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Unsettling Futures:

Morality, Time, and Death in a Divided Belfast Community

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

by

Matthew Richard McCoy

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Unsettling Futures:
Morality, Time, and Death in a Divided Belfast Community

by

Matthew Richard McCoy

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Christopher J. Throop, Chair

This dissertation is grounded in sixteen months of ethnographic research conducted within segregated social housing estates in east Belfast. It investigates the structurally violent aftermath of colonial conflict and how the possibilities for moral experiences and living a good life might orient the lives of residents. During the 2016 Centenaries of the Irish Easter Rising and the British Battle of the Somme, as well as the sudden eruption of the “Brexit” referendum, the melancholic experiences of Northern Ireland’s fraught history led to existential questions about the future. While the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement ended “the Troubles” (1969-1998), a sectarian and colonial conflict, bitter tensions persist today between Catholic and Protestant communities. This dissertation argues that the lived experiences of the future in the everyday lives of working-class communities constitute the social world in such a way as to challenge the efficacy of the Northern Irish project.

Northern Ireland as a national project remains in a precarious state of unsettledness in the lives of Catholics and Protestants residing in east Belfast’s social housing estates. As documented

from the accounts in this dissertation, these areas sustained untold losses during conflict and today endure multiple forms of social and economic deprivation including some of the highest suicide rates in the world despite the 1998 agreement's promise of community rejuvenation. This dissertation shows that while suicidal ideations, traumatic memories, sectarian hatreds, and drug and alcohol addictions proliferated in the aftermath of conflict, segregation, and unequal access to resources, residents today also actively cultivate alternative futures for themselves and their children for the sake of living a better life. Drawing from person-centered inquiries into the social life of moral worlds, this dissertation examines self and other perceptions of suffering, care, and death for residents of east Belfast. As a result, this ethnographic research highlights the visions of alternative futures arising outside of NGO, paramilitary, and state-controlled circuits.

Each chapter of this dissertation enters into how the future shapes first-person experiences through phenomena such as hauntings, emotions, rumors, narratives, and dreams. These lived experiences show the complex ways that people cultivate, interact, and shape their emergent moral worlds for the sake of creating a more livable future. Death takes on prominent salience in the ethnographic accounts in this dissertation as the complex histories of sacrifice orient many of the participants' moral ground projects. This dissertation ultimately shows that in order to avoid succumbing to intergenerational despair, many people in east Belfast's social housing estates actively cultivate alternative possibilities for their future lives and their future deaths.

The dissertation of Matthew Richard McCoy is approved.

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2020

For Charanya and Avaya

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VITA

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Introduction

Billy: I don't care about the fucking troubles. I don't care. I don't care about the fucking troubles. The troubles are history.

Alby: You're on a slow suicide mission.

Billy: No. No, I'm not.

Alby: Yeah, you are.

Billy: I don't care about the troubles.

Alby: I said the slow suicide mission.

Billy: What the fuck am I doing here?

Alby: A slow suicide.

Billy: No, it's not.

Alby: It is. It's simple.

Mass begins at ten in the morning. The church bells peal over the heavily walled Catholic district in east Belfast and momentarily blunts the noise of gulls reeling and squawking above, bored and hungry in the sticky June mid-morning. Not far away from the church, Billy staggers slowly across the court with the aid of a crutch. He calls in to Alby's house for his first drink of the day. One neighbor calls him "dead man walking." Another neighbor, cigarette in hand, squints at Billy and remarks at his jaundiced skin: "he's yellow as Bart Simpson."

Billy is unwell. From the front room of Alby's house, we can see Billy make his slow way towards us. Billy began drinking alcohol a little over a year ago after abstaining most his life. Alby and his friend Pod say Billy's body could not handle the drink like their bodies could. The two of them had been drinking since they were young, they say, and Billy's liver did not have that experience. In a few months, Billy will die from the drink. During the time period in which I know him, he calls in frequently to Alby's house at the sound of the morning church bells. A few other

middle-aged men call in at this time too and they all share in prolonged “sessions” – drinking while talking and arguing, smoking, watching football or racing on the box – together in the front room often until the late evening. When Billy enters, he sits in a white padded armchair next to the window overlooking the court where children are playing. Billy wears the same green Ireland football jersey as many of the children outside are wearing. Some of the children are kicking footballs idly around. Smaller ones are riding tricycles with immense effort, and their plastic wheels grate against the brickwork of the court.

Alby and Billy want to talk with me about living through the conflict in Belfast, but they wanted to do this soberly. This is why I am here at ten in the morning. The conversation turns heated, with ear-splitting eruptions, and angry arguments every few minutes. Alby does not like what Billy says and becomes cruel. Alby’s quick-wit flusters Billy. He turns to Alby, exasperated and says at last, “you slegged the fuck out of me.” Slegging is the sustained act of ridiculing another. Slegging, if not countered by a reciprocal sleg, easily increases its intensity until it has cascaded into unidirectional bullying. But Alby’s cruelty, I come to understand twenty minutes into the conversation, is embedded within a complex form of distributed care encompassing Billy, the neighbors, and especially the future of the children playing in the court. Alby’s cruelty is also a moral act. This underlying moral complexity reveals itself when I – in a moment of silence between the two men – accidentally breach an implicit norm by asking an ill-timed question. The question I ask ultimately discloses the true function of Alby’s front room. Alby’s front room functions as a space of hospice for Billy and for others. The front room of the house is a place for these men to care for one another through drinking and talking together as they cope with their troubles. Alby tells Billy three times during this “session” I attend that Billy is on a suicide mission. Alby’s front room will be Billy’s final stop before his death. It is perhaps for this reason that members of the local community send Billy to Alby’s front room when he begins to scare the neighborhood children. Tommy, who

owns the off license where Billy buys his alcohol requested to Alby that he keep Billy inside and away from the park. Billy had choked his own dog by the collar at the park earlier that week, and the children were duly scared.

My ill-timed question arises in what I perceive to be a moment of pause, of quiet: I see Billy rising from the armchair and reaching for his crutch, and so I ask suddenly, without thinking, “Are you away?” With this question, I give Billy a motive about why he was reaching for his crutch. In turn, he makes sense of this act through my question and modifies my interrogative and expands it into his own declaration: “I’m going away.” Alby erupts in anger at both of us.

Alby: Matthew, I don’t know why you say that. There’s kids out there playing.

Billy: Would you shut the fuck up?

Alby: All the kids are out there playing in the street. Bill. Don’t fucking lie, just sit there. There’s all those kids playing football out there. Don’t you go out there. Leave this house like that. You’re leaving my house and they know my fucking child. No Bill. You’re fucking not leaving my fucking house. See if you’re going to bed, you’re going out the back. You’re not walking through my front door in front of all them kids.

Alby then turns and explains why I should not have responded to nor paid any mind to Billy’s act of reaching for his crutch. Imbuing this act with meaning, providing for it an utterance, I gave Billy the idea that he could freely leave out the front door. It turns out that I had misunderstood the situation and, by extension, misinterpreted the function of the front room itself.

Alby is responsible for Billy for the sake of the community, for the sake of his own nine-year-old son who plays out in the court when he visits Alby from his mother’s house. Alby expounds to me clearly, “You shouldn’t say anything. See when he makes a move, he can’t get off that chair. See if I wanted him out, I’d fuck him out. That’s the reason he’s fucking sitting there. Cause them kids are playing in that fucking court.”

Though I have been invited to sit and listen to them discuss their experiences, I have also interrupted a delicate moral attunement. Later on, Alby and his friend Pod explain to me that they

feel responsible to keep Billy away from the children; the children must not see him drunk or fall down. Alby and Pod want me to understand that they do not want the lives of the children to repeat the patterns within their own lives. As they see it, their futures were taken from them by Belfast's ongoing conflicts. They want the children playing in that court, in that park, to have a better future than them. Keeping Billy out of sight for the sake of allowing a different future to grasp these children is an integral aspect of the essential functions that take place in Alby's front room.

Alby often expresses overt disdain for Billy's past. Irritated by the continual onslaught of Alby's slegs, Billy admits at that moment he does not care about the troubles. Nonetheless, Alby continues to turn the conversation back to the region's conflict because he is angry about what Billy did in those days.

Alby: You didn't even live in the bastardin district. You fucked off.

Billy: Alby, would you.

Alby: Fucking over with the fucking yuppies. You fucked off. Went to the education and all. Fucking university. You fucked off when the troubles was here. Your fucking da was there. With the fucking - do the fucking struggling around the district of lifting our bodies up off the fucking street. Didn't see it that way, Bill? That's the way we know your da. Not the way you fucking know him.

Billy: Would you fuck up?

Alby: No. No. I'm not fucking up. You haven't a clue what your dad went through. Didn't tell you fuck all cause he knew he'd seen it all.

Alby claims Billy's father on behalf of the district. Billy's father was a mechanic and undertaker, responsible for "lifting our bodies up off" the very streets upon which Alby prevents Billy from walking. Children used to rap Billy's father's door and run away when they heard his father's deep holler in response, "I'll fucking bury you!" As the undertaker, so the joke goes, Billy's father certainly would have. However, Billy moved away from the district to go to school at the height of the conflict in the early 1980s.

Alby makes remarks about the troubles in order to castigate Billy for leaving the district, for receiving an education, and for ultimately finding work in a salaried civil servant job responsible for distributing grants to communities in Belfast. Worse still, Billy is unlike his father and does not know his father the way the district does. He did not commit his way of life to the community, as his father had. Alby finds all of these things a betrayal. To complicate matters further, Billy's partner of many years is a Protestant woman, and he is often unfairly blamed for neglecting to reward their own Catholic district with funds in favor of Protestant communities when he was in a position to distribute grants.

Despite all this, Billy's place in the community remains here in Alby's front room. Alby's cruel injunctions keep Billy from leaving the front room. If Billy were to go outside, after all, he could easily injure himself or, worse, find himself beaten brutally by young men in the district, which has happened before. Billy also falls frequently. He tells me these beatings and falls have resulted in what he terms "neurology," by which I am certain he means neuralgia. This slippage in the name rings true, however, because Billy means to indicate his psychic damage too, and not only the nerve pains in his body. If Billy drinks too much, Alby harshly directs him to rest on the floor in the front room. On some nights, Alby will command him: "stay down. I told you, stay the fuck down" and then will put a blanket over him when Billy finally relents. Though the court at night is quiet and free from children, Alby tells me he wants to keep watch over Billy in case he vomits and chokes. Alby insists that by reminding Billy through continual slegging and shaming that Billy's place is not outdoors nor alone in his house, he keeps Billy alive longer than if he were on his own.

Alby's form of care towards Billy is for the sake of a different future, one that might emerge after, and indeed out of, the deaths of the men in his front room. Almost all of the men who visit here, except for Billy, served as combatants or prisoners during the conflict that engulfed the area in

the east of Belfast. Here, life remains unsettled, and many are on a slow suicide mission out of sight of others so that a different way of life might settle here.

Unsettling Futures

Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, projects a fantastical future. Walking around Victoria Square, a chic outdoor and multi-level shopping center built in 2008 with UK and EU peace dividends for the cost of 400 million pounds, it is difficult to envision that this was once Belfast's conflict-decimated and weary city center. Nonetheless, tour guides still make a healthy wage through "dark tourism" as they drive their black taxis around the working-class districts. They attempt to provoke tourists to imagine how the city center itself was encircled until the 1990s by the British Army's notorious "ring of steel," a barricaded checkpoint that required soldiers to search and pat down shoppers. They ask tourists to imagine the hollowed-out remnants of bombed buildings and the pandemonium of sectarian riots and gun battles.

The glass dome atop Victoria Square offers a panoramic view of the city, one of the crown jewels of the post-peace process investment in economic infrastructure. From the glass dome, one can see across the River Lagan to east Belfast where two massive yellow shipbuilding gantry cranes nicknamed Samson and Goliath abide in the docks. Harland & Wolff, the shipbuilding company that built the Titanic with mostly working-class Protestant labor, still employs workers, though the last ship was built in 2003 and the shipyard is consistently teetering on closure. With the Thatcherite and New Labour policies moving shipbuilding out of the country where labor and materials costs are cheaper, the enormous cranes are infrequently used, and new contracts are signed only for the maintenance, repair, and refitting of already existing ships as well as for building wind and tidal energy turbines. In the shadows of the cranes, the HBO fantasy epic television program *Game of Thrones* films at Titanic Studios in an expansive building where ships were once painted. In the

evenings, at the city center's pubs and bars – The John Hewitt, Duke of York, Kelly's – excitable tribes of sizable and heavily bearded men drink together. A city center overrun with these hirsute extras is the surest sign that the TV series has begun filming again. Near the cranes and the movie studios sits Titanic Belfast, a shimmering silver museum. The external architecture designed American-born British architect Eric Kuhne deconstructively suggests the bow of the ill-fated passenger liner.

To the south of the museum and gantry cranes, beyond the television fantasies of castles and dragon fire, rises the steeple of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic church. The church marks the edge of Short Strand district, an area that has historically regarded the cranes with spite, seeing in them violent histories of sectarian Protestant and colonial British economic oppression continuing into the present day. It is here in the Short Strand where another sort of civic infrastructure continues to be built and maintained: towering concrete and steel "peace" walls separating the Catholic Short Strand from the Protestant Inner East.

While mixed streets of Catholics and Protestants existed until 1969, the Catholic Short Strand and the Protestant Inner East have been implicitly segregated since at least the pogroms against Catholics in the early 1920s and explicitly segregated since the start of the recent conflict called "the Troubles" (1969-1998). Conflict erupted in Northern Ireland in 1969 between, in general terms, the Catholic and Protestant working classes. By 1971, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the main Catholic paramilitary, launched an unrestricted guerilla war against the British state, including the British Army that had, up until 1971, been outwardly defining itself as a peacekeeper between the two communities. The conflict solidified when paramilitary groups became more organized, armed, funded, and recruited: "revolutionary" Irish Republican paramilitaries from poor Catholic social housing estates and "counter-revolutionary" British Loyalist paramilitaries from poor Protestant social housing estates. Generally, from a Catholic, nationalist, and republican point of

view, the conflict was a campaign against the British state, security forces, and the loyalist paramilitary campaign against Catholics. From a Protestant, loyalist, and unionist perspective, the conflict was a campaign against terrorist aggressors. From the British security force perspective, and often colluding with loyalist paramilitaries as well as “touts” within republican organizations, the conflict was a counter-insurgency operation.

According to security statistics from the British government on the conflict, from 1969 to 1998 there were 3,289 people killed, 42,216 people injured, 35,699 shootings, 10,142 explosions, 20,568 armed robberies, 359,699 house searches, and 18,258 persons charged with terrorist or serious public order offences (Elliott and Flackes 1999, 681-687). Though Northern Ireland is often overlooked as a significant “war” or “conflict,” intrinsic to the ironically understated term “the Troubles,” O’Leary and McGarry remind of the scale:

The population of Northern Ireland in the 1981 census, itself disrupted by violence and abstention, was estimated as 1,488,077. If the equivalent ratio of victims to population had been produced in Great Britain in the same period some 100,000 people would have died, and if a similar level of political violence would have taken place the number of fatalities in the USA would have been over 500,000, or about ten times the number of Americans killed in the Vietnam war. (O’Leary and McGarry 2016, 9-12)

Since the official end of conflict in 1998, the casualties continue to soar. Paramilitary-style beatings and killings continued even as I write this introduction. On 27 January 2019, the prominent anti-drug loyalist, Ian Ogle of Protestant Cluan Place, east Belfast, was stabbed to death by the drug-dealing wing of the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force. I had informally spoken to Ogle several times during my fieldwork. Murders and debilitating injuries incurred from paramilitary and drug-dealing feuds and beatings and deaths from suicides, alcohol and drug overdoses, heart attacks, PTSD, and other forms of intergenerational traumas are rampant. Though this conflict has often been described as ethnonationalist (British Protestant Loyalist Unionist versus Irish Catholic Republican Nationalist) in nature, its origins of course are founded on the various waves of British colonialism on the island of Ireland, especially through plantation colonialism. Violence, as often noted, can

detach from its site of origin to overflow into unpredictable acts that beget yet more unpredictable formations of violence (Feldman 1991). Yet, the source of Northern Ireland's violence undoubtedly begins with the brutality of English rule over indigenous Irish, as well as the often equally brutal rule over poor Protestants shifted into Ireland from Great Britain during successive periods of dispossessing and colonizing plantations. The most consequential plantation, the Plantation of Ulster (1609-1690), focused primarily on the confiscation of land in the province of Ulster, in which Northern Ireland resides. Centuries later, in 1921, the island of Ireland was partitioned into two, what later became known as the independent country of Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom. On the precipice of the 2021 centennial of this bloody partition that tore the country geographically and psychically into two pieces, Northern Ireland's status remains as contested as ever. The Brexit has further unleashed apocalyptic rhetoric about the return to conflict. If a hard border is again erected between the two countries or if an economic border is put between mainland United Kingdom and Northern Ireland making the island Ireland economically unified, then many believe that conflict of some sort is inevitable. A hard border is anathema to Irish Republicans and Nationalists and an economic border is unacceptable to British Loyalists and Unionists.

Between the Catholic Short Strand and the Protestant Inner East, divisions reflecting the history of the island remain endemic to everyday life. "We've had little success" or "things have moved slower than we'd like" are two common refrains pulled from my field journal brimming with such sentiments from community workers and politicians who have attempted to integrate the two communities. Yet, the open secret is that very few people in these salaried positions, whose job is to create cross-community relations, actually desire to see the communities living together. Many of them see no reason to force the issue. Indeed, the economic livelihoods of these functionaries and their own national identities are predicated on "coming out of conflict," not overcoming conflict. To

be sure, this ethnography does not take the position that living together in harmonic cohabitation with one's (often hated) neighbor should, or could, be the goal of a post-conflict Belfast, even if my own ethico-political leanings are inspired by the tradition of an open, free, and cosmopolitan democratic society. To frame my data to suit my own comportment would render a stark moral judgement against the experiences and understandings of my participants from Protestant and Catholic communities who do have strong ideas about how to organize territory, society, politics, and identity. Suspending judgment and considering many opposing perspectives of others, and not the viewpoints that aligned most closely to my own, was the stance I tried to inculcate in order to attend to multiple perspectives. I wanted to let what appears (opinions, practices, experiences) in the shared world of appearances *to appear* in the first place before typifying and judging. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulated a fundamental truth about the constrained freedom of being with others, writing that “true liberty takes others as they are, tries to understand even those doctrines which are its negation, and never allows itself to judge before understanding” (2017, xxiv-xxv). The vast majority of working-class communities in Belfast are “happy enough” to exist separated from one another in an era without constant car bombs, gun fights, snipers, assassinations, sectarian riots, and the violent panoply of urban warfare, though few of them are happy with the institutions and laws created by the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The original 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement modified existent institutions and created new structures of administration, which included fostering relationships between the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland. These institutions included

[a Northern Irish] assembly to run northern departments, like education, environment, health and so on; a north-south ministerial council; all-Ireland implementation bodies for matters such as tourism, fisheries, and language; a new British-Irish Intergovernmental Council; and a British-Irish Council bringing together representatives from the devolved UK regions and the two sovereign governments. (Feeney 2014, 125)

In the original peace agreement, Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army paramilitary, and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the main Protestant political party at the time, could not agree what to do about policing. Though the police force and special branch was not disbanded, as Sinn Féin insisted (and today, any Catholic from a working-class district who gains employment on the police will be put out of the community one way or another), Chris Patten of the Conservative Party reformed the policing structures in Northern Ireland by

chang[ing] the name of the police from RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and decreed police stations should be neutral workplaces and therefore the Union Jack flag must not fly nor pictures of Queen Elizabeth be displayed. The uniform was also redesigned, softened from the sharp, militaristic RUC tunic and cap to a variety of options, including baseball caps, jerkins, and open-neck shirts. The most controversial measure was that, in order to remedy the huge religious imbalance of the force being 93% Protestant in a society which is now only 57% Protestant, recruitment should be on a 50/50 Catholic/Protestant basis. These were the most fundamental changes to the ethos and organisation of the North's police force since the establishment of that force in 1921. (Feeney 2014, 126)

In the aftermath of the 1998 peace agreement, existential questions about the future of oneself, the other, and the community remain. Uncertainty about the future affects all spheres of everyday life. As soon as the institutions of the 1998 peace agreement were underway, a narrative of shared economic development attempted to take hold that elided the unequal distribution of poverty and violence before, during, and after the conflict. The common discourse holds that the Troubles “affected everyone,” which blatantly disregards that half of the fatalities occurred in just 12 of the 94 postcodes in Northern Ireland, and “what these dozen neighbourhoods shared in common was that they were – as they remain – sites of grinding, multigenerational poverty” (Coulter 2019, 123-4). The promise of private American investment and sustained peace gave rise to the momentary fantasy of widespread employment and healing, what the Irish scholar, David Lloyd, calls “therapeutic modernity” (Lloyd 2000). To enjoy in the bounty of development and investment, often dubbed the “peace dividend,” individuals would have to agree to disremember, to lose what was lost during the melancholic century of colonial and sectarian war, violence, and dispossession. There have been no

South African-style peace and reconciliation committees. Because the truth is unknown about what happened to many loved ones, the dead and injured and the families of the dead and injured have yet to experience any sense of justice or revenge. The material effects of development have led to some new mostly middle-class industries, retail employment opportunities for the poorer classes, and the partial integration of traditionally sectarian realms like the civil and police services. It seems that the Tony Blair's dream of a "peaceful and stable future" where there is "a well of economic goodwill and potential inward investment out there just waiting for the right opportunity and the right conditions" did not come to pass (cited in Coulter 2019, 124). A recent report found that Northern Ireland's "[h]igher worklessness and lower employment than other parts of the UK ... arises mainly from more inactivity (due to health, caring or education) rather than very much higher unemployment. Employment rates for disabled people, in particular, are much lower than in the UK as a whole" (Barnard 2018, 23). The report found that 370,00 people in Northern Ireland live in poverty, including 110,00 children, 220,000 working-age adults, and 40,000 pensioners (2). What this report calls "worklessness" due to "inactivity" concerns the legacy of disability and psychological trauma stemming from the conflict. 15 per cent of the population suffers from some form of conflict-related trauma (Coulter 2019, 216). And 23.2 per cent of the entire working age population in Northern Ireland are claimants for some form of unemployment (Incapacity Benefit (IB), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), or Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which is 1.79 higher than Great Britain at 13 per cent (Tomlinson 2016, 117).

The people living in the working-class social housing estates in urban Northern Ireland, though generally relieved for the conflict to end, are intent not to lose what was lost. The period of therapeutics and peace dividends is ending, if ever begun. Many individuals in working class communities, and many voices heard in this dissertation, especially non-Sinn Féin republicans and

nearly all the loyalist communities, feel that the 1998 peace agreement was misrepresented and then abused by the politicians in charge.

Speaking about the feelings and experiences of peace agreement with participants was always a contradictory affair during my fieldwork. To give one example, a 20-year-old from the Short Strand who went off to England for university says to me that the younger generations do not care about the troubles, and only the older generations are still sectarian. He thinks the media plays up the sectarianism whenever riots kick off. For him, riots or bigoted social media posts are not about sectarian hatreds, but about “boredom – there’s nothing there for the youth.” He offers examples from his own life coming from a working-class Catholic estate where he lacked access to good paying jobs or even accessible leisure centers. He also used to be involved in youth justice programs and cross-community residential programs in which Protestants and Catholics from across the divide spent weekends together. He says that most riots are planned over Facebook amongst acquaintances for the sake of boredom and for a good time and not for the sake of harming one another. The cultural script of sectarianism may be used as the precondition for starting a riot, and then amplified by the media as the cause of the riot, when in reality, these rioting kids know each other, and are often friendly acquaintances. And yet, in the very same conversation with this 20-year-old, he notes that tribalism still does reign in these communities. Bitterness and hatreds are still distributed throughout, he notes, as reinforced through murals, flags, memorials, bonfires, commemorations, and other public and private enactments of history, identity, and ultimately, self and other perceptions. Those who educate themselves often leave the district like himself and those who remain and forgo an education end up becoming *bitter*. The contradictory message seems to be undergirded by a spatial logic of distance which insinuates that if one leaves one’s home, especially for the sake of a university education, one becomes less bitter, while the longer one stays without leaving, the more bitterness becomes cultivated in these working-class estates. I use the descriptor

“working-class” as an historical designation for social housing estates. Though the statistics are notoriously difficult to come by because of the various welfare schemes and scams, illicit economies, and other forms of wage earning outside regular employment channels, very few people living full-time in working-class communities have full-time, long-term employment in regular positions.

One of my participants, Woody, a former community worker from a Protestant and loyalist working-class community, asked his Facebook friends about a recent incident in which Catholic youth attacked a loyalist parade in the summer of 2019. For him, this was an act of hatred, not boredom. He wanted to know what sort of future lies ahead. Loyalist parades are a fixture in Northern Ireland, re-territorializing space with the sensorium of what Catholics rightly believe to be aggressive displays of sovereignty and triumphalism. Catholic youths commonly throw bottles or rocks, occasionally escalating into fistfights, though major riots have been unusually infrequent since a series of destructive riots in 2013. My participant posed his question about the future in terms of the interface areas. Interface areas are the historically violent areas where Protestant and Catholic communities meet and that often serve as a forewarning to larger outbreaks of violence. Woody asked on Facebook:

the interface trouble it's young people born after the GFA [Good Friday Agreement] is it hatred in them or is antisocial behaviour. Is the next generation going to endure what happened 50 years ago?

Normally these questions are answered with tedious sectarian responses about how all the Catholics are terrorists, terrorist sympathizers, or “rats” or “scum” with their “eyes too close together.” But my participant is well-respected amongst the Protestant and loyalist community for his serious and reflective comportment, and his questioning was not for the sake of revving up the “aggro,” aggression towards Catholics, but for the sake of honest dialogue about the future generations. Two responses stood out to me. The first posted comment:

Just an opinion here mate but since the gfa [Good Friday Agreement] there's a vacuum in our communities when prisoners were released and funding given out politicians forgot

about the future of the youths there's nothing for them no clubs facilities worth talking about so what do they do they resort to gang warfare fights being arranged etc. I've seen it before growing up on the mainland different areas arranging fights in there dozens sometimes 100s. I'm not saying this is a cause for how it is but it sure as hell doesn't help as for the blue bag brigade the blame solely lays with parents I've seen kids as young as 12 13 pissed falling all over the place and seen there parents only a few 100 yards down the road also pissed with not a care in the world.

The second post:

there was a wee 14 yr old full in bitter hateful wee shite. fml [fuck my life] he wouldnt have a single clue about the troubles but the bitterness was well bred into him.

The sentiment of the first response, though written by someone who affiliates with the Protestant tradition, could have been written by anyone in the social housing estates across in Belfast. Once the loyalist and republican prisoners were released back into the community as negotiated in the peace agreement, including many who had killed people during the conflict, and once peace funding was awarded as salaried “community workers” positions to ex-paramilitary members who had consolidated power and influence within the social housing estates, the everyday working-class individuals soured on the agreement. The government neglected to offer futures possibilities to the majority of the people within the social housing estates – “politicians forgot about the future of the youths there's nothing for them.” This “nothing” became filled with sectarian trappings as well as intergenerational alcohol and drug use, potent forms of kinship and friendship relations in Northern Ireland. This nothing is also felt by the newest shape of the troubles: suicide. The suicide rate in Northern Ireland in 1971, at the outbreak of the troubles was 5 for every 100,000 people.² In 1998, the year of the signing of the peace agreement, the suicide rate was 9 per 100,000. In 2018, the suicide rate was 16 per 100,000 people (18.6 age-standardized), which is the highest in the UK, and

¹ Rowdy men and women who follow the parades, named after the blue bag used to bag alcohol by off-license liquor stores.

² Suicide statistics can be found <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/suicide-statistics>

remains in the top 15 of any country in the world. Between 2015 and 2018, there were 1,228 suicides, of which 929 were men and 299 were women. In Belfast alone, 360 suicides occurred during this period. Since the end of the conflict, there have been over 5,000 suicides, eclipsing the number of people lost during the conflict.

The second Facebook post above points to a cultivated virtue amongst more sectarian families: bitterness. Regardless of one's knowledge or understanding of the conflict, bitterness continues as a primary mooded perception when encountering the other. Bitterness, a chronic hatred towards the other often permeated with melancholy, is widely believed to be bred into children at a small age. That the youth in the present, and thus the future, are "pissed with not a care in the world" and "full in bitter hateful" expresses the unsettledness of time in Northern Ireland at least for the loyalist's communities. And though I mention loyalists as being bitter, this is also again the cultural script that saturates public discourses. Loyalists are often written off as backward, reactionary, and bitter right-wingers. Republicans are stereotyped as forward-thinking, educated, and optimistic. Though, of course, republicans are often given the "terrorist" label more frequently than loyalists. And, indeed, these two cultural scripts clearly do not hold in every community and on the person-centered level. The conflict, however, and the bitterness towards the other side, remains palatable in everyday life.

These communities have not lost sight of what was lost during the conflict even as many of their patriot "volunteers" or "defenders" joined the ranks of the well-salaried who post their vacation photos on Facebook from Benidorm, Spain (Protestants) or Santa Ponsa, Spain (Catholics) or from their weekend getaway caravans far away from their "peace-building" jobs. These images create tensions and jealousies, though rarely spoken about in public, between residents who often tell me they felt more cohesive during conflict. The peace agreement assured that at least the senior paramilitary leaders and their kinship networks would have the opportunity for employment in the

newly created salaried positions. Northern Ireland, however, is no place for narratives of progress and development to take hold. Though the peace process in Northern Ireland ended the overflowing of widespread armed insurrection and sectarian killings, high rates of alcohol and drug use, PTSD, suicide, and forms of hatreds, including far right- and left- wing nationalisms, flourish. Unsettling futures disrupt any sense of common sense, of a commonly shared world with mutual understanding. While wrapping up my initial fieldwork period in 2016, this unsettled time reared into everyday consciousness when the Brexit decision left Northern Ireland in a precarious state as the only UK land border with the EU. In more right-leaning communities, mainly working-class loyalist, a dizzying array of flags were flown, showing support for leaving the EU: in addition to the usual loyalist paramilitary flags and Union Jacks or Ulster Banners, various racist flags appeared from America: Confederacy and Ku Klux Klan. The flag poles were also replete with Nazi Party and Donald Trump's 2016 "Make American Great Again" flags. All of a sudden, the specter of a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland became a distinct possibility, and with it, the real potential for the collapse of peace agreement, which to be sure had done much to staunch sectarian violence yet done too little to address structural violence.

Disagreement abounds over the interpretation of the history of events in Northern Ireland, which this ethnography lays bare. Most notably, a disagreement over how the *future* is experienced right here and now, presents itself in everyday life. To be sure, it often appears that negotiations and conflicts over the *past* is what is at stake discursively and materially in Belfast. Memorials seem to pop up overnight, commemorations (parades and other highly ritualized events) continue to create conflicted territorial spaces amidst the constant back and forth discourses of Orange vs. Green, Protestant vs. Catholic, us vs. them'uns and the inevitable "whataboutery," justifying one's behavior by pointing to a similar past behavior from the "other side." In the aftermath of overtly violent conflict and structurally violent peace, the paradoxical nature of future experience comes to the fore.

Narratives about the future often run headlong into the very concrete problem of Northern Ireland's "peace walls." Over 100 peace walls segregate the working-class districts, keeping the communities within relatively homogenous. An aerial view of the city shows the ground crazed and crenellated with cracks like misfired ceramics. The 100 peace walls separating one from the other permanently cement uncertain futures as a binary. The walls evoke the future in terms of a stark either/or rather than in terms of a cohabitation.

At an event in September 2019 organized by Belfast Exposed, a contemporary photography organization and gallery space, the 50-year anniversary of the peace walls was the topic of a public seminar titled "Peace Walls 50 Years On." The public seminar consisted of an audience of about thirty people facing a panel constituting of a freelance journalist, professor of photography, employee of Department of Justice, director of the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the ex-chair of the Community Relations Council, an architect, and an Associate Professor of Design from the University of Texas, Austin. These seven individuals sat in front of a massive blown-up canvas photograph of a peace wall taken by Frankie Quinn, a local photographer who has been documenting the peace walls for 30 years. He was not invited to speak, though his photography exhibition, *Cordon Sanitaire*, a retrospective of his images of the peace walls, was a focus of the discussion. Notably, Quinn has always lived in the working-class communities living amidst the peace walls. None of the discussants have ever lived near a peace wall, and they each hold positions that afford them middle to upper-middle class livelihoods. They were each paid 200 pounds for appearing. 1,400 pounds total. Quinn, who is unemployed and on benefits of under 200 pounds a month, could have used these funds, but was not invited to speak at this event in which his photographic work backgrounded the paid participants as they spoke. One of the panelists, interviewed on camera after the seminar, spoke tautologically:

My belief has always been that to find a real solution to the problem of the walls, "a very difficult conundrum of the walls," as I've called it, is to bring together a much wider range

of people to have these conversations about solutions and about approaches to the walls and about ways of understanding them.

This speaker, an English journalist and author, voices the popular insight that in order to find a real solution, people must have conversations about solutions. As to the “much wider range of people,” this clearly does not include those who live in these walled communities, at least on this day. This sort of language is congenital to discussions about the peace walls from those who have a financial interest in their existence. Similar statements abound in public discourse, signifying the very emptiness at the core of the social, academic, artistic, state, and economic networks spiraling around “what to do about the walls” while not actually speaking with, or letting speak, the people living amidst them. Quinn, on this day, was on the polluted end of the “cordon sanitaire” despite the fact that the speakers were ostensibly speaking about his own photographic journalism. Quinn’s life’s work surrounded them like so many unasked questions. If a meaningful human world is set up, in part, by the durable arrangement of human-made creations to outlast the living, have the peace walls entered into the realm of timeless works of art or focal sites of spirit – creations like temples, capitals, sports stadia capable of opening, gathering, arranging, and unifying relational contexts for a way of life – separate from utilitarian or functional ends? Is this why images of walls – which sit literally outside the gallery - hang from the art gallery’s walls? And what of the concealed existence for those, like Quinn, who live behind the faces of the walls being discussed?

The government of Northern Ireland is notoriously unstable. After the various agreements supplementary to the 1998 Agreement, the political structure of government consisted of a power-sharing (between Catholic and Protestant political parties) and devolved entity. Yet, as of 2017, the power-sharing Assembly has collapsed and reverted back to direct rule from Westminster.

³ “St. Andrews Agreement” (2006); “the Hillsborough Agreement” (2010); “Stormont House Agreement” (2014); “Fresh Start Agreement” (2016). There are also currently ongoing negotiations around the “backstop” agreement due to the Brexit.

Northern Ireland's instability, and thus the unsettled experience of the future for those within its borders, was laid as its very foundations after the partition of Ireland. The partitioning of the island into two entities was never voted on by an all-Ireland populace but was established by Government of Ireland Act 1920 voted upon by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The act was to create two territories under United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. However, the Irish War for Independence led to the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, which existed as a self-governing Dominion under the British Commonwealth until 1939 and was then eventually established as a republic in 1949. Northern Ireland, in the meantime, has existed since 1921. Northern Ireland resides in the historic Irish province of Ulster, and British Loyalists often refer to the country as Ulster. Yet, Northern Ireland only resides in six of the nine counties of Ulster. This strange apportioning originally maximized unionist, and Protestant, votes by gerrymandering the territories. The initial result of the partition was that 65 percent of Northern Ireland were unionists/loyalists and 35 percent were nationalists/republicans. In 1972, the *Sunday Times* investigative team, Insight, concluded that

The border was itself the first and biggest gerrymander: the six counties it enclosed, the new province of Ulster, had no point or meaning except as the largest area which the Protestant tribe could hold against the Catholic. Protestant supremacy was the only reason why the State existed. As such the State was an immoral concept. It therefore had to be maintained from the first by immoral means (cited in Ó Ruairc 2019, 13)

To keep this clearly unequal and discriminatory territorial structure in place, Northern Ireland has long been allowed extraordinary legislation granting it special “state of exemption” judicial powers compared with the rest of the United Kingdom and Ireland:

Emergency legislation from the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (1922) to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act (1973) and its subsequent versions, and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 have been a constant since 1921 even in periods of peace. (Ó Ruairc 2019, 15)

For this reason, Northern Ireland has always already been a “state of emergency,” borrowing from the political philosopher Giorgio Agamben's definition of the paradigm of government based on a

sovereign decision to suspend the rule of law. Agamben sees the state of exception as having become endemic, as “modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination of not only political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system” (2005, 2). Northern Ireland has, throughout its history, implemented mass arrests and internment without trial, the “five techniques” of interrogation torture (prolonged wall-standing, hooding, subjection to noise, deprivation of sleep, and deprivation of food and drink), shoot-to-kill policies, plastic and rubber bullets fired against children, and counter-insurgency strategies that include collusion with paramilitaries.

As an American anthropologist working with participants in Belfast who survived torture, I am morally compelled to discuss the legacy of interrogation and torture implemented in Northern Ireland. The “five techniques” of interrogation implemented in Northern Ireland would detach from their site of origin and become a globalized practice during the US government’s “War on Terror.” In 1971, fourteen men suspected of associations with the IRA were arrested and interned without trial. In a secret interrogation center in Northern Ireland, the British military subjected these men to the five techniques. These men became known as the “Hooded Men” because of the hood covering their heads that they were forced to wear during their torture. In 1976, the European Commission on Human Rights found that the UK had tortured the men, but the UK successfully appealed the decision (Corrigan 2014). In 1978, the European Court of Human Rights handed down the *Ireland v. the United Kingdom* decision that overturned their previous ruling and found that the interrogation of the fourteen men constituted “inhuman and degrading treatment” but not “torture.” This distinction would reverberate through the decades. Between 2001 and 2002, the US Attorney’s General office for the George W. Bush administration drafted what would become known as the “torture memos” signed by the Assistant Attorney General, Jay S. Bybee. These memos approved enhanced

interrogation techniques, justifying this decision by exploiting the distinction created by the *Ireland v. the United Kingdom* 1978 ECHR decision. Below I reproduce images from pages 28 and 29 of these memos (Bybee 2012):

The leading European Court of Human Rights case explicating the differences between torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment is *Ireland v. the United Kingdom* (1978).¹⁵ In that case, the European Court of Human Rights examined interrogation techniques somewhat more sophisticated than the rather rudimentary and frequently obviously cruel acts described in the TVPA cases. Careful attention to this case is worthwhile not just because it examines methods not used in the TVPA cases, but also because the Reagan administration relied on this case in reaching the conclusion that the term torture is reserved in international usage for “extreme, deliberate, and unusually cruel practices.” S. Treaty Doc. 100-20, at 4.

The methods at issue in *Ireland* were:

- (1) Wall Standing. The prisoner stands spread eagle against the wall, with fingers high above his head, and feet back so that he is standing on his toes such that his all of his weight falls on his fingers.
- (2) Hooding. A black or navy hood is placed over the prisoner’s head and kept there except during the interrogation.
- (3) Subjection to Noise. Pending interrogation, the prisoner is kept in a room with a loud and continuous hissing noise.
- (4) Sleep Deprivation. Prisoners are deprived of sleep pending interrogation.
- (5) Deprivation of Food and Drink. Prisoners receive a reduced diet during detention and pending interrogation.

The European Court of Human Rights concluded that these techniques used in combination, and applied for hours at a time, were inhuman and degrading but did not amount to torture. In analyzing whether these methods constituted torture, the court treated them as part of a single program. *See Ireland*. ¶ 104. The court found that this program caused “if not actual bodily injury, at least intense physical and mental suffering to the person subjected thereto and also led to acute psychiatric disturbances during the interrogation.” *Id.* ¶ 167. Thus, this program “fell into the category of inhuman treatment[.]” *Id.* The court further found that “[t]he techniques were also degrading since they were such as to arouse in their victims feeling of fear, anguish and inferiority capable of humiliating and debasing them and possible [sic] breaking their physical or moral resistance.” *Id.* Yet, the court ultimately concluded:

Although the five techniques, as applied in combination, undoubtedly amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment, although their object was the extraction of confession, the naming of others and/or information and although they were used systematically, they did not occasion suffering of the particular *intensity* and *cruelty* implied by the word torture . . .

Id. (emphasis added). Thus, even though the court had concluded that the techniques produce “intense physical and mental suffering” and “acute psychiatric disturbances,” they were not sufficient intensity or cruelty to amount to torture.

Figure 1: Pages 28 and 29 from the “Torture Memos”

Ollie, whose voice will be heard in Chapter II and the Epilogue, endured these techniques and several further forms of torture: his buttocks were exposed to an electrical fire, pistols were dry-fired against his head, and he was threatened with the prospect of being thrown out of a helicopter while

high above the ground. Ollie was a combatant unlike the “Hooded Men” who were wrongfully accused of IRA membership. He believes torture against combatants like him have never been investigated because of their combatant status. When speaking to Ollie about the torture techniques, first endured as a 17-year-old, he first turned to humor. I ask him “Did the Brits use the 5 techniques on you?” Not missing a beat, Ollie replied “Only 4.”

My question became the precipitate for what Ollie calls his gallows humor. My question exposed the absurdity of quantifying torture – *only* 4, he answers sardonically. Of course, the British secret services, dressed in civvies instead of uniforms, subjected his body and mind to many so-called “techniques,” though the boundaries between classifiable and distinguishable acts of torture blend into one another. Ollie prefers not to count them. Ollie tended to be elliptical and distanced himself from his experiences of torture in conversation, often speaking in the third person. After interviewing him, he would often message me at home on Facebook messenger to speak about his experiences more directly. He’s allowed me to share this excerpt from an interview about his experiences as a 17-year-old during interrogation:

Ollie: Standing against the wall for long periods of time. No food. No water. Threatening to shoot me. Dry-firing pistols. Took me by helicopter to a place and said they were throwing me out. But they didn’t. They didn’t hood me, however. They sort of liked grabbed me so I couldn’t see, but they didn’t hood me. They beat the shit out of me. Some of it left bruises, but they tried not to leave bruises. You know, how to rough somebody up is to like discombobulate them. And then there was this methodical one that would hold my rear over a fire. An electrical fire that was burning the ass off me. And they insisted that I should talk or it would get worse. Everything was “this is going to get worse, this is going to get worse.” They took me for a long walk and a Brit put a pistol to my head and he said, “you know what I have to do now?” I said, “get fucking on with it you fucking prick” something like that that “get on with it, do what you have to do, I don’t give a shit.”

Matthew: Were you with other people or did they isolate you?

Ollie: No, you were isolated. I mean, the standing the wall, there were other people in the room doing the same thing. A few of the things – because I didn’t respond well to the beatings – they threatened to beat other people that got me to stand there. They said get against the wall and I said go fuck yourself. So they beat the

fuck out of me and I still wouldn't get against the wall. And they said get against the wall and I said "go fuck yourself." And then they said, "beat him and him." And I said, "alright, I'll get against the wall." Because I didn't want other people getting beatings because of me, especially because one was a cripple and one was an old, old man. I didn't know them, but I didn't want them to get hurt. They may not have even been IRA volunteers, I don't know who they were...And I can say honestly, I've never been the same since. Some people *have* paranoia, and other people *have it for a reason*. And I have it for a reason.

His own resistance through laughter at those beating him compelled his torturers to turn against another person, and he was forced on the wall. Given Northern Ireland's exceptional status and history of the British army torturing its citizens, it is not surprising that the territory itself is ambiguously defined. Properly speaking, Northern Ireland is not a province of the United Kingdom, nor a state. From the perspective of republicans and nationalists, this area constitutes "the North," the occupied six counties. From the perspective of loyalists and unionists, Northern Ireland is a country that is part of the United Kingdom like Scotland and Wales. For loyalists and unionists, the Republic of Ireland seceded in 1921 with the formation of the Irish Free State, while for republicans and nationalists, the country was partitioned illegally by the United Kingdom. Though I prefer the term "quasi-state" to name Northern Ireland, this term is contentious as well (Clifford 2011; O'Leary 2019). The Irish political scientist, Brendan O'Leary, who stringently sticks to usages found in formal agreements and treaties declares its proper political status, "two states that share the island are Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" (2019, xxiv). In this strict definition, Northern Ireland is defined as the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland." To say Northern Ireland partially consists of Northern Ireland is remarkably redundant. And including Great Britain as having co-equal status to Northern Ireland within the entity known as Northern Ireland signifies that the state is always already de-centered. The unity evoked by "the *United* Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" is immediately riven into division by its very legal political status. Northern Ireland exists in Northern Ireland, but only partly, a half-portion to be exact. These definitional contortions reveal that the sovereignty of Northern

Ireland is neither here nor there. The entity is unbounded by its boundedness, settled in its unsettledness.

Fieldsite 1: Catholic Short Strand

St. Matthew's Parish, or the Short Strand (Irish: *Trá Ghearr*) district, presses towards the Lagan River in the western most part of east Belfast. The historically working-class social housing district itself is about a mile in diameter and nearly entirely enclosed by various structures like peace walls, environmental buffers, and infrastructural buffers like roads and the Translink Bus Depot. The sole road allowing full entrance and exit access to the district is Mountpottinger Road which cuts directly through the district. The only other entry into the Short Strand from the outside is the Bryson Street junction next to St. Matthews Church and the peace wall; this is a dead end. The Short Strand district is a mere fifteen-minute walk from Belfast City Centre, though its pedestrian walkways cross several busy thoroughfares. A local counselor has remarked that to walk out of the district by foot is "like putting your life in your hand" on account of heavy traffic and difficulty in accessing direct walkways. Though the counselor's comment can be perceived as slightly hyperbolic, the truth of the matter is that because the roads around Short Strand were originally developed as separating and segregating buffers, navigating and locating easily accessible walkways are a challenge.



Figure 2: Chicane Entrance to the Short Strand



Figure 3: Outside View of Short Strand Wall and Environmental Buffers

Despite its relatively small population of under 3,000 residents living in around 900 units (terraced houses and flats) on 22 streets, many influential Irish Republican leaders and Irish Patriot Dead hail from the Short Strand. The Provisional Irish Republican Army, the main paramilitary during the conflict, was founded in a gun battle in the district in 1970. The gun battle, locally referred to by Catholic residents as the “Battle of St. Matthews,” will feature prominently in this dissertation. The main factions during the recent conflict (1969-1998) were the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and two main Loyalist paramilitaries, the United Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). There were, and continue to be, other minor republican and loyalist paramilitaries.

While Northern Ireland, and certainly Irish and British societies, are often seen as constituting imaginary communities through the retrieval and construction of the past in the face of changing social, economic, and political circumstances, much of my own ethnographic work was

attuned to listening to how the possibilities of the future manifested in lived experience. I quickly discovered that for so many Belfast residents, the future takes on a moral and existential imperative, and these articulations of the future, which are often thrown forward from past troubles, are at the center of this ethnography. This is a singularly different approach from many ethnographies of Northern Ireland which have previously sought to forefront the constituting processes of violence and political subjectivity. My ethnography makes no claims, for example, to offer a comprehensive theory of the underlying structures constituting political violence and agency, such as Allen Feldman's *Formations of Violence*, or gendered political subjectivity and performativity such as Begoña Aretxaga's *Shattering Silence*. These remain the more notable works in cultural anthropology for deeply theorizing violence and nationalism in Northern Ireland, particularly Irish Republicanism. These books, properly speaking, are not ethnographic in the sense of relying on fieldnotes from participant-observation.⁴ Though they are magisterial accounts of oral history gathering and theorizing, neither shed light on the messiness of being with others within social housing estates because they eschewed participant-observation. Both of these influential scholars believed that during their period of fieldwork, using participant-observation as a method contributed to the State surveillance of the communities that were still at war.

Though this ethnography explicitly does not make thematic the “politics of” any aspect of social life and focuses on the ethical and moral dimensions, politics are deeply engrained in the historical experiences that shape everyday perceptions of social worlds. It is worthwhile at this point to briefly outline the politics of my fieldsite. Notably, the Short Strand is a microcosm of Irish Republicanism. Republicanism is a movement about self-determination that seeks by various means

⁴ “Given the high level of military surveillance, a small community study would have been extremely difficult and inappropriate, as local people rightly feel that gathering of detailed information on their everyday lives may contribute to military intelligence...I decided to focus my research on past events that took place during the first decade of the conflict” (Aretxaga 1997, x-xi); “In a culture of political surveillance, participant observation is at best an absurdity and at least a form of complicity with those outsiders who surveil” (Feldman 1991, 12).

to establish an independent Irish Republic through the reunification of the two Irelands, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, into a sovereign state separate from the United Kingdom. A not-so-shorthand phrase for this future state used by many of my participants to describe a united Ireland is “32-County Socialist Irish Republic.” The Short Strand district, moreover, is a strong supporter of Sinn Féin, historically the political wing of the PIRA. Through the charismatic leadership of Gerry Adams over thirty-five years, Sinn Féin became and remains the largest Catholic political party in Northern Ireland. The PIRA has been on ceasefire since 1997 and disarmed since 2005. The question of whether the PIRA continues to exist is a continuous and potent form of speculation amongst people in Northern Ireland. Some of the PIRA’s organizational structures clearly still exist – most likely a loose network of individuals rather than the fully-fledged Provisional Army Council – but the nature of secret societies is such that rumors, governmental reports, and journalistic efforts are the extent of knowledge about the current status of the PIRA. During the third week of my fieldwork in the Short Strand, an organization believed to be the PIRA successfully assassinated a former member. This act ultimately ended a long-running feud and showed that the PIRA indeed still had structures in place. It is important to add here that in both the republican and loyalist communities, the identifications of “ex-combatant” or “community worker” or simply “republican” or “loyalist” are commonly used to refer to former or current paramilitary members, since it is illegal to be associated with the paramilitaries in the United Kingdom.

Within the Short Strand district dissent against Sinn Féin is palpable despite the district’s Irish Republican sympathies. Competing republican ideologies make a point of finding ways to resist Sinn Féin’s support of the peace process through hoisting flags, graffitiing walls, posting anti-Sinn Féin screeds on social media, and, on occasion, arguing with Sinn Féin canvassers in the doorways. The history of republicanism in the area is the history of “splits:” arguments amongst members that lead to the formation of various spin-off organizations. Consequently, there are more than a dozen

republican organizations in Ireland, many of whom attempt to continue in the spirit of the failed 1916 Easter Rising leaders who, after failing to successfully overthrow British Rule in a series of planned attacks against British troops in Dublin, were summarily executed and thus martyred by the British Army, constituting the long chain of Ireland's Patriot Dead.

Many of these dissenting republican factions, moreover, believe that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Peace Agreement was a recolonization of Ireland, and they organize antithetical platforms to Sinn Féin who embrace the agreement. These republicans are often referred to as "dissidents" or "dizzies" by the media, loyalists, and mainstream republicans associated with Sinn Féin. However, the term "dissident" remains an imposed term and, following the lead of both my participants and dissident scholar Marisa McGlinchey (2019), I will speak instead of "radical" or "non-mainstream" Irish Republicans. Sometimes some of my participants called themselves "active," and this term expresses that they engage in ongoing acts of insurrection against the British State. For the sake of not exposing the illegal status of my participants, this dissertation omits most references to the term "active." Some republicans, whose voices will be heard in this dissertation and who may have once been a Provisional IRA volunteer, were unconvinced by the peace agreement, especially move towards a power-sharing agreement with Protestants as brokered by the British government. As McGlinchey (2019) observes in her work on dissident republicanism, there have long since been dissidence in the Provisional ranks after the 1986 decision to end the long-held abstentionism in which members of Sinn Féin would run for local office but refuse to take up a seat if they won. Another major point of dissension, as McGlinchey notes, occurred when Sinn Féin accepted the principles of consents in the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin's newly emerging dictum, then,

⁵ Article 1 (ii): "recognise that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

subordinated the cause for “freedom” under “equality,” which to this day rankles many long-time republicans and ex-Provisionals. Equality was never the goal of an armed resistance against the British State, and if equality ever were to come on the island of Ireland, for radical republicans, it would only be after separation from England and the recognition of the right of self-determination of the Irish people as a whole in all 32 counties. The formation a 32-county socialist republic is the specific entity desired by many republicans, but the right to self-determination precedes this goal. Liam Ó Ruairc, a notable Irish researcher with a republican viewpoint, argues that in current media and political discourses, “the conflict is now re-defined not as a political dispute between two opposite political ideologies, but as a cultural clash between two different cultural identities” (Ó Ruairc 2019, 109). For Ó Ruairc, moreover, the “universalist principles” of Irish Republicanism became subordinated to “particularist demands of parity between communal identities” (110).

Sinn Féin and Provisional (or Provos or Provies) volunteers, before the 1998 Northern Ireland-wide referendum on ratifying the terms of the peace agreement, met with republican neighbors and residents in St. Matthew’s Social Club in the Short Strand as well as in other republican social spots throughout the country, to convince comrade, enemy, and fence-sitter alike that the peace agreement would be worth it. As one non-mainstream Republican puts it to me, “the conflict was never about jobs and money” and that when he first heard about the jobs and money, he knew “dangling this carrot was problematic.” It was the “first time he’d heard Republicans make this argument” for the sake of peace. This decision lead to the creation, and bolstering, of the “peace industry,” networks of non-profit organizations, community centers, resident forums, partnerships, etc. For many other disillusioned republicans, the sacrifices and injustices at the heart of constituting the new order were simply forgotten by Sinn Féin. Too much dissension and disagreement with Sinn Féin could get one ostracized from the community, though their support ebbs and wanes. The peace agreement and the subsequent amnesty for prisoners, all without a truth and reconciliation

committee for the acts committed by the British Army and republican and loyalist paramilitaries, constitutes a great deal of anger and resentment for many in the working-class communities in which so many of the atrocities occurred. What dwells here is unsettled stasis, both equilibrium and strife, towards the inoperative state, which currently has a collapsed assembly, and is awaiting the final decision of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, which may again lead to a hard border between north and south.

Elements of Irish Republicanism have long since espoused socialist, and often explicitly Marxist, positions. However, historically and continuing into the present, rightist and socially conservative Catholics make up an influential constituency within the broader Republican movement. Sinn Féin's current configuration holds many ideological strands together, but mostly emphasizes a form of working-class socialistic policies about equality, social welfare programs, better jobs and housing, etc. One unique aspect of political formations in Belfast, in both Protestant and Catholic communities, is they can hold coalitions together leftists and rightists, though not without the obvious tensions concerning policies.

The Short Strand's economic infrastructure is sparse. It has two small shops that offer a small selection of overpriced groceries, a bookmaker, a Chinese food takeaway, two bars, a hair salon, and two taxi companies. For its public infrastructure, it has an under-16 youth center and football pitch, playground for young children, and community center with a crèche. There is also the aforementioned St. Matthew's Catholic church with an attached primary school, a credit union, and pigeon club that operates in a caravan behind the community center.

Fieldsite 2: Protestant Inner East

The outer rim of these security infrastructures constitutes the Inner East, consisting of roughly 6,000 of 90,000 total Protestants of the east Belfast population. The Inner East comprises of a collection

of working-class social housing Protestant districts, each with their own history and different ideological and political loyalties. Pitt Park, across from the Newtownards Road from the Short Strand, is ideologically split from historic antagonisms between the two main loyalist paramilitaries, the United Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), the former represented the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP, a center-left party) and the latter represented by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP, a rightwing political party). It is important to note, however, that loyalists stand apart from the political parties they support, even if former loyalist combatants become politicians. Irish Republicans who support the political party Sinn Féin rarely make a distinction between republicanism and party. Loyalists often demand to be recognized as separate from the political institutions, and those loyalists who engaged in paramilitary service comport themselves like veterans or part of the military. The DUP has the largest share of seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly, which again has not functioned since 2017, though the MLAs still receive a salary. The DUP also currently holds together the Tory-majority coalition government in Westminster as brokered by former Prime Minister Theresa May and continuing with the newest PM, Boris Johnson. The DUP has strong constituency farther up on the Newtownards Road into outer east Belfast. The DUP have in the past worked with CharterNI, a non-profit organization serving working-class loyalist districts and run mostly by former UDA members. In the more rural outskirts of east Belfast are many social housing estates; Ballybeen, Braniel, and Clarawood estates are some of the largest. These are all also traditionally UDA areas. Though I visited these areas to meet with some participants who lived there, I remained in the Inner East for the bulk of my research with Protestants.

On other side of the Bryson Street peace wall from the Short Strand is associated with the UVF and Red Hand Commando (RHC), a UVF-affiliated paramilitary. This area, where I conducted most of my research with Protestants, includes Tower Street, Susan Street, Beechfield Court, and

Thistle Court. I also worked with a several residents from a street called Cluan Place, which is a separate and cut-off loyalist enclave that juts directly into the Short Stand. Loyalist Cluan Place is a street entirely surrounded by peace walls.



Figure 4: Cluan Place



Figure 5: Bryson Street Peace Wall, Protestant Side



Figure 6: UVF Mural, Newtownards Road, East Belfast

Each Protestant street and court is a social ecology unto itself, and though I engaged with at least one resident from each street, I focused most of my efforts on Tower Street, which to be sure, gathered residents from across the Protestant territories for special commemorative events. I mainly worked geographically, then, in UVF associated territories, with UVF members who define themselves as “anti-crime.” The UVF is currently split into two factions: those who are anti-crime and those who embrace criminality (primarily drug dealing). These factions are currently in open conflict against one another, and brutal deaths have been the expected result of such feuds.

One explanation from locals about why loyalism is fragmented has to do with what is described as an intentional plan by politicians to decentralize the paramilitaries through funding schemes. An influential loyalist associated with the community sector and both the “veteran” and

“drug-dealing” wings of the UDA describes what he calls the eight-year cycle of disempowering loyalists. He believes that first the rival Protestant UVF paramilitary became disempowered through the peace industry. Then the UDA became targeted. The cycle ended in 2016, right about the time of the Brexit. The Brexit, he contests, would have easily led to a United Ireland if it were not for the DUP holding power with the Tories, though loyalists like him trust neither political party:

The bottom line is we have no other, so we have to negotiate through the DUP. We aren't at the table. There's no space for us at the table. There's nobody who is creating a space for loyalism at the table. And whenever someone comes like myself to represent loyalism, that's what happens to them [i.e. they become disempowered and scapegoated]. Myself, various other leaders from the loyalist community, that's what happens and that's what has been having. It comes in cycles. It comes in cycles. And we believe that, you know, the government has been using community development as a tool to bring communities on board one at a time. Take them through a process of community development, disempower the military side of things, you know what I mean. Disempower the military side of the organization through community development. Take them through a process there. I've analyzed the cycles. Last around about eight years. Last around about eight years. The government did it in the early 2000s with the UVF. Took about eight years. Took us to about 2008. Then they jumped on board with the UDA, Matthew. They started taking the UDA through the community development process which lasted there up until about 8 years. And now the UDA is decimated now as far as community leaders and playing a positive role. They are demoralized. The leaders have been demonized. The organization is totally decentralized. Totally.

[...]

You wouldn't trust a Tory if you brought one up yourself. The bottom line is for the unionist and loyalist, and I understand this and know this well. This is a key point for your writing. If the DUP didn't hold the balance of power, we wouldn't even be talking about a back stop. They wouldn't be talking about. And that's because, that's what the Westminster wants. Westminster wants, and this is me as a unionist and loyalist saying it, Westminster wants to hand Northern Ireland back. They want to hand Northern Ireland back. That's a given. Northern Ireland has served its purpose. It has no financial benefit for mainland GB. We're costing them billion and billions of pounds every year. They want to hand Northern Ireland back. And this is part of the exit strategy. All disempowering unionists and loyalists and marginalizing them. While empowering republicanism. Cause you can see that. You can see two people: if I'm a reported on in the press, I'm reported as a loyalist murderer, a loyalist terrorist. And republicans are republicans just. And that's it. There's a totally different narrative when they're reported about in the press, and we see that on a daily basis. And that's all part of the exit strategy to facilitate the republican agenda here in Northern Ireland and to ease out quickly and to slip out quietly. And that's what happening. I bet you the Westminster government are kicking themselves – the Tories are kicking themselves – because if the DUP didn't hold the balance of power, they wouldn't be talking about the backstop. They would just impose the backstop and they would just slip out of here. We would have a federal all-Ireland via the EU by default and that would be the forerunner for the

United Ireland. That's the bottom line. And I see it. A blind man on a galloping horse could see it. And we all see that. And that's another context to the Brexit situation.

Indeed, this perspective about community development, whether or not it was used as a tool to disempower loyalists and pave the way to a United Ireland, expresses the commonly shared view that post-peace agreement community development does very little to build infrastructure within poor Protestant and loyalist communities. Around the interfaces, economic and public infrastructure – other than the peace walls – is sparse. Many buildings remain empty. On the face of these empty buildings are plastered false shop fronts to give the semblance of economic activity. Most of the children in the Inner East lack leisure facilities and a youth center. However, farther away from the peace walls, there is an abundance of economic infrastructure with major international grocery chains like Lidl and Tesco and restaurants like McDonalds. These businesses are also frequented by Catholics; however, there is still fear amongst the older populations about shopping within the east, and many still prefer to drive or take taxis into Belfast City Centre, Yorkgate near the center, or even across the city to West Belfast in the Catholic Falls Road area to do their shopping.

Though all these markers of identity – Catholic, Protestant, Nationalist, Republican, Unionist, Loyalist, dissident, Shinners (Sinn Féin members), DUPers (DUP members) as well as the acronymic attributions UVF, UDA, IRA, PIRA, OIRA, INLA appear throughout this ethnography, I continue to bristle each time I type these descriptors and acronyms to give identity to my participants. Using them too easily categorizes who they are and what they must be like without assuming a great range of fluidity, ambiguity, and not-knowing. As Feldman so significantly (1997) notes, “[i]deological objects in Northern Irish political culture are subjected to a high-contrast binary optic based on exclusive and polarized ethnic, confessional, and political categories - Protestant/Catholic, Loyalist/Republican, state/antistate - in which nothing is blurred” (35). The political culture to this day still operates under such a binary optic, but my ethnography shows that though these categories are still operative, there is much blurring on the community and person-

centered levels. Fragmentations are common, as discussed above. Indeed, these affiliations are strongly felt and cultivated, as this ethnography shows, and though I use these acronyms to show the work of cultivating particular ways of being, I also attempt to show the complexities of individual experiences that elide such identifications. These ascriptions are also stubbornly durable, and even those who define themselves by one of them recognize how antiquated they've become in a contemporary Western context. While these ascriptions may have had strong analytic purchase in years past, especially when being able to "tell" what someone was (Burton 1978) constituted a life or death perceptual ability, the ethnographic encounters post-peace agreement in Belfast allow for more in depth and person-centered work that shows more complex forms of identity and experience, especially in light of the uncertainty about economic and national boundaries resulting from the Brexit.

Research Activities and Participants

This dissertation is based on 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork. The ethnographic approach was necessarily multi-sited, even if the sites were streets apart. I wanted to understand the multiple perspectives about everyday life and orientation towards the future in this fragmented place. The six-week pilot study began on June 20, 2014 and ended July 31, 2014. During this period, I befriended Frankie Quinn, the photographer mentioned above, who ran a non-profit photography and art gallery in the heart of Belfast City Centre. The Red Barn Gallery was known as "the people's gallery" and hosted work by working-class photographers. The gallery lasted until 2016. At the time meeting him in 2014, Quinn displayed his work on the peace walls, which he has been documenting for thirty years. Particularly striking to me was a black and white photograph of the Bryson Street peace wall in the Short Strand. This turned out to be one of the streets I conducted a great deal of subsequent research. Beginning June 2015 and ending July 2016 with follow-up fieldwork conducted

for six more weeks during summer 2017 and numerous phone calls, emails and Facebook messenger conversations occurring even until the very final moments of submitting this dissertation, the data for this dissertation was collected. The original impetus for fieldwork was to understand the effects of the “peace walls” on the formations of future subjectivities of those who lived up against them, whether historically Protestant or Catholic communities. In Belfast community worker parlance, to work with “both sides” is called “cross-community work.” As one of my participants glibly reminded me, “Cross? You better believe we’re cross!”

Conducting ethnography across the peace walls was difficult, and often overly naive. But I refused to be limited to hearing from “one side” over the other. In order to get access to these communities, I needed to introduce myself to a “gatekeeper” through which to be introduced to members of the community. Gatekeepers are local politicians, community workers, or former combatants (or a combination of all three), or other prominent individuals such as artists, who introduce researchers to members of the community (i.e., chain-referral). Though I had made connections with Frankie Quinn in 2014, he was photographing in America during summer 2015, and so I needed to cultivate relations with a new gatekeeper. One way of accessing working-class communities is working for a non-profit organization that has community relations within the community under study. I interned at the Belfast Interface Project (BIP) from August 2015 until March 2016 because it advertised itself as a non-sectarian, neutral non-profit that worked in all areas of Belfast. My decision to intern with this organization, which is centered in the middle of Belfast city center – a neutral area for non-profits – caused me a great deal of trouble. Unbeknownst to me, the strategic director of this organization was a former Sinn Féin politician from the Short Strand. He had recently replaced a non-political founder of the organization, and with his appointment, many doors closed for me in the Protestant Inner East, at least initially. Because the strategic director was associated with Sinn Féin, and thus the IRA, I had only limited access to Protestant

communities that partnered with the BIP, none of whom lived on the interface with the Short Strand, which is UVF territory. UVF territories opposed, at the time of my fieldwork, working cross-community. I was thus introduced to Catholic residents in the Short Strand Community Centre, which is run mostly by PIRA/Sinn Féin affiliated individuals with a few exceptions. While I made some lifelong personal friendships in the Centre, I became immediately identified as someone who worked with the Sinn Féin in the Short Strand from the Protestant perspective. One way I knew about how some Protestants viewed me was they told me upfront. One community worker from a Protestant background told me she and another community worker saw that I was attending a Catholic christening on Facebook. She was a part-time employee of BIP with a master's degree in anthropology from Trinity College Dublin in the historically Catholic Republic of Ireland, as well as an friendly acquaintance of the person whose infant was being christened. Yet she explained to me that I had taken sides by attending a Catholic christening. When I asked how she herself conducted ethnographic fieldwork for her master's degree in anthropology without attending ritual events, she said she did not conduct fieldwork this way. Indeed, my phone calls and emails stopped being answered by many of the Protestants I had met during my first few months of fieldwork. One of the interviews I had set up with a Protestant was cancelled, and she dropped out of contact with me. These were unmistakable signs.

During my time at the non-profit Belfast Interface Project, I was expected to bring in funds through grant-writing. These grants were for the sake of funding the salaried positions, and not necessarily for programs for the impoverished "interface" communities. Interface communities are communities in which Catholic and Protestant districts touch each other in a space known as a "flashpoint," often sites of sectarian violence and riots. The main grant I wrote consisted of a comprehensive project concerning oral histories of the peace walls for the UK Heritage Lottery Fund. Since my dissertation research concerned, in part, experiences of living against the peace

walls, the director assured me that these funds, if awarded, would open up access to members of the communities who live against the walls. I wrote a grant with a £55,910 budget. The director believed this budget was insufficient and added additional costs to pay higher rates to those who worked on the project (myself excluded since I did not have a work permit). The director's budget was just shy of £100,000, and I warned the director that an oral history project of £55,910 was already rather expensive, but he insisted on the larger budget. The grant was rejected. After this setback, I began working fewer hours at the non-profit. I had also been introduced to too few people in the community and my fieldwork was going nowhere, though to this day I remain grateful for him introducing me to staff at the Short Strand Community Centre.

I took my skills of applying to the UK Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to Frankie Quinn, who had returned from his photographic work in America. His art gallery, always on the precipice of closing, had recently been rejected for the Arts Council funding it direly needed to remain open. Over a bottle of *uisce beatha* and ginger ale, Quinn revealed to me his vision of opening up a photography archive that could gather together the working-class photographs taken during the conflict, which he imagined were disintegrating in shoeboxes in closets throughout the north (it later turned out this shoebox reverie was not only true but quite often the case when it came to old photographs of the Troubles). Quinn is a working-class photographer on benefits who supports himself through grants and selling photographs. He still lives in the Catholic working-class community in which he was born and documented the troubles as well as everyday life for the past thirty years. The archive would give him an opportunity create an institution for these working-class communities, and through publishing books and holding exhibitions, working-class photographers could make some money with their images. I told him I was certain I had cracked the code of the UK HLF grant writing process, which, to be sure, was more clear-cut and less mysterious than the funding institutions for anthropological graduate student fieldwork. Quinn assured me that if I could

be seen as giving back to working-class communities through funding an archive where local peoples' photographs could be digitized, edited, and archived, then more people would open to speaking with me. He added that the archive could also be a space to teach digital photography and photo-editing to at-risk urban youth. So, we went to work. In under two months, we had secured a £27,000 grant from the HLF to open the Belfast Archive Project (BAP).⁶ Further, I secured a Belfast City Council grant of £4,000 and, in 2017 I wrote another successful HLF grant of £34,000.

In the meantime, and unbeknownst to me, the non-profit I had originally worked for had resubmitted my grant application with my initial £55,910 budget to HLF. They had been awarded this funding for the oral history of the peace walls. Since the HLF grants are announced publicly, the award was quickly brought to my attention. However, when I mentioned the grant to the director, he denied using my initial grant application and did not want me working on the project. I am unsure to this day why he took this antagonistic position towards me, but it could have been because I had helped Frankie Quinn start a new organization without telling him. Because I had access to the online grant application form, I was able to confirm that the director had resubmitted the grant application I wrote verbatim and subsequently used my words for a scripted video advertisement for the project.

All in all, however, my grant writing work contributed to £120,910 poured directly into the local communities in which I conducted ethnographic research. Considering the exchange rate when the grants were awarded, this equates to well over \$160,000. This has had the expected upshot of opening up many research doors for current and future research projects.

⁶ <http://www.belfastarchiveproject.com/>



Figure 7: Belfast Archive Project Workspace and Film Negative Safe

It is true that my association with the director of the Belfast Interface Project (not to be confused with the Belfast *Archive* Project, my organization with Quinn) where I originally interned closed doors in Protestant communities. However, some Protestants, associated with CharterNI, a non-profit associated the UDA, still had to speak with me because of their ongoing relationships with the BIP, which helps to fund some of their programs. However, CharterNI had recently gone through a tabloid scandal that accused their director of still leading UDA paramilitary punishments against residents – hammer-to-head beatings – as well as other financial scandals, and so the Inner East communities were not keen with me working with the Protestants from CharterNI either. I remain in contact, however, with former workers of CharterNI. They believe that public’s perception was soured because they became too successful in bringing in funds. Because the organization is loyalist run, it became a threat to organizations, including church groups, and politicians who often compete for the same funding schemes. The public script is supposed to read that loyalists are supposed to be

terrorists and ostracized, and according to current and former employees of CharterNI, and the more successful the loyalist run organizations became, the more likely this script of paramilitarism will be used against them. Nonetheless, my initial gatekeepers from BIP and CharterNI consistently lead to locked gates.

It was not until the final five months of my research in 2016 that the UVF Protestant community opened up to me through meeting with a community worker named Raymond Laverty who ran an organization called the Inner East Youth Project (IEYP) in the heart of Inner East Belfast, one of the poorest and most deprived areas in all of the United Kingdom. Raymond and those who worked for him welcomed me and understood my difficulties crisscrossing the divide. One of his nephews had starred in the movie *Jurassic Park III*, and so he generally enjoyed meeting people from Los Angeles with whom to talk about Hollywood. He had recently been visited by Prince Charles and given an award by Queen Elizabeth for his work within the Inner East communities. Though Raymond certainly is a proud Protestant and loyalist, he did not judge me based upon my relationships with Catholics. This proved fruitful, and the IEYP allowed me to help them with one of their final community projects.

Other than the time limitations inherent in writing a dissertation, only two of my chapters have voices from the “Protestant side” of the community because of my belated entry into their community. This is a weakness of the multi-sited approach, but also adheres to the ethical position that I refused to conduct an ethnography by neglecting the perspectives of a social group constituting more than half the population. Though I have yet to come up with a satisfying way to unnaturalize the taken for granted categories of Protestant, Catholic, republican, and loyalist because of how much purchase they have in the everyday discourses in Belfast, and amongst my interlocutors, the person-centered approach I took allowed for these hard and fast identities, which of course reconstitute themselves with ideological slippage during different historical times based

upon the tensions at hand, allowed for an openness to emerge, and space for imaginative contingency to sublimate such identities.

During the Brexit campaign, the Sinn Féin Republican position was to remain with the European Union, even though the pan-Irish Republican position was always supportive of leaving the EU. This “switch” was barely registered by Sinn Féin supporters and voters, though many old time republicans were quite upset about it. One of Sinn Féin’s strategists admitted to me that part of the reason for switching historical positions was because the Protestant DUP party was supportive of Brexit and for political reasons Sinn Féin could not be seen to be aligned with them. The binary optic of identity for political reasons had to hold sway over historical positions.

Some days, during and after my fieldwork, I had the thought that it was a mistake to approach my ethnography in a multi-sited way, as no one could ever truly trust me, and I sometimes feared for my safety. To give an example, I was invited to a party in the Rangers Club on the Shankill Road, a notorious UVF bar. I was told that if I told what I saw to the other side, to Catholics, I’d be taken back up to the bar, and I’d not be walking out. Similar warnings were posed to me from “the Catholic side.” There was an attempt to extort money from me with threats that used the idiom of paramilitarism (beating, kneecappings, etc.) if I didn’t pay up. Fortunately, I had cultivated a strong friendship with a powerful kinship network that snuffed out these threats quickly. Though, in hindsight, perhaps these speech genres of the threat can be classified as piggybacking off of Belfast’s notorious reputation, kneecapping is still prevalent throughout Belfast and during my fieldwork, there was a paramilitary assassination in my field site quite near where I lived. Another incident involved a hand grenade thrown at the feet of police from the Short Strand, which failed to detonate. Yet another incident included a car bomb explosion outside the Short Strand that led to the assassination of a prison officer. Multiple kneecappings (bullet to the knee) occurred throughout Belfast during my fieldwork. Belfast, as a whole, remains heavily surveilled, as well. I found myself

caught up in anxious behavior. Surveillance is a mimetic process, as those who are surveilled develop the practice of surveilling themselves, as Foucault famously discussed in his theories of the omnipresent seeing of the panopticon as a paradigm for understanding a disciplinary society. Social media allows such monitoring as this Facebook messenger image of me walking behind one of my participants cousin's and his wife shows how I was often reminded, out of the blue, by participants that they "saw" where I was on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube videos:

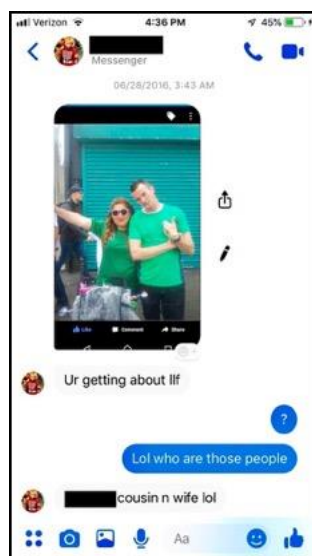


Figure 8: Getting About

To be clear, receiving the message “Ur getting about llf” [laughing like fuck] is a form of social control, and though not threatening in this case, since I was walking on the Shankill Road – Protestant territory – and was seen on Facebook by a loyalist, this is not a problem. Usually, Facebook videos of riots or of bands marches are used by “either side” to find antagonists and post their pixelated faces around social media. For example, during a recent 2019 August riot in the New Lodge, perhaps most infamous for serving as a backdrop to Rihanna’s music video for “We Found Love,” which contains the lyrics that continue to define the area “we found love in a hopeless place,” an historically Catholic estate where Sinn Féin has lost control over the “hoods” or the youth who control the territory, Protestants gleefully took screenshots of Catholics who threw stones or

barricade fencing or even punched the officers (who tend to avoid reciprocal aggressive acts) and posted their visages to find out their names. Once names are discovered, the police service, which has Facebook and Twitter accounts, is often included in the multiple messages that constitute the “threads” on social media.

My own image being sent to me through Facebook might have served simultaneously as kind of warning and its antonym, of being “all clear.” Both meanings are inherent in the gesture. The genre of the warning, or the threat, can be interpreted as telling me not to betray trust while also acknowledging that I was not betraying trust, but this act of surveillance is still rather nerve-wracking. Conducting fieldwork in the working-class areas of Belfast is difficult because of the constant loyalty tests and surveillance. My fieldwork made me paranoid, irritable, and lonely, even though my wife and daughter, thankfully, were with me during a large period of time. I began to have disturbing dreams. In my dreams, I would betray my participants’ trust, and then after a while my participants began to die my dreams because of my inability to help them. My then four-year-old daughter, who was with me for seven months of my fieldwork, refers to me during this period of time as “Belfast daddy” in comparison to regular daddy, by which she means that I was often less jovial and playful with her.

While maintaining impartiality is itself an ideological position, which my participants consistently reminded me, I believed it was less fraught than my other options. I did not articulate a preference for loyalism, republicanism, dissidents, radicals, non-mainstream, non-affiliated, “hoods,” or drug-dealers over the other, though I listened deeply and tried to understand thoughts that challenged me. Often times, people would try to get me to align to their position by offering me brutal examples of acts committed by one side or the other. These moments were difficult, and I usually answered with some banality such as “what a horrible tragedy” or “I cannot imagine” or “I don’t know what it would be like to have been in your shoes.” I more than once frustrated some of

my interlocutors with my lack of support for particular political positions. Some never spoke to me ever again because they found my lack of revolutionary or reactionary politics insulting. For others, the fact that I could converse about Marxism⁷ as easily as Churchillian conservatism was a great boon for engaging in meaningful conversations.

I interviewed over 70 individuals, 10 of which were shadowed and interviewed numerous times. I interviewed 27 females and 43 males. I also recorded 10 hours of semi-naturally-occurring conversations. I say “semi” because I was an interlocutor within these conversations and would often ask questions to things that were discussed. Interview length averaged nearly two hours per interview. Some interviews lasted four hours. Some interviews were written down by hand by those participants who did not want a record of their voice. My wife and I transcribed over 100 hours of interviews and conversations. Writing field notes was a harrowing experience. I doggedly attempted to write field notes in real time to capture the immediacy of description. As every ethnographer knows, too much mediation by time can unnecessarily alter the content. Yet, this was not a fieldsite where, over time, writing notes became inconspicuous and second-hand as the methodology books teach us. I was told innumerable times to put my writing implements away, had my journal taken from me (to be given back), and in general was constantly questioned about why I was writing. Writing fieldnotes in historically militarized and surveilled communities such as the Short Strand and the Inner East revealed the still constant suspicion of outsiders. Nonetheless, enough of my interlocutors understood that researchers and journalists needed to write things down, and I was able to take a couple hundred pages of immediate notes, and 400 pages of more reflective, end of the day field entries. One way to maneuver periods of time when note-taking was not possible was

⁷ In particular, having taught Marx and Engels, including *Communist Manifesto*, *German Ideology*, and “On the Jewish Question,” multiple times for Jeff Prager’s Sociology 101: Classic Social Theory course in the UCLA Department of Sociology helped me become accepted by, and intelligently converse with, many Irish Republicans and some Marxist-leaning loyalists associated with the UVF.

the camera. Because of the proliferation of smartphones and image-taking, taking digital images proved more acceptable. As Feldman notes (1997), Belfast is historically under sway of a “scopic regime” in which vision is constituted precisely on violence. Though Feldman’s provocative position equates the camera and the sniper scope as belonging to the same underlying logic of violence, I chose to take photographs alongside photographers from the communities in which I worked. Ethnography, in my view, cannot be limited to oral histories, as in the case of Feldman’s work in Belfast. In this crossing, I took 50 rolls of 36-exposure film on a Leica M6 rangefinder and a few thousand images on a digital Panasonic Lumix point-and-shoot. Visual ethnography was made even more appropriate because I befriended many photographers (including a photographer who still shot and manually developed film like myself) early on in my fieldwork who, when I accompanied them, gave me access to places and images that would otherwise be foreclosed to an outsider.

Chapter Synopses

Chapter I lays out the underlying narrative strategy and theoretical framework of the dissertation. Borrowing from the literary authors, this chapter first argues that “not-knowing,” “multi-perspectivity,” and “roundness” should be the goal of writing thick ethnography. This chapter stakes the ground that ethnography has for too long ignored the deep descriptive and lyrical aspects of the ethnographic practice. Rather, this dissertation seeks to subordinate theoretical puzzles and overly general claims about the nature of social processes to evocative ethnography that places the voices of our interlocutors as the analytic thing itself. This chapter thus offers a theoretical account of “the particular” that structures the ethnographic claims of the dissertation by drawing upon resources from the “ethical turn” in anthropology, phenomenology, and existential philosophy.

Chapter II delineates the unsettled nature of temporality in the Short Strand both in terms of historical and contemporary “unsettling.” This chapter traces the legacy of the 1916 Easter Rising

into recent reenactments by Sinn Féin during the 2016 centenary celebration in Belfast and in the Short Strand. During the 1916 Easter Rising, a Provisional Government of the Republic of Ireland was proclaimed by Irish insurrectionists in Dublin. The entity of a provisional government, of course, is nothing new to political thought and practice. Yet, the 1916 Proclamation borrowed heavily from the Pauline temporality of the New Testament where the possibility of qualitative ruptures, which break apart the constant stream of “nows” that can be numbered, measured, and placed into an linear order of before and after, are inserted into the ordinary succession of historical time. Indeed, the conceptual “right time” of a New Testament *καιρός* (*kairos*) has been writ large into the 1916 Proclamation, the very founding document of Irish political identity. This temporal concept continues strongly in Irish Republicanism in the 20th century, particularly in terms of the concept of temporal provisionality. As elaborated upon in this initial ethnographic chapter, during 1969 and 1970, the concept of the “provisional” emerges again within a split in the Irish Republican Army. This split gives rise to a new group, calling themselves rather significantly the “Provisional Irish Republican Army.” The paramilitary organization, and thus the name, identity, and experiential content of being Provisional, becomes solidified during the “right time” of a gun battle in 1970 at St. Matthews Catholic Church in the Short Strand district. This was the first proper gun battle, and defense of a Catholic district, so the story goes, since the outbreak of the troubles in 1969. From thence forward, the chronicity of *καιρός*, understood in terms of “provisionality” become endemic to everyday life in the area. The “right time,” as the chapter thoroughly explores, is all the time, and it is an unlivable duration for those who must live in the district. This chapter is enriched with the ethnographic detailing of Ollie, one of the main actors during the 1970-gun battles, whose broken body and mind are the inevitable result of living in an endemic period of an unsettled existence born out of provisionality, a never-ending *καιρός*. For Ollie and others in the Short Strand, the “right time” of a qualitative *καιρός* becomes indistinguishable from the quantitative time of *χρόνος* (*chronos*),

and the future becomes caught in a time loop. This period of time is repeated and re-experienced in consciousness with no hope of escape. The right time, the opportune time, has become grafted onto the melancholic structure of existence, glimpsed at the commemorations of a centenary celebration, a marking of one-hundred years of failure to achieve the *telos* of a longed-for united Ireland.

Chapter III presents a fine-grained and person-centered account of Thomas, the caretaker of St. Matthews Catholic Church in the Short Strand. Thomas's elaborate overthinkings about his own death is only matched by the meticulous care he takes for the grounds of the church. Borrowing from Mattingly's (2014) concept of the "moral laboratory" that names the experience of individuals finding themselves in situations to cultivate a modified sense of moral existence, this chapter frames Thomas as a cultivator of his own temporal morality. Building off Mattingly's framework to include an account of how moral laboratories emerge in response to historical experience, this chapter also addresses Thomas Wentzer's phenomenology of historical experience to show how Thomas's first-person experience of cultivating the churchyard becomes for the sake of intergenerational duty. When Thomas discovers quite suddenly, for example, that his father protected the district during the significant 1970-gun battle, intergenerational moral possibilities are unexpectedly revealed to him.

Chapter IV thickly describes the harrowing experience of a Protestant family who lost their patriarch during the very same 1970-gun battle described in previous chapters from the Catholic perspective. Forefronting a daughter's experience over five decades to find some measure of justice for her father, this chapter shows the interior work that goes into cultivating her self-described "black spot," a psychic, emotional, and embodied phenomena that willfully shapes her encounters with the perceptual world, particularly in her attitudes and behaviors towards Catholics. This chapter offers a unique theory about how apocalyptic visions become laminated onto immediate perceptions through active engagement with a site of bitterness: the Catholic church from where the family believes the sniper murdered their father and husband.

Adjacent to Chapter V illustrates the harrowing experience of a Catholic widow who lost her husband during the gun battle. Because she was initially told by the PIRA that her husband was killed by a Protestant gunman, she spent nearly four decades attempting to keep her five children from joining paramilitaries to avenge their father's murder. However, upon learning in recent years that her husband was actually killed by friendly fire from a PIRA volunteer who could not handle the recoil of a Thompson submachine gun, she has now committed herself to keeping her husband's name free from Irish Republicanism in willful defiance of the community in which she lives.

Chapter VI examines the history of Belfast's peace walls as conditioning sensory experiences. The city's peace walls do not just produce segregated and homogenous Catholic and Protestant areas, but also contribute to the future (im)possibilities of the residents who live up against them. They impact what facilities and infrastructure can be built, and what sorts of future lives that the youth can live hemmed in by these massive structures. What ultimately cultivates here is an experience – often spoken about in dark humor – of “despair” and “nothingness.”

Chapter VII considers the aftermath of an assassination that occurs in my fieldsite during the course of my fieldwork. In a naturally occurring conversation to which I am privy, a Short Strand resident, Alby, tells his friend Brendan about administering the last rites to his recently assassinated neighbor, a man he despises for having killed his friends and for harming Brendan's mother. Evoking the liturgical, Irish Catholic, and Irish Republican oral form of the “litany,” Alby questions the morality of others, the community, and his own self over the course of this conversation. Drawing from the micro-phenomenological insights of Harvey Sacks's original lectures on conversation and the ethics of plurality from Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, this chapter unpacks the unfolding moral struggle in Alby's telling of the tale and within the content of the tale itself. Ultimately, Alby crafts a different way to ethically respond to a future that requires individuals

in the community to reflect more deeply about others, both the living and the dead, to end the never-ending repetition of violence.

Chapter VIII returns to the Protestant Inner East during preparations for the commemoration for the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme, in which the 36th Ulster Division, an infantry division in the British Army, was largely active in combat. On July 1st, 1916 the division suffered 5,000 casualties, and residents of Tower Street work to change the area to “Ulster Tower Street” in commemoration of the Ulster Tower war memorial in Thiepval, France to those who from the 36th Division. Drawing from the recent work of Jarrett Zigon on “worldbuilding,” this chapter elaborates upon the moral and ethical responses and reflections of Protestant Inner East residents as they attempt to build a future world for themselves outside of deprivation, conflict, and peace processes.

Chapter IX lets unfold a disquieting day in the life of Brendan. Brendan has lived his entire life in the Short Strand. Through deeply describing a particularly impactful day in the life of Brendan, this chapter considers the ways in which the familiar world solicits him into reflecting about his sense of self amidst existential uncertainty about his future. Through familiarity, this chapter suggests, unseen marginal possibilities—past futures—may solicit us into concerned and engaged reflection about our existence. During an intimate and precipitating conversation with an old friend, this individual becomes solicited into an altered understanding of his way of life and his future place in the community.

The Epilogue to the dissertation is a self-reflective and speculative essay about dreaming in the field. This epilogue begins with a return to Ollie, introduced in the first chapter. Ollie appears to me in a dream that continues to haunt me. In the dream, Ollie dies, and I am helpless to prevent it. I grew close to Ollie during my fieldwork, and many of his worrisome thoughts and utterances spill over into my own dreaming life. Ollie often talks about his own death and about the dreams that

haunt him. Drawing upon anthropological theories of dreaming, I attempt to frame my dream alongside Ollie's own dreams and fantasies to show the complexities and anxieties of being with others during fieldwork. I also juxtapose Ollie's imaginary possibilities and hopefulness for a united Ireland alongside the historical so-called "Irish Question," the dream of Irish self-determination.

Chapter I Theoretical Framework

Organizing Content and Form

In his renowned essay on narrative writing, Donald Bartheleme contends that “writing is a process of dealing with not-knowing, a forcing of what and how” (1997, 12). Ethnographers, however, must limit themselves to more obvious constraints than those of fiction writers in order to force the “what and how” – quite often at the expense of the fundamental experience of not-knowing. Of course, by disciplinary necessity, this dissertation is built around extrapolations from field journals, interview transcripts, sticky notes, text messages, Facebook posts, survey data, photographs, videos, and copious quotes and citations from others. But the content and form of this dissertation also cultivate such fertile grounds of “not-knowing” through dwelling with involuntary memories and recollections of conversations with others, reveries, imaginative free variation, dreams, and even nightmares. When writing and organizing the results of my study, I permitted the writing to follow the paths of “not-knowing,” through allowing the phenomena to appear through the experiences and voices of my interlocutors. Indeed, it may very well be my commitment to not-knowing that allowed me to work across the divide, when displaying what is already “known” can become immediately ethically and politically poisonous. Consequently, I also oriented my descriptions towards rendering ethnographic vignettes of visceral, immediate episodes with others, especially impacting conversations like that of Alby’s and Billy’s that opened the introduction. The narrative shape of the ethnographic data in this dissertation thus borrows from the literary tradition of presenting narratives with multiple narrators, and not always for the sake of conforming to a tidy argument. Indeed, throughout the writing of this dissertation, I resisted coercing my data to fit into any preconceived rubric I might have developed prior to setting out in the field.

Methodologically, then, this dissertation draws from a niche in anthropological methods known as “person-centered ethnography” developed by the psychoanalytic anthropologists, Robert Levy and Douglas Hollan (Levy and Hollan 2014). This is one of the few methodologies in the field of anthropology that recognizes the “not-knowing” mentioned above; indeed, “person-centered ethnography” asserts that being with others is, in fact, an entire way of “not-knowing,” a way of being disturbed and perpetually surprised by one’s inability to comprehend other people. Person-centered work requires ethnographers to dwell with others without presupposing beforehand any constituting forces or processes, whether social, historical, economic, political, or otherwise. As a result, during my fieldwork I would interview the same person ten or fifteen times, occasionally for upwards of four hours. The person-centered stories arising out of this methodological sensibility appealed to my participants who wanted to be listened to on their own terms – without me asking a series of pre-determined, formulaic questions.

It is simultaneously irresponsible and impossible to organize the conflicting and intertwining voices of ethnographic participants, especially in contested sites of historical experience such as Northern Ireland, within the same universe of meaning or within the explanatory framework of social processes. Thus, to expose the multi-scalar legacies of conflict, social suffering, and structural violence as always entangled with, but not wholly determining, first-person experience requires listening deeply to others and allowing the first- and second person complexity of interior life to leak out on the page. João Biehl, for example, understands the practice of ethnography in this way. He has primarily focused on complex life of Catarina who lived in an institution for the homeless and mentally ill in Brazil, what Biehl calls a “zone of abandonment.” Through intimate, person-centered work, Biehl reframes the ethnographic imperative for anthropologists in terms of telling stories:

Anthropologists, I would say, tell stories with instances of human becomings: people learning to live, living on, not learning to accept death, resisting death in all possible forms. Our characters are those who might otherwise remain forgotten, and they want to be

represented, as Catarina did: to be part of a matrix in which there is someone else to listen and to think with and through their travails. (591)

Biehl's framing accepts that there is a larger matrix of social conditions while prioritizing listening to those living with, and becoming otherwise, amidst these conditions. When composing this ethnography, I attempt to evoke the naturally occurring conversations that texture everyday interactions during my fieldwork. The multiplicities of voices often interrupt my own authorial voice. By letting voices from the field interrupt the discursive flow – perhaps through telling a disruptive joke or “yarn” within the unfolding logic of the dissertation – I've offered a counterpoint to a univocal academic voice intent upon reducing via thematization the voices of people. This dialogic technique hopefully shows what being with others is like in these communities.

What narratologists call “multiperspectivity,” multiple narrators braided together within a novel or short story collection, thus inspires the form of this ethnography. Braiding together narratives and dialogic interactions, allowing for voices to speak out and disrupt the coherence of my ethnographic analyses and the concrete political realities with which they engage, better fits the ethnographic experience of being with others in Belfast, where “calling in,” “banter,” “telling a yarn,” “slegging,” “slabbering,” and “winding someone up” form a semantic cluster signifying the centrality of speaking, conversing, storytelling, gossiping, joking and bullying others in the everyday lives of my interlocutors. Northern Ireland remains an obsolescent colonial project, often forgotten by those who partitioned the island of Ireland, and part and parcel of bringing to life the vibrancy of the people who live in this uncertain state is to let them speak.

The adjacent field of qualitative sociology has recently reignited a robust Geertzian debate about the importance of thick ethnography. Besbris and Khan's critique of the use theoretical concepts sheds light on why anthropologists should prioritize situated, descriptive ethnography and tread carefully with theoretical concepts that attempt to grasp “beyond” ethnographic immediacy. In their article “Less Theory. More Description.” they show that in social scientific writing, “as a

concept spreads, scholars become incapable of precisely stating what it is and it ends up depicting many things that are untreated or inconsistent with one another. Its increasingly theoretical ‘development’ makes the concept decreasingly useful” (2017, 148). Tracing the myriad and contradictory ways that notable sociologists have implemented Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital,” they discover an overall disturbing trend. A readymade concept like cultural capital becomes useful to qualitative writing, they argue, “in part because of its ambiguity and in part because of its spiraling expansiveness. It is amenable to the relentless demands for theoretical expansion (and inconsistency)” (151). These problems compound in ethnographic writing when multiple concepts and concept-like idioms, combine with a dizzying array of adjectives to saturate sentence after sentence. Mears (2017), for example, worries about the sociological – and I would add anthropological – tendencies to produce “puzzles” out of qualitative data. Mears argues that qualitative work often begins by constructing a puzzle to be solved by the end of the article or book chapter. Puzzles, she asserts, are the conventional way we learn how to write in graduate school, and over time, these puzzles come to “signify one’s position in the literature, hook a reader’s attention, and, ultimately, signal that one has mastered the conventions of making theoretical contributions” (138). In qualitative work, Mears notes, puzzles attempt to explain something unexplained by existing theories, which pits theory against description from the outset, often “subsuming the value of empirical details beneath an abstract framework” (139). Thinking of inductive ethnographic work in the form of a deductive puzzle produces “repetition of thought patterns and ritualization of the way we place puzzles within the presentations of research” (140). Instead, following the lead of the sociologist Andrew Abbott, the ethnographic writing in this dissertation attempts to evoke the “recreation of an experience of social discovery,” what he calls the “a lyrical impulse in sociological and social scientific writing” (2007, 71, 96). Abbott reminds the ethnographer that “causes” and

“consequences” are but one aspect of seeing the social world. The world’s beauty and sadness, too, must be captured by the hard work of descriptive, and lyrical, ethnographic writing.

By letting the apparent messiness, the beauty and the sadness of people’s lives disrupt the ethnographic presentation of my data, I hope to avoid the part (the individual) being metonymically confused for, or subsumed under, the theoretical whole (social conditions, causes, or processes) and drowned out by overgeneralizations. My phenomenological approach, also inspired by psychoanalysis, often, though not rigidly, begins with first-person accounts opening up into larger concerns. Ethnography ungrounded in the first-person drifts into generalizations, just as novels that lack character development renders one’s imagination impoverished. In this regard, the distinction made by E. M. Forster (1927; see also Mattingly 2008, 146) between “flat” and “round” characters also applies to ethnographies as well. For Forster, flat characters, “in their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round” (103-4). The advantage to flat characters is that they are easily recognized and remembered long after the book has been read. Often, ethnography trucks in typicality when presenting vignettes from fieldwork with which to make larger claims. I welcome, of course, that generalizing is necessary for putting our research into larger contexts and claims about structural violence, histories of dispossession, or the unequal distribution of capital, amongst other important concerns, but too often human complexity is irredeemably reduced to make these points. For Forster, the “test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way...[i]t has the incalculability of life about it” (118).

Putting aside the accelerating trend to quickly generalize, I have tried to dwell with the incalculable, surprising, confounding, and maddening aspects of everyday life and of being with others to capture the emerging experiential horizons just coming into view, though not without secondarily trying understand the social conditions or what phenomenologists call “lifeworlds” from

which such experiential horizons arise. In this regard, I've opted for a "round ethnography" that, in the final instance, defers to individual lived experiences, the words and deeds of those with whom I spent more than a year of my own life. Agreeing with Toni Morrison's research method of "literary archaeology" in which reconstructing a world means first to gain access to the interior lives of those she writes about in light of – and not despite of – imagination's memory, I treat the question of interior life of my participants not as afterthought, but as vital to "the revelation of a kind of truth" (2019, 240).

The Anthropology of Moralities

Because of my emphasis on not-knowing, multiperspectivity, and the roundness of existence, this ethnography dwells within person-centered ethnographic encounters to understand the complex worlds towards which people orient themselves towards shared, though often incompatible, moral projects. Following, then, Vincent Crapanzano's observations that "the singular has often been sacrificed to the general in the human sciences and that, more often than not, this has resulted in a distorting simplification of the human condition," this ethnography carries with individual perspectives as the ground of anthropological inquiry (2004, 8). The particular person and his or her involvement in the world requires dwelling with his or her singularity before subsuming under a larger paradigm. As such, this ethnography takes as its own theoretical and methodological orientation some themes emerging out of the anthropology of moralities over the last decade that examines the moral complexities and the unsettled work of leading a good life, even in a bad life. Mattingly and Throop's comprehensive story of the formation of anthropology of moralities, or "ethical turn," locates three frameworks for such theorizing moral complexities: "(a) ordinary language philosophy and a focus on ordinary ethics, (b) phenomenology and an emphasis on moral experience, (c) Foucauldian and neo-Aristotelian traditions of virtue ethics" (2019, 478). Though the

framework for this dissertation is situated within phenomenological and existential anthropology, it borrows also from the other frameworks at times as well. As Mattingly and Throop note, “the first person has ontological primacy within the phenomenological tradition because of the premise that no third person perspective can serve as the ground or starting place for humans in virtue of the kinds of beings we are” (482). And borrowing again from Mattingly and Throop, the fundamental forms of experience for my ethnographic process highlights the “excessive, uncertain, and emergent” structures of human existence (482). Grounding ethnographic inquiries amidst first-person experience and what it’s like to be a particular person, including taking seriously how each person is actively involved in questioning and answering what it means for him or her to exist in his or her own way, captures how the deeply complex lifeworlds emerge amidst social forces and structures without building an account out of an overly deterministic social theory. As the philosophical anthropologist Thomas Wentzer convincingly argues,

One can be subjected to and depend on powers, traditions, language games, drives or spells beyond one’s control or even awareness, ignorant of any causal or structural effective nexus that might condition one’s actual situation or future prospect. One might even lack suitable vocabulary to articulate one’s lived experiences. One nonetheless would possess the authority to experience and the right to be heard, when telling one’s story, however imperfect or chaotic it might sound. (2014, 28)

Recently, the sociocultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner engaged with the anthropology of moralities. Ortner’s own formulations on subjectivity, power, and agentive projects (under the name of “practice theory”) remains perhaps the most useable macro-scale social theory to apply to empirical data in anthropology (see Chapter IV). Ortner’s (2016) observations on “dark anthropology,” ethnography that examines the unbearable conditions of suffering in late capitalism, is a call to anthropologists to integrate the work of the ethical turn with sociocultural work on power, inequality, and violence (60). This is precisely the dialogue that this dissertation hopes to cultivate, but by attempting to understand the first-person experiences of those who exists amidst such social conditions in the first place. In this way, the ethnographic starting point remains the

sticking point. I recall a formative moment in my own anthropological training during my very first graduate seminar on “practice theory” with Sherry Ortner at UCLA. The class was discussing Bourdieu’s foundational claim – the infamous “structured structures disposed to serve as structuring structure” passage – that changed the trajectory of social theory:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g., the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to serve as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (1977, 72)

Ortner, sitting at the head of the table in the seminar of about twelve graduate students, helped to explicate this notoriously obscure passage. The cramped Haines Hall seminar room, most notable for the sweep of antiseptic fluorescence, was normally uncondusive to student discussion, and Ortner regularly found herself offering lectures on the material. After remarking on the passage’s disorienting lack of clarity, Ortner explained how this passage ultimately made the argument that humans are structures of reproduction. A student challenged her on this point from a Foucauldian “resistance” perspective, while my own thoughts oriented towards Jean-Paul Sartre’s conception of the human “condemned to be free,” since Ortner had argued that passages like these in Bourdieu acted as a counter the freedom narrative of existentialist thought. The student who brought up Michel Foucault imprecisely described Foucault’s claims on the paradoxes of contradictory power relations giving rise to resistances, and Ortner charitably rephrased the student’s question and then offered an ethnographic example from a movie studio set – she was in the midst of completing *Not Hollywood*, an ethnography of the independent film movement of the 1990s. Ortner said that while the Foucauldian account is compelling, if one steps back and looks at a film set, one can see the reproduction of structures at work. The *habitus* is unmistakably and predictably visible when

observing technicians, actors, and other filmworkers prepare for the next shoot, as well as the hierarchical dispositions between the various people. “You can pretty much,” she said, “see the structures.” She held her hands slightly above her head, palms down, and stirred her fingers not unlike a marionettist. I could not help thinking, especially since cinema was on our minds, of the *The Godfather* movie poster, a disembodied hand ominously holds up the movie title by a crossbar and puppet strings. Her certainty about the ability to see humans *as* regulated and regulating structures thrilled me as much as dismayed me. Could one really see such structuring structures in the ethnographic present if only they were to step back and observe the goings-on of people?

In time, I came to recognize the possibilities, but also the limitations, of this way of seeing others. Modelling human experience on the frame of theatre or games, all of which are relatively rule-bound and habituated, only goes so far into understanding the dynamics of social life. And further, abstracting from people for the sake of isolating social, economic, and political processes, so that the processes themselves take on the grammatical position of the acting subject within ethnographic theorizing make it difficult to understand the human stakes. Phenomenologically, prioritizing the *a priori* social structures may account for *what* appears to people, while neglecting an account of *how* the modes of givenness and ways of access of phenomena appear to the lived experiences of people. Considering that human experience is always a synthesis *about* something with a self-awareness of that something, I give theoretical primacy to intentionality and the awareness of one’s sense about having his or her own experiences. For this reason, I was also reticent to prioritize *institutions* at the focal site of ethnographic discovery, though to be sure, I spent an inordinate amount of time during my fieldwork in NGO and governmental offices as well as community centers. I was drawn to more traditional ethnographic engagement within social housing communities, which is a common form of social organization within the United Kingdom, though they are also structured by deep familial and political histories in Belfast. The “institution” has

steadily come to replace the “cultural area” in the social sciences since the foundational writings about various institutions by the philosopher Michel Foucault and the sociologist Erving Goffman. Many ethnographic monographs and articles today are explicitly or tacitly written with fieldwork data collected from workplaces, offices, factories, laboratories, hospitals, clinics, courthouses, schools; that is, in more or less rule-bound spaces not unlike the movie studio. Subsequently, in my view, anthropologists seem to have responded to Gupta and Ferguson’s (1992) perception-shifting imperative to move away from seeing the ethnographic fieldsite *as* an isolate culture by binding themselves ever more tightly within cloistered spaces. This is not surprising since, as Bourdieu held, employment is “one of the major foundations of *illusio*” or interest in the “game of life” and many of these institutions are the superstructure resulting from economic processes (2000, 222). Bourdieu’s paradigmatic site of inquiry, despite his early work amongst the Kabyle and his later work amongst the lower classes housing projects of France (1999), remained fixed to conceptual apparatus of “the institution” understood as a “field.” He writes, “[e]very field is the institutionalization of a point of view in things and in a habitus” (2000, 99).

Yet, Bourdieu in his later works also began to rethink his overly restrictive theory through the “limiting-case experience” of the “subproletarians,” like the chronically unemployed residing in housing estates (223). I borrow from Bourdieu’s late phenomenology of future temporality of the subproletarians, people who are also often referred to by policymakers and researchers in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as the “workless.” Bourdieu’s account sheds light on the everyday life within Northern Irish social housing estates where employment is temporary, illicit, or non-existent. Similar in type to Marx and Engels’s *lumpenproletariat* like addicts, criminals, or the homeless who will always remain on the margins of capitalism or communist revolution alike, the subproletarians lack a future and thus introduce a “radical kind of doubt: it forces one to raise the question of the economic and social conditions which make possible access to time” (223). For

Bourdieu, subproletarians lack what he calls the futural “forth-coming,” which is normally constituted through an investment in the (economic) field and thus having a social stake in the game of life (221-3). “Dead time” results from such a lack. Though Bourdieu did not offer an ethnographic account of dead time, in Belfast, this time is filled with much activity. Dead time is precisely the most revealing ethnographic time, a time lived outside or opposed to the time of institutional time. Indeed, Bourdieu admits that these limit-case experiences of the subproletarians have become more widespread in society, even amongst the employed, leading to an increased “margin of freedom” to reopen the space of social possibilities and improvisation. In this vein, this dissertation works amidst the “margins of freedom” and locates in them in the person-centered contexts of experience. Rather than thinking “beyond,” “towards,” or “yet to come,” three overused prepositional obligations in anthropology, this ethnography seeks a “return” to the uncanny site of anthropological discovery: first-person lived experience.

A word, then, about experience. Though we are often unreflectively absorbed in worldly activities, it’s important to remember that we are very rarely ever unconscious in the world. Unreflectively and unconsciousness are different, and the latter occurs when we sleep (though not when we dream) or when we undergo a traumatic injury. Experience is pulled, modified, and responds amidst one’s involvement in the world, which may be structured by face-to-face interaction or being alone “with one’s self.” Experience is also affectively charged at all times, even if one is experiencing “ennui” or “boredom,” two possible moods of apprehending the world. As Sartre noted, moods or emotions are “transformations of the world” (Sartre 2015, 44). Through them, one’s world becomes disclosed under different meaningful and, following Throop, moral aspects (2014). Befallen by emotions or moods, a person apprehends an altered, and sometimes disrupted, world. Even if affective experiences are pre-shaped by social and cultural patterns and scripts, one can be distanced from others through the mood that has befallen them, as Hochschild (1983, 2002)

has so brilliantly captured in the paradigmatic case of how a bride on her wedding is supposed to feel happy but finds herself miserable. In this way, emotions can distance a person from the collective. One may have to actively manage or shape how he or she feels to “get back on track” with the collective affect. And, as Gregory Bateson’s cybernetic theory of relationality has long since held, it matters the concrete *who* one is interacting with in person or in thought. My first and second person experiences are not with abstract “others” but with concrete people with whom I’ve shared deep sedimented histories of involvement, or no history at all, and these dynamic and differential interactions and involvements contour the ethnographic discoveries within this dissertation (see Chapter III for how helping to repair a lawnmower allows my participant, Thomas, to feel comfortable reveal his deeply historical experiences maintaining a chapel’s grounds). Often the complexities of being-with others happen in intimate contexts, in the homes, pubs, or car rides. On walks. Over the phone in the early hours. Perhaps because the majority of my participants were unemployed in the normative sense of the word – subproletarians to use Bourdieu’s characterization – this afforded more intimate forms of face-to-face ethnography than in other contexts. To be sure, first-person lived experiences emerges out of an intersubjective world. “Calling in” is one of the local existential structures underlying the possibility of being-with and being-for others in Northern Ireland communities. Calling in allows one to enter the house of someone in the community (if you are on good terms) during most of the day and night, and even sometimes in the late night if the social relation is strong. Calling in is a structure that maintains the conversations, stories, gossips, and face-to-face relationships within Catholic and Protestant working-class communities. “Calling in” can be seen, following Goffman, as a “stabilized structure” of the “social gathering,” a “shifting entity, necessarily evanescent, created by arrivals and killed by departures” (Goffman 1967, 2).

To be sure, social, economic, and historical conditions in Belfast can brutally suppress one’s abilities to exist in certain ways. As the dispossessing site of British imperialism’s first colony that

was, arguably, “re-colonized” by the British in the aftermath the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland’s legitimacy as a quasi-sovereign country is constantly questioned. Former conflict combatants and everyday people simply desiring a resolution to the ambiguity of national identity have instead found themselves in a more sectarian, if less overtly violent, society suffering from the same multiple deprivations of working-class communities in the United Kingdom, but with the added legacy of conflict traumas and hatreds. This dissertation, rather than prioritizing such social conditions of re-colonization and structural violence, however, begins with how people *question* their existence amidst these conditions. The *question*, rather than the structuring field, is the primary locus my ethnographic discovery, and these questions often emerge in the aforementioned “calling in” structure. Existential questioning that effect a *struggle to be* goes beyond the possibilities offered by structural, post-structural, and Marxist theories. Michael Jackson proposes that

Behind Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s refusal to admit the knowing subject to discourse is a refusal to give issues of existential power the same value as issues of political power. Questions of coping with life or finding meaning in the face of suffering are rated less imperative than questions of social domination and distinction. (1996, 22)

Though Ortner in her own work famously inverted the relationship between theory and practice by prioritizing practice as a modifier of theory – hence, practice theory – what has yet to be disclosed is how human existence, and the questioning that emerges from it, gives rise to both practice and theory in the first place. The phenomenologist Martin Heidegger claims to have discovered the unsettled ground giving rise practice and theory. He calls this ground concerned *involvement*. Bourdieu would later qualify this involvement as *illusio*, the “involvement in the game of life” (2000, 220). What Heidegger discovered, which was quickly covered over by absurdist and existential individualisms writing about anti-heroic quests and structuralists writing about dominating reproductions, was the “care-structure” that questions and responds to this unsettled ground of existence. The phenomenological answer to what underlies practice and theory says that by

involvement in the familiar world, which very well may be unbearable, people take a stand on the fundamental unsettledness of existence. Unsettledness reveals the fragile significance and temporal finitude of the self and world. The care one has for his or her self, others, and things, characterized by *involvement* amidst the world is ultimately the primordial context on the basis of which one practices or theorizes. The range of possibilities for concerned involvement may be limited, and structurally violent, to the point where our life is stripped nearly bare of meaning. Caring is not always a happy story, but it is the story that accounts for the persistence of human existence and the seemingly endless range of individual and collective responses to unsettledness. In caring, of which *not caring* is derivative, about the world, one takes a stand on their existence within their situated embeddedness amidst that world into which he or she is thrown. Caring constitutes a home for one's self and others. In a conversation with the phenomenologist Hubert Dreyfus, Heidegger notes that the English word "care" closely connotes the phenomenon he discovered: "I pointed out that 'care' in English has connotations of love and caring. He responded that was fortunate since with the term "care" he wanted to name the very general fact that "*Sein geht mich an*," roughly, that being gets to me" (1991, 239). *That being gets to me*, that my existence is something I care about, take a stand on, and with which I involve myself constitutes a range of possibilities for my "self." Practice and theory are already derivative of this existential response to unsettled ground of existence.

The anthropology of moralities is itself a heterogeneous mixture of positions, theoretical orientations, and debates. These articulations can be very difficult to follow because they emerge in dialogue with baroque philosophical texts. Though I emphasize lyrical ethnography to the din of theory, the rest of this section will situate this dissertation within dense and often opaque phenomenological language. Unlike other opaque theoretical traditions, however, phenomenological concepts are always of secondary importance to descriptions of concrete life. There is nothing natural about a phenomenological concept, and though I find much food for thought in concepts

such as intentionality, involvement, horizons, disclosure, care, *Dasein*, absorbed coping, breakdown, moods, natality, etc., as descriptions they simply point out phenomenon and make no claim to transhistorical universality. Phenomenological concepts are always impermanent articulations cognizant of their finite temporal use, and they can be discarded if they no longer capture the movement of life. Often, concepts are understood as inner representations or labels that the mind affixes to objects in the external world. In fact, phenomenology understands concepts as primarily nonrepresentational and embodied skills of gripping, and being gripped by, the world. As the philosopher Alva Noë (2012) notes, concepts are skills – “technique[s] for grasping something” – that allows one access to what the world affords. They are embodied (“sensorimotor understanding”), relational, and skillful amidst a shared, or unshared, background (35, 24). If the concept does not allow access or a sensitivity to worldly things, then it has become an unuseful skill that darkly mediates experience, rather than opens up contact with the world. That is, if phenomenological concepts do not “make sense,” then the phenomenologist begins again by describing the *what* and the *how* of the things, others, and situations in the shared world of appearances. By placing priority on the hermeneutic circle of experience, the fragile movements of life out of which phenomenological descriptions arise and congeal into concepts unfolding in time, the practice of phenomenology retains its primacy even as other competing theoretical frameworks see their concepts fall into ruination.

Many of the ethical turn scholars borrow from phenomenological inquiries and directly or indirectly respond to the existential question first thematized by Heidegger: “the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself” (Heidegger 2008, 33). And this existential question itself responds to the formative answer given by Aristotle that ethics is the *activity* of flourishing within one’s community through cultivating the right moral virtues and dispositions. Answering the existential question by the *way* one exists does not mean that the question itself must

become entirely thematic to the individual. But, following the moral philosopher Bernard Williams, one must have a sense of a ground project or projects, a set of commitments within their situated way of life that propels them forward. The ground projects “which propel one on do not have to be even very evident to consciousness, let alone grand or large; one good testimony to one’s existence having a point is that the question of its point does not arise, and the propelling concerns may be of a relatively everyday kind” (Williams 1981, 12). To be sure, within a working-class community historically engaged in moral ground projects for the sake of the entire future existence of their community, death can become a significant commitment or way of life. As Williams notes, “there is no contradiction in the idea of a man’s dying for a ground project – quite the reverse, since if death really is necessary for the project, then to live would be to live with it unsatisfied, something which, if it really is his ground project, he had no reason to do” (13). One’s ground project, of course, can collapse or become threatened, and when this happens, one’s sense of meaningfulness and sense of self are thrown into relief and must be worked through. The future can appear uncertain, and within post-conflict contexts, uncertainty about the future can render an endemic inability to realize one’s ground project. One’s ground project or projects, moreover, are the focal concern of an existential quest and not just one care amongst other, but “it is at once more thoroughgoing and serious...more individual and permeated with character than the desire for the necessities of life” (Smart and Williams 1973, 111). An essential aspect of one’s ground project, from a neo-Aristotelian viewpoint, is orienting towards a purpose, a *telos*, projected as certain possibilities towards the future in one’s everyday actualizing of their ground project. Yet, these *teloi* can collapse, and the unity of one’s ground project and narrative self can be thrown into chronic unsettledness. As the neo-Aristotelian philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre describes,

Unless there is a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life, the good of a human life conceived as a unity, it will be *both* the case that a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade in moral life *and* that we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately. These two considerations are

reinforced by a third: that there is at least one virtue recognized by the tradition which cannot be specified at all except with reference to the wholeness of a human life – the virtue of integrity or constancy. (2007, 203)

In the aftermath of the troubles in the Short Strand and Inner East, the *telos* or the “singleness of purpose in a whole life” becomes up for grabs. Existence becomes unsettled, and past ground projects cultivated during conflict become difficult if not unintelligible to continue, as the expected future does not come to pass or when people do not recognize the same future as shared. When the telic aspect of existence, the possible shared future that draws people into an expectational horizon, becomes foreclosed or an image of the future becomes impossible to imagine, then grounds projects cease to make sense. When entire communities are all of a sudden torn out of a conflict situation for the future of their way of life, with only the brief hope of poorly paying jobs, including participating in illicit drug economies, to fill the gap left by the ground project that took the shape of an everyday struggle, but a struggle that made sense for the future of one’s identity and community, then the subsequent “subversive arbitrariness” certainly puts into question the moral virtues relied upon to lead a good life, even if lived during troubled times. The unity of one’s ground project, moreover, is also how the story of one’s life is embedded in their community. MacIntyre notes that our moral identity and commitments that emerge out of the “moral particularities” of our community are not limitations, but, rather, the place from where each individual begins his or her “moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists,” and MacIntyre goes on to remind us, however, that “particularity can never simply be left behind or obliterated” (219).

Cheryl Mattingly, following MacIntyre, describes the relationship between the particular and the whole as a “need” to carry over one’s particular acts or situation into a larger narrative unity: “There is a need to connect what is ‘at stake’ in any particular act to a narrative of the self” (2006, 9). This back and forth between the particular acts, or situations in which acts occur, and the larger narrative context constitutes a fundamental aspect to the sense of unity for one’s ground project. To

be sure, this can all go wrong, and a community can chronically lose the possibility for its members enacting meaningful ground projects and thus narrative selves. As Mattingly notes, people may be thrust to “re-envision” their narratives in order to alter their ground project. Re-envisioning is not simply an unreflective practice, but, for Mattingly, concerns a moral willing. For Mattingly, “Willing so conceived is a matter of learning to shift attention, to re-orient, to re-envision and re-imagine” (5).

Ordinary Ethics, Moral Breakdown, and Existential Imperatives

This dissertation engages with the everyday ethical uncertainties and problems that constitute day-to-day life in contemporary interface Belfast communities. What do such uncertainties entail and what are their ethical entailments? Writing about what has become termed ordinary ethics in anthropology (see Lambek 2010), Veena Das (2015) notes that the everyday “is taut with moments of world-making and world-annihilating encounters that could unfold in a few seconds or over the course of a lifetime” (54). In an everyday way, we find ethical concerns suffuse even the most quotidian of our everyday practices as the future that has consequence for us is already implicit in how we anticipate and orient our projects, even if this future remains on the margins of awareness. But as many of the stories in this ethnography show, the moments in which one’s future existence becomes a focal question often stand out with a particular prominence – one that calls forth, as Jarrett Zigon (2007) has argued in his pioneering analysis of “moral breakdown,” a process of thematic reflexivity that allows for dynamic and creative responses to such existential quandaries. Efforts to answer such questions let emerge what the phenomenological anthropologist Michael Jackson (2013) calls an “existential imperative.” Existential imperatives, the tension one feels when they want to act in a constraining world, may erupt suddenly or disclose themselves slowly over time. When the future comes to language and thought, these can be harrowing, disruptive moments. In order to

understand how this future becomes disclosed, how the understanding of existence that underlies the way the self, others, things, and institutions hold together, I begin with unpacking two phenomenological presuppositions operative in this dissertation. The first concerns *intentionality* and the second concerns *involvement*.

We are never in the world in a singular and unchanging way. Indeed, as Edmund Husserl's phenomenological analysis of "intentionality" reveals we are always shifting between differing aspects, attitudes and perspectives when experiencing ourselves, others, and situations. For Husserl, "intentionality" describes how *something* is loved in loving, hated in hating, reflected in reflecting, remembered in remembering, perceived in perceiving, imagined in imagining, and so on. Consciousness, directed always towards objects, is a *presenting* of the world, rather than a mediator of re-presentations. Our acts of consciousness constitute and modify objects while, at the same time, the objects themselves affectively draw our attention into constituting and modifying acts. We can alter our experience of objects by changing our perspective: to inhale, for example, the sweet fragrance of a fine whiskey at closer distance or stilly sit on the sand as the withdrawing light at sunset darkens the colors of the ocean waters. Objects are always altering amidst our durative perceptual experience, always becoming-other in time, and yet they endure with the same identity through these phases (Husserl 1973, 347). Consciousness can also modify the things of the world, drop their identity, and disclose them as other radical possibilities through memory, reverie, phantasy, in a word, through *imagination*. Withdrawn acts of consciousness like these, to be sure, still must respond to the solicitations of "the imaginary texture of the real" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 165). Imagining is not a flight from the real world, but a possibility built into the very texture of the world's appearing. Ultimately, apprehensions of the world are always under a certain light, shaded by acts of consciousness, while the world itself makes certain demands on us. As Throop and Duranti (2014) show, objects within ritual expectations pull our attention. They affectively draw us to attend

to them because of prior familiarity or because of how strange they seem. Consciousness then proves to be neither locked up within itself without a correlate nor is it a storehouse for worldly objects placed within like a cabinet of curiosities. Though habitualities and typifications often lead to the constitution of objects, people, or situations in a familiar, take-for-granted way, the intrinsic openness of consciousness amidst an every unfolding horizontal world of others, over the altering movement of time, means that the world and the social world of others can always appear in unexpected ways.

The intentionality of consciousness further points to another primary level of existence: our concerned involvement that discloses our way of being in the world in the first place. While Husserl draws our attention to the concrete fact that consciousness is always “of” something, Heidegger, as already detailed, emphasizes how this *something* of consciousness is always situated, and thus disclosed, amidst a meaningful “being-in-the-world.” Humans are involved beings, absorbed in their ground projects oriented towards actualizing future possibilities. Through concerned involvement, one discloses not just an understanding of others, things, institutions, and the social world itself but his or her own distinctiveness as a person who engages in meaningful ground projects. Heidegger writes that, “The intentionality of ‘consciousness’ is *grounded* in the ecstatical temporality of Dasein” (2008, 498). What he means is that because human beings are constituted within time and are thus time-reckoning beings, they find themselves deeply involved with the finiteness of their existence (running late, planning a trip, preparing for a child’s education, or coping with death). Humans thus come to care and thus experience the world *as* significant in distinctive ways. That is, existence becomes an *issue* when one’s time is finite – an insight that directly informs Jackson’s “existential imperatives.” People get caught up and involved in ground projects for the sake of which their being becomes meaningful. The futural horizon of involvement is such that the movement of one’s existence – their sense of self in relation to their meaningful world – “comes towards itself

futurally...the 'for-the-sake-of-itself' (416). That one's existence is not a stable structure or an agglomeration of fixed properties, but always something that one *comes towards* from the futural horizon means that existence remains open, dynamic, and full of creative potential. We involve ourselves with other, things, and our own self because of the care we have for our finite existence. Through involving themselves in their world for the sake of their ground projects, people disclose an understanding of what it means to exist. This understanding of existence – how the world is held together for oneself and others – can be reflected on, questioned, challenged, and modified, but existence becomes revealed only through one's involved engagement, from a phenomenological perspective, and only belatedly can be modified by a theoretical attitude. This background horizon “comes alive” in our dealings with it by withdrawing and operating smoothly in predictable ways, yet if we withhold or suspend our “interpretive tendencies” or typifications towards others in the world, we encounter the phenomena *as* phenomena in “their own accord *in* our concern with them” (Heidegger 2008, 96, original emphasis).

The Work of the Particular

From phenomenology, I borrow certain claims about human consciousness and involvement in the world as futurally oriented. I draw from Heidegger that our care for the world is characterized by one's deep involvement with projects grounded in that world. This involvement discloses salient and concerning aspects of one's existence. From Husserl, I appropriate his description about the correlative nature of consciousness under the auspices of “intentionality.” For Husserl, human experience can be analyzed by the myriad ways that consciousness co-constitutes the world as meaningful. With this underlying phenomenological structure laid out, I have articulated a framework that can make sense of the experiential structures of “the particular” in the ethnographic encounter. However, to thematize the ethical potential of the particular, and to show how the

particular itself has been understood philosophically, and thus mediated historically and culturally, I need to return to Immanuel Kant whose meditations on the particular offer a theoretical articulation that can help to make sense of phenomenological descriptions. I borrow from Hannah Arendt's lectures on Kant's third Critique, and then discuss how this dense theoretical undergirding shows the ethnographic particular to be a disclosive and generative site of the human condition.

Briefly, the phenomenology of the ethnographic particular is threefold: 1) the particular gets us back to real life as it is really lived; 2) the particular becomes a critical element for disentangling larger discursive, material, and sensory regimes; and 3) the particular, through its excessiveness and critical function, holds out the possibility of another way to see things and other worlds on the margins of the horizon just coming into existence.

Dwelling in the particular discloses the excessive, uncertain, and emergent structures of existence. Though my interest in thinking through the particular developed from an Arendtian reading of Kant's third Critique that I wrote about at length in my written doctoral examination under Jason Throop, I found Cheryl Mattingly's (2019) articulation of "perplexing particular" to align with my own thoughts. What interests me in the perplexing particular is how it can disfigure understanding and throw one's conceptualization of others in relief. Throop (2018) calls this experience the "ethnographic epoché," an arresting moment of suspension characterized a bracketing of one's knowledge of the situation. These perplexing particulars emerge not just for the ethnographer. One of the ethnographic innovations of my research is showing how the perplexing particulars emerge in the flux of experience for the individuals themselves as mediated through cultural forms of sociality like what people in Belfast describe as "calling in." I borrow, like Mattingly, from Arendt who sees in the activity of thinking a process of unsettling our taken for granted concepts of understanding. The activity of thinking, which Mattingly says "defrosts" the anthropologist's concepts and previous understanding, finds its food for thought, in the shared

sensory world of appearances and within the flow of interactions with others. In a similar vein, Jarrett Zigon calls for the anthropology of moralities to develop concepts that emerge “from a world rather than add value to it by means of moral concepts (e.g., right or dignity) that are assumed to preexist in the world” (Zigon 2018, 112). Though Zigon rightfully critiques the Kantian language games associated with the “ordinary ethics” tradition in anthropology, I want to borrow from an Arendtian reading of Kant’s third Critique implicit in Mattingly’s work on the perplexing particular.

Kant’s third Critique, read phenomenologically, describes modes of reflective thought that account for the disjunctive experiences of the *particular*. His account on the beautiful and sublime, for example, remain a powerful precursor to many of the discussions about “disruptions,” “ruptures,” and “breakdowns” so central to much of the work in the ethical turn. The question about *what* is disrupted is also answered, in part, by a phenomenological reading of Kantian philosophy (see Heidegger’s own *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*). For Kant, as laid out in his first critique, the categories of our understanding (*Verstehen*) and the *a priori* intuitions of space and time shape our encounters with phenomena. That is, our mind is open towards and constitutive of the objects intuited in the sensory world of appearances. Constituting objects in this way is what Heidegger refers to as the mode of being of *Vorhandensein* or being-present-at-hand, the mode of being crucial for the sciences. This mode of being of objects allows one to pluck something from its use context and thematize it or think about it theoretically, determining its formal properties, or determining a new use context.

Heidegger famously adds two more modes of beings to the present-at-hand mode. The second mode he calls *Zuhandensein* or being-ready-to-hand. This is the mode of being in which things withdraw from circumspection during practical use within a larger pragmatic context of the in-order-to (utilitarian ends) and the for-the-sake-of-which (meaningful existential projects). This mode of being occurs against the background conditions of moral virtues, social norms, others, practices, and

languages. The equipmental nature of being-ready-to-hand is such that the tool or thing withdraws from consciousness the more absorbed the person becomes using the tool amidst the background context. Heidegger names the third mode *Dasein*, which is the mode of being human as embedded in the world. As existing, *Dasein* is always taking a stand on their being in some way or another. This is the being for whom being, or existence, becomes a question in the first place. Importantly, and inherent to the German prefix “*Da*,” this mode of being exists as situated, though dispersed into, a meaningful background. *Da*, meaning both “here” and “there” in German, expresses the fact that everyday human existing is not just open to the whims of coercive possibilities in the world, but, rather, as actively disclosing possibilities for itself and others (Dreyfus 1991, 164-5).

Heidegger’s pragmatic mode of being-ready-to-hand and Aristotle’s cultivation of practical wisdom have become for many anthropologists contributing to the ethical-turn useful for ethnographic fieldwork because practices can be seen and spoken about, perhaps more easily than internal life. But when considering the ethical turn’s interest in those moments that shock us out of our habits, that disclose our unsettledness, Kant’s aesthetic theory of encountering the *particular* remains valuable. As will be discussed below, an Arendtian reading of Kant gives us the resources for theorizing the particular, an experience that our understanding has difficulty subsuming, in political and ethical terms.

Arendt and Kant on the Particular as a Condition for Thinking

Kant presents an influential account of reflective judgment as the moment when one encounters particular sensations in the world of appearances under that cannot subsumed under concept, rule, or law – in a word, no authority can guide such an encounter. The more intense of these particulars he calls *sublime*, those unbounded threshold encounters that shake our thoughts, and take us beyond language. Reflective thought carries with the immediacy of the particular for the sake of forming a

commonsense or intersubjective standard by which to make sense of it. This form of thought may radically alter the way one encounters the world as its not surprising that thinkers from Arendt to Slavoj Žižek ground much of their work in Kant's articulation. Indeed, the particular moments suggestive of the sublime need not be understood as rare aesthetic moments of rapture, but as inherent to the possibilities of everyday lived experience itself that require a kind of thinking or judging that alters one's understanding and thinking. The activity of *reflective judging*, for Kant, is the ability to think the particular under the universal. The *determinative judgment*, however, subsumes a particular under a rule, norm, or principle. This is the experience one has of typifying a situation, which allows us to get along through the day without much resistance. This form of judgment is also necessary for one's unreflective perceptual judging in the world. One needs to assume the walls won't disappear or collapse, or that the ground will not shake. People make assumptions through the constancy of experiences that sediment over time and unreflectively typify situations, subsuming the excessive or even inhuman dimensions of the particular. The temporal orientation of determinative judgments is distinctly of the past, what came before. The *reflective judgment*, however, orients itself towards the future. Importantly, the reflective judgment also orients thinking about *others* as the way towards possible futures. When a perplexing particular appears under which no measure can be found, this mode thought not guided by past habits, rules, or norms allows one to tarry with the excess of the particular for the sake of coming up with an altered concept that offers new way of access to the world. This is a moment of tarrying, often uncomfortably dislocating and disfiguring, of letting emerge out of necessity a new standard by which to understand the given. If it is to emerge as useful, this standard requires interaction with and assent from others. The judgment is "still uttered only conditionally. We solicit everyone else's assent" (86). The end result of bringing the particular to language is what Kant calls exemplary validity, or the example. Taken together, we have at least three moments in making sense of the particular: an encounter with a particular, the

activity of thinking, and the formation and utterance of a (narrative) standard by which the excess of the particular can, for the time being, make sense. These three moments find *a priori* conditions an intersubjectively constituted world and often find their emergence within the flow of interactions with others. That the particular can be brought to language and co-constructed with others means we presuppose an intersubjective world in which the example can cause us to come to a mutual understanding, the possibility of “trading places,” to follow Husserlian phenomenology. The standard requires, at minimum, the ability to expand one’s viewpoint to include the standpoints of others. The example, once entering into the shared world, sets up a certain understanding of the particular.

For the phenomenologists of perception and embodiment, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the particular emerges out of the nonsense of sensations that always belatedly come to our senses. Drawing from the example of the French painter, Paul Cézanne’s later works, Merleau-Ponty attempted to think through the lived perspective of the particular: “In giving up the outline Cézanne was abandoning himself to the chaos of sensations, which would upset the objects and constantly suggest illusions...if our judgment did not constantly set these appearances straight” (1964, 13). Understood in this way, and borrowing from Cézanne’s discovery about lived experience, sensations upset the precise boundaries of objects. The space of the particular, between such disfiguring and “setting these appearances straight,” is precisely the site where other understandings arise. Merleau-Ponty also speaks of this in terms of a “vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things” (18). This image of vibration, of clearing a space for spontaneous discovery has a *temporal* quality. Arendt calls this kind of present lived experience the “gap” between the past and the future (2006, 10). Arendt’s ideas about the temporality of the particular emerges from her political reading of Kant and her phenomenological reading of Kafka’s parable “HE.” Briefly, in Kafka’s parable, “he” is pushed forward on a path by one antagonist and pushed backward by another. The unnamed “he” holds out

the hope that he might jump out of this tug of war and be promoted to an umpire over these two as they battle (7). Arendt's phenomenological reading of this parable sees "he" as the present moment in which the human stands, as the force of past pushes forward and the force of future pushes backwards. The insertion of the human in the lived present thus forms a gap that "breaks up the unidirectional flow of time." Arendt then reinterprets the possibility of such a "jump" out of the temporal strife as a "diagonal force" that alters the experience of the gap and the forces striking against it (12). This, she says, is the radical "activity of thought," a "small non-time-space is the very heart of time," (13) is the path of thinking about the particular or what Merleau-Ponty calls the "vibration of appearances" out of which stories, examples, norms, values, and rules are altered, shaped, or emerge for the first time. Ethnography is thus another site to dwell with such particulars out of which hopeful future possibilities might arise, even if momentarily.

When dwelling with particulars arising from lived experience, we are therefore thrown into experimental modes of existing with the past and future. Arendt (1982) borrows her understanding of these situations from Kant's discussion of modes of reflective thought the face of the unsettling experiences of the beautiful and sublime. For Arendt, a return to Kant provides the template for "felicity in a future life; and for this I may hope" (20). The judgment of the particular, which takes the shape of an intersubjective achievement in the form of an example or story, arises out of such pleasurable beautiful or painful sublime encounter. This judgement, for Kant and Arendt, does not simply seek to make sense of the particular in the present, but for a future that will have been. Again, then, particular takes the grammatical shape of a future perfect tense.

For the Greek theoretical attitude, which is implicit in the Neo-Aristotelian viewpoints of ethics discussed above, the standpoint of the spectator, "looks at and judges (finds the truth of) the cosmos of the particular event in its own terms, without relating it to any larger processes in which it may or may not play a part" (54). The particular event or story contains the whole meaning, revealed

at the end, according to Arendt's gloss of the Greek spectator's view. For Kant, however, larger social processes, such as that of progress, did not lie at the end of the particular event or story. Kant, as Arendt reminds us, looked to the particular events or stories as "opening up new horizons for the future" (56). All of a sudden, because of Kant, the notion of the world historical event that "contains the seeds of the future" become part of the human experience of developing one's capacities and social arrangements in perpetuity. The particular in both the Greek and the Kantian stories is the site where thought and action dwell. Though Hegel and Marx, Arendt notes, take from Kant the progressive movement of the history, there is a particular end to history for both so that humans are doomed to "do nothing but perpetually rethink the historical process which has been completed" (57). For Hegel and Marx, the particular that may open up alternative future horizons makes no sense under their strict teleology. Kant's openness to perpetual development, as has been noted, is the truly radical progressive who believes in the continual development of one's capacities, possibilities, and worlds. For Kant, each encounter with the particular has the possibility of disclosing new futures and thus serving as an exemplar for future life. For Kant, imagination, as the capacity of having present what is absent, either "defrosts" taken for granted concepts and norms, as Mattingly (2019) notes, or produces new exemplars or stories to serve as moral signposts for others to follow. Arendt finally notes that since I cannot judge one particular by another particular, and because the standard cannot be borrowed from elsewhere, one must judge the particular as an example (76-77). Recall that the English word "example" comes from the Latin *eximere* "to single out some particular," Arendt rearticulates the radical potential of the example for moral existence: "the exemplar is and remains a particular that in its very particularity reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined. Courage is *like* Achilles, etc." (77). Through dwelling with the particular, future possibilities – the way things could and should be – can belatedly be brought to language and shape of ethical life. Considering that when we speak about ethnographic *data*, what we are really speaking

about “something given,” the past participle of the Latin *dare* (‘to give’), the ethnographic particular becomes such a site of the given.

Tarrying with *both* the Greek notion of the particular revealing a final telos for-the-sake of which one’s life has meaning and Kant’s notion of the particular that opens up new horizons for the future, the ethnographic importance of the particular comes into relief. To live without a telos, as MacIntyre mentioned, is to shroud all meaningful existence in arbitrariness, yet to live with a rigid telos, even when it becomes impossible or inoperative, can lead to despair or even the proliferation of superstitions. Part of answering the question of unsettled existence requires holding fast to a telos, but also a willingness to let it go when its fulfilment becomes impossible.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, which resonates with the phenomenological understanding sketched above,

Before the apocalypse of the twentieth century, even those who were oppressed could dream of a better future based on the belief of a greater, more liberated world was possible. The future existed as a vital mental object, an internal structure that both generated and received guiding inspirations, evoking inner resources that could actualize the self’s venture into the world. Today that dream is waning.” (Bollas 2018, xxvi)

[...]

Perhaps being, relating and existing as a “first person” now feels too problematic. The postmodern critique that the subject was an illusion probably constituted the first philosophical objectification of subjective suicide. But now it seems that the shift away from the generation of meaning has destroyed selves in a different way: it has left them without agency, existing as objects in the world of objects (65).

The perplexing ethnographic particular, the particular out of which a relation to the future emerges, is precisely the moral site to reimagine possibilities for existence, meaning, and a robust sense of the self. Rather than succumb to what Christopher Bollas calls “subjecticide,” thinking through and detailing the particular, and social structures that work through the particular, this dissertation staves off an anthropology in which perception, experience, interaction, and thoughtfulness, those things that make up the texture of a person’s ground projects, are dismissed.

Unsettled Existence

And given these previous conceptualizations of the particular, we might ask how social and cultural forces and structures pattern such particulars? To exist is to take a stand on one's existence. Taking a stand on one's existence often happens in moments when the unsettled nature of social structures and shared meaning appear. The work of taking a stand on one's unsettled existence begins, following Freud's work on *unheimlich* or the uncanny, *at home*. Indeed, my interlocutors in Belfast actively promote such engagement with the particular out of which other future possibilities might arise. The particular makes an appearance in the social structures of "calling in" to another's house for "yarns" or for the sake of caring for each other's mental health as shown with Billy and Alby in the introduction to this dissertation. Or "slegging" one another. These are not just ritual forms of social reproduction, but what Zigon would call sites of world-building, which are fragile sites where new possibilities for ethics and politics, though ephemerally actualized, may emerge (2018). The particular is not just a philosophical framing to make sense of immediate experiences, but an actively cultivated experience of clearing space and time so that people can gather together and let abide the finite, excessive, uncertain, and emergent *for the time being*. The following dissertation dwells, for the time being, in such particulars, to show the how ethics and morality emerge within inoperative, emergent, or unseen futures.

Chapter II Past Futures



Figure 9: *Easter Rising, Short Strand, 17 April 2016*

Demarcating Loss in Provisional Times

A young woman dressed in the olive-green wool uniform of the *Cumann na mBan* (“League of Women”) unfurls a flag, a green sheet with gold and white letters spelling out “Irish Republic.” The flag cracks on the wind, defiant against the darkening sky. In the distance, the steeple cross of St. Matthews chapel bears solemn witness to the Easter Rising. The drama begins with a ballad, “The Foggy Dew.” On the grassy hill of Mounteforde Play Park in the center of the district, a young man sings an impassioned rendition of the first two stanzas while many old-timers in the crowd sing atonally with him.

A cheeky boy hanging over the handles of his bike hollers, “McGregor’s walkout song!” a reference to the Dublin-born UFC mixed-martial arts champion Conor McGregor. Indeed, McGregor often performs his walkout to Sinéad O’Connor’s seditious recording, draped in the Irish tricolor. The boy’s crack, an appropriately timed insurrectionary moment during an insurrectionary ballad, formed a short rift in the spacetime of commemoration until he received plenty of stern looks and quickly rode off. “The Foggy Dew,” perhaps the most famous Irish ballad composed in the late 1800s and rewritten during the 1916 Easter Rising, depicts the sacrificial necessity of dying for the cause of Irish freedom against British colonial rule. The weightiest lyric of the first two stanzas sung on this day is “right proudly high over Dublin Town they hung out the flag of war.” The flag marked, and continues to mark, a form of provisional time for the Irish insurrectionists, a period of transition when Ireland would reveal herself out from her hidden foundations for the sake of supplanting the present colonial state of affairs.

The most important flags raised during the 1916 Easter Rising were the Irish tricolor and the Irish Republic flags. They were planted above the six majestic ionic columns of the portico of the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin, the crown-jewel of Georgian colonial infrastructure on the island. The colonial spectacle of the British infrastructure simultaneously signified a timeless monumentalism and a future-oriented modernity. But during the 1916 Easter Rising this colonial spectacle was overmatched, taken beyond the pale in the heart of the Pale, by the audacious spectacle of Irish insurrection. Here, the insurrectionists proclaimed a discontinuous provisional government from which a more primordial Ireland, personified as “she,” would rise up and leave in ruins the colonial apparatus. This was a form of theatre rarely staged against the British Empire.

Today, this theatre continues in the Short Strand. More than simply a drama, reenactment, or political ritual, an experience of provisional time is being reconstituted and reinforced here and now in the center of the district by the youthful participants for the sake of the older spectators,

many of whom volunteered during the most recent conflict (1969-1998). The existential character of provisional time is one of being-unsettled. This “unsettled existence,” to borrow a phrase from Bobby, a former IRA volunteer, emerged first as a mood and then an articulable experience between 1968-1970 and continues today as an unfinished project for a reunited Ireland.

Another young actor, dressed as Padraic Pearse in oversized woolen trousers, steps forward to the microphone, unfurls a scroll, and begins to read the Proclamation of the Republic. As did the real Pearse on 24 April 1916 on the steps of the GPO in Dublin, thespian Pearse announces the intentions of the newly constituted Provisional Government. He takes turns reading each paragraph with another young woman who translates his words into Irish. After he finishes reading the Proclamation, a young girl begins a solo Irish dance on the top of a picnic table, hands straight to her sides. The dance, I think, must signify the provisional period of time between the proclaiming of the provisional government under the Irish flags and the fiery destruction of the GPO by British artillery. When the dancer finishes dancing, the thespian Pearse reads his surrender letter to the British general: “the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the city and country will order their commands to lay down arms.”

Sponsored by Sinn Féin, the largest Irish Republican political party in Northern Ireland with a sizeable constituency in Ireland as well, and staged with Short Strand residents and actors from a local Belfast reparatory, a series of four walking plays in the four corners of the district were billed as *1916: Our History, Our Future*. Around 100 people, mostly residents, attended the multi-sited production, a low number for a Sinn Féin public event in the Short Strand, which would have drawn a thousand a year or two earlier. Suspensions immediately heightened in the community that support for the political party was waning. After years of governing, Sinn Féin has, despite themselves, become a mainstream political party. They shake hands with the hated British Royal Family and

engage in the ignoble day-to-day sausage-making of legislation in what all Republicans admit is a still-British-ruled statelet. Though their electoral support remains considerable in Catholic working-class areas, Sinn Féin is often decried as “lining their pockets” with British pound – “imperial blood money” – by non-mainstream Republicans, and, increasingly by more mainstream-leaning Republicans supportive of Sinn Féin. On a brick wall at the entrance of the district, the graffiti “Sinn Féin Touts” in thick black paint on red brick appeared overnight. A tout, the worst kind of person in Belfast, is one who gives information to the enemy. Traditionally, touts were kneecapped or killed. Macabre, though darkly humorous, murals on the sides of buildings regularly appeared throughout Catholic districts during the troubles, reading “Warning Touting Can Seriously Damage Your Health” paired with depictions of coffins.

Several non-mainstream Republicans opposed to Sinn Féin spoke with me about this event. They appeared emotional, a paradoxical blend of glee and mourning, about the lack of turnout. On the one hand, there was great pleasure in seeing Sinn Féin taken down a notch, especially since Sinn Féin has, since the 80s, set the political tone in the area. On the other hand, for non-mainstream Republicans, there was a sense of loss beyond the normal commemorations of the dead. The 1916 Easter Rising remains the untainted, pure form of Irish Republicanism that every republican and nationalist share. The simultaneous revelry in Sinn Féin’s inability to draw a large crowd while still mourning the losses of the Short Strand, that proud bastion of Irish Republicanism, contributed to this sense of ambiguity.

Barney, a non-mainstream Irish Republican, explains that Sinn Féin has bought the British imperial line of creating and managing “equal” shared spaces of peace. Irish Republicanism was never about equality, for Barney, outside of radical *freedom* of self-determination within an independent socialist Irish Republic. That is, according to Barney and other radical or non-mainstream republicans, Sinn Féin has adopted a post-peace process form of governmentality

(Foucault 1991). Pro-peace agreement mainstream Irish Republicans are no longer subjected to the harsh prison sentences, house raids, and punishments (including torture) of yesteryear, embracing a “shared society” of conflict management and allocation of governmental and peace investments. Non-mainstream republicans like Barney, rather, believe in the absolute right of the use of violence against British occupiers, and because of this, they are marginalized by Sinn Féin. Barney’s house is raided every few months and he’s jailed frequently. When I interview him, there’s nearly always a marked police car or a non-descript car parked outside, which he explains is likely MI5 surveilling him. He has me exit out the back of his house into the alleys so that I’m not surveilled, though he admits he left my name and phone number out on a stickie note on the countertop during a recent raid. Although a mug was placed on top of the note, a serendipitous moment that may have spared me surveillance, he tells me they likely were always listening to my phone calls anyway. The police recently arrested his girlfriend, who has nothing to do with Irish Republicanism, to intimidate him, he thinks. Barney believes that Sinn Féin is complicit in this kind of anti-republican treatment.

Barney also tells me that “Shinners” (Sinn Féin members) come to his front room all the time to “break out of the bubble” of what he calls “the narrative.” They come to him to complain about their organization. “Like a confession,” he says. Then they go back to their lives, outwardly supporting Sinn Féin’s policies and actions even if personally disagreeing. Barney tells me that one time a Shinner told him that he wanted to shoot another Shinner, and Barney offered to get a gun. “But then he was out the fuck. All talk,” Barney says with disdain.

For Barney and other non-mainstream republicans, a deeper sense of loss than simply remembering those who died for Irish freedom or the melancholic mood attached to such a loss became exposed by this commemoration. Precisely at the moment of its most grand and expensive public spectacles for the 100th anniversary, the very narrative of 1916 falters and misses its mark, at least as presented by mainstream Irish Republicanism. Of course, 1916, in many ways, is the lost

object of the melancholic experience. It contains multiple overlapping and contradictory residues of centuries of loss and dispossession for Irish subjects. As a melancholic object, 1916 expresses such multiple losses and their residues and contributes to an unsettled time. What is lost is perhaps less important than how the community experiences such a loss. On the one hand, this community coheres together because of consistent loss throughout more than a century of conflict. A sense of belonging emerges at the site where the community cannot simply move on from the losses they've endured, and through residing together amidst loss instead of triumphing over it, the Short Strand, as so many working-class districts, emerge as a community.

On the other hand, some losses disrupt more than others. To experience a faltering 1916 commemoration may reveal that the overdetermined melancholic object of loss has itself become a toxic, unlivable form of melancholic existence unbinding the traditionally melancholic community. Rather than serving as that which binds, this toxic, unlivable existence has emerged in the aftermath of the 1998 peace agreement with the British government and Protestant Loyalists. The area is besieged with constellations of structural violence inherent to any working-class neighborhood in the United Kingdom exacerbated by the long-term effects of living through a 30-year conflict. High rates of unemployment, alcoholism and drug use, trauma and PTSD, disability and long-term pain, and the latest shape of loss, suicide. Suicides remain the most difficult to talk about in the district, perhaps because of the Catholic legacy that places such a taboo on the act, and also because the cultural scripts with which to make sense of this exploding form of loss have yet to cohere. Brendan, a friend of Barney's, simply frames suicide in terms of the legacy of conflict and tells me "another victim of the conflict," each time he hears of a new suicide in the area.

To be sure, the Easter Rising Centenary burnout was also apparent, with two major parades over two consecutive weekends planned on the Falls Road in West Belfast, not to mention a spectacular series of events planned down in Dublin. Both Sinn Féin's West Belfast and Dublin

commemorations drew massive crowds. For the former event, the then-leader of Sinn Féin Gerry Adams's speech in Milltown Cemetery was orated on one of those island days of simultaneous bands of rain and spears of sun. The verdant hills canopied by an enormous tarp reading "Honour Ireland's Patriot Dead" created a vertiginous backdrop for his oratory on top of the literal graves of more than a century's quota of Irish Republicans. A palimpsest in which the world of the dead has deliberately been laid over the world of the living. Adams's speech, booming through his prominent overbite, stirred his listeners into what seemed to be delirium:

1916 was right. The men and women of that rising were right. It was Republic against Empire. Republicanism versus Imperialism. We know what side we are on. We stand by and for the Republic. Pearse put it well. He told his court martial; "You cannot conquer Ireland. You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom." Connolly also faced his court martial unbowed and unbroken. He told them: "We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire and to establish an Irish Republic." That is our resolve also. So, join the Rising. *Bígí linn. Ar aghaidh linn le chéile. Up the Republic! An Phoblacht abú!*

Ultimately, the Short Strand could not compete with these other events. Regardless of turnout in the Short Strand, however, the *1916: Our History, Our Future* commemoration attempted to make explicit a unique form of temporality arising from 1916, which the people of this district reconstituted in a new way in 1970. In this district on 27 June 1970, during what locals call "The Battle of St. Matthews," the newly-constituted paramilitary known as the Provisional Irish Republican Army successfully defended the district against their Protestant neighbors. In particular, the Provisional Irish Republican Army defeated the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) paramilitary and the Orangemen associated with the Orange Order, a conservative unionist Protestant men's organization. This was the first time that the concept of "provisional" became attached to a way of being in Ireland aside from a handful of days in 1916 when the "provisional government" declared its intentions to overthrow British rule.

Collectivizing Temporal Loss

The first of the four plays turned out to be the most important for understanding how the district keeps alive the temporal discontinuity from 1916. The crowd walk from the play park across the road and into a court where *An Tine Bheo* (“the living flame”) stands as a triumphant memorial to the fallen active duty Irish Republican volunteers called “Ireland’s Patriot Dead” in the district. The memorial was built for the 40th anniversary of the Battle of St. Matthews, opening on Sunday 27 June 2010. It is a semi-enclosed stone garden. The headwall of the memorial crests ten feet high in the back and decurves towards the front like a small amphitheater lined with an uninviting cornice of jagged stones. Centered in the foreground is a statue: three verdigrised bronze arms staggered in height gripping the stem of an Easter Lily (calla lily), symbolizing the martyrs of 1916 Easter Rising and more generally symbolizing all the Patriot Dead of Ireland. A tricolor flag flaps above the lily when the wind kicks up. Along the headwall are painted portraits of the faces of the Patriot Dead from the district, those who died on active service. The first portrait depicts Charlie Monahan, born near what would become the Short Strand on 21 March 1879 and who Irish Republicans consider the first Ulster death, if not the first Republican death, of the 1916 Rising. In the days leading up to the insurrection, his car containing munitions went off a bridge into the River Laune, County Kerry, where he drowned.

Today, within the memorial grounds of *An Tine Bheo*, a drama staged explicitly for Charlie Monahan, Short Strand’s sole link to the 1916 Easter Rising, is performed. The drama, *Johanna Monahan*, was written by Laurence McKeown, a well-known writer, playwright, and former IRA volunteer from Randalstown, County Antrim. McKeown participated in the 1981 Hunger Strike in which ten men died; Bobby Sands was the first to die on hunger strike and remains the most well-known of these martyrs. McKeown survived seventy days without food, the longest stretch of any hunger striker who survived, before his family took him off. Today, he watches the play he wrote for the community. Unfortunately, the Celtic vs. Ranger Scottish Cup semi-final match is also in full

swing, and many onlookers drop their heads to check their phones. Celtic vs. Rangers, a Scottish Premiere League football rivalry that has always been a sectarian, and often violent, match of Catholics vs. Protestants respectively. Before the play begins, Andy, with whom I've been watching most of the commemoration, checks his phone to see the results of a disputed throw-in, complaining that the ball "come off a Rangers man's leg and the linesman gave it to Celtic. You know for the throw-in. And the referee changed his mind." This reversed decision, it turns out, led to a Rangers goal. Suspecting anti-Catholic bias, Andy angrily departs the audience at the memorial garden to finish watching the rest of the match from home.

In the meantime, the drama begins as a one-woman performance. An actress playing Johanna Monahan appears in the front of the headwall of the memorial garden wearing a plain woolen skirt and crimson overcoat and white scarf. She recites Padraic Pearse's poem, "Mother," and then analogizes Pearse's mother's experience to her own:⁸

Lord, thou art hard on mothers:
We suffer in their coming and their going;
And tho' I grudge them not, I weary, weary
Of the long sorrow-And yet I have my joy:
My sons were faithful, and they fought.

Padraic Pearse wrote that for his mother but it's as if he wrote it for me because I watched my own two sons, Charlie and Albie, take the path of bloody protest for a glorious thing. Unlike Pearse's mother one of my sons, Albie, was returned to me but not Charlie. I think of them often and speak their names to my own heart in the long nights. I think of the time they grew up here. Simple times. We had nothing. We were poor. Everyone was poor then. But we shared what we had. The community shared. That's what community is about.

⁸ In Pearse's final letter to his mother written from Kilmainham Prison on the day of his execution (May 3rd, 1916), he refers to this poem, his last creative act for the sake of his mother: "You asked me to write a little poem which would seem to be said by you about me. I have written it, and a copy is in Arbour Hill Barracks with other papers and Father Aloysius is taking care of another copy of it." Remarkably, the voice of the poem is his mother speaking to him, the writer of the poem, as Pearse trades places with his mother to consider what she, and any mother, might be experiencing upon the death of her son.

Johanna's singing and soliloquizing reiterate the normative trope of the long-suffering Irish mother, the central consciousness encompassing more than one individual. Johanna links herself to Pearse's mother, Margaret, and one can also imagine within this sacrificial appeal, the chain of suffering mothers extends back to Mary, the mother of Christ herself. Encountering the face of Johanna now means to disorient oneself from the individual, Johanna or Charlie, and to reorient oneself to the social conditions out of which this mother-son dyad emerges in the first place. Johanna reminds the audience of the historical poverty that generates an ethos of sharing, the very condition out of which the community defines itself. The mother turns out not to be primarily towards the individual lives of her sons, though their names are thought and spoken often. Rather, Johanna constitutes the very community as one in which losing sons to fight dispossession is shared. Through mourning such loss, the community becomes ever more tightly bound, less individuated, and oriented towards a future for the sake of which all the mothers and sons might find glory. During this soliloquy, Johanna faces the crowd, while behind her the painted portrait of Charlie faces outwards, watching. Mother and son disrupt the visual field of the audience and propel them to examine the melancholic foundations of their social ties, characterized by the phenomena of loss, poverty, and sacrifice.

Johanna continues, giving an account of Charlie's childhood with his brother, Albie, on the streets of the district. She describes the carefree children's play and mischief-making, but amidst the shadow of sectarianism centered on the Protestant shipyard just beyond the edges of the district. And then, as quickly, she transitions from nostalgia to tragedy, giving an account of Charlie's death:

Charlie was good with his hands. He became a motor mechanic. To think of him, Oh my God, to think of him in that car and the wheels going round and round and round and the water. And the water. Shortly after Easter 1916 I answered a knock at the door and a man from the area, a man I knew well, came in and sat me down. He said "I've bad news for you Johanna." I knew it wasn't good. He told me that Charlie and three other volunteers were sent to Kerry on Good Friday. They were to take over the Valentia Island wireless station and to signal ashore the German ship the Aud, with Roger Casement and its cargo of 20,000 rifles, machine guns and ammunition for the Rising. Their car went off a bridge into the River Laune. They still weren't sure if Charlie had drowned. All they knew was that one man had survived and was able to tell the story. Maybe Charlie had survived as well and was in

hiding somewhere. Maybe I'd get better news soon. But I knew I wouldn't. I knew in my heart he was gone. I could feel it in my bones. Six months later they found his body. He was the first Volunteer from Ulster to die on active service in 1916. Three days before the first shot was fired in Dublin.

A tall, middle-age man next to me, who is not originally from the district, leans in to my ear and speaks heresy. He says it's a bit of a stretch and pretty desperate to memorialize a guy who's best known for crashing his car. Much like the "McGregor kid," there are dynamic insider/outsider leakages to how much reverence is comported towards the commemorations.



Figure 10: Johanna and Charlie

Johanna then reaches out and rests the tips of her fingers on the portrait of the face of her son. The vulnerability and tenderness expressed as she faces her son's visage on the wall seemed to animate his very soul, bringing him back into the realm of the living to sing one final lament with her.

Charlie's ghost, played by a young adult male actor, wheels into the memorial on a bicycle wearing a grey flatcap and vest. He and mother sing together "Four Green Fields" to end the skit:

What have I now
Said the fine old woman.
What have I now
This proud old woman did say.
I have four green fields,
One of them's in bondage.
In strangers' hands,
That try to take it from me.
But my sons have sons
As brave as were their fathers.
And my four green fields
Will bloom once again said she.
And my four green fields
Will bloom once again, said she.

Through this public performance, Charlie's life becomes what Judith Butler (2004) calls "grievable" within a normative perceptual horizon, encircled by the names and faces of the patriot dead from the area. Butler notes that "the norm governing who will be a grievable human is circumscribed and produced in these acts of permissible and celebrated public grieving...sometimes operates in tandem with a prohibition on the public grieving of others' lives" (2004, 37).

The grieving of Johanna, as the typical Irish mother, for Charlie amidst the litany of names and images on the memorial wall who died as volunteers for Irish Republicanism has an obverse side; those not mourned by the community, those who survived or did not align with the primarily Sinn Féin narrative. Though Barney, for example, has defended the district as a member of a rival Republican paramilitary and continues to serve a republican against British rule, if he were to ever die on active service, he would not be remembered here. And non-mainstream Republicans or former PIRA volunteers who suffer with PTSD and injury who did not die in active service and who wait for death in the confines of their flats, forgotten and ungrieved, will also never know a place here.

Charlie's life is grieved as one who made the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of escaping the very bondage that, because of his actions and the actions of his father and so on, will eventually lead to the blossoming of a future outside of such a bondage. The sort of life that serves as the ideal for

grief in this community is self-sacrificial *for* the community. The drama of his public corporeal appearance speaks to the social ties of responsibility those in the district have to their martyrs. To be a martyr literally means to be a witness, to be in a state of awareness. Charlie, of course, was an active martyr, choosing to fight against those who kept his community in bondage. His mother speaks about his way of life; a kind of life that should surely be grieved, but also emulated by others. Charlie's ghost does more than haunt the present scene as a reminder of what the community has sacrificed. While the community witnesses this sacrifice, Charlie's ghost enacts the other side of this relationality, as Charlie also witnesses and surveils the living to ensure that they continue to do their part as circumscribed by Sinn Féin. Through the dead's witnessing, the living is called to account.

This memorial sits away from St. Matthew's churchyard. Its location spatially distances it from the roots of Christological sense martyrdom⁹, or *imitatio Christi* connoting nonviolence, whether in the traditional passive or 20th century liberation theology sense. Instead, the memorial prioritizes active forms of enduring death for the sake of faith by memorializing Charlie and the subsequent faces of dead active duty volunteers whose main tool against oppressors was precisely violence. This ambiguity with regards to Catholicism is most evident in the fact that both terms, martyr and patriot dead, are used to identify the dead, though the latter term is noticeably more frequent today.

⁹ While there is an immense secondary literature on martyrdom in Ireland, I've been most influenced by Sweeney's (2003) general tracing of the genealogy of Irish self-sacrifice and self-immolation from the Old Irish manuscripts to the 1981 Irish Republican Hunger Strikers. Martyrdom in Ireland is a multi-layered phenomenon with pre-Christian pagan and syncretic Catholic roots, not to mention centuries of insurrectionary activity culminating in the IRA. Ó Cadhla's (2017) essay likewise plots the pagan and Christian elements of the martyr in modern Irish Republican Ballad tradition. For a general understanding of the shifting cultural and theological understanding of martyrdom, Valiente (2014) has charted several important strands, including the more recent embracing of active forms of liberation theology martyrdom. This theology was forcefully articulated by the great Jesuit thinker of the 20th century, Karl Rahner, in his 1983 article, "Dimensions of Martyrdom: A Plea for the Broadening of a Classical Concept." Rahner argues that the Church should not just recognize passive martyrs, but those who "suffered in active struggle for the Christian faith and its moral demands" (10).

Charlie's ghost, in singing the defiant Irish folksong against British imperialism in Northern Ireland, disrupts chronological times. After all, Northern Ireland did not exist when Charlie was alive, and the song sung had yet to be written. Chronologically understood, Charlie and Johanna singing "Four Green Fields," the 1967 folksong by the Irish musician Tommy Makem about Northern Ireland, constitutes an anachronism. Yet, anachronisms merge with other forms of chronicity at the memorial. Time leaks here, a recombinant horizon in which time moves forwards and backwards, spatialized like a spiraling gyre in the service of constituting the unsettled time of provisionality. I believe what is being constituted here is something like a "past future." That is, the anticipation of a future in which a united Ireland *would be* done by Sinn Féin, a future anticipated by so many from the past.

I proposed over email to the playwright, Laurence McKeown, whether his play about the resolute mother and sacrificed son was speaking to a "past future," and I asked him his reasons for writing the play in the first place. He responded:

I suppose I wanted the story located in the community and family from where Charlie came rather than it being simply his story. The struggle impacted families and communities. Will be interested to see how you deal with the 'past futures'. I prefer to live in the 'now' and neither cling to the past nor grasp for the future but aware that the past stays with us and we need to be conscious of that at all times.

McKeown's framing of how he experiences time in terms of the "now" moment argues against my own understanding of his work, as reconstituting a future from the past for the sake of the present. This "now" appears to de-temporalize loss and break apart the push of the past and future. But to understand this "now" of McKeown's, it's clear that I must trace the genealogy of provisional time.

Constructing an Irish Subjectivity

To fully understand provisional time, and how it arises as an unsettling mood at the start of the most recent conflict in the Short Strand, an account of its inception is necessary. On 24 April 1916, the Army of the Irish Republic, an amalgam including James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, the Irish Volunteers, Irish-American "Hibernian Rifles," the woman's organization, *Cumann na mBan*, and the boys' organization *Na Fianna Éirenn*, the latter two as auxiliary units, rebelled against the British Empire while it was mired in the trenches of France fighting WWI. They proclaimed Ireland's independence from England and established a Provisional Government of the Irish Republic with a series of performative utterances written mainly by Patrick Pearse, an inspirational Irish Nationalist, and James Conolly, the well-known Irish Marxist and Catholic Nationalist. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was read four minutes after noon by Patrick Pearse on the steps of Grand Post Office (GPO from here after) in the center of Dublin and distributed as a pamphlet throughout the city.

The opening lines of the proclamation read:

POBLACHT NA hÉIREANN
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

This vocative opening directly addresses, and thus brings into existence at the moment of its performative uttering, two subject positions for the first time: "Irishmen and Irishwomen." Of course, this is not the first time a form of Irish identity appears, but through repeating this identity (and by including women indicating its intent to align with the woman's suffrage movements), within the context of an insurrection and the establishment of a provisional government, the Irish emerge as sovereign subjects. Yet, the hitch of gaining a sovereign identity in Ireland, which to foreshadow will repeat in the Short Strand, is the requisite loss of self to a "provisional" temporality.

Crisis becomes the constituting condition of the Irish subject. Once the proclamation is orated, an altered and now “provisional” temporality of Irish sovereignty is spatialized in the heart of Dublin. The vocative thus calls to attention, and brings about, an altered Irish subject. Pearse’s address continues: “In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.” The Irish scholar Liam de Paor, in his analysis of the Proclamation, a document that is read aloud constantly but rarely analyzed rhetorically, notes this “apostolic form of address...a call to a jihad; the Irish people are being summoned to war in the name of God and of the nation’s martyrs” (de Paor 2016, 70-1).

Not only does the nation receive its future from a confluence of God and the dead, but it becomes a personified agent – a mother – who summons through her people, “her children,” to *strike*. A tricolor flag and an Irish Republic flag flown from flagpoles on the GPO become the focal sites for such a summoned gathering. The flags were hoisted and planted atop the occupied GPO in Dublin, signifying the setting down of roots, of making and possessing territory, within the Pale itself, the seat of British sovereignty. The tricolor, vertical lines of green, white, and orange, as de Paor notes, was not considered the national flag until that moment when it was planted (74). This performative act changed the very understanding of existence for this object and experiencing the tricolor from thence forward was an experience of Irish sovereignty. Pearse’s proclaiming underneath the flags, particularly the tricolor, articulates an experiential structure for the Irish people, and this understanding of a way of life arises, it seems, from the overlapping confluence of temporalities – past to present for the sake of a hidden future laid down at the foundations of time and ready to reveal itself in this “now” moment. Perhaps this is why Laurence McKeown emphasized his preference to live in the “now.” The status of the now, which is the privileged mode

of appearance of objects to acts of consciousness, becomes emphasized in 1916 as a revelatory moment.

And only in a decisive “now” moment could this Provisional Republic come to be, seemingly drawing from Paul’s conversion and the New Testament temporality of *καιρός* (*kairos*), the opportune moment or event, which evokes a sort of crisis when it comes. The Proclamation affirms: “having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, [the Provisional Republic] now seizes that moment.” The right moment to reveal itself, and thus be available for seizing, is suggestive of Joel Robbins’s thesis that *rupture* is the principle Christian experience and contribution to current understandings of temporality: “Christianity represents time as a dimension in which radical change is possible. It provides for the possibility, indeed the salvational necessity, of the creation of ruptures between the past, the present, and the future” (Robbins 2007, 10-11).

Borrowing from the “radical discontinuity” of Saul of Tarsus’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus when he suddenly encounters Christ, Robbins argues that Christianity is unique in “keeping the discontinuity that marked its birth at the forefront of its followers’ minds” (11). This Christian development of time transforms into an Irish Republican sense of time through the radical discontinuity that erupts out of the event of the proclaiming the new (provisional) Irish subjectivity to be seized at this revealing moment.

Alain Badiou specifically grafts St. Paul’s conversion and ministry onto his account of the event, seeing in Paul the “poet-thinker of the event” who connects “the general idea of a rupture, an overturning, and that of a thought-practice that is the rupture’s subjective materiality” (2003, 2). Badiou explains that the conversion experience produces a new existential subject. The one who utters “I am” understands the copula as disclosing an entirely altered world:

Is the term “conversion” appropriate to what happened on the road to Damascus? It was a thunderbolt, a ceasura, and not a dialectical reversal. It was a conscription instituting a new subject: “By the Grace of God I am what I am [*eimi ho eimi*] (Cor. I.15.10). What this

absolutely aleatory intervention on the road to Damascus summons is the “I am” as such.
(2003, 17)

The Proclamation of the Irish Republic itself has within it a similar theory of time that parallels, and perhaps is directly indebted to, Pauline experience. In fact, written into the very proclamation was that the time of Ireland was the time-moment to be seized. What is revealed, of course, is the Ireland whose foundations have always already been laid, and in many ways, this is also an experience of the apocalyptic. The apocalyptic uncovers another order through the disfiguring chaos of revolution. What was once excluded is now not only included, but borrows from, while surpassing, the very sublimity of the mighty colonial apparatus. What the apocalyptic reveals, in this case, is not the new, but rather a return to a prior state for the sake of a particular future. It presents this breach in time through a whole host of signifying acts and symbols. To be sure, the apocalyptic is a discontinuity in the order of things, but only for the sake of which the future becomes grasped through what has already been. What is revealed at the end (speaking in terms of an apocalyptic eschatology) will be what was already there at the *arché*, the beginning.

The end of the story of the provisional government for 1916, of course, remains the defeat of the rebels during their last stand at the GOP and the adjacent Moore Street, and the subsequent execution of sixteen of the leaders, of which Padraic Pearse, Roger Casement, and James Connolly are the most infamous. In the aftermath of the provisional spacetime disclosed through the utterance and subsequent insurrection, Ireland now had a fresh generation of martyrs and most importantly, a way of living that temporalizes in an historically unique way, binding the Irish Republican *subject to death*.

Another way to think about the symbolic meaning of the provisional in Ireland during Easter weekend is as a reenactment of the event of Christ’s Resurrection, a transitory period in which Christ is neither here nor there. Once dead, he is now alive, roaming the earth, but only temporarily. From thence forward, all Christians were bound to Christ’s death as the fundamental

act revealing their way of life. Being bound to death, of course, is not a unique position for the colonized subject. The colonized subject often potentially exists as a *homo sacer*, as bare life who can be killed without repercussions (Agamben 1998). Whether this potential for a death sentence is commuted, deferred, or leveled matters little for the status of the colonized. The Irish rebels, through the drafting of a proclamation, which enacts such a death contract, rearranged the terms of the debate about the deaths of the colonized subjects. They re-negotiated the terms of the death sentence, taking colonial cultural forms – proclamations, provisional law, nationhood, signatories – and reinterpreted and laminated these forms onto an armed insurrection.

While de Paor (2016) shows that the Proclamation draws from the genres established by the Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man and Citizen, and Lincoln’s Inaugural and Emancipation Proclamation addresses, much less attention has been paid to the fact that these very genres were also used for colonial subjugation. What Brian Larkin (2008) calls the “colonial sublime” in the case of British colonial rule in Nigeria, in which colonizing powers created infrastructures that would evoke “the feeling of submission and prostration...the mixture of horror and incomprehension” (36) while at the same time offering up such technological modes of developments to the colonized, was reversed by these Irish insurrectionaries. No longer was the grandeur of colonial rule sublimely demarcating a future for Ireland. Rather, the fiery and futile insurrection against such colonial sublime bore out radical discontinuity with such a future. The sublimity of the provisional government harkened back to a spectacular amalgam of radical Christian discontinuity and primordial Irish pagan frenzy. It is no surprise, then, that a statue of the Irish mythological hero, Cú Chulainn, stands in the foyer of the General Post Office today. Known for his fierce *ríastrad* (war spasm or torque), the statue depicts the moment of his death, strapped to the pillarstone with battle goddess Morrígu in the shape of a scald-crow perched on his shoulder.

In some sense, the Irish Proclamation also makes explicit the colonial dictum that under such rule, subjects are already bound to death at the colonizer's whim. But, the Proclamation counters this proposal not through denying death, but accepting it in a unique way, as Irish citizens bound to death for her. Indeed, all the signatories of the proclamation would be executed. They had taken the potential for being reduced to bare life inherent in any colonized body and actualized it by literally signing their own death contract, and they knew this explicitly. Because of a series of mishaps and deception, including the interception of arms from Germany, the initial plans for the Rising were foiled before they began. When they pushed ahead "to bring out what force they could, a day late, on Easter Monday, it was in the knowledge that the rising would know have little or no prospect of military success. It would be a gesture - 'propaganda of the deed'" (de Paor 2016, 51).

For the first time, though perhaps still in latency, what it means to be an Irish Republican is correlated to *provisionality* especially in the face of certain defeat. A crucial characteristic of provisional time is the experience of resolutely anticipating a salvific moment to seize and "to strike." More importantly, there is acceptance of the expectation that during this provisional temporality the sacrifice of yourself and others will likely end in defeat. This moment to be seized often requires the Irish subjects to be killed or to kill within the unfolding of provisional temporality. Inherent in these acts of martyrdom was a kind of experience grounded by an understanding of transcendently destructive death. Dead generations would live only through the summoning of Irish children towards death; a death that not only bore no guarantee of victory, but that almost certainly would end in defeat. The dead live and the living die. The living are thus bound to death. In this way, the Irish Proclamation is a death contract that says if one is Irish, he or she has already been sentenced to death, socially and actually, until the time when the provisional ends in a united Ireland, a united Ireland that is admittedly always already thwarted.

To be more precise, this is the re-negotiation of a death contract set down by colonial rule but constituted out of a counterthrust of interpretation. A retort which takes death onto oneself and says, “yes, we will die, but as Irish subjects.” As James Connolly published in the *Workers’ Republic* two months before the Easter Rising, “A destiny not of our fashioning has chosen this generation as the one called upon for the supreme act of self-sacrifice – *to die if need be that our race might live in freedom*” (Connolly 2016, 247, emphasis added). Within this reversal is the very agency denied a colonized people. This sentiment is encapsulated in the final line of the Proclamation: “In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.”

The first provisional period lasted six days. After the Easter Rising, the “provisional” remained larval in form. Its inner content pulsed with potential ways of being and desires to question, and thus act, counter to the realm of colonial time and law, both of which function as the death principle in colonial Ireland for a subject other than British or Anglo-Irish. The nationless subjects remain “beyond the pale.” This clever turn of phrase originated in Ireland to signify that which remains outside the Pale, or British rule in Ireland since the late middle ages, became inseparable from the notion of a distinguishable Anglo-Irish polity and culture. The initial conception of the provisional, perhaps written as an afterthought while drafting the proclamation – a rhetorical trope hewn out of the revolutionary event of the 1916 Rising – injected itself into the caesura through its public proclaiming. What was constituted here was a collective awareness, a unity of apperception in Kantian terms, through which space and time synthesized with a provisional death contract. A speech act, to be sure, transforming what could be said and done within a newly emerging time and space. Then, borne out of this caesura, the provisional becomes an altered and altering temporality.

Unsettling Existences

Throughout 1968, and especially during the “Summer of ’69,” civil unrest in Northern Ireland had turned into open conflict. Six thousand refugees, primarily Catholics from Belfast, fled across the Irish-British border for Gormanston Refugee Camp. As the largest displacement since WWII took place, Catholics and Protestants separated into homogenous districts and built rudimentary and slapdash barriers from crates, vehicles, oil drums, scrapwood and sheets of corrugated metal roofing. The British Army began erecting more solid structures of concrete roadblocks and metal and concertina razor wire. They would be called “peace lines.”



Figure 11: First Peace Line Being Erected, Coaches Street, 1969 (reproduced with permission from the Belfast Archive Project)

The immediate perception in some of the Catholic districts, more folkloric than true, was that the old Irish Republican Army that consisted of mostly veterans who fought during the border campaign (1956-62) had failed to protect them. This apocryphal story is still told today: the graffiti

“I Ran Away,” it has widely been claimed though never proven, was scrawled on walls when the old IRA could not prevent the Protestants from burning Catholics out of their homes. A former Provisional IRA volunteer told me that he was influenced by the discourse of this “I Ran Away” graffiti as a teenager, but admits never actually seeing it, “The only piece of graffiti that I saw – and I didn’t understand it either – was just on the Newtownards Road there on Seaforde Street, up around that area, and it said ‘US Hands Off Vietnam.’” Whether or not the IRA was as feckless as the discourse holds, or whether simmering tensions within the organization used the 1969 pogroms as a reason to fracture, two IRA leaders in Belfast, Joe Cahill and Billy McKee, split from the IRA leadership in Dublin. Using the angry and disappointed sentiment behind such discourses of cowards, Cahill and McKee constituted the Provisional Irish Republican Army in December of 1969. Billy McKee would be in command of the Provisionals during the gun battle at St. Matthews in June 1970.

Bobby tells me that at first a certain “mood shift” permeated the streets in 1968; a mood that increased in tension as violence broke out around the city. This mood rose out of interactions with the street itself, including interactions with his 14-year-old friends. Over the year, the vague awareness of “tension” on the margins of consciousness came to be central in his life, which he articulates as an “unsettled existence.” He describes how this “mood shift” was felt on the streets of the Short Strand where he lived. This mood became modified into historical experience through conversations with others on these streets until, he says, he had an “awakening.” The mood was already there, yet only when he had an awakening could the mood be brought belatedly to language. Describing this mood, Bobby tells me a long narrative about his “awakening” that began in 1968. Astonishingly, the energized image of his narrative, the Irish tricolor and starry plough flags, are situated at the beginning of the story, even though chronologically, they appear at the end of his awakening when he had become part of the project of Irish Republicanism.

Bobby: The first tricolors that I'd seen was in 1970. That was my, the first thing I see was the tricolor and starry plough together. But that my kind of awakening – political awakening I suppose is a way to describe it – was in summer of 1968. I was 14... Well, the only memory I have of it was that for some reason we boys, 14-year olds, became vigilantes on Bryson Street. Because Bryson Street was the last street before you went into Unionist or Loyalist East Belfast. Was a mixed street in the sense that maybe a third was Protestants, so you would have got Union Jacks flying and things like that... About '68 there was tension, in the summer of '68 there was tension in this community. And it was really about some sort of fear, which I couldn't quite quantify or put a handle on, about their neighbors in the Protestant community. They come down in the middle of the street, it didn't quite sit right. Because we lived beside them, but anyway, there was a mood shift, but you see, unbeknownst to me, there was events happening in the North, that was creating the tension such as the civil rights marches, protests of the students, all this activities going on all around you, and I'm sure it was going on in here because you've got Republicans and people who want to look for the opportunity to have another go. None of that I'm aware of, none of it. But when it arrives at Bryson street is what happens to me is I end up in the corner of the street watching and protecting the street... We just all end up all us boys together, it was probably because maybe its school we were talking about it, or maybe at nighttime we would stand at the corner of the street talking about it, I don't know.

But the upshot of it all anyway is that I'm standing from summer 1968 at the corner of Bryson Street and Madrid Street, watching down into loyalist East Belfast in case they come up. So that's where I begin there. And of course, in the summer of '68 I then begin to learn from hearing from other people, from standing with older boys and older men what it all means... On the street you begin to hear the history of the district from the 1920s. And a flip of the coin, you know you've got guys old enough to have been in the IRA in 1920 talking to you at the corner of the street. So now, you're kind of very slowly changing. Imperceptibly changing as a boy, who might just be riding bikes, looking for girlfriends and all that stuff. Suddenly attacking your house, attacking your family, attacking your neighbors – and all that sort of stuff. So I kind of thought, use this as a wee metaphor, I was on the streets in '68 and haven't really left them because of my life the way it evolved in terms of the conflict and struggle and what have you. Psychologically you can't end up on the streets forever. In your head. You're not on reality on the streets, but in your head.

Matthew: What's that like?

Bobby: I think it's an unsettled existence. Unfinished business in terms of struggle for independence. I think it's probably also due to the traumatic nature of the shift of being an ordinary boy at 14 into this role as a vigilante and from that comes your – out of that comes, that's your first rung on the ladder to jail. The first rung in your life to go, completely changed life that's filled with things that life should never be filled with. Which is war. And that's what happened. So '68 begins.

In the Short Strand, and in particular on Bryson Street, which even now demarcates the two communities and where St. Matthews Catholic church resides, the mood never really left Bobby's own psychic structures. It was, as he says, "in your head." The very unsettled existence contains both the "traumatic nature of the shift" leading to rungs of the "changed life" beside another life that was never fulfilled.

Bobby's existential sensitivity towards such a mood welling up from the very streets in which he played becomes aroused through interacting with his friends as well as old IRA men. The very streets themselves, as Bobby says, are still in his head. The streets became the mooded space amidst which an unsettled existence had to be lived. He experienced on the streets what the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (1987) calls a "mood space." For Bollas, an altered self can emerge out of such spaces. He says, "[t]ime must pass before a person emerges from a mood, and when he does the space created for the experiencing of a mood disappears with the act of temporal emergence" (100). Mood spaces, thus, "establish fragments of former self states." Pushing this understanding of mood, and borrowing from Throop (2014), we can see how moods can remain latent, on the margins, in the shared horizon of experience: "moods are existential modes of engaging with moral problems in such a way that they remain viscerally bound to our being. Moral moods are thus embodied responses to the problem of 'keeping alive' particularly existentially resonant and yet unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) moral concerns" (72). What Throop calls moral moods, moreover, may sublimate the particular moment of its arrival and become potentially repeatable in different times, lending to moods of transhistorical character.

In fact, as Heidegger has observed, moods have the particular character of "repeatability," of bringing one back to what has been for the sake of which their existence can orient towards the future (2008, 394). For Heidegger, humans are always attuned, or disposed, to a mood, even if such a mood is "neutral." Moods allow things to matter, to appear as significant or in the case of being

“unsettled” to appear as insignificant. No longer did the concerns of “being an ordinary boy at 14” matter for Bobby. What appears from having been, but springing out of resolute determination from the future, are the Irish flags and the experience of Irish sovereignty. The flags appear to Bobby as mattering out of his unsettled mood. This mood is not locked in his head, but arises intersubjectively between him, his mates, and the old timers on the streets. Ultimately, however, what arises in such a mood is an attunement to “potentiality.” This “potentiality” is repeated, as if out of the past, in a peculiar way – as a resoluteness that comes from a past future. The tension on the streets brought Bobby and others face-to-face with this mood.

As Bobby explains, once the mood became articulatable, the emergence of the “Provisionals” (Provos, Provies, etc.) as a way of being, and thus an identity, begins to proliferate, especially after the split within the IRA in 1969. At the end of the split, when the dust settled between ideological camps, two Republican groups would emerge: Official Republican Army (Stickies) and Provisional Irish Republican Army, the latter becoming the major offensive Irish Republican paramilitary during the troubles. The newly formed Provisional Irish Republican Army and its Provisional Army Council announced:

We declare our allegiance to the 32-County Irish Republic proclaimed at Easter 1916, established by the first Dáil Éireann in 1919, overthrown by force of arms in 1922 and suppressed to this day by existing British-imposed Six-County and 26-County partition states. (*Irish Times*, 28 December 1969, in Bell 1980, 366)

The first chief of staff of the Provisional IRA, and one of the men responsible for its founding, was Seán Mac Stíofáin. In his memoirs, Mac Stíofáin explains that he never meant anything by naming the breakaway group “provisional” other than as pragmatic-semantic use of the word:

I should explain the original meaning of the term “Provisional”...we agreed another convention would be held, if possible within six months but in any event not later than twelve months, to regularize the leadership position. Pending this the newly elected Army Council and Executive were, quite accurately, regarded as provisional bodies (138)

[...]

The first leak of the split appeared in a Fianna Fáil newspaper, the *Sunday Press*, on December 28, 1969. It said that some members of the IRA had “withdrawn” at a convention earlier in the month to form a Provisional Army Council. The leak did not come from our side. But the term “Provisional” caught the public’s attention immediately. It rang a bell in the memory of the Irish people. The men of 1916 had signed the Proclamation as the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic (142).

Mac Stíofáin admits that the initial naming of the Provisional apparatus drew from a practical understanding of articulating the transition from one organization to a new organization “regarded as provisional bodies.” Yet once the name entered into the public sphere, it brought to awareness the collective melancholic temporality of subjugated Irish Catholics and seemed to resonate with unconscious dynamics, such as those famously described by Freud. As if drawing from the psychoanalytic law of the father, the manifestation of latent former ideals lodged in the unconscious, the term provisional “rang a bell in the memory of the Irish people.” Recall that for Freud, the mood of melancholy has a distinct and durative temporality compared to mourning, an extended and miasmatic lived experience of time, where the “pure culture of the death instinct” holds sway, “driving the ego to death” (Freud 1989, 43). Indeed, as Freud later recognized, there are perhaps no firm borders between mourning and melancholia, such that melancholia may very well remain partially constitutive of the person, and their experiences, until the end. This experience, which requires that one incorporate the person, ideal, or other loss into the core of their being, as a fundamental structure of subjectivity. Melancholia, and the ambiguous unknowing of what was lost during a loss, turned out to be a fundamental structure of human existence.

The Provisional, as a proper identity, and as an experience of time, can be seen as repeating the death contract, instantiated during the insurrectionary and sublime moment of the Easter Rising. Mac Stíofáin, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army, split off from the IRA because they wanted to rush headlong into death, as proclaimed in the Proclamation. They wanted the ability to kill, to do more damage, and to die. More than just a declaration of allegiance, however, the newly formed Provisionals enact a tropological effect in the understanding of the term. Provisional now

accrues the sense of not only an altered subjectivity – distinct from Irish subjectivity and even Irish Republican subjectivity – but a chronic existential condition.

By 1970, the dormant apocalyptic thinking of 1916 resurfaces in Belfast. The Provisional Irish Republican Army will emerge new, phoenixlike out of the ashes of the old Irish Republican Army, on 27 June 1970 in the Short Strand. The so-called Battle of St. Matthews will facilitate a shape of time that remains operative today. The Provisional IRA retrieved their name from the Proclamation and stated that so long as the British remain in Ireland, the time of the provisional would structure day to day life. Consequently, for the first time, a Catholic paramilitary succeeded in defending a Catholic district against attack. Moreover, a Catholic paramilitary went on the offensive against *Protestants* and the Protestant state apparatus, not just the British security apparatus. They killed two (innocent) Protestants in east Belfast and injured dozens. During the gun battle, the Provisional IRA emerged as a cohesive paramilitary for the first time. It did so by seizing a moment, by defending the district that was under attack by Protestants, made of Loyalist paramilitaries and bandsman and Orangemen, wanting to burn down St. Matthews and Catholic houses. The Provisional IRA that had emerged in the Short Strand in 1970 filled the rebel void, but with an armed campaign.

During the evening of 27 June 1970, endless barrages of gunshot bursts, cracks, and the slaps of bullet on brick of the church and priest's residence could be heard throughout inner East Belfast. Hundreds of Protestants, Protestant paramilitary members, and members of the Orange Order, an anti-Catholic men's organization, gathered on the Newtownards Road outside of Saint Matthews Catholic Church to face off against the Catholic Defense League, and the newly formed Provisional Irish Republican Army. Most of the police and the British army stood on the sidelines during the battle, the army admitting that they had too few troops to deal with a crowd of this size. What happened during the gun battle remain contested, and this event has engendered webs of

dissent, with competing narratives, memorials and commemorations emerging from each side of the community, as well as new counter-narratives recounted by individuals. Each new reflection on the event, and memorial performance of such threshold encounters, recombines temporal relations in the present for the sake of a past future. As such an energized event, it has left its mark on the whole of east Belfast, and the closer one gets to the church, the more entropic the social relations become. The church is the regular site of riots and attacks and it's no surprise given the main Bryson Street peace wall that separates east Belfast runs across the street from the church. The gun battle at the chapel upturned all social life in east Belfast.

Such a sequence of temporal upturning recall what the Irish novelist James Joyce calls the “chaosmos of Alle” (Joyce 1999, 118). Such a “chaosmos” emerges out of and constitutes a drastic and in many ways inarticulable period of reckoning with time. For Irish Republicans, a presumption that time has already been completed, that a united Ireland has already happened, but everyone is just waiting to see it, is evident in the very Proclamation of the Irish Republic. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic first articulates this weird sense of an already completed time that disjoins the present time, for the sake of a future time, that has already been laid down at the foundations of time. After the gun battle at St. Matthews, this experience of chaosmos will become the everyday time, especially the closer one gets to the perceived portal of temporal displacement – the church itself.

Unlivable Times

The acts of commemoration reinforced the unsettled status of Irish existence in the Short Strand. This was, however, mostly curated through a Sinn Féin understanding of the post-peace process Ireland in which the future will be brought about through political and electoral gains. What remains unsettled, in this narrative, is whether Sinn Féin will emerge as the dominant political power. These

performances restore a form of time to consciousness. They evoke the mood initiated in 1916 and later rearticulated and reinscribed during the Provisional IRA's debut in the gun battle in the Short Strand in 1970. Attached to their very name – provisional – is an experience of the disunity. Those who give their lives for the sake of this time are remembered on the memorial wall of *An Tine Bheo*, “the living flame.” And yet, this is a Sinn Féin memorial, and as such, no more names will appear here, as the armed struggle for a United Ireland is a thing of the past for the party. These commemorations had a political orientation and elided a message of continuing violence against the British, which when evoked chronotopically figures as a former practice.

On the one hand, Sinn Féin, as the political wing of the Provisional IRA have to summon the history of armed conflict against British rule to advocate for a political program divorced from such violence. This paradox, ultimately, cannot be resolved by common sense. The original discontinuous ruptures of 1916 and 1970, and the way of life lived within such a rupture, becomes cysts stuck on time. In Henrik Vigh's (2008) work in Guinea-Bissau, he notes that the temporality of ruptures can themselves become part of the leveled-down everyday, such that all life exists within such temporal crises: “war is no longer seen as an exception but as a recurrent event. It has become a cyclical and expected manifestation of the dense disorder that characterises Bissauian society” (6). Ruptures from the everyday or what Vigh calls “crises,” take an “enduring hold on people and societies as it becomes endemic rather than episodic” (7). So rather than being a decisive moment of change, Vigh notes that ruptures of crises, instead, become a chronic existential condition, one of persistence. This endemic form of time becomes unlivable for many the longer it persists.

To be sure, at the Short Strand 1916 commemoration lives are grieved, not just by the actors, but by real mothers, sisters, fathers, brothers, and children whose loved ones' faces and names are placed in the successive genealogy of patriot dead begun with Charlie Monahan. And yet, there are others from the Short Strand who are beyond the limits of grievability, who remain unseen

and prohibited from this performance. The very temporality of the provisional rupture has paradoxically become frozen. This temporality that is supposed to open up the possibility of a future free from colonial rule becomes part of the background. This messianic future shown in the commemorative acts recalling the potential of the provisional actually gestures towards its exhaustion; an exhaustion felt by the very bodies excluded from the public performance.

Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA discarded Ollie. He sits on the literal and figurative margins of the district. Ollie's life becomes ungrieveable for both the state, which is unsurprising considering its historical stance towards Irish Republicans, but also by Sinn Féin. Ollie, who lived in America under an alias and only returned home after the peace agreement, is ostracized by his community, in part, because he fled during a temporary release from prison in the 1970s under the auspices of attending his brother's funeral. This benefit of temporary release, which he used to escape from Northern Ireland, was withdrawn from subsequent Republican prisoners. These prisoners would miss the funerals of their family members and they blamed Ollie for what they think was a selfish act. When Ollie returned to Belfast, the local Sinn Féin leaders refused to let him move back into the community, even though he had been one of the finest IRA operators and had played a critical role during the "Battle of St. Matthews." He was forced to beg Sinn Féin leadership on the Falls Road for permission to return to the community in which generations of his family have lived, many of whom served as republicans. Barney, his brother, argued fiercely with Sinn Féin to allow him to return and they relented. Ollie was able to return, though many in the district see him to this day as a traitor.

After Sinn Fein's *1916: Our History, Our Future* commemorations ended, I met with Barney inside of Ollie's house. Ollie was in the hospital recovering from neck surgery to replace one of his cervical vertebrae that had been injured when British soldiers rammed his head into a moving Saracen in his early 20s, and he had asked Barney to gather some things from his flat. Upon entering

Ollie's ground-level flat, Barney points out to his car and swears at the police. He says they've taken his car five times to search it and an armed response was just at his house last week. He relates this "harassment" to why the commemoration plays were not well attended. He says that last year there would have been a few thousand and the year before it would have had people coming from other districts. He says people are angry at Sinn Féin for supporting the police. Recently, a prison officer's car had been bombed just outside the district, which was condemned by Sinn Féin politicians. The prison officer later died. Barney questions those who complain about the police officer being blown up. "What about what they did to us?" he says emphatically, "I can bring you around to hundreds of people in the district who are disabled because of what they did." Barney's brother is one of these hundreds.

Ollie himself lives in an unlivable time. He describes this kind of life to me, which he calls "half-dead," and questions about how long one should live in such a life, including the time limit governmental health system should agree upon for allowing such suffering to occur:

My life is pretty moribund. There was a young man in Belgium who killed himself with the help of doctors because he was so depressed, he was twenty-nine years old. That caught my eye. He was self-euthanized I guess you call it. He put himself forward for euthanization. They agreed. It's causing a lot of debates to be had now because it's a new departure. He had a mental illness or qualified as having a mental illness whether it was emotional. He's dead now and his suffering is over. The point is just that. It begs the question about how long do you live with a mental illness before you opt for the fucking chop?

[...]

I think I'm dealing with trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder but not very well. It's been untreated for many, many, many, many, many years and that's the problem and there's no real treatment for it because they don't know how to develop a treatment for it. Any breakthroughs there have been have been in scenarios not embraced here. I know of several things they are doing in the States, but those practitioners aren't here yet and their theories aren't wildly popular here.

The story of the depressed Belgian man killing himself, the "new departure" of self-euthanization, offers Ollie an example and language to question his own unsettled existence about how long his own suffering can go on. This question offers itself as alternative temporal possibility, even if the

final possibility. Ollie consistently looks for alternatives to his current life, and when he questions the newly emerging possibility of self-euthanasia, he does so with interest, as if he finally had a worthwhile thought to mull about, a possible purpose and alternative temporality to dwell with. He says, “It begs the question about how long do you live with a mental illness before you opt for the fucking chop.” Constitutive of Ollie’s psychical and embodied suffering is the endemic and unsettled existence of the surrounding world. Just like the Short Strand has not offered him the possibility to matter, and indeed the community has isolated him further, the NHS has not offered any “breakthroughs” and “theories” for people like him to work with. Currently, Ollie takes many medicines to keep the pain at bay and his mind placated from dark thoughts of his own death.

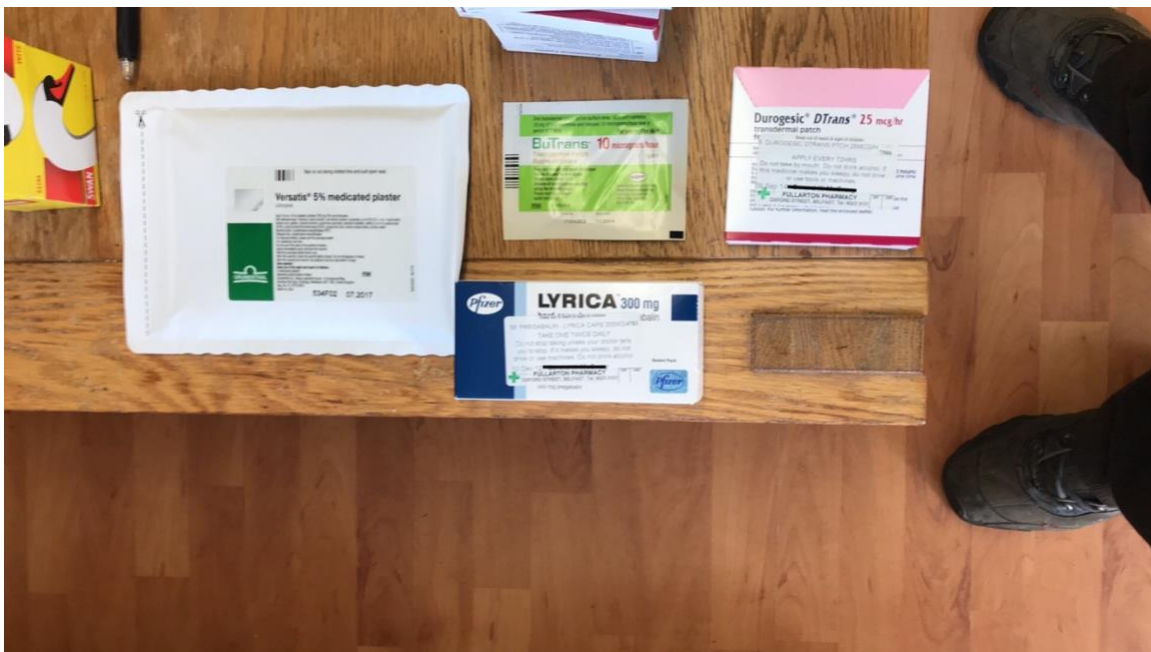


Figure 12: Ollie's Meds

Ollie’s name will not be remembered on the walls of *An Time Bheo*, and no one will stage a play for him in the future. The moral question becomes, *who* emerges from the mood of provisional temporality? Considering one’s existence becomes reconfigured through mooded attunement, who have they become? And through this altered way of being, what sort of world discloses itself? Ollie was a former Provisional, prisoner, and victim of both British and PIRA torture schemes. He has

difficulty speaking about these latter experiences – not just because the horrific and traumatic abuses he experienced escape language, but because these abuses are ever present in his daily experiences, and it physically exhausts him to draw more attention to them.

In 1970, Ollie was the OC of the Short Strand *Fianna* – the James Connolly *slua* (branch) – the relatively independent youth wing of the IRA meant to train future officers. He was sixteen. He remembers having little time to think during the gun battle and though today he can smell cordite, he's quite sure that during the battle, he did not smell anything. Mostly, "I could tell you what's in my field of vision and what I'm looking at if I'm going to shoot it." He tells me it was a grueling night. He defended the grounds of the chapel and the perimeter of the northeast corner of the district, tracking and attempting to shoot what he thought was a British Army-trained sniper. Then suddenly, he recalls, he saw something rather peculiar right there on the streets as he first hoisted a tricolor flag in the air, and then hoisted his rifle: he momentarily recalled the Easter Rising of 1916. Ollie says he experienced a simultaneity of two events superimposed on one another, playing out together. In his mind he could tell, or rather, remember the future. Two futures, one from 1916 and his present time. Even before the firefight, he tells me that he knew how the plan would unfold in victory. Though this fusion of the 1916 Easter Rising and the currently ongoing gun battle only lasted for a quick moment, it impacted him deeply. Even today, Ollie continues to imbue "making plans" with oracular power and he believes he knows how they will unfold.

The Provisional IRA leadership wanted Ollie to wave a tricolor flag on the night of the gun battle. This was to be a symbolic show for the surrounding Protestant community, the Orangemen and loyalists. Waving an Irish tricolor flag in the area would have proclaimed to the community that the PIRA was in ascendance there, and that they would not be defeated. Ollie tells me that he knew precisely what would happen as soon as he received these orders from above. He says to me: "I knew how it was going to unfold, of course I did. How can you make a plan if you don't know how

it's going to unfold?" When he did finally wave the flag on Seaforde Street parallel to St. Matthews and within the line of sight of the loyalists, the provisional time of Padraic Pearse standing on the steps of the General Post Office under the newly raised Irish flags, became reconstituted in the here and now.

While Ollie believes he knows how his plans will unfold, he readily admits he is often disappointed, that his plans do not unfold the way he knew they would. If I forget to call or visit him at nearly the exact time at which we had previously agreed, then he tells me that I "fucked it all up." Subsequently, Ollie's notion of the future too often deviates from the manner in which he believes it will unfold. He once foretold his own death, he explains to me, and then came to desire it so badly that he felt that he was dead already.

During the neck surgery to replace one of his cervical vertebrae where he had been injured when British soldiers rammed his head into a movie Saracen, his heart stopped on the operating table. He was dead for minutes. When the doctors later informed him of this he was horrified. He had signed a DNR, a do not resuscitate order, and yet they revived him:

I had died, and they brought me back even though I had signed a DNR. I signed the DNR. Do not resuscitate. They said it was because I was in theater and they wanted me to come through the operation to see if I was going to survive. But I had signed a DNR. I'd also told them not to give me morphine, which they did. And that often makes me think that's the Brits trying to derange me.

He tells me that for a decade he knew he needed this surgery and that he had been preparing for death on the operating table. During multiple conversations with me ranging a year before to the day of the operation, he speaks about dying. About six months out from the operation he says,

I won't make it off the table. I don't equate my life at this point as being of any value to anybody. Without purpose I'm one of these people that has no - what's the word - passion for anything without purpose. And I've been purposeless now for the last fucking ten years or something. So I feel like I'm half-dead already.

He had been foretelling, and thus expecting, his death for so long. Yet did not expect that he would die, and then *come back to life*. Coming-back-to-life was the worst possible future for him. I borrow

from Ollie's words about being "purposeless" to show how provisional temporality, the death contract that ensures defeat, continues to resonate in the present with Ollie. It is unlivable for those who live. Ollie thought the Battle of St. Matthews was going to break this cycle of failure for Irish Catholics in the North, and yet the provisional aspect today has become a form of chronicity that is more akin to stasis, understood as simultaneous strife and inactivity, an unsettled, and for Ollie, unlivable existence.

And because of the failure of the Provisional IRA to bring about a united Ireland, Ollie persists in telling his own future in which things would be different. Today, he has recurring dreams about an internecine war between Catholics and Protestants that he is sure will happen within the next five years. He plans on writing a science-fiction novel about it, a novel that will be read by future generations as predicting the future. His dreams, he tells me, are actually premonitions. Historically, others, including his family, did not listen to his premonitions. In the 1970s, he had tried to warn his mother before his brother was killed by loyalists:

I had that six weeks before my brother Paul was shot dead. So I wrote a letter to my mother telling her to leave here with him. And I regret writing the letter because it was based on a dream, but I knew it was going to be true. And I think it caused my mother some grief, or additional grief because I'd written the letter, and so she already knew he was going to die.

These two moments of premonition in Ollie's memory – waving the Irish flag above the Short Strand and writing a letter to his mother about his brother's death – are different forms in which Ollie has structured future possibilities. In the former, Ollie follows a known and determined course that his IRA superiors have given to him. In the latter, Ollie tries to stop the known and determined course which he believes is inevitable. In both visions, he sees the future.

Ollie explains that "spasms of time" in which freedom exists, or is barely glimpsed, get taken over by authority and by hierarchical thinking. This is what happened after the gun battle in 1970. Not unlike when Pearse read the 1916 Proclamation under the newly raised tricolor about Dublin's GPO, it was a "spasm of time" for Ollie. The moment when he waved the Irish Tricolor on

Seaforde Street across from St. Matthews Catholic Church against the marching Protestants, loyalists, and Orangemen became a brief period of freedom. Ollie describes the aftermath of the gun battle in terms of the sociality and freedom of the district. There was a brief moment of freedom when the community began to assemble in a way it had not done before. Then, the newly formed Provisionals relied on authority and beating squads to keep the district in line since the police and the Army could not act as community police, but only as patrols looking out for insurgents. He says he could see “the new iteration of Republicans becoming organized, setting up their own hierarchy and dispensing justice in the way they saw fit.” This hierarchical structure usurped the emergent community spirit that emerged out of the instant.

Provisional Temporality

In a decades-long conflict in which every small battle has been subject to the scrutiny of historians and journalists alike, the 1970 Short Strand gun battle has gone largely overlooked. On 27 June 1970, a gun battle known by Catholics as “The Battle of St. Matthews” and Protestants as either “Protestant Pearl Harbor” or “Murder in Ballymacarrett” explodes onto the streets around St. Matthew’s Catholic Church. It is at this moment in the Short Strand that a “provisional temporality” erupts outwards from the crust of everyday time. Everyday time, for the purposes of this discussion, should be understood as the shared time of practical engagements in the social world, the *sensus communis*. Provisional time, however, disfigures the surface of this everyday time, the ways of reckoning with time, and shapes the possibilities of experience. As a result, a *dissensus communis* remains today in the Short Strand – despite the fact that decades of gunfire and bombings in the area have been met with peace agreements and ceasefires. In fact, this very same 1970-gun battle remains in a state of perpetual reinterpretation today amongst both Catholic and Protestant

communities, both of whom speak frequently about it vis-à-vis the 1916 Easter Rising rebellion in Dublin, Ireland.

Here, the ongoing social contestation of the interpretation of such events have led to the continued presence of the provisional time. The term “provisional” in the context of Belfast’s historical idiom conveys more nuanced meanings as well. For decades, the word “provisional” has referred to the paramilitary organization, or a member of the organization. Significantly, in 1970, the word “provisional” entered into the Oxford English Dictionary as an adjective and noun signifying the organization or membership within the Provisional Irish Republican Army. Yet, before this meaning emerged on the linguistic scene, other uses of the word that bear directly on its use in Ireland include *provisional order*: “*Law* (in Britain) an order made by a Minister of the Crown under the authority of a statute, but requiring confirmation in an Act of Parliament before it takes legal effect” and *provisional government*: “an interim or temporary government.” Both of these notions are found in the drafting of a unique document, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic.

The provisional, pregnant with significance in Ireland today, emerges out of a ruined revolution, a singularity that changed the possible expressions for rebellious acts for future actors in Ireland. Patently repeating elements from the 1916 Easter Rising, the 1970 battle around St. Matthews Church in the Short Strand thematically and pictorially reenacts the Easter Rising in multiple ways. It is this event, moreover, which serves as a fulcrum for a sort of provisional temporality inflecting the ranges of quotidian engagements, aiding in realizing former futures, and taking on a surprising psychic life for the individuals who live under its thrall. Provisional time in the Short Strand transmigrates from a rhetorical trope to a lived experience, from a radical form of subjectivity to a leveling and ossifying concept and identity.

Raymond is a self-described community historian. For him the 1970 Short Strand gun battle is “one hiccup of a long conflict.” He is satisfied with this description and repeats it often. Raymond

speaks quickly and often under his breath. He is a short, slight man in his mid-50s. He hunches severely for his age and walks quickly. He tells me his fast gait is to get by unseen. He tries to instill caution in me, especially about the events pertaining to the gun battle. He's worried that I'm asking too many questions of the locals. Raymond tilts his head upwards and warns me sternly: "you need to ask questions without asking them."

Raymond grew up in the Short Strand but has lived for decades in West Belfast. When he visits his mother back in East Belfast he tries "to get in and out of the district undetected by staying on the edges." By now I know what he means. It's as if hundreds of eyes watch you in the Strand. There is something mysterious, sleuth-like about Raymond, but there is also a deep sadness about him, particularly when he speaks of the way he was put out of his house off of Bryson Street by Protestants in the aftermath of the 1970-gun battle. He wrote two self-published books about the Short Strand. His first book, *Lagan Enclave: A History of Conflict in the Short Strand 1886-1997* is, in my estimation, the first in-depth exploration of the "Battle of St. Matthews" ever recorded in a history book – even if self-published. His second *The Rising of the Phoenix* is the only text devoted to the events surrounding the weekend of June 27th. While the battle itself is often mentioned briefly in other academic sources, Raymond was able to gather first-hand accounts, including his own, of the night and morning. He is proud that this book is well-cited by researchers. In it he quotes the Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands' famous saying, one that has been scrawled on the sides of houses and walls and printed in pamphlets and memorabilia throughout Belfast for nearly forty years: "Everyone, Republican or otherwise, has their own particular part to play." It was important for Raymond that *Lagan Enclave* didn't have his real name on the book. He didn't want to take ownership of that history like journalists and academics do. "The community owns their history," he says. "It was funded by myself. Making money is not why I done it." A few selections from the book shed insight into the historical significance of the event for the district:

By 5.00am the gunfire ceased and the gunmen began to fade into the shadows as dawn broke. One local defender...had been killed in the rounds of the church and Billy McKee had been wounded. Two Protestants were killed, one at Central St. and another at Beechfield St./Bryson St junction. Two others died later. The provisionals had emerged from their first major action victorious over the UVF opponents but more importantly there was a sense of achievement as well of a job well done, sending out the message that the provisionals would deter any attacks on Catholic areas - Bombay St., Cupar St. and Conway St. had been avenged in the Short Strand. (Ballymacarrett Research Group 1997, 60)

[...]

On Sunday June 25th 1995, the Short Strand celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the *Battle of St. Matthew's*. The Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, visited the area, not for the first time, to unveil a memorial plaque on the exterior wall of the Sinn Féin office in Beechfield Street for all the local IRA men killed in conflict dating back to 1916. An IRA colour party led a rally through the district and the Sinn Féin leader signed autographs and posed with children for photographs. He paid tribute to the district for their community spirit and survival. (100)

I think about how Raymond's clever saying that 27 June 1970 was "one hiccup of a long conflict" properly embodies the sense of time in the district. An involuntary contraction, the rhythm punctuated by periods of expectant waiting for a recurrence, the recurrence of a "past future" that crystalizes in the image of 1916 – something that spoken grammatically, "will have been." This, of course, is the fundamental nature of provisional temporality. Thus, the new temporality draws from the resource of the 1916 rising, rewrites this event in the present by resurrecting and redeeming an actual concept of time itself called provisionality - and creates a future perfect tense in which possibilities that "will have" occurred in the future are contingent upon past possibilities. We can see how the past is now seen as preparing possible futures – again, grammatically rendered in the future perfect – that seem to become belatedly actualized. If Ireland is ever reunited – an anachronistic desire in a period of waning state sovereignty – it will take such a future perfect shape borne out past struggles. Provisional, unsettled temporality, as such, is a form of time that enters into the Short Strand in a flash, even though its emergence can be traced genealogically back to 1916. It would go

on to reassemble the intersubjective possibilities while also suspending a shared, common time for the sake of a time yet to come, a future from the past.

Chapter III Caretaking

Deadlines

Mass begins at 10 at St. Matthews. Thomas, the sacristan, has just finished preparing the altar for the priest. We meet outside at the grotto next to the church. Here, a statue of a child kneels and prays upward to an encaverned Mary mantled in white. Covering Mary's feet are bright red flowers painted by Séan, a former Irish Republican political prisoner, who became a political muralist after his release from prison in the 1980s. Behind the grotto stands a linden tree and beneath the tree is a stone memorial marker for Hank who was shot by friendly fire in 1970 and died two days later. A few yards across from the grotto and erected near the wall of the church is a granite Memorial Cross carved with golden Celtic knotwork and enclosed by a short sandstone wall. From all accounts, this cross remains the sole memorial erected in the grounds of any church anywhere on the island of Ireland to victims of the Troubles. In English and then Irish, the base of the memorial reads:

Jubilee Iubhaile
A.D. 2000

This memorial cross is dedicated to the memory of all the deceased members from St. Matthew's Parish especially those who died as a result of the conflict in our country. Always remembered with love and respect by their families, friends and parishioners. Mary Queen of Peace, pray for us.

Dóibh siúd uilig as Paróiste Mhaitiú Naofa atá anois ar shlí na firinne, go mórmhór dóibh siúd a d'éag de bharr na coimhlinte in ar dtír, a thiomnaítear an chros seo. Beidh dilchaimhne ag a muintir féin, ag a gcairde agus ag a gcomharsana ortha go brách agus is le grá agus meas a chuimhneofar orthu. A Mhaire Banríon na Síochána, guigh orainn

May they all rest in peace
Suimhneos síoraí orthu uilig

In the west grounds of the church, a tall and wide net expands like a purse-seiner hung out to dry. This prehistoric technology repurposed and rebranded marks the latest innovation in Northern Ireland's ongoing game of Keep Away, of keeping poor Protestants away from poor Catholics and vice-versa. The raucous rioting of spillover crowds of Protestant British Loyalists protesting Belfast City Council's decision to limit the number of days the Union Jack would fly over Belfast City Hall necessitated its erection in 2013. This "peace line" now protects the homes to the west of the church from bottles, stones, petrol bombs, and other crude missiles. A winch straddles an aluminum post on one end of the net though the net has never been retracted. I was told a joke about a man paid to watch and wait for the right time to retract the net: you'll find him watching and waiting in a pub in his holiday home in Spain. An exasperated Department of Justice (DOJ) official told me there is a phone number to call when the residents want the key to retract the net but he warned me it takes hours to respond and if a riot were to arise the houses could be irreparably damaged, so for the time being its best to keep the net extended.

On the northern edges of the church grounds facing the Newtownards Road are two fences. The first, an iron fence with decorative flourishes, belongs to the church. The second is a taller metal mesh fence built by the DOJ. In the five-foot gap between the two fences are hedges planted as environmental buffers to decrease visibility and prevent riots from easily spilling over. Thomas tells me the "prods" (Protestants) from the DOJ "poorly planted" them "in haste also." He thinks the frontage is terrible looking and he otherwise takes such pride in keeping the grounds in good aesthetic condition. He calls them "the stupid DOJ hedges that never grow." And he says they are "laurel, ironically." I ask him why laurel is ironic. He tells me laurel is the victory plant, meaning to him that the DOJ workers who planted the hedges were sending the Catholics a message. While the hedges never grow, they do amass trash from people walking up the road or waiting at the bus stop just beyond the fence. Thomas lists, "diapers, golfballs mostly for some reason, flasks of soup, packs

of sandwiches, band batons, of course red, white and blue! Detritus of drinking: bottles, cans and bags and plenty of piss!”

Still yet, another memorial marker is inlaid in front of the church’s entrance; a white cross carved and painted into a palm-sized circle of marble set into the pavement over which parishioners walk and coffins pass. On this spot in 1922, a woman in her early thirties was killed when a bomb thrown into the grounds from Bryson Street exploded as she made her way to church. A reminder of the pogroms against Catholics during the 1920s that claimed over four hundred lives, mostly Catholic. Above the right door to the church is a statue of St. Matthews, quill and book in hand, whose feet are splattered with many colors from paint bombs and balls thrown and shot from beyond the fences. He holds a quill above the page and looks out across the grounds with his frozen statted gaze, and I imagine what he’s seen here over the past 135 years disrupts his genealogical work.

Thomas leads me behind the church to the priest’s house. A three- or four-story red brick building in disrepair, built in the 1883. I see a hand-sized crater in its façade. Several bullet holes pock the brickwork. Brendan, Thomas’s friend, a few months earlier pointed the holes out to me, poked his finger into one, and pulled away a handful of crumbling brick. He tore at the single bullet hole with a sudden twinge of anger. He says these holes date to the gun battle on 27 June 1970 when, as a boy, he ran in fear from his large house on Bryson Street as Protestants tried to burn his family out. Fleeing down Bryson Street, covered by a family member who was the OC of the district Provisional IRA, with his parents and two siblings past the priest’s house, the gun fight broke out around them. In his hand, he grinds to rubble the brick. In his hand, a memory of what remains of the middle-class life his father had planned. The large, many-roomed house his father bought on the edge of the district for the big Catholic family his mother always wanted. Brendan has four siblings, and one died in childbirth not long after they were forced from their home that night. His mother

tells me, “I lost that baby not long afterwards. The battle was so stressful, didn’t know if she was going to make it. But I had two more.” In his middle-class life not lived, one that he speaks of often, Brendan would never have been sent to a borstal by the judge after being arrested as a teen for scouting a soldier to be killed by an Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) gunman. He’d have gone to college. He and Thomas would have done well for school, he thinks, if not for the war. Somewhere in Brendan’s clenched fist is the space where the bullet hole once was, the ruins of another, aborted life.

At the door to the priest’s house, Thomas punches a code into the keypad to enter. The first room across from the entryway is the kitchen. Around the corner is the office with two monitors up on the wall: the screens show inside the chapel facing the altar and outside over the chapel grounds. In the kitchen, an electricity salesman explains to Mary, one of the church volunteers, how changing the brand of electricity to an Irish company could save money.

Thomas makes tea for everyone and we have biscuits. The electricity salesman does not take biscuits, and he shows us his license picture from when he was much heavier and tells us that he had a heart attack last December. Thomas rises from his seat and rolls a fag. He twists opens the blinds and uses a pole hook to unlatch the top portion of the hung window for his smoke to escape. He calls to me to join him. His attention has been drawn outside the window. Covering the outside of the panes is a protective metal grate reminiscent of a prison window. The window faces out onto a fenced empty lot where the nunnery once stood and where new social houses are being built facing the Bryson Street peace wall. The Bryson Street peace wall is made of brick with mesh fencing above. A row of three-inch metal spikes runs horizontal to prevent climbing. The spikes do not prevent climbing. The wall itself was initially built by residents with scrap iron and cars in 1970 and consisted of burnt out and abandoned homes. Then the military placed concrete blocks by the mid-1970s, by the 1980s a brick wall emerged and continued to be heightened throughout the 2000s. The

total height of the wall is 25 feet and it runs 902 feet along the length of Bryson Street across from a near equally long and tall row of three-story terrace social houses on the Catholic side.

Thomas explains while looking at the build site that people are awarded one of those new houses facing the wall if they are “centregors,” a play on the word *Gaeilgeoir* (speaker of Irish), meaning those who work or are related to those who work at the local community centre. The community centre, which also houses multiple non-profit partnerships, is mostly run by families associated with the Provisional IRA or Sinn Féin, the PIRA’s political wing. “I heard the director’s daughter already got one of the houses,” he says with slight irritation towards the (unverified) information. Yet, he believes that without the PIRA there’d be no church at all, and certainly no new houses for Catholics. Thomas studies a police car as it drives up and parks near the build site. Police presence has been heavy since August when a former PIRA volunteer was assassinated outside his home a few streets away, which ended a long-running feud (Chapter VII). He mocks the police car: “reassuring presence,” while pointing out to me that all the barbs on the peace wall are pointed inwards toward the district, not outward towards the Protestants on the other side. “They’re always facing towards us, caging us in.”

Mary and the electricity salesman finish their negotiations and depart while Thomas finishes his cigarette. I begin to peel a banana I packed for my lunch. When Thomas sees me eating, he asks if I brought the banana. I suspect he asks this because a bowl of bananas and apples sits on the table. I make this inference quickly. I say I did bring the banana from home. I also add that wouldn’t be caught stealing a priest’s banana. He says that’d be a pretty funny thing to get sent out of the district for stealing the priest’s banana. Thomas relentlessly questions or comments on these sorts of ordinary acts and in this moment, I am again reminded that acts need quick and forthright explanations in this surveilled and secretive community. Sometimes questions lead to more questions, so a better way to (occasionally) get out of these scrupulous binds is humor.

Unfortunately, when it came to my early fieldwork in the district, I was mostly humorless. In time, I crafted or borrowed from others a couple of mainstay responses: “Want to know the color of my shite, too?” or “You already know my work with the FBI is top secret” for example. In time, familiarity and friendship assuaged some of the questioning, but not for all interactions and not for some people like Thomas, whom I consider to be, despite his relentless and irritating questioning, a friend. Thomas made me always aware of what my body was doing, the actions it took in the shared world of appearances and thrust upon me an often-debilitating self-reflecting awareness of the words I used when I spoke.

I ask Thomas what it would take for the walls outside the kitchen window to be brought down, as if this were the right way of approaching the wall in conversation. Still, Catholics and Protestants, these pre-modern Western markers of identity, vestigial and outmoded, necessitate segregation by something as prehistoric as a wall. The wall evokes the sense of strange predictability, itself an aspect of a chronic temporality that seems almost out-of-time with its mute resistance to the change, even ruination, of meaning. This wall keeps two self-identified populations at what Walter Benjamin would call a “dialectics at a standstill” (2002, 262). Amidst this standstill, thought encounters a tension-riven constellation of past and present in a “now” point of experiencing the wall. On the one hand, the wall does not follow from the utopian dreamscape of a previous time like other forms of public works infrastructures, as the original and current function of the wall is to keep the two communities apart. In this way, dystopia appertains to the wall’s founding. On the other hand, the out-of-time experience, counter to Benjamin, does not “blast” the historical object – the wall, the static identity – from its location in the linear march of progress to reveal temporally disjunctive contradictions of surreal capitalist development. Rather, what appears is startlingly eternal, removing any sense that these social and material arrangements could be contingent. What flashes up here for me, with Thomas looking at the wall, is a rigid binary in a stuck time. Speaking to

Thomas and others of younger and older generations about the wall, it has not accrued any new sense or contradiction that might allow the wall to speak otherwise than what it spoke decades ago when it was built. In this way, because the function of the wall remains exactly the same as always, the wall also seems to prevent the appearance of haunting or spectral pasts that may allow to emerge the inevitable temporal slippages of passing time. The divisions, at least on this day, remain as predictable as a mathematical equation.

Thomas, evoking this dialectical standstill, answers my question about the future of the relations between the two communities by saying nothing can be done about the static divisions. He's married to a Protestant, his daughter had a child with a Protestant, and though mixed marriages are common enough – just under 100 in the Strand, I'm told – Thomas does not think much of the Protestant faith or community in Northern Ireland. I posit that integrating the schools would be one way to create a more lasting peace between Protestants and Catholic. He says it's not logical to send Catholics to worse (state-run, and thus Protestant) schools. They'll be surrounded by pictures of the Queen and Union Jacks. Catholic education also creates stronger minds, he argues. He adds, however, not to romanticize the IRA or IRA killings, that no one wanted to do these things. But they didn't go to war for his children to assimilate with Protestants under the Queen and her flag. And anyway, he says, Muslims, Indians, and all sorts attend his daughters' Catholic schools. They are always welcomed, so it's not the Catholics who are segregated – it's the Protestants who segregate themselves.

This separate and better schooling for Catholics is also, he says, a necessary precondition to supplanting the supremacy of Protestants planted here by the British. I ask, "Won't integrating inevitably happen sometime in future? Isn't it a matter of time?" He tells me "it's not possible" in a separate Northern Ireland. And I ask him from a theological perspective whether it wouldn't be best to try to live with one's neighbor. Echoing his disdain for the laurel hedges planted by Protestants,

he recalls the parable of the barren fig tree as an example of why Protestants and Catholics will never integrate in Ireland. He asks me if I know the parable about the tree that won't fruit, and I say I do. He replies, "that time Jesus got angry!" The original reads:

6 He told this parable, 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none.

7 He said to his vinedresser, "For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?"

8 "Sir," the man replied, "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it:

9 it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down.'" (Luke 13: 6-9)

Irritated at his short and definitive summary of the parable as "that time Jesus got angry!," I quickly Google the original parable on my phone, read it, and then ask, "Isn't the original story about patience?" He says I'm assuming that with more time the fig tree will bear fruit. I'm being "too hopeful." He shows me there is another way to look at it: the tree was never going to give fruit and the parable set forth the setting up of a "*deadline*" for when the tree will be ripped out. The parable is not emphasizing, for Thomas, the extension of time for something to change. For Thomas, a firm date is laid down for the tree's removal. Thomas extends this argument to cohabitation with Protestants. The Catholics will "outbreed them," he says. He mimics and recasts my earlier interrogative and says wryly, "It's only a matter of time." Thomas finishes with a smirk to let me know he's not all fire and fury and says with exaggeration "kicking out those Orange bastards is the end of the story!" Underlying his smirk, perhaps, is the reality that he is married to a Protestant woman and is the smitten "granda" of his granddaughter, born to his daughter and her Protestant fiancé.

I think about this short exchange about the parable in conjunction with his disdain for the "poorly planted" laurel – "the stupid DOJ hedges that never grow." Two years after my fieldwork ends, as I am writing this chapter, Thomas texts me to tell me he's finally ripped out the Protestant laurel hedges. If Thomas's interpretation of the invasive hedges, the parable, and the current period

in time as one of limbo speaks to a larger understanding of a future in which there is no synthesis of the divisions, then what time is everyone else living in? What should we make of this time of inactivity, of barrenness, of used time? One way to look at it is disclosed by Thomas and others who frame the current time in terms of a future that has already happened, but that others either cannot yet see or refuse to recognize. Those who believe that the apparent, yet unrecognized, future is already here like Thomas discloses a distinct structure of time still seems to require a great deal of caretaking. The caretaking of this future that has already happened, and the deadline on which it will become revealed to all, even to those who are not included, is the work of time, the time that takes and gives for others to come to altered understanding of being. Blind to the future amidst them, the work of caretaking keeps open this future for the deadline in which others will see and interpret their world “as” a united and Irish world.

We can contrast this with Ollie’s experience from the previous chapter, an experience wherein making the time livable for himself has become increasingly difficult. And while Ollie cannot keep going, he does despite the great difficulty of living within a future that has become unlivable. Thomas’s story, however, illustrates the intense form of caretaking that keeps open the future that has already happened and will, predictably, be seen at the deadline.

As Thomas argues, the decision has already been made, and united Ireland has already happened. At some deadline, others will experience this future, finished Ireland *as* an already revealed future. But it takes work and fidelity to this revelation, nonetheless. This future perfect dimension ordering the social world is one of the unique ethnographic discoveries in my field site. Although it is not shared by everyone, the experience of an already-decided and, in some instances, already-happened future in the present is a common comportment for my interlocutors.

Disruptions

Thomas gave himself his own pseudonym for this ethnography. He wants to be presented as the one who doubts, just as the Thomas from the Gospel of John doubted Christ's wounds. Through doubting, Thomas gains a hand, however minor, in controlling the outcomes of his own decisions. It makes sense given his propensity to doubt that Thomas asks a lot of questions, especially of outsiders. Of course, being asked questions is a common experience for any outsider to Belfast, especially when he or she enters into the city's tightly bound and heavily monitored social housing estates. Thomas explains that when he asks questions of newcomers, he first wants to know where they were born. This is more complicated than it seems because people often answer with a location that they think Thomas knows. Often, the more local cases provide an elusive answer to avoid telling him their home district in fear of being prejudged by sectarian or class antagonisms. Thomas wants to predict people's behavior, to gauge their character; for him, these things can be easily determined by knowing precisely where an individual was born. The place of birth, he explains to me – the exact district or even the street – expresses itself obviously through the person.

Thomas is not a Strand Man. He was born a "Stickie," an Official Irish Republican, in the Market, a working-class area just over the Albert Bridge from the Short Strand. To be considered a "Strand Man" or "Strand Woman" one must have been born in the Strand. Being from the Strand is commonly associated with "hardness" and a "siege mentality." The former term is a derivative of a common identity in Belfast called the "hardman:" street fighters and boxers who existed before the outbreak of conflict in the 1970s and who were well-respected for their pugilistic abilities. The hardness characterizing people in the Strand may derive from this historical Belfast identity, but it means something quite specific here. A Strand Man or Woman's hardness refers to his or her lack of compromise in the face of his or her enemies. It refers to his obstinance and ceaseless readiness to respond to attack. Hardness is coeval to a siege mentality, a way of holding oneself in constant

readiness to stand one's ground for the sake of defending the community. After all, no other Catholic enclave in Belfast is as isolated and surrounded as the Short Strand is by antagonistic Protestant communities. In this way, the people in the Strand often see their district as a virtual island always ready for the next siege – the next riot or petrol bomb or sudden flurry of bricks and bottles.

During our first conversation, Thomas tells me that being a Strand Man is different than merely just being *from* the Strand. He tells me a story that I hear repeated by other residents happy to make the same point about birthright status: an old woman dies and as her funeral cortège passes from her home to St. Matthew's chapel, the local mourners come out to pay their respects. The old woman lived every year of her 93 years in the district except for her first. As the coffin passes, a disgruntled man leans over to catch his mate's ear and says "yeah, but she wasn't born here, you know" to which his mate, in complete agreement, replies: "blow-in." The underlying sentiment, of course, is that the cortège should not be accorded the same kind of reception as one born in the Short Strand, while the story also exposes the humorous absurdity of such strict birthright standards of identity.

Thomas opens up to me about his relentless questioning and doubting. He traces these experiences back to his Catholicism. It's a form of overthinking, he explains to me. Thomas's overthinking, he believes, comes from being born in a Catholic community and attending Catholic schools. He says, "there is this intangible something that comes along with a Catholic education that makes things a mystery." I say, "makes the familiar strange?" He says "yes, it's a philosophical component" and continues, "Catholic education teaches you 'I think therefore I am.' Descartes." He laments that it's unfortunate so many in the IRA left the church. Their rebelliousness, the very thing that allowed Irish Catholics a chance for freedom, is learnt in Catholic education. He says overthinking, however, is "awful though because ignorance is bliss." He says his mind is constantly

turning, he can't even sleep. "You question everything," he says. He admits that overthinking causes him many problems. He again compares his constant reflecting over the thoughts, details, minutiae of his daily encounters to the French Catholic thinker René Descartes's incessant doubting. He sees in Descartes's dictum of relentless existential thinking in the face of possible deception as his own condition. Thomas's central focus of overthinking is dying, and he wavers whether this thought is distinctly Catholic or from surviving the everyday terror of conflict. This active thinking about dying even qualifies his greetings:

Matthew: How are you?

Thomas: All good mate, if I could just stop thinking of dying every fucking day.

Matthew: Why you thinking about that?

Thomas: Oh, that's a constant of mine. Thought you knew.

This exchange is typical of a Thomas-specific property of greeting. It shows that greetings indeed have propositional content and can offer new understandings of context or the person (Duranti 1997). For Thomas, this greeting discloses the particular experiential content of overthinking, which takes the shape of thinking about his own death. This is a familiar, if unsettling, form of involvement for him, as evinced by his surprise that I did not know about his constant thinking about his death. Through this disclosure, he shares an understanding of his existence with me, and I become involved in the hermeneutic experience of putting to language how this overthinking about death structures his way of life. When I probe him further about overthinking, Thomas tells me friends have told him that he suffers from "the nerves." "The nerves" is a common articulation of the experience of distress that cropped up many times during conversations with those in Belfast. The syndrome signifies the manner in which the conflict in Northern Ireland becomes embodied in

those who lived through the constant terror of being the next victim.¹⁰ Yet Thomas does not attribute “the nerves” as the source of his doubtfulness or his overthinking. For him, the activity of overthinking is part and parcel of his Catholic heritage. To be sure, Thomas knows he overthinks things because of living through conflict, and he did not immerse himself into Catholicism until towards the end of the conflict, perhaps as a coping mechanism that allowed stable aspects of his childhood Catholic identity to emerge. He does say, however, that “the nerves” may be a hinderance to this overthinking. Thomas explains that his “nerves” act up during jolting moments and in particular when children kick footballs off the front of his house and gate or when a car or truck revs its engine. Thomas’ nerves “kick off” during these unexpected sensations and interrupt his involvement with thinking. Nonetheless, to slow his mind from “circling” in the evenings, he removes his belt, drinks Budweiser out of the bottle, and “holds court” for those who “call in” to his front room. “Calling in” is a fundamental structure underlying the formation and maintenance of social relations in the Short Strand. This act of “calling in” tends to social relations as people drop in for conversations, quick hellos or gossip or for the sake of lingering with a cup of tea. Recently, calling in has become supplemented with constant social media postings and text messaging. Thomas also receives many phone calls, especially when a local resident dies. Out of social necessity, the news of death must travel at the fastest possible speed due to the obligation to offer condolences, the desire to get the story of what happened, and the need to share in mourning.

¹⁰ Medical and psychological anthropologists, of course, have long since studied the idiom and experience of “the nerves” and *neriosa* in a range of primarily poor and structurally violent cultural contexts (Good 1977; Guarnaccia and Farias 1988; Jenkins 1988; Lock 1989; Low 1994; Rabelo and Souza 2003; Scheper-Hughes 1988). As far as I know, Sluka (1989) is the only researcher who has explicitly addressed the experience of “bad nerves,” “nervous debility, and “living on their nerves” in the context of Northern Ireland. Sluka also notes that there were reports of doctors calling this the “Belfast Syndrome” in the late 1970s. Sluka wants to make clear is that “the nerves” in the context of Belfast refer to “daily experience of military repression and state terror, and it took a considerable toll on their nerves” in the Irish Republican ghetto of Divis Flats during his fieldwork in the early 1980s (225). Sluka locates living under constant terror – and the possibility of being the next victim of violence – as the causal mechanism for the nerves.

Thomas hears about the dead earlier than most because he is responsible for organizing funerals at the local chapel as the sacristan, and so the families and priest need him informed right away.

During one of our first encounters, he arrives at the Red Barn Gallery, a photographic gallery in which we both “call in” in the afternoons in the city center, from his morning duties at the nearby chapel preparing the vestments, candles, and memorial anniversary reminders for the ten o’clock morning Mass. He complains about the lawn mower. Apparently, the grass on the chapel grounds was cutting unevenly and the mower left behind mucky clumps. He tells the group assembled there (of which I am a part) that the lawn looks like dog droppings to him. He is visibly irritated. I pipe up and tell him I can help. He looks at me incredulously. He asks what I could possibly know about manual labor. I tell him I spent most of my youth mowing greens at a golf course, and I ask if he uses a kind of self-propelled mower with which I have considerable familiarity. He shoots me a long, curious look before joining the rest of the group of men chatting boisterously in the Gallery office. The next morning, Thomas texts me to meet him at the chapel before Mass, and I do.

He brings me to a maintenance shed behind the church. It is an old, red brick building which houses a defunct coal shoot and boiler room that once kept the church’s adjacent convent warm before they knocked it down many years ago. Thomas gestures to the lawn mower which I immediately recognize and approach slowly. I balance, then adjust the blade of the mower as Thomas watches. Above me hangs a picture of a brightly haloed Mary facing a prepubescent Jesus. As I angle the mower’s blade slowly around, the malodorous mixture of grass clippings, petrol, and damp routs my sense of smell so I look around to get some respite. Disassembled dark marble columns and metal adornments pile up in the corner of the room. Thomas notices me looking at them and tells me they are the old altar rails. After Vatican II changed the liturgy, he explains, most Irish churches removed the altar rails. He has been told by a succession of priests to

toss them away, but he keeps them in the hopes that one day he can be the one to reset the barrier. He thinks the divinity of the high altar necessitates the separation of the priest from Mass-goers. He tells me it is vulgar the way they have it now. Thomas further explains that for him Mass, as a true experience of the divine, can be seen in how the priest gestures with his hands. The movement of hands is how you tell a priest who truly connects with the divine, he says to me as he elevates his own hands in the air. He tells me to watch the priest's hands, the way they rise over the altar, the way they bless. I imagine Thomas means by this the way the wafer transforms into the host through the elevation by the hands, raising the newly consecrated host for his eyes to see.

I look back down to the mower where I have angled the blade with a slight front-down pitch. Thomas does not seem to like what I have done, but I tell him that the entirety of the flat blade should not be cutting for the entire rotation. Just a segment of blade needs to come in at an angle or else the entire blade edge, even the unsharpened part, will cut at the grass and create a lot of unevenly cut "muck." A half-inch adjustment later, Thomas tries out the mower for a few minutes outside, and seems pleased with the adjustment. The cleanliness of the chapel grounds is of the utmost importance to him, and he thanks me. This small blade adjustment takes the shape of an intersubjective achievement and opens up an entire world of significance to me because Thomas is genuinely thankful. In time, this church and this moment of helping to caretake the church, brings me much ambivalence. I come to understand what it means to be a caretaker for *this* particular chapel. St. Matthew's chapel, I will soon learn and will detail in Chapter IV, is deeply hated by Protestants across the road. St. Matthew's orients a destructive and overpowering bitterness in east Belfast for the "other" community, and it is easily the most hated site in east Belfast, at least for the Protestant community. An air of melancholy suffuses the place amidst the near-constant rain and the surrounding culture of death. The local and academic term for the church is a "flashpoint," a term evoking a concentrated and unexpected burst of instantaneous violence. Flashpoints, like this

chapel, are often located on the “interface” between Protestant and Catholic districts in Belfast. While some flashpoints can appear in unpredictable places, and thus can be mobile and fleeting, the chapel has been a flashpoint since it was opened and dedicated to St. Matthew on Sunday 13 March 1883. Since then hundreds have been wounded and killed mere yards from its doorsteps (Kernaghan 2000, 12).

Image of Time

I confide in Thomas my difficulties meeting people and gaining trust since my arrival. He responds in a peculiar way. He takes out a piece of blank paper and sketches two quick strokes. A familiar symbol appears, a cross. With this first expressive act, an almost sacerdotal gesture that performs the sign of the cross itself, the paper recedes into the background as he begins generating an image of his cosmos: “*that* is the chapel,” he says firmly. As Thomas continues to sketch, an aerial view of the district appears, and so does the existential significance and historical experience of maintaining the chapel and its grounds. The network of relations and involvements – Thomas’ drawing and narrating, my spectating and listening, the interior of the maintenance shed with a picture of Mary and Jesus, the lumped altar rails, the putrescent odors, rain tapping on the roof, the belfry above us chiming its hourly bells, the Union Jack bunting flapping on the other side of the fence – are constitutive of my absorbed engagement in Thomas’ performance of his world. He is, in part, disclosing what it means *to be* for him and others. His drawing projects certain possibilities for his world and reveals to me how he preserves this world through his caretaking work at the chapel; a world that was built and defended by those who came before him. This church is the gathering site of layered historical experiences, and though Thomas’ devotion to his faith orients his life, this faith cannot be separated from an experience of the worlding-building project of Irish Republicanism. These grounds are as much political as moral and sacred, where a new political idiom arose for the

first time, where the Provisional Irish Republican Army rose from the ashes of the old IRA. Zigon (2018) notes that a “politics for becoming otherwise, a politics of worldbuilding emerges from a world that has become unbearable and creates political language and activity in response to the demand of this unbearable” (74). St. Matthews chapel in June 1970 would be the site of such an emergence out of the unbearable, when the newly formed Provisional IRA successfully defended the district. St. Matthew’s chapel thus gathers its significance not simply from its sacredness or from being the house of the Catholic God, but because it was, and continues to be, such a site of



Figure 13: Thomas's Sketch

becoming otherwise, a worldbuilding project for those within the bounds of the Short Strand. It is distinctly a counter-space to British colonial rule and the Ulster Protestant and loyalist communities. After rendering the cross on paper, Thomas demarcates the chapel grounds by drawing the streets that surround it. In the chapel grounds he draws two short lines and says, “that’s me and Freddy

next to the chapel during the marches.” He explains that he and his friend Freddy are both responsible for looking out of the chapel grounds during loyalist marches in order to call for help if trouble should arise. He continues: “here’s the doctor’s surgery.” He draws a box to signify the surgery and marks it with an “S.” He squints up at me and asks, “Brendan ever tell you the story of being nearly burnt out by Protestants?” He points to the doctor’s surgery where Brendan used to live. Thomas then draws the priest’s house and points to it: “we lock the gates during the marches.” Then he dots the chapel grounds with thirteen marks. “You wouldn’t even know they were there. They watch and wait.” I think to myself at the time that these must depict men who guard the district. Thomas then draws an X and says, “Where Hank was killed” during the Battle of St. Matthews in 1970. He then draws two thick lines above the chapel grounds. They depict back-to-back wrought iron and mesh fences that separate the churchyard from the road, Catholics from Protestants. He explains that in 1970, “one of the concrete pillars was knocked over and crushed a Protestant woman trying to riot against the chapel. They could hear her squealing over the district.” He labels the Protestant area to the north “PP” for Pitt Park. He says that there was a purge amongst competing loyalist paramilitaries in the Shankill, and then some of them relocated into the flats across the road in Pitt Park. This caused trouble with the long-time Protestant residents who had other paramilitary allegiances, trouble which also spilled into the antagonisms against the chapel. He then draws a rectangle signifying Cluan Place in the lower righthand corner, or southeast quadrant, of the district and he explains it as the only Protestant infringement in the area. Cluan Place juts into the Clandeboye, a Catholic subdistrict in the Strand, which he draws as a circle. Then he draws dots in Clandeboye. Thomas says, “they keep raising the walls to separate the two of them.” He explains the dots are where petrol bombs landed on Catholic homes during a period of rioting in 2002. He says locals call it “The Siege of the Short Strand.” He draws dots in Cluan Place where the missiles from the Short Strand landed. He thinks Sinn Féin and Gerry Adams caused

trouble on purpose during 2002, launching missiles from Catholic Clondeboyne to Protestant Cluan Place to “kick things off.” He sometimes narrates and draws too quickly, and I miss what he says. While he draws, he refers back to “the chapel” like a refrain: “because of the chapel,” “near the chapel,” “to protect the chapel,” “up from the chapel.” He also says that the Protestants were stupid to burn the Catholics like Brendan’s family out of their homes during the 1970s. He draws on the map the shops on the Newtownards Road where Short Strand families would have frequented before 1970. He says they cut off their own economic noses because “they just didn’t want any *taigs*¹¹ about the place.” When Thomas finishes drawing the map, the district is nearly sealed by lines depicting the real walls that encase it. He labels the Bryson Street wall with a “B.” Then he sketches his own house and the road he lives on that splits the district into two halves. The bottom of this road he labels the “12th” and draws a bunch of lines and shading signifying the parade route and mobile “walls of steel” the peelers (police) put up during the mini-12th, a loyalist march on 1 July. He finishes his drawing and hands it to me.

Thomas was born in Catholic district near the Short Strand months after the gun battle in 1970, the historical effects of which are spatially distributed throughout his drawing: where Brendan was burnt out, Hank was shot, the Protestant woman was crushed by the column. He has no first-hand experience of many of these historical events. Yet, these historical experiences emerge from his very fingertips as he draws his world and narrates these events. Thomas “transposes” himself into the historical situation, a fusion of past and future horizons continually forming the present (Gadamer 2004, 303-4). Transposing oneself means bringing oneself into what is other, and thereby transcending one’s particular situation. This historically-effected consciousness results from acquiring such enlarged horizons, which “means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole” (Gadamer 2004,

¹¹ Derogatory term used for Catholics.

304). Thomas thus responds to the historical situation in this moment by letting unfold a distributed understanding of the past, how Wentzer understands historical experience as “shared and distributed diachronically” (37). Of course, as Wentzer notes, particular qualities of lived experience are barred to those who were not present for the original event. Thomas did not experience many qualities of the gun battle. Yet, following Wentzer, historical experience always has a shared and social aspect distributed through time, and I would also add distributed through space and individuals who take up the task of caretaking for particular temporalities in particular places. In terms of the distribution of historical experience, Thomas’s intense involvement in the place of the historical event renders his historical experience potentially richer than those who are not actively attuned and responding to the past for the sake of a particular future born out of that past.

Unfolding a World

Through his drawing, Thomas responds to my lack of understanding by letting his world unfold. The unfolding takes the shape of an involvement with depicting the district and imbuing the pencil marks on the page with details and stories about people and events. This encounter cannot be separated from the activities of striking up conversations with strangers in the photography gallery, fixing a mower, and preparing for Mass. All of these involved enactments disclose his way of being in the world, his own style of performing these everyday activities, the possibilities he is projecting and actualizing. In concerned involvement, the gallery, mower, shed, chapel, grass, altar, and now his sketch are disclosed amidst, and are disclosive of, a shared background understanding. In existing towards certain possibilities that he cares about, Thomas weaves a world that simultaneously weaves him. These phenomena do not exist in isolation, though they can be isolated into discreet moments, especially when giving a narrative account. These phenomena are constitutive of a relational and

nested nexus in which they are understood “as” something:¹² the grass *as* grass to cut, the mower *as* mower to cut the grass, the shed *as* shed to shelter the mower that cuts the grass. All of it for the sake of caretaking for the chapel, a focal site that gathers a meaningful lifeworld for not only Thomas, but the entire district. A malfunctioning mower blade requires taking apart the mower and working out what went wrong, and this also presents the possibility of asking about the purpose of the mower, of catching sight aspects of the already operating “as-structure” that includes the world that envelopes the grass the mower cuts.

It is only later that I can return to Thomas’s schematic drawing of the area and see it *as* a conflicted world, as the spatializing, depicting, and accounting of a particular kind of temporality. More precisely, Thomas’s drawing contains sedimented temporalities extending, entwining, and forming a particular historical background understanding. Some of the historical events explicit in Thomas’ narration include the 2002 Short Strand-Cluan Place riots, a 1970-gun battle and economic realignment on the Newtownards Road, and the annual July cycle of loyalist bandmen marches and Orangemen parading. Other events are implicit: the death of Hank by friendly fire, Brendan’s family exodus, the tradition of watching and waiting, and, significantly, the importance of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin when Irish Republicans and Nationalists tried to overthrow British rule. These sedimented histories and practices expressed by his map are the conditions of possibility for him to caretake for the chapel. Thomas’s caretaking of the chapel already gives us a clue as to how he lives

¹² Developed phenomenologically by Martin Heidegger, the “as-structure” articulates how perceptual experience is embedded within pragmatic and social contexts. The things of the world appear as usable within our individual and social projects. Things draw me into practical engagement with them and thus show up “as” something within a larger project. The kind of engagement depends on the nesting of my specific and overall projects. This primary way of coping with the world thus shows that things in the world show up “as” something before we represent them or articulate them, and thus things show up as already interpreted in our pre-predicative experiences: “That which is understood gets articulated when the entity to be understood is brought close interpretatively by taking as our clue the ‘something as something’; and this articulation [i.e. the as-structure] lies *before* [liegt *vor*] our making any thematic assertion about it. In such an assertion the ‘as’ does not turn up for the first time; it just gets expressed for the first time, and this is possible only in that it lies before us as something expressible. The fact that when we look at something, the explicitness of the assertion can be absent, does not justify our denying that there is any articulative interpretation in such mere seeing, and hence that there is any as-structure in it.” (Heidegger 2008, 190; emphasis in original)

his future possibilities. The grounds of the chapel that Thomas mows disclose a sacred backdrop for weddings, funeral processions, and communion photographs, and the chapel itself discloses itself as an assembly of worship. The grounds also disclose sedimented temporalities of conflict and suffering, hatred and bitterness, as well as pride and resilience – a siege mentality. All this becomes apparent by the mower and its breakdown.

“Breakdowns” in phenomenology range between pragmatic (the breaking of a tool) to the world collapsing (the loss of a loved one or an ideal) (Dreyfus 1991; Heidegger 2008, Zigon 2007). A breakdown is a phenomenologically salient occurrence when the usually smooth activity of unreflective engagement in the world encounters a disruption. When one is deeply engaged, for example, in mowing the grass, the mower withdraws into the background and the enviroing world of the grass draws the mower into the activity. The switchover from smooth coping to circumspective or reflective engagement is a moment when the object of engagement becomes an issue for the person using it. There are gradations of modifications one has, moreover, when experiencing these moments (Throop 2003). Giving an account of Thomas as I have done here does not fully grasp his way of being, of course, just like the sketch and account he gives of the district to me is only partial. But the possibilities glimpsed, those Thomas enacts, are the familiar ways of being into which he was thrown, taken up, and made his own through their performing, repeating, and thus cultivating. Through these projecting possibilities, he shapes his own style of existing. Because we are constantly ahead of ourselves, we are already transported into our future possibilities that we’ve self-projected simply by existing in a historical way.

Notably, Thomas’s drawing of the district is itself a moment of a more encompassing sketching out, or projecting, of determining possibilities for the future. Conceived existentially, Thomas is already ahead of himself in this moment with me. At stake in this engagement is the anticipation of a possible future for himself and others in the community; or, rather, of being already

transported into that coming future. The future dimension, and the foresight implicit in Thomas' mowing and fixing of the mower for-the-sake-of-which a future can continue to inhabit his present, is what I want to make thematic and conceptualize. Explicit here is the very interpretation underlying the engagement in the maintenance shed. Interpretation, following the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger, is founded on a fore-structure: fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. For something to be interpreted *as* something, it must be grounded in this fore-structure. We must "have," "see," and "conceptualize" the situation in advance for it to show up at all. We have this structure in advance of our interpreting the world and making thematic this structure requires both phenomenological and hermeneutic investigations.

I cannot know Thomas's precise forms of consciousness, his memories, representations, fantasies, or habits, as he drifts in and out of the absorbed drawing, explaining, and attending to various aspects of his drawing. In-between he and I, however, emerges an understanding of existence that reveals important aspects of the historical essence of the district. To be sure, his drawing and narrating remains a partial world in lived experience and a *quasi-world* in imagination for me, but this was a significant encounter for disclosing how an understanding of the future is projected through Thomas's everyday involvement at the chapel. His involvement discloses an understanding of the district, which is part in parcel of being an historical being situated in this particular place and time. Our own particular encounter is characterized by being solicited into the *here and now* of a fragile disclosure as it performs itself through our engagement with one another. In this encounter of drawing and narrating to me the district of which he is also a "blow-in," we are drawn into the lively sharing of historical experiences. Thomas simultaneously disfigures my previous understanding through transfiguring my sense of his particular situation. This is how I characterize my experience with Thomas in the shed in the early days of my (mis)understanding of the district.

In the end, the object of the encounter with Thomas emerges belatedly as an enlarged concept or image. More precisely, his drawing now encounters me as Thomas' caretaking of a finished event that has yet to reveal itself the finished event of Irish unity and self-determination, like Thomas's interpretation of the parable of the barren fig tree where the future was already known and a deadline already set for other to see it. I come to see Thomas, and his act of drawing, his cultivation of the grass and care for the chapel, as participating in this event of a finished Ireland.

From Thomas' sketch of the district emerges an image of time. Solicited through his own hand, Thomas' drawing represents a type of temporality that began with the shaping of the experience of time born in the 1970s' Battle of St. Matthews. This time in which those in the district engage in their projects with a sense of shared meaning or what Alfred Schütz calls "the idealization of reciprocity," the tendency for people to speak and act on the presumption of a shared background understanding of an "interchangeability of standpoints" (Collected papers I: 1962: 3–47). This shared background for the Catholics of the district constitutes the world that Thomas preserves by his caretaking. Blood has been shed on the very grass that Thomas so meticulously maintains. On Bryson Street, which Thomas has labeled with a "B" in his drawing, families abandoned their homes under the cover of bullets. The stories contained in Thomas' sketch are numerous, and I understand that through helping him fix the tool that maintains these hallowed grounds – not only hallowed Catholic grounds, but hallowed Irish Republican grounds – I had helped to continue Thomas's own form of moral cultivation. More broadly, I was drawn into participating in the space of provisional time. I came to learn about the sedimented layers of time contained in this map, and years of Thomas's own moral engagement with the landscape of the chapel grounds.

As a sacristan, Thomas keeps the sacristy of St. Matthew's in order: polishing the chalices, cleaning the vestments, arranging the priest's liturgical books. Thomas's work inside the chapel

keeps Mass, funerals, weddings, and christenings in order; maintaining the sacral rituals still so important to this district despite the rest of slowly secularizing Ireland. Yet, it is caring for the chapel grounds that might be his most morally imbued tasks. These tasks are ethical beyond his Catholicism. They are deeply personal and intimate ways of caretaking for his own moral sense of self. I believe his acts are also forms of experimentation. Mowing the grass and keeping the hedges trimmed are examples of what Cheryl Mattingly calls a moral laboratory, “small moments” and “activities [that] speak to a cherished *ordinariness*, to the cultivation of ‘significant routines’” (2014, 79). Thomas, after all, is caretaking for a community that hasn’t quite accepted him as their own, yet with these acts he experiments with the imaginative possibility of being otherwise, of being an important member of the community. And though these acts, are for the sake of larger social contexts borne out of unspeakable tragedies, part and parcel of Thomas’s mowing is also for the sake of stilling his overthinking about his own death. Recall that Thomas’s overthinking about death takes up a great deal of his everyday existence. Caretaking the chapel is a way of forestalling thoughts about death, of absorbing himself in the historical experience of others, of shouldering the great historical weight – taking the care away from others in the community – for the sake of keeping open the future that was birthed here in the chapel.

These small acts of cultivation, he knows, are nested in the shared concern of caretaking of a way of life that speaks through him. This way of life is founded in a breaking of ordinary time. What breaks, and breaks thorough, ordinary time is a form of temporality that founds a world. This form of temporality holds within it a vision of the future in which what has been done will be revealed. St. Matthews has been subject to raids and attacks by Protestants since the late 1800s, and the grounds have been bathed in fire and bullets. It persists as a structure, but it also persists as a gathering site holding open a world-building project. *Underlying the world-building project is the caretaking of a future that emerged out of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin and repeated itself during the gun battle at St. Matthews.* This

future, understood in the future perfect tense, is why the Irish insurrectionists of 1916 fought against British rule, for the sake of Irish sovereignty. For the residents of the Short Strand, St. Matthew's chapel functions as this foundational locus of a finished Irish project revealed in 1916. The chapel serves as a literal and figurative anchor in time which embodies past hopes for the future unification of Ireland. It signifies crucial flashpoints in the historical Troubles and memorializes those who died in what could be called Ireland's "forever war." But the chapel is not merely looking backwards towards the departed; time at the chapel also seeks to make present a temporality from the 1916 Rising and the Battle of St. Matthews.

The very word "caretaker" accrues secular meaning in Ireland, as the person who temporarily cares for the farm or household once the tenants have been evicted, often by Anglo-Irish owners. Reversing the identities inherent in this historical usage, Thomas's work helps to keep the foreigners - the Protestants and British Loyalists - outside the walls of the church, and the district, for the sake caring for the revealed future. Speaking in terms of time, these grounds are an energized site where a moral sense of the future emerged during the Battle of St. Matthews as a provisional time that would, once and for all, reveal the completed Irish subject and nation once and for all. Provisional temporality is an ethical temporality, a responsibility to a future in the present that remains in unsettled stasis until the deadline when all will see and know. Thomas's work in the grounds of the parish church are thus moral in multiple senses, as the site of Republican sacrifice, Catholic death, and his own responsibility and self-making.

Family History

Nearly a year after Thomas draws me the schematic, Thomas himself will discover the historical secret that his deceased father was instrumental in protecting the district during the Battle of St. Matthews. I am in the room, when his oldest sister "calls in." During a long discussion about the

historical susceptibility of the Short Strand to attack, Thomas's sister tells him about his father's role as a defender, and he begins to tear up. It is as if, retrospectively, he had been caring for the chapel all along for the sake of his father. He wasn't born in the district and so he's always felt like an outsider even though he cares deeply for the community. This knowledge about his father's role in the battle, kept secret for 46 years by his sister, and then suddenly revealed to Thomas showed to him that he was on the right path. Recall Thomas's liminal status as a Market Man amongst Strand Men, reminded early and often by others in the district who tell him who he is and who he is not. In sense that Thomas's sureness with which he frames the virtuousness of his caretaking commitments was exposed and challenged during this reveal about his father, that before he found out that his father was implicated in the most significant event in the history of the district, his fervent work at the chapel was for the sake of cultivating a moral ideal even more moral than those who were born in the district, even if ultimately he retains outsider status due to his birth. In some ways, his moral commitments falter – or become less significant – when he hears about his father. Now, Thomas's own moral work becomes reassembled, a possibility that his work is what Cheryl Mattingly calls the “care of the intimate other” (2014, 5). This intimate other is, of course, not alive anymore, and this reveals the complex historicity of how intimacies with dead loved ones can alter one's moral commitments. Thomas's experience of his sister's revealing about his familiar history during a “calling in” session evokes Mattingly's conception of the “moral laboratory,” the ways in which individuals experiment with possible futures, selves, and actions in albeit emergent and thus short-lived moments and spaces. Though ostensibly Thomas's work on the chapel continues like before, something “new” emerged, an altered “I” that accounted for himself in new moral terms. His possibilities for being a son are altered. Again, following Mattingly, Thomas's narrative sense of self shifted – the ending of his plot changed – even if the moral work he continues to do remains outwardly the same. Again, returning to Wentzer's phenomenology of historical experience,

Thomas's father serves as an experiential link, a witness to this historical event, and now Thomas experiences himself "as descendent, as heir who has to respond to the request of the predecessor," his father (Wentzer 2014, 40). Unlike the experience of the father directly sharing historical experience to his son in Wentzer's auto-ethnographic account, Thomas receives his father's historical experience from his sister, which itself foregrounds the already shared background of the historical event as more or less shared to him by the community. But recall that the community does not see Thomas *as* a Strand Man, and this marginal status may very well inhibit the community from sharing with him their heritage and historical experiences. But now, through the experience of his father as shared to him by his sister, Thomas can respond *as* a link in the chain of historical experience. After his older sister shared his father's experience during the gun battle, Thomas's caretaking of the chapel in the present and in the future "responds" in Wentzer's formulation, to the story of his father, and, more importantly, Thomas retroactively understands his past experiences caretaking for the chapel as responding (albeit unaware) to his own father's moral project of defending the district. There is a distinct shift in how the world discloses itself to Thomas, though he thinks about how he must have sensed the familiar significance of for the chapel all along even if he didn't properly know his father's role. Thomas comes to open up with me about his father after his sister's reveal, how he always suspected that even though his father abandoned his mother and children to lead a bohemian lifestyle, that Thomas was still his favorite child. Though Thomas cannot know definitively whether this was true, he opens up about how his work at the church is a sign that he and his father shared the same commitment to the defending the district, which constituted an important aspect of Thomas's "ground project." For Bernard Williams a "ground project or set of projects which are closely related to his existence and which to a significant degree give meaning to his life" and one's "ground projects providing the motive force which propels him into the future, and gives him a reason for living" (Williams 1981, 13). Thomas now finds out that

his father helped to defend the very world in which such Strand Men and Women could exist in the first place, and this becomes intimately entangled with not just the future Thomas is keeping open (the revealing of a united Ireland during the Battle of St. Matthews) but also his own future as a caretaker for his family's historical experience. Thomas's "moral laboratory," his duty to the chapel, becomes altered, perhaps even entirely transformed. This familiar landscape now solicits him in a more deeply familiar way, as an intergenerational task to defend its existence. Through his sister's revelation, he and his father become entwined in a broader historical narrative of Irish Republicanism. Thomas's image is a re-presentation, to be sure, of the unsettling, yet structuring concept of provisional temporality. Yet, more than just a re-presentation, it is also a *presenting* of itself as a world founded on an unfinished event in which his historical experience now links to that of his father. His father's experience imbues Thomas' caretaking with a new moral sense, and perhaps, serves to defer his overthinking of his own death for the sake of continuing the still-impacting acts of his dead father.

CHAPTER IV

Black Spot

Happy Home

“Our family’s happy home plunged into darkness,” Lizzie says. She sits next to her mother, Irene, and me at a small kitchen table. We eat Kit Kat bars and Tunnock’s teacakes and drink heaps of milky tea. The sweetness of the treats and the warmth of the tea provide comfort during a difficult three-hour conversation. The two of them take turns telling me what they know about the night Jimmy died. Jimmy was Irene’s husband and Lizzie’s father. They’ve told this story before, though fewer listen to them nowadays. On the evening of 27 June 1970, they say, a sniper from the Provisional IRA shot Jimmy in the abdomen. After an hour of lying in the street, he died five minutes after midnight. Jimmy had been out late with his friends at Buffs Social Club, a popular venue for Protestant men in Belfast. The evening was mild with enough daylight to see clearly until well past ten. Irene sent word to the club that soup with shin bones and sandwiches – “soup sandwiches” – were ready. Jimmy and his friends departed the club and wended a familiar route home through the backstreets of east Belfast on the way to supper. Leading the way, Jimmy turned right onto Bryson Street, a mixed street of Protestants and Catholics, without realizing a gun battle between paramilitaries had kicked off. Immediately, he fell down. Automatic gunfire erupted from the streets surrounding St. Matthews Catholic Church and did not stop for hours. When the gunfire quieted, Jimmy’s friends pulled his body up from the street. After the clock passed eleven, Irene knew something was wrong. She knew her husband’s punctual rhythms through the clock on the wall of her kitchen. At the time she was expecting a baby at Christmas, and in an interview to a regional newspaper after her husband died, Irene said the baby was “to make our happiness complete.”

Three hours after Jimmy died, his daughter awoke to the sound of a policewoman and policeman at the front door to her flat, “‘There’s been some sort of an accident. You have to go home. Something to do with your daddy.’ And that was exactly how they said it.” Lizzie worked in England for a printing firm, and she remembers the firm paid for her taxi from her flat to the airport. When she landed, she took another taxi from Aldergrove Airport to east Belfast. In those days it was unusual to take such a long taxi ride because long rides were too costly for the working classes. To this day she still cannot remember who paid her fare to Belfast. Arriving in the taxi and looking out onto her community where she born and raised, onto the people whose lives are densely interwoven with her own – her expansive kinship networks and deep chronicles of friendships – nothing appeared to her. Instead:

It was dead. The air was dead. The people were dead. The whole row of houses were dead. That’s the only way to describe it. And the taxi stopped, and I heard somebody say “‘It’s his daughter. It’s Lizzie.’” And I get out of the taxi. They were my neighbors. I grew up with them. I looked around at these people and thought “‘there’s nothing here.’”

Lizzie repeats four times the word “‘dead,’” an epistrophic refrain unfolding the way her family’s happy home breaks apart. The forceful onset of things “‘dead’” contours her narrative, and the mood at the kitchen table seems to dim further with each dead thing she describes. Irene nods in agreement as Lizzie describes this experience of “‘nothing.’” Lizzie’s repetition of the dead state of things points retroactively back to the initiating “‘it’” of “‘It was dead.’” The “‘it’” expresses her meaningful world, a nexus of familiar relations, memories, and expectations. What, ultimately, is her experience of this “‘it’”? Getting out of the taxi, she turns towards her neighbors with whom she grew up and she looks around at them and then turns inward towards the thought, “‘there’s nothing here.’” In the days afterwards, Lizzie describes herself as being there, but not there, and “‘it’” happened around her.

Lizzie: And the next few days was just - it’s been horrendous - but those were dreadful. Mum was pregnant at the time, three months. And the doctor came, and he was for giving her tablets and stuff, but she never took tablets at the best of times, so she

wasn't for taking tablets. And then there was just all sorts of people in and out, in and out. It was just like you were there, but you weren't there. It all happened around you, you know.

Irene: The only way I could describe was my neighbors were in and out, the only way I could describe that time was in my house a sea of faces, a bubble of voices, couldn't put names to them, just to make those out, when I looked at all I seen was only one face that I do remember coming up out of the blackness. I see my aunt and uncle and they were devout. Very devout Christians. He was a Christian from when he was fourteen. And my face just lit on her, and my words to her was "Aunt Tildy, why did God do this terrible thing to me? What did I ever do to him?" I said, "why did he do it?" And her words were, "hush up it wasn't God. It was Man. It was man, the evilness of man and his evil ways." And I said, "but isn't he God almighty, couldn't he have stopped them?" The conversation ended there.

Lizzie's world – her happy home whose roots stretched through streets, neighbors, houses, families, and the very atmospherics of her life – collapses. For Irene, the world was dimmed – a "sea of faces, a bubble of voices, couldn't put names to them" – but a face did come up out of the blackness to answer her existential about why God did this terrible thing to her. Her Aunt Tildy answered that it wasn't God, but the "evilness of man and his evil ways." Irene ended this conversation with her aunt. She didn't want to hear it. But, as will be discussed below, this question and answer would be retained by Irene and brought to presence again during a life-and-death battle with a demon more than a decade later.

From thence forward, Lizzie, however, dwells in this collapse as a moral imperative. Lizzie's moral imperative becomes to speak from the place of her dead father. "It's his daughter, it's Lizzie." Simply put, her kinship identity slips away when her father died. After her father's death, she slides into the role of quasi-father to her siblings. She functions also through her daily responsibilities as the quasi-partner to her mother. For the subsequent generation of family, she continues as a "cowboy," a cultural identity she borrows from her youth, for the sake of her nephews and nieces. She rolls down hills and gets dirty with them even today.

All the while, she holds within what she calls her "black spot." The black spot grows considerably after the Northern Irish government refuses to properly investigate and arrest those

responsible for her father's death. She joins the merchant navy to cope. Thereafter she spends six months at sea and six months at home. By coming and going, Lizzie claims to contain the black spot where the "bitterness" gathers. She says that she never recovers from her father's death nor regains her former self. She describes herself as if she were unhandleable: "I always maintain that anywhere I go and anywhere I say things, because people don't know how to handle me, they walk away. Or they metaphorically pat you on the head and say, 'we understand.'"

Throwing Off the Boulder

Lizzie's perceptual experience of her social world collapsing, the deadening of a once meaningful way of life, appears as fundamentally melancholic. As Judith Butler notes, "in melancholia, not only is the loss of an other or an ideal lost to consciousness, but the social world in which such a loss became possible is also lost" (1997, 181). Irene, Lizzie's mother, also succumbed to a similar melancholic mood. She says, "I carried the hate and the bitterness." Yet, melancholia does not quite capture the experience of carrying "bitterness," though bitterness may allow for melancholia to also permeate one's existence. Bitterness remains the primary articulation of mooded experience according to Lizzie and Irene, and so many others in Northern Ireland who lost loved ones. Bitterness, in the context of conflict and sectarianism, signifies a sharp and biting hatred mixed with bigotry. In Western contexts, of course, to be bitter is a familiar modality of hateful resentment, but amongst my interlocutors in Belfast, bitterness takes on the chronicity of melancholia, but with an additional willful double-bind: willful enmity towards the other while still holding one's composure in everyday life. Though there are ritual outlets where bitterness explodes onto the scene, these rituals do not fully account for how bitterness shapes everyday self and other perceptions.

Lizzie and Irene's accounts of their bitterness, as will be discussed below, take on the character of an everyday personal experience. Bitterness amongst Protestants, however, can spill

over into public space through various ritual institutions. Annual bonfires on “The Twelfth” is one such socially scripted ritual. Appearing as an archetypic instance of what Victor Turner calls “liminality” – “essentially the unstructured (which is at once destructured and prestructured)” – hundreds of bonfires are lit when the darkness sets on July 11th and into the early hours of July 12th in Protestant working-class areas throughout Northern Ireland (1970, 98). The historical reason for lighting bonfires concerns the “Glorious Revolution.” The Protestant William of Orange defeated the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland in 1690. His victory ensured the dominance of Protestantism in Ireland and the United Kingdom. As the story goes, William of Orange’s fleet of ships was led to safe harbor by the lighting of the bonfires. During the bonfire ritual of The Twelfth, bonfires built with pallets, scrapwood, tires, and other items, sometimes towering hundreds of feet tall, are lit. Traditional loyalist songs, usually remixed as rave songs, are blared. Smaller bonfires for the younger children are also lit before the main bonfire. From upon Cavehill overlooking Belfast, the white and orange pandemonium of hundreds of bonfires backgrounding the massive plumes of smoke always strike me with a sense of the sublime, a staging of the end of earth itself. This ritual allows for, amongst other collective effervesces, hatred, bitterness, and “aggro” (aggression) towards all things Irish, Catholic, and Republican. To be sure, Protestants also experience a profound rejuvenation of their identity, which they experience as under threat since the peace agreement of 1998. These rituals are also historicizing events: the European Union, ISIS, Papal, and Palestinian flags have also burnt recently, as the bonfire communicates current grievances. The EU, ISIS, Vatican, and Palestine are mediated by way of analogy to Irish Republicanism.



Figure 14: Cluan Place Bonfire Lighting and Burning



Figure 15: KAT (Kill All Taigs) Painted on Irish Tricolor, Unlit and Lit

There is another ritual that will be discussed below reserved especially for memorializing the Protestant men, including Jimmy, killed during the weekend of the gun battle at St. Matthews. Returning to the Lizzie and Irene's kitchen table, both shared a similar experience of bitterness after the death of Jimmy. Yet, Lizzie's bitterness after the loss of her father has continued for over four decades, while Irene's bitterness lasted eleven years, with momentary flare-ups. I want to lay out some of the existential structures of bitterness, especially focusing on how bitterness manifests differentially between mother and daughter to show its all-encompassing and perceptually attuning character. In melancholia, as Freud memorably wrote, "the shadow of the [lost] object fell upon the ego" (2006, 316). In acute bitterness, this fallen shadow casts a wide pall. Self and other perceptions cultivated amidst the bitterness disclose aspects of the world in which memory, imagination, immediate sensory perception, and future visions laminate on one another in experience. Bitterness

functions in a similar way to a mood, attuning those who are bitter to aspects of the world that would remain hidden. While there are many ways to become bitter, including being “bred into bitterness” as a child, I am attentive in this chapter to how bitterness befalls those who lost love ones during the Troubles. Though, of course, much can be said about how the bonfire rituals mentioned above socialize and reinforce bitterness. Bitterness, though intersubjective, becomes embodied, and thus named, in many idiosyncratic ways. As mention, Lizzie experiences her bitterness as a “black spot,” while her mother, Irene, experienced bitterness as “boulder of hate” and demonic “voice” that once spoke through her.

In his original distinction between mourning and melancholia, Freud says that “Mourning is commonly the reaction to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as the fatherland, freedom, and ideal and so on” (Freud 2006, 310). When one loses a loved other, there is an “exclusive devotion of mourning” (311). Melancholia, which “contains the same painful mood” as mourning, lasts longer and is “characterized by profoundly painful depression” and “the loss of ability to choose any new love-object” amongst other reducing and punishing symptoms (311). In mourning, the world appears as impoverished, while in melancholia, one’s inner psychic life darkens. Later, however, Freud revised his theory on melancholia, seeing the mood as an underlying historical structure of the subject that forms the character of the “I” who is a “precipitate” and “history” of abandoned and lost others to who the self was once affectively attached (1989, 19). Under this revised understanding, the experiences of consciousness are shaped by a history of losses. Building off of Freud’s later insights, Judith Butler (1997) offers a theory of subject formation by inverting the temporal order separating mourning from melancholia. Melancholia, Butler argues, “makes mourning possible” (170). In the ethnographic context of Belfast, *bitterness* interrupts and permeates the melancholic forming of identity, becoming the formative existential mood through which other general moods and specific emotions appears.

An ethnographic phenomenology of perception accounts for the intersubjective conditions of everyday life in which bitterness, which is structurally close to melancholia but with an intense future-oriented willfulness (often towards the hated other), manifests in first-person experiences. Bitterness, like melancholia, is a “painful mood.” The dispositional and mooded aspect of bitterness are notoriously resistant to change. Bitterness perdures. As Throop (2014) writes about moods, they are an “enduring” and “existential expanse within which reflection is deployed” (70). The existential expanse of bitterness is not a *mediation* of the world understood as a distortion, but, rather, allows for the mutual *contact* of self and world. Bitterness discloses aspects that would otherwise remain hidden. The phenomenologist Edward Casey describes the experience of perduring as a mutual encounter between self and world of “*enduring-through*” (2000, 228, emphasis in original). Bitterness also emerges as ritualized activity, as bitterness’s perdurance lends itself to “the temporality of memorialization” (229). Yet, bitterness can be thrown off over time. It is not destiny. As investigations into temporality show, the consciousness of internal time opens onto the ever-adumbrating, and modifying, experience of the self in worldly involvement.

Edmund Husserl’s investigations into the succession of time, the consciousness *of* internal time, show that our acts of perception are structured by the constituting triple intentionality: 1) *retentions of* fresh memory sinking into the past; 2) *now-points of* primal sensations; and 3) *protentions of* the future coming into view (Husserl 1991). This constituting triple intentionality of time-consciousness allows for the fusion of the phases of apprehending objects within the temporally thick “living horizon of the now” (45). Acts of perception run off into the past, fuse, and compress; these flowing off retentions sinking into the past continue to shade the ever-adumbrating perceptions of objects just as anticipatory protentions throw fresh light onto the present. This temporal structure allows one, for example, to hear a melody instead of a series of disconnected

tones or see a unified field of perception rather than disconnected “images” as if sight were like viewing a slide show or scrolling through an Instagram feed:

The “source-point” with which the “production” of the enduring object begins is a primal impression. This consciousness is in a state of constant change: the tone-now present “in person” [of a melody] continuously changes (*scil.* consciously, “in” consciousness) into something that has been; an always new tone-now continuously relieves the one that has passed over into modification. But when the consciousness of the tone-now, the primal impression, passes over into retention, this retention itself is a now in turn, something actually existing. While it is actually present itself (but not an actually present tone), it is retention *of* the tone that has been. A ray of meaning can be directed towards the now: towards the retention; but I can also be directed towards what is retentionally intended: towards the past tone. (30-31)

Husserl’s phenomenological discovery of the constitutive structures of internal time consciousness thus shows that encounters within the perceptual field are always open, dynamic, and ever-adumbrating. Yet, time-consciousness is conditioned amidst embodied moods and the worldly background horizon of significance in which individuals are actively engaged. The capacities of memory, imagination, and understanding emerge out of pragmatic *involvement* amidst the durable and shared world. The world appears *as* meaningful, in part, through moods. As Rasmus Dyring notes, “moods open up the pragmatic sphere within which the practical care” for one’s way of life happens, and “constitute the things of the world as the things they are, i.e., in their particular significance” (2015, 299). Heidegger’s discovery of the “as-structure” of experience articulates how perceptual encounters are embedded within pragmatic and social contexts. This primary way of concerned involvement amidst the world allows things to show up “as” already interpreted in our pre-predicative experiences:

That which is understood gets articulated when the entity to be understood is brought close interpretatively by taking as our clue the ‘something as something’; and this articulation [i.e. the as-structure] lies *before* [liegt *vor*] our making any thematic assertion about it. In such an assertion the ‘as’ does not turn up for the first time; it just gets expressed for the first time, and this is possible only in that it lies before us as something expressible. The fact that when we look at something, the explicitness of the assertion can be absent, does not justify our denying that there is any articulative interpretation in such mere seeing, and hence that there is any as-structure in it. (Heidegger 2008, 190; emphasis in original)

Both Heidegger's "as-structure" of experience and Husserl's structure of internal time consciousness, which constitute the continuously changing phases of perception in the first place, are important for understanding how perceptual encounters operate along a gradient between the durable and dynamic poles. Importantly for the sake of bitterness, the world becomes perceived through enduring moods that are lived through and cannot be easily "thrown off" even if time-consciousness constitutes the dynamic experience of phenomenal objects. The constitutive triple intentionality of internal time-consciousness, however, does have a part to play in loosening the grip of the mooded perceptions of bitterness.

For Irene, throwing off the bitterness took the shape of a life-and-death struggle within her temporally unfolding internal experience. She battled against a demon-like voice taunting her when she entered a Pentecostal church eleven years after her husband died. Importantly, Irene describes this experience in terms of a durative expanse of datable time, "from the end of December until the twenty-second of February." Then, Irene speaks about the internal changes occurring during this period. When Irene first entered into this Pentecostal church in December of 1980, she experiences the rest of the congregation disappearing. Her attention, her very existence, is gripped by the pastor who seemed to only be talking to her as if he knew her.

So the pastor started, and as he spoke, everybody suddenly disappeared, and he seemed to be talking to me alone. His eyes seemed to be on me, and I kept saying to myself, "How does he know that? He doesn't know me! This is the first time he's seen me. Why should he be talking like that as if he knew me?"

In this dramatic recounting of her struggle to throw off bitterness, her very soul seems to hang in the balance:

And each time I said I was going back to church, the voice in my head said, "But you can't go back in church." And it was a deep, deep hoarse voice.

((emulates demonic voice in deep, guttural tones)) "You can't go back to church."

And I said, "But why?"

((continues in demonic voice)) “He’s a god of love, and you’re full of hate. He not want you in church and you’re sitting there and you’re full of hate listening to him.”

And I was, “no, no, no. No.”

And each time I went, where the same wee verse of scripture come to my mind that voice says, “Remember he’s a god of love, he not want you.”

And that went on and on, but I still went to church because at the back of me mind, there was this other voice saying ((in lilting, soft tones)) “You come to church. You will be welcome.”

And that hard voice again.

The deep, hoarse, and hard voice again and again draws her away from the church, from the perceptual scene in which her attention brackets out the world except for the pastor who sees her, knows her, and speaks to her. The demonic voice mocks her, repeatedly. For how could she be wanted by the god of love? The voice reminds her that she’s full of hate. Yet, over time, another voice emerges within her, a kinder voice of welcoming. The pastor guides her altering perceptions. These perceptions, guided by the pastor and the gentle voice of her internal psychic life, begin to modify. The softer “other voice” residing in the back of her mind, the margins of consciousness, directs her towards a future: *come, you will be welcome*. The future appears on the margins of consciousness through this gentler voice. She kept going to church because of this voice, even if she agreed with the demonic voice that about her hate. The battle continued. Again, the world around her withdrew from appearance except the pastor. The pastor spoke directly to her. Arising out of this this dyadic scene was an existential *question*. Irene questioned her unsettled existence lived amidst the bitterness, and what responded to her questioning was the miraculous opening of a hymn book that instructed her what to do:

So on until the 22nd of February, and the pastor gave his talk and it was all about, as I thought, *me*. And everybody in the church seemed to disappear, and it was only me and the pastor.

At last I says, “Oh no, what must I do to be saved? I cannot get rid of this bitterness.”

And without me opening up – had the hymn book on my knee – and it opened. And on this page – there was other hymns on the book – and this one hymn jumped out and all I seen was the words “Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, Hear my humble cry, While on the others you are passing, Do not pass me by.”

And I looked at them words, and the words said, “If you don’t accept him tonight, you are lost forever. He’ll pass you by and he will not come back to you, no matter how many times you call for him.”

And I looked at that, and the next thing, without me doing anything, my hand went up, when the pastor was calling if anybody wants to know the Lord. I come and speak to him. And as soon as my hand went up, there was this boulder, a heavy boulder just lifted right off. *Phew* ((Sighs in relief)). And I thought I was as light as a feather. And the tears came and I sobbed my heart out, and from that till this I haven’t looked behind me. And *He’s* always been there. Then, it was a couple of months after it when the pastor asked me to give him a testimony, and my aunt Betsy said she would come and hear it.

And it was only that night that as I was giving the testimony that the question I asked the Lord “why did you do this terrible thing to me?”

And it was only – she was sitting there – and I give it out, and I said, “Now I’ve got an answer: it wasn’t God that done it.”

I says, “Just like my Aunt Tildy says, it was the evilness of man and his evil way.”

I says, “So that’s the questioned answered.” I now know in my heart it was not the Lord that would have done it.

Matthew: And did you feel less hate? The bitter and the hatred that you used to feel? Is it gone away?

Irene: That boulder of hate that I lifted off my shoulders. That was all those eleven years of hatred and bitterness, and I thought in my heart, “well, I could forgive the ones who murdered my husband because the Lord suffered more on the cross for me, and if he can forgive me, then surely I can forgive.” Now, I would be telling lies if it was *all easy going*. There’s times I do feel hatred, bitterness coming in and I could take the one and shake a life out of them and choke them, but the voice – the nice, wee gentle voice said, “Remember, I died for you. I forgive you.” That was my life from then. The 22nd of February 1981, and I’ve been going to church ever since.

The gentle voice appears at the end of Irene’s narrative recounting *as* Jesus. The “as-structure” of her perceptual experience accrues the sense, over time, that the gentle voice moving from the margins to the focus of thematic awareness was Jesus, while the demonic voice seems to sink back into, if not disperse, from internal life. Irene’s harrowing conversion experience away from

bitterness, which manifested through the voice of the demon, helped her articulate the fundamentally human question to God, “why did you do this terrible thing to me?” And she gives out the answer that it wasn’t God that did it, but the evilness in man, his evil way, which retrieves the original conversation she had with Aunt Tildy. This time, however, she listens to the answer. The boulder of hate fell off her shoulders. As she tells me this story across her kitchen table from me, her daughter listening quietly by her side, she lifts the boulder from her shoulders and throws it away.

Lizzie, however, describes herself as remaining bitter. She describes intentionally holding onto bitterness in her “black spot,” even as her mother has mostly overcome the bitterness. Though Irene still experiences the hatred and bitterness “coming in” from time to time – it’s not “all easy going” – the gentle voice of Jesus reminds her that he forgives her for any future bouts with bitterness. Lizzie, perhaps because of her relative youth in her early 70s compared to her mother who is in her early 90s, keeps hold of the bitterness as a “moral engine” driving her moral project (Mattingly, et al. 2018). As Throop notes of moods, “they are existential modes of engaging with moral problems in such a way that they remain viscerally bound to our being” (Throop 2018, 70). Though mother and daughter differentially exist amidst the bitterness, they both actively try to keep alive the authentic memory of Jimmy and what happened to him during the gun battle at St. Matthew’s Church. Despite coercion from various segments of Belfast society – institutional, State, or community organizations – in an effort to remember (or forget) Jimmy in inauthentic manner, these women continually activate memories of their lost loved one in particular ways. Far from being “stuck in the past,” Lizzie and Irene bear the responsibility of “being with the dead,” what Avery Gordon, in her description of the experience of haunting, suggests is an enigmatic duty for those still alive as “something-to-be-done” (2008, 2).

What Will Have Been Done

The burden of contesting inaccurate or blatantly false narratives tends to fall again onto the women of Belfast families who continually fight to have their narratives heard in order to secure a proper place for loved ones – for their names on the memorials erected, in the pages of history books, and for future family to come. The willful work of being with the dead is untimely work – a continual fighting to be heard – and it takes courage to stand firmly against the leveling effects of a divided community’s stabilizing regime of historicity, and its impulse towards historiography which favors one narrative over the other. To live *with* dead others is thus excessive. There may be social scripts, norms, and rituals to follow, but the relation is all too often improvisational. Being with the dead in a way that goes against the social form may require a willful comportment, of acting in ways “more” than one should. Being-with-the-dead thus constitutes a relationship, following Alfred Schutz (1961), to the world of our predecessors. To understand being-with-the-dead through Lizzie’s black spot, we also need to understand how being-in-the-world is primarily a co-world with others. Part and parcel of an intersubjectively constituted *co-world*, for Duranti, drawing from Schutz (1967), is “[t]he being-with of specific encounters, interactions, joint activities, in the present as well as in the remembered past and in the anticipated future, as expressed in the future perfect” (2010, 27). The *future perfect* is precisely what is contested in east Belfast. *What will have been done* for the sake of her father is precisely the temporal orientation speaking out of Lizzie’s black spot. Lizzie’s vision of the future, detailed below, is one in which she will stand against Irish Republicans, and those Catholics who support them, on the day after the last day of time to render unto them judgment.

Being-with the dead, then, can mean going against the social will, borrowing from Sara Ahmed, is experienced as “not witness” (2014, 57). Ahmed notes that when we say we are *with* someone, it means we are *for* them, and drawing from Arlie Hochschild’s work on “emotional labor,” Ahmed notes the will work it takes to make adjustments to being-with others (52).

Hochschild's paradigmatic example of the bride forced to adjust to the "happiest day of her life" while precisely feeling unhappy uncovers the temporal rupture between one's self and social world (Hochschild 1983, 59, cited in Ahmed 2014, 52). This temporal gap between the self that *I am* and the self that *I am supposed to be* can be closed through emotional labor, the willful work, of aligning to the social will; or, one might remain out of attunement like Lizzie. Not being attuned with the social world is precisely what happens when being-with-the-dead goes against being-with the social will. When this happens, following Ahmed, the individual can be deemed willful the longer she holds out, and thus becomes a stubborn "killjoy" who "gets in the way of what is on its way" (47). Willing concerns itself with life *projects*, not just objects. In this way, willing wills not just *at* something, but *for* a possibility to actualize; willing wills for the sake of which possibilities can be thrown forth into the future. Being with the dead, in Northern Ireland, reveals not just the existential vulnerability of the family, but how the vulnerability of the "with" risks exposure for use in someone else's projects. The dead become martyrs and patriot dead, turncoats or touts, sites of origin myths, and justifications for political ideologies and action. Through accounting for the dead, others can position the dead in projects outside the terms of their own way of life, and in doing so, the dead may begin to appear strange or preyed upon to those who knew them.

Often times, then, memorials become resistant objects out of which family members and communities negotiate their fraying ties¹³ In Northern Ireland, the fraught network of interactions surrounding remembering, memorializing, and being-with the dead engenders a "serious game," borrowing from Sherry Ortner, played in shifting fields of power relations (Ortner 2006, 129-30). The serious game of memorializing lay bare the power asymmetries between the complex individual

¹³ Viggiani's (2014) work stands as the exemplary example of the politics of memorialization in Northern Ireland, but she takes an experience-distant approach to cover much ground, whereas I intend to focus on the first-person's perspective engaging with such memorials.

subjectivity and the social embeddedness of that subjectivity. This site of tension, following Ortner, is where projecting projects as possible modes of resistance arise:

It is about people having desires that grow out of their own structures of life, including very centrally their own structures of inequality; it is in short about people playing, or trying to play, their own serious games even as more powerful parties seek to devalue and destroy them. (147)

For Lizzie and Irene, however, the serious game of memorializing Jimmy becomes not primarily about playing, practicing, or doing, but, rather, *responding*. Playing a serious game is not simply a skillful and risky practice. Part and parcel of a serious game, especially for Lizzie, is responding to the dead in an authentic way so that truth, judgment, and vengeance will have been meted out in the future. The time it takes to resist, to be willful, often takes its toll. It is difficult to stay willful with the dead, especially when the dead are taken up by others for their memorial, monumental, reconciliation, and today especially, heritage and tourist projects. The familial tension in how much time – how much of one’s future – to devote to dead is often offloaded to others who integrate the dead into narratives of struggle. Lizzie, out of her siblings and mother, has become the one who shoulders this willful bitterness.

Lizzie takes on an almost Antigone-like insistence on seeking acknowledgement of truth about what happened to her father in the face of Irish Republican mythmaking, initial lackluster support from the Protestant politicians, and State bureaucratic unresponsiveness. She quite literally lives between “two deaths,” (Lacan 1992) the actual death of her father and her own social death. After her father died, Lizzie’s unending and resolute commitment to seeking truth and retribution for his murder became her response to the ethical question of how one should live in the face a world collapse.

As will become clear in what follows, Lizzie prevents others within and outside their communities from making claims on behalf of the dead or forgetting their history altogether. Her task has been – since 27 June 1970 – to counter the dominant attitudes and narratives regarding the

events surrounding the loss of their loved ones, and to insert their own voices in the male-dominated narratives surrounding the gun battle at St. Matthew's chapel. She lives with a Janus-faced engagement backwards and forwards in time: into the past with the dead who *have been*, and forward into a perfected future in which things *will have been* made into an ideal state as long as their narrative work continues.

The expectational horizon of the social world bespeaks to letting the memories of the dead solidify into a shareable and useable mytho-historical narrative. This horizon is already a site of contestation across Catholic and Protestant narrative boundaries. As Henry Glassie described his fieldwork in rural Ulster: "Protestants and Catholics do not have different versions of history. They have different histories" (Glassie 1995: 152-3). Quite understandably, because of the tapestry of accounts of what happened during the gun battle at St. Matthews chapel, and because mythmaking and myth-destroying impulses entwine, the dead themselves remain energized sites of disagreement across and within the communities. These disagreements, moreover, distribute themselves in spatial and temporal forms, and thus shape sensorial and perceptual encounters, most obviously through memorials to the dead. The relations between material things like memorials, the chapel, the streets, the annual parades, constitute a response to the haunting of "something-to-be-done."

The rest of the chapter will explore the significance of Jimmy's memorial in terms of the larger Protestant community, and then in terms of Lizzie's experiences. The memorial for Lizzie's father is adjacent from St. Matthews Catholic Church from where a sniper killed him. After the 2016 commemoration ends, Lizzie looks towards the belfry from where her father was shot and killed and tells me about a future vision of revenge in the time of Revelation. After speaking with Lizzie about this encounter with the belfry and listening to her further describe how her black spot shapes encounters with the church and its environs, I expand on the phenomenological theory of bitterness outlined above. In addition to willfully being-with the dead, which requires Lizzie to maintain the

bitterness in her black spot, I borrow from Husserl's concept of the "double perception" to show how different temporal perceptual experiences are laminated on one another. Double perception names the experience perceiving both the immediate object and a memory of how the object once was within the same perceptual experience. Perhaps we visit our childhood apartment and see that the walls have been painted or the carpet replaced, and yet we can still "see" the old paint, carpet, and other familiar objects laminating on top of this present perception. This retained memorial perception allows for a complex perceptual experience. Building off of Husserl's idea of the "double perception," I want to include a third perception, the future vision, as another form of temporal lamination. For Lizzie, during the present experience of the belfry, she sees herself enacting vengeance at the end of time.

The second structure of the experience of bitterness accounts for how perceptions can become shared. Laminated perceptions can become intersubjectively achieved through what Husserl calls "pairing." Pairing describes the passive experience of transposing perceptions from one to the other of through the body, language, and general mood. One simply finds themselves caught up in the perceptions of the other. In pairing, our self and other perceptions alter and attune to the embodied other we are "going along with" in a perceptual experience. Indeed, through Lizzie's words, body, and the surrounding environment, I cannot help but to "see" a disturbing (for me) future perfect scene of Lizzie's.

Murder Most Foul



Figure 16: Memorial Garden

Jimmy and another man are memorialized by a poem titled “Murder Most Foul.” The poem is etched into a black granite plaque and sits behind their memorial tablet. The enclosed brick and wrought-iron memorial garden stands diagonal from St. Matthew’s chapel, on the other side of the road, on Protestant territory. A bench is placed in the east corner of the garden, and those who might take rest here cannot avoid seeing the adjacent spire of St. Matthews.

Lizzie’s friend Magee, with her mother’s permission, designed and built the garden in 2003. Magee composed the poem “Murder Most Foul” himself and had it etched into stone to officially

consecrate the memorial site. Notably, the poem's title finds its origins in the mouth of the ghost of Hamlet's father: "Murder most foul, as in the best it is. But this most foul, strange and unnatural" (I.V.33-34). In a way, this memorial gives voice to ghosts who call upon their children to respond. The memorial is a site of not only the persistence of the dead, but of the past and future as hauntings the present "now" in the temporal form of the repeatable date: 27 June. The poem's history speaks to the belated understanding of Magee and many others in the Protestant community about the significance of the gun battle, and in interviews Magee often wonders aloud why it took him so long to put his experience of that night to words. The final stanza "Murder Most Foul" gives us a clue to the belated formation of language; in these words, a phenomenology of the date appears:

When I look back in the light of day
There can be no compromise with the IRA
This date should be burned in our brain
East Belfast cannot let this happen again.

The first line of this final stanza calls attention to something coming into the light, showing itself, which is constituted by looking back to "this date." In looking back, what appears is a relation to the IRA (Irish Republican Army). This relation is one of "no compromise." Already this is a negation of a possible future. To compromise is make an agreement together towards the future, a promise sent forward. The phrase "no compromise" haunts this poem. 27 June 1970 must be internalized – "burned in our brain" – as a time beyond measure towards which east Belfast must keep in its sight and "cannot let this happen again."

It is no surprise that the annual memorial service includes a parade of invitation-only loyalist bands garbed in military-inspired uniforms, and not just the British military, but the United States Marines ceremonial dress is drawn upon as well. This poem brings with it an intensity born out of a retrospective looking back, concentrated here in very spot of the memorial. What is brought to light of day, is a certain relation with the other and time. The IRA and the 27th June 1970. The poem, the memorial, those people surrounding it, are brought to the burning light of this date. Each year, the

date's repetition insistently repeats in order to negate every other datable *now* from 27th June 1970 to the present *when* the State apparatus appeased the IRA. At the moment of the setting of this poem on stone in June 2003, compromise had already been reached in the form of the 1998 peace agreement. The Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), aligned with the UVF paramilitary, was the main Protestant signatory of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. This stone negates this compromise and serves as warning to Protestants who take seriously the peace agreement. This memorial is hardly unique in this way. But boldly, its presence and performance reconfigure the occurrences during the span of time between 27 June 1970 and 27 June 2003 as impossible to forgive by any agreement. The memorial, and the yearly commemoration, thus carve out a perceptual scene oriented towards the future by looking back. The looking back is a destructive moment in which previous understandings of the past are annihilated for a timeless truth that no peace agreement can fix. Casey notes that in the present, "where commemorating is bound to occur, a memorialization of the past is brought for which, as ritualistic, textual, or intrapsychic, allows for the past to be borne forward rememoratively into the future...we remember *through* such memorialization" (2000, 256, emphasis in original). In the context of Magee's memorial, he offers the Protestant community to also remember *through* a future opposed to the peace agreement.

Magee is a former commander of the east Belfast battalion of the UVF. During what he calls the "Protestant Pearl Harbor," the night Jimmy and others died, his world collapsed. Never before had his Protestant people been attacked in such a way. Magee describes the immediate, and long term, effects of the night:

What I got from that night is vengeance. Vengeance. I wanted to do as much damage to these people as what they'd done to my people. Innocent people. Going about their business. It's like: I'm the guy who believes in if you'd slap me in the face and I do nothing about it, you'd continually slap me in the face, and you'd slap me harder and harder and harder, and the only way I'm going to stop that is to make sure that you don't slap me in the face. And that was the thought process. That these people had to be slapped in the face for what they'd done. It's like every person who, who – It's like every – I mean, murder is murder no matter what it is. But what these people'd done that night, they're trying to make

out that they were fighting equal combatants. They were shooting dead, innocent people that knew nothing.

His paramilitary activities resulted in Magee becoming, like many young working-class men in the early 1970s who got involved with paramilitarism, jailed in the Long Kesh prison. There, he learned to write poetry from the Belfast poet Michael Longley in a “wee hut.” During one of these lessons, Magee asked Longley what to write about. Longley answered, perhaps prosaically, to devise some poems relating to your experience. But Longley also believed poets must give shape to their experiences after time had passed, and he warned against writing out of the spontaneity of events.¹⁴ Sadly, Magee died from a heart attack before I could probe him further about why he waited so long to write this poem. But he did say that “it’s only in the aftermath when we were able to sit down and analyze the whole thing were you able to get the true picture of what had occurred that night.” Magee took the lesson from Longley that to write about transformative events takes time, and only after one looks back on them from a distance can their significance become revealed. Magee’s poem thus has the character of a communal melancholic *longue durée* while also recalling what Freud calls *Nachträglichkeit*, deferred action or “afterwardness.” Casey glosses this Freudian concept in the context of commemoration as showing that “by being commemorated, what might otherwise end altogether, come to a definite close, is granted a delayed efficacy” (2000, 256). The poem, paraphrasing Casey, looks ahead by looking back.

Magee is an elderly man and a former UVF commander who runs an historical organization devoted to the history of loyalism in east Belfast. He admits his own agency to get the memorial built when approaching Lizzie and Irene: “I visualized the memorial on the road just across from St.

¹⁴ Longley’s advice to Magee was consistently expressed in many of his own writings about poetry and conflict: “Too many critics seem to expect a harvest of paintings, poems, plays and novels to drop from the twisted branches of civil discord. They fail to realise that the artist needs time in which to allow the raw material from experience to settle into an imaginative depth where he can transform it and possibly even suggest solutions” (Longley 1971, 8).

Matthew's Roman Catholic Church. And Lizzie was skeptical, there's no doubt about that. She'd heard so many things before, about what people were going to do and what they were going to do, but I assured her and her mother that I would going to see this project through." It is notable, moreover, that Magee's words are etched onto the stone and not Lizzie's. Lizzie never had to come to a belated understanding of the significance of the evening, nor the peace agreement. Sitting across from me and Magee during the summer of 2016 in meeting room in a community center on the Ravenhill Road just down from the Short Strand, Lizzie describes what she thinks of Magee's poem on her father's memorial: "I think the poem's brilliant. Because it's sounds all right like a poem. But it's the truth. It doesn't deviate, it doesn't need any sort of florid detail, and it's well written. It's simple."

I ask Lizzie, "what do you mean by truth?" She responds immediately: "It's innocent people. Innocent unarmed people were violently attacked that night and murdered in a pre-planned assault. It gives a whole lie to St. Matthew's Roman Catholic chapel and their whole myth that they were attacked, and they were defending themselves." Though Magee's poem might speak this particular temporal experience of afterwardness of understanding, as mediated through a belated post-peace agreement understanding of the politics of memorializing, the poem inherently lacks the first-person experiences of Lizzie and Irene.

Memorial Parade



Figure 17: Memorial Parade

The service begins with a minister recalling the gun battle. He reaffirms Protestant east Belfast's commitment against Irish Republican terrorism. Usually, a Presbyterian minister of a church a few streets away writes and orates a sermon that mixes elements of religious and ethnonationalist political speech. Today, the minister holds a print-out of his sermon and reads from it while another man helps him by holding out a microphone. The two men stand just outside the gate of the memorial and speak to a gathering of people that spills into the Newtownards Road. He finishes his speech by listing the names of the Protestant men who were killed during sectarian battles throughout Belfast during the weekend of 27 June 1970. The list of names flows seamlessly into the first line of the fourth stanza of the 1914 poem "For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon. This stanza is also known as the "Ode of Remembrance," recited during memorial services, especially on Remembrance Day, throughout the British Commonwealth:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

The final line is repeated by those congregating around the memorial. In this repetition, the “we” of the community enacts a social willing of remembrance that links the dead of Great Britain’s wars to the dead of those in east Belfast. Then a minute of prayerful silence follows. The reverend breaks the silence with another recitation, this time the hymn, “Abide with Me.” And after the final line, “In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me,” he invites the families to come forward and lay flowers. Today, Irene is accompanied by one of her other daughters while Lizzie stands on the edges of a crowd of about 100. Irene points with her index finger at the base of the tablet where she wants her daughter to lay the flowers. Her daughter says “there,” to which Irene utters a slight adjustment “right there.” Her daughter place flowers “right there” at the base of the memorial tablet, and Irene hands her daughter a note to place within the bouquet. They stand in silence for a few moments. In other years, they say a prayer or touch the etched name of Jimmy. Today though, Irene looks towards the “right there” of her husband’s memorial tablet.

When all the family members finish laying flowers, the reverend says a closing prayer. For the forthcoming parade, he asks of the Lord, “May it pass off peacefully. Protect all those taking part,” an omen as much as a sermon, containing past traces and future portents of the spilling over of violence that has in the past and will occur again on this interface, an historic threshold site of the predictable unpredictability of abrupt violence. Then the bands are notified to begin the parade, which begins a mile up the Newtownards Road and ends at the memorial where bandsmen lay wreathes of poppies.

Intersubjectively and intercorporeally instantiated in the “now” of memorial interaction, the sensorium of practices constitutes a “here,” a “right here” in Irene’s words, juxtaposed against the “there” of the adjacent church. This countering timespace de-centers and challenges of the Catholic community’s narrative about the gun battle. The memorial and commemoration refutes their claims

to the future. By portraying themselves as the victims of aggression gathering “here” opposed to the “there,” the Protestant community is offered a counter-future to Catholic and Irish Republican narratives. To be sure, the public memorial practices establish a transitory perceptual frame through which those gathered here apprehend and experience their history. Yet, as Casey notes, commemorating is not a derivative mode of memory, but constitutive of remembering itself. He calls commemorating an “intensified remembering” and inherent to intensified remembering is both bodily and place memory (Casey 2000, 257).

Though guided and regulated by the Protestant and loyalist norms of mourning and parading, which include the ethnonationalist and religious sermon, resounding songs of the (para)militaristic bands, lowering of flags, and laying poppy wreaths, there is more experiential complexity for the loved ones that cannot be entirely subsumed by what could easily be perceived as a “typical” loyalist commemoration. I turn now to Lizzie’s experience.

Revelations

I meet Lizzie for the first time ten minutes after the 2016 memorial parade ends, taking place on 24 June 2016. The day was especially charged with emotion. The day before, a UK-wide vote to leave the European Union commenced, and today, the results became official: the so-called Brexit was a success. Working-class Protestants in east Belfast positively welcomed the news. Perhaps Northern Ireland would finally distance itself from the Republic of Ireland.

I am photographing within the memorial garden and trying carefully not to step on the newly laid flowers and poppy wreaths when I hear Lizzie calling to me. I look up at her and she asks me if I went to the parade. I tell her I did. She points to the stone in front of me and tells me this is her daddy’s memorial. I ask her what she thought about the march. She corrects me: it’s a “walk,” not a march. She tells me it was about *beating the drum*. It wasn’t about memorializing or

celebrating life. What life there was to be celebrated ended on Bryson Street 46 years ago, she explains. Lizzie is adamant about this point when she says: “I didn’t lose my father. You lose your keys. You lose your way. But I didn’t lose my father. He was killed. Murdered.” The beating of the drum is a public speech act that, for Lizzie, threatens the order of the Irish Republican narrative of what occurred that night. The beating, for Lizzie, also serves to remind those in government – politicians, government officials, police detectives – that no one has been held accountable. Beating the drum has long been associated sectarianism, beginning with anti-Catholic and then anti-Irish Republican sentiments, as loyalist and Orange parades since their 1796 origin have responded to current political and social conditions (Bryan 2000).

Today, Lizzie borrows from the cultural performance and idiom of loyalism not for the sake of reifying loyalism – though this may be one effect – but to speak for her father. Because Lizzie does not accept peace funds and because Magee raised funds from the community to build the memorial, this entire scene is neither State sponsored nor wholly loyalist triumphalism. She does, however, draw from the sensorium of Orangeism and loyalism, the sermons and parading, to keep public attention to her family’s injustice and, more radically, to stop a future from coming to be, a future in which Irish Republicans “get away” with murdering her father. The “Battle of St. Matthews,” after all, is still considered the singular event out of which the “rising” of the Provisional IRA occurred, and thus her father’s death became absorbed as a significant catalyst on the way to uniting Ireland once and for all, in Republican histories.

Later on, as I get to know Lizzie, she tells me that down inside her is a “black spot forty-six years old.” Lizzie describes it as her hell. Down inside her “black spot,” somewhere close to her heart and away from consciousness, is where her bitterness and hatred collects. She tells me she learned bitterness from her “good teachers,” from Irish Republicans:

I have been called bitter. I was holding up ((raising hand)) and saying, “yeah me, no problem.” I had good teachers. Because the Irish Republicans taught me everything I need

to know. Bigoted? Not a problem. I had good teachers. Irish Republicans taught me what I need to know about being a bigot. My family didn't. My mum and dad didn't. None of my family. But I learned the hard way when I saw my daddy lying in the coffin... The number of times after it, I was metaphorically patted on the head: "calm down, calm down, we'll sort it out, we'll sort it out." It was never sorted out. And people seemed to think I want an apology from the IRA. They could stuff it where the sun don't shine. I don't want an apology. All I want is the cold, hard truth. The acknowledgement that they used the grounds of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic chapel to murder innocent people and one of them is my daddy.

An understanding of her black spot helps to make sense of how Lizzie engages with St. Matthews.

During her father's commemoration parade, some of her "black spot" escapes her and overflows into the grounds of St. Matthews. Bitterness usually condenses to fit into her "black spot." The condensing is the intentional, active work of her will. Out of necessity it must be condensed and contained, and this is not to be confused with a negation, repression, or abstraction of the objects correlated to the bitterness, but rather, with containing the thickest content – the people who did this to her family – in a locatable internal place that can be both controlled and retrieved. Speaking about her decision to leave Belfast for six months at a time to prevent her black spot from exploding against Catholics by joining the merchant navy, Lizzie elaborates on the work of the black spot:

Matthew: Your mind drifted away from this and you were able to think about other things?

Lizzie: It didn't drift away. It give me a bit more clarity about what exactly I was capable of.

Matthew: Oh, okay.

Lizzie: That I never knew I was capable of. And it thought, "you could actually do that, you know?" And I wouldn't lose any sleep over it, if I had done it at the time, wouldn't have lost any sleep. Still don't think I would lose any sleep, to be honest with you. But it's more condensed that I mean, not hating everybody, but *hating the people who did it*.

Matthew: And that's what that helped?

Lizzie: That's what that helped me get down into my hell, well, my black spot. Not everybody – because everybody does, everybody's capable of bad things – but not everybody does bad things.

Without what Lizzie calls the condensing of her bitterness, her black spot would spread over her conscious life. She would simply *be bitter*, understood not as a general affectedness but as a total *way of life*. And she would be content living the bitter life, but her relationship with her mother, one of care and of obligation, has required her, over the long years of being a substitute caregiver to her and to her younger siblings, nieces and nephews, to cultivate a form of strength to control her bitterness. If she did not have a place to put the bitterness, her thoughts from the black spot would enter into the world of cause and effect as violent acts against Catholics.

In the first few minutes of meeting Lizzie at her father's memorial, a mood of disquietude wells up. She peers beyond me as I face her. Looking beyond my body towards St. Matthews, the spire meets her attention in a particular way. The church grounds are barely visible behind trees and fences overgrown with creeping vines and shrubs, but the spire raises high above them. Lizzie is attentive to the spire and so I attend to the spire. She flicks her head in the spire's direction and says, "Come the Revelation, I'm going to shoot them all." This stark proleptic utterance does more than reveal her bitterness. In orienting me towards the spire, I share her disquietude and dimly come to see how the spire orients her moral project. In between her and the spire she perceives a future perfect world coming near her, something that will have been done just beyond the end of time during the time of Biblical Revelation when accounts are settled.

Later, when sitting with her and Irene, Lizzie expands on what leaps towards her in her encounter with the chapel. She tells me over tea of a future vision of carrying a submachine gun into the middle of the church grounds.

I wouldn't care if it was man, woman or child, I'd have been in the middle of the church ground with a submachine gun. I'd have got my hands on one, and yes, I'd have just shot all round me. And I wouldn't have cared.

This future experience of the church is not locked inside her head but immediately perceived when she attends to the spire or, more exactly, to the belfry. Bitterness shapes her perceptual contents in

this experience. Perceptions are overlaid with memories, according to Husserl, forming a “double perception.” Understanding this saturated sense of perceiving helps to frame how to understand her future perfect vision across the road from the chapel. In Husserl’s account of the juxtaposition of memory and perception, one can have a “double perception” of an object (1973, 180-1). The remembered object and the perceived object sometimes come together in our immediate perceiving. Husserl writes, consciousness will “juxtapose them or bring them together temporally” (181). Thus, Husserl shows how phenomena in the world can temporally disclose themselves in this laminated way in which past presences are given in present presenting of objects. “We can say: we bring objects which belong to different fields of presence together by transposing them to *one temporal field*; we move the first objects to the intuitive temporal field of the others. In this way we bring them into one intuitive succession or intuitive coexistence (that is, into a unity of simultaneous duration)” (181). What gives itself can be experienced in various temporal entanglement of memory, presence, and anticipation. Lizzie’s future perfect vision, her expectation, of what will have been done is overlaid like a memory onto the givenness of the chapel in her immediate perceptual experience. This juxtaposition forms a distinct temporal field for her project of being-with her father. But in order to keep this juxtaposition free from doubt, which can creep back in after new stances and engagements, one must remain resolute. In this way, one’s future self, the self that may get vengeance at the end of time, takes on a future perfect sense or what Heidegger (2008) calls “the future as coming towards” (378) “as-it-already-was” (373). When enacting a willful decision about how to respond to the dead, Lizzie’s perceptual encounters rise up to meet her in this singular way. Again, the remarkable aspect of this encounter is the laminated visioning of a future to come in the present moment. This laminated perception, of course, is entangled with the mood of bitterness, the embodied black spot, that allows her access to the world in this way.

Understanding emergent encounters like hers at the memorial, the “here” positioned against the “there” of the spire allows for unshared ways of experience to become shared. In attending to the *there* of the spire, she brings it near to me *here* at the memorial in a particular way. I encounter the spire, however dimly, when she orients me to go along with her. Through her body and speech, I experience how the world orients around her position, what phenomenologists call “pairing” (Husserl 2013, 112-3; Zahavi 2012). Pairing is a fundamental form of intersubjective achievement that occurs at first as passively and involuntarily between two or more people. As a phenomenological bedrock of experience, pairing undergirds how the immediate perceptions arising in being-with-others shapes our own perceptions of the world. Pairing quite simply is the act of perceiving or “living through” others’ perceptions together. Pairing describes how others shape our ways of perceiving and thus accounts for how, in time and over time, one can achieve understanding and access to the worlds of others. Lizzie immediately perceives the spire as a site of a future shooting, of negating her hated other, in the biblical time of Revelation. Of course, there is asymmetry between my perception and hers. I do not, of course, viscerally experience this future perfect moment nor her bitterness, and yet something of her perception of this church strikes me. When I walk by the church’s spire even today, I cannot help but be reminded of Lizzie’s experience. I am unsettled. Through pairing, through attending to the same object – or better, her moral project – I come to sense how she is oriented through her encounter with the church. She transfers sense to me through her positioning, to the “there” she brings near, nearer than the memorial from where we stand in measurable space. In Husserl’s description of pairing, it is “as if I were standing over there, where the Other’s body is” (123). I begin to understand how bitterness is not just a discourse or ideology but woven into the concrete life and world of Lizzie and others. Bitterness leaps out of the world itself. One can come to pair with this experience without knowing it. Pairing is a movement, a back and forth between the here and there, out of which a sense of things sediments and identity

can emerge. This is a fraught experience for an ethnographer in such an interface flash point between two historically antagonistic communities. After all, I have also immersed myself with others in the church grounds across the road. In this moment with Lizzie, I also cannot help but wonder if Thomas is mowing the grass, and my disquietude takes the shape of *guilt* in thinking about Thomas, who was discussed in the last chapter, as a potential person to be shot at the time of Revelation. In this moment, I think of the preceding month when I was asked to take photographs of his daughter during confirmation in front of the very spire that meets Lizzie in this apocalyptic way.

Perceptions are made more pregnant, and ways of perceiving altered, the more we are shaped by the other's perceiving. Indeed, I only understand later some of the real depth of how this church discloses itself to Lizzie when I discover she believes her father's sniper was perched in the belfry of the church. In later conversations, she repeats this again, using the future perfect tense to describe her idealized vision: "I will have shot them all." Lizzie explains she will greet the OC of the 3rd Battalion of the IRA that night, a devout Catholic in his 90s, on his way to the afterlife. She says "He used his religion as a weapon when it suited him. And now, he's using it to get him through, what, Purgatory? No, he won't go through Purgatory. See when he gets there, I'm going to be there and he's not getting passed me. I'm alright. I'll go to hell, big deal."

This evocative account of standing in the way of her antagonist's afterlife, while startlingly, also speaks out of a shared bitterness felt by families of the conflict. Yet, while such descriptions readily spring out of speaking with people in Belfast about their murdered relatives, Lizzie's vivid descriptions, often drawing from the language of the King James Bible, disclose profound perceptual experiences. Her immediate perceptual scene of the church spire, for example, is the correlate of an act of consciousness that she later describes to me as something "escaping" from her "black spot." Lizzie speaks, and perceives, from a future time where life cannot go and where life

cannot get past her on day of Revelation. And this encounter with Revelation is spoken out of a threshold site of neither life nor death: she is located in the place of her father's memorial stone which itself is placed on the street where she was born, where her family once lived, and across from the street on which her father was killed, diagonal from the church wherefrom the bullets were fired. A stone tablet marking his death placed near where she was brought into life by him. She stands in this haunting realm and looks to the chapel steeple – where the cross sits – and she does not simply speak out of her imagination. The vision leaps from the chapel in her engagement with it. It is not simply a phantom or image in her mind. It is located in between her and the church spire, and now I am participating in this haunting futural vision, her “something-to-be-done.”

The chapel leaps towards Lizzie's perceptual involvement with it as a scene of revenge against the hated others who plunged her happy home into darkness. A vision of revenge discloses itself. Recall from the last chapter how the chapel leaps towards Thomas as a form of life needing to be cared for and cultivated for the sake of his community and family. This starkly different instance of world-revealing is not originally rooted in different imaginations or discursive formations. Rather, each person discloses the world, achieves access to divergent experiences, through their engagements with the chapel. If we want to say that this encounter is imaginary, then we need a radically different understanding of imagination as that which allows us access to what the world discloses in our concerned involvement rather than a capacity that produced mental phenomena severed from our perceptual world. But our experiences of the future are entangled with the immediate perceptions of the world. The future is embodied in the flick of Lizzie's head towards the belfry, and the contained black spot close to her heart.

Taking seriously the claim by Lizzie that when she engages with the chapel during periods of heightened emotion, she encounters a revelatory future perfect scene – something that will have been done – of final judgment, then we need to account for immediate perceptual experience with

the chapel that solicits the response: “Come the Revelation, I’m gonna shoot them all.” When Lizzie looks at the church, she tells me, and I barely catch it because of how strange it sounds, what reveals itself to her. In her sight of the chapel is a disclosing of Revelation. How such utterance, a startling image of judgement day, leaps out of her encounter with the chapel’s steeple opens a lid inside of her, in the place where the deadness of the nothing carved out a black spot for her bitterness to reside. And she is visibly angry speaking about Republicanism, and she begins to tell me more – again, standing across from the chapel at her father’s memorial.

Still standing across from the chapel, pausing from putting folding chairs into her car, she says that there have always been two nations, one British and one Irish. She insists to me that Americans like me do not know this. It was in the 1970s that the Irishness took over, and then all of a sudden, the Protestant Loyalist and Orange parades were called a march like they wore jackboots when it was really a walk. She tells me that Irish Americans do not know, they have this wrong idea. America has this wrong idea about Protestants and their culture. She knows that the Republicans within the Short Strand district will never complain to the Parades Commission that makes determinations about which parades can comments about this particular commemoration, about these sounds, like they do the other Orange and Loyalists parades. Sinn Féin has never told them to stop commemorating her father and another man who was killed. She says Sinn Féin won’t tell them to stop because they know they’re guilty of murder. They know she waits here on the anniversary of her father’s death. She waits for truth. She believes there isn’t any such thing as justice, but there is truth. It is cold and hard, she repeats insistently.

While waiting is often associated with passivity, following Hage (2009) and Crapanzano (1985), there is also an active, and perhaps agentive, side to it. Lizzie willfully waits until the end of time if need be. What Hage, again borrowing from Crapanzano, calls “active passivity” is imbued by a willfulness to remain in the place of her father. She wants the man she blames for orchestrating the

gun battle, an elderly Republican man in his 90s, to be brought to retribution. As it is commonly believed that the man who shot her father died a few years after the gun battle in another skirmish. Lizzie says she won't stop until he acknowledges the truth. Absent the truth "my peace will come when I get some sort of vengeance."

Lizzie finishes folding and stacking the chairs in the boot of her car. The car is parked on the sidewalk outside of the walled-in memorial garden. The memorial sits where Fraser street once was, and the foot of the Fraser Street Bridge was a small dead-end street called Ardilaun where Lizzie was born. Inside the walls is a slab of granite a couple meters high with the names of the two men killed and a white flagpole affixed with a flapping Union flag. Lizzie makes sure to latch the gate of the garden before she leaves. She tells me before she drives away that there was a book "Murder In Ballymacarrett" that tells the true story of what happened that night. She drives away and I go back into the memorial garden and look at it more carefully now. On the stone are cut these words:

27th / 28th June 1970

That night in a planned
and provoked attack,
the Provisional I.R.A.
introduced guns on to
the streets of East Belfast
from the sanctuary of
St. Matthew's Chapel and
surrounding area.

The tablet also contains the words "Lest We Forget." It lightly rains, and neither Lizzie nor Protestant east Belfast forgets. The various identities that go under the name Loyalism in Belfast, often evoke the modal utterance *Lest We Forget*¹⁵ as a coda. Three dozen or so wreaths and bouquets placed at the pedestal, each adorned with a note of condolence, become wet and the ink on the

¹⁵ "Lest we Forget" is borrowed from Rudyard Kipling's poem "Recessional" and is used as a common phrase or epitaph throughout the UK during Remembrance Day. In Belfast, it is used to bring those who were lost (almost always Protestants) during the Troubles into the recognition not only during Remembrance Day, but also as a part of one's everyday life.

notes trails off. The notes read things like “East Belfast Battalion Ulster Volunteer Force Lest We Forget,” “Murdered 27th June 1970 will always be remembered by his sister and family,” and “In Memory from East Belfast Protestant Boys.”

Against the State

Lizzie often states that her life came to an end when her father was killed, and that much of the last forty-six years has been keeping her hatred at bay and fighting against what the social world throws at her to mend her loss: husbands, therapists, and, the worst, schemes for “dealing with the past.” She has, at various times, tried each of these processes to help give meaning to her life. But “nothing worked.” They found her un-handleable. That is, willful.

While fundamentally altering, the uncanny the experiences of “nothing” often release their grip as time flows, yet Lizzie has kept alive the bitterness in ways even her own family could not. Recall that the experience of the consciousness of internal time, the constant ebb and flow of temporal encounters, allows the world to disclose itself under different, meaningful aspects. Psychoanalysts call this the “work of mourning” in which the emotion and effort attached to the lost loved one become reinvested in some other person or project. After Jimmy’s death, the family describes a long period of darkness setting in over them. Lizzie’s brother went on to join the Protestant paramilitary UVF and ended up in jail after murdering a “tout,” a turncoat Protestant. Today, after becoming a Baptist pastor in England, he gives motivational speeches about the dangers of plunging into darkness. Irene, as mentioned, heard a voice of a demon and had to battle this demon over the course of several months before accepting Christ in her life. But Lizzie still wants revenge. She says the Northern Irish and British governments, then and now, consistently fail holding those they know to be accountable to account for murder. The elected officials, she says, allot funding that ends up producing reports, legacy documents, proposals, committees, all sorts of

bureaucratic genres so they can, in her words “do a ‘Pontius Pilate’ and wash their hands.” There has never been a full-blown truth and reconciliation commission in Northern Ireland. There have only been various, and heavily mocked, government schemes for “dealing with the past.”¹⁶ Often, I would ask people who lost loved ones, as straight-faced as I could knowing the colorful answers that awaited me, what they thought about State, non-profit, and academic proposals for “dealing with the past.” Lizzie answers in less scatological terms than most and says, angrily, it’s all been a “cop-out.”

The Historical Enquiries Team (HET), an investigative unit of the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) that formed in 2006 and ended in 2014, worked with families to find out what happened to their loved ones. HET Review Summary Reports were then handed out to victims’ families and are inaccessible to anyone outside the family and PSNI, and this was the extent of the “truth process” thus far. Lizzie’s family made a joint pact not to share their report outside the family. But two of my other participants allowed me to photocopy theirs about the murder of their son. When I first looked at the cover of the report I was taken aback, and my first thought is that they had given me the incorrect document. It is a childish, spiral-bound report, as if collated by a teenager for a school project. The entire report is written in Comic Sans script, minimizing, for me, the gravity of its content. The cover also contains some strange image – a stock photo of a heavily mascara’d single female eye gazing myopically into the distance. The contents of the report are broken into seven sections: 1) Description of the role and function of the Historical Enquiries Team; 2) The death of (victim’s name); 3) HET Review; 4) Outcome of HET Review; 5) Conclusion; 6) Questions raised by you and your family; 7) What happens now.

¹⁶ A recent report defined the term this way: “*Dealing with the past* or *dealing with the legacy of the past* is a broad term that refers to efforts to address the specific rights and needs of victims, survivors and communities, and initiatives designed to help individuals and broader society to come to terms with the effects of past conflict-related abuses. Usually such efforts include a focus on such themes as truth, justice, reparations, storytelling, acknowledgement, memorialisation, and reconciliation” (McEvoy et. al 2018, iii)

The report, Lizzie tells me in her kitchen, was a whitewash job because the investigators did not speak to people who would have known about her father's death. In particular, the commander of the PIRA in the Short Strand that night:

I wanted the historical inquiries team to go and speak to to him. And their attitude was 'if he doesn't want to speak to us, we can't make him.' They don't want to kick it up. They don't want to rock the whatever nice wee boat they've got going.

In May 2018, the Northern Ireland Office began soliciting responses from victims of the Troubles for a consultation paper called "Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past" that proposed a whole series of institutions and mechanisms for dealing with the past. The consultation proposal to the public came together at a very slow pace, as it began in 2014, and continued throughout my fieldwork. Later chapters will deal with the glacial pace of how documents come together in Northern Ireland. Finally, the document was released to the public. Individuals and organizations had until October 5, 2018 to submit responses. Lizzie penned an address, which she read at an event about the consultation process, and then published in a local newspaper. She ended her address with "As innocent victims and families we are having justice taken from us. But we have the truth in the sense that we know who the murderers were. We are not afraid to name the cowards and so the truth will survive."

Line of Sight

Lizzie sees her bitterness, in its condensed form, as being sheltered and preserved for a future time. When Lizzie's mother dies, something will change in her. She and her mother go back and forth about this change:

Lizzie: I was able to condense all mine down into this wee – not wee – big black ball. I know it's there, and I acknowledge, and I struggle with it, but I don't let it control me. All these years, I have managed to keep – not a lid on it – but keep it contained, but it's still there. I always maintained - now a while ago, when Mum was really, really ill, and she was in hospital, and it was really bad. I mean, she nearly died. It was dreadful. She made a comment about she doesn't know why she's still here at her

age, and my answer to that was, “you’re still here, to keep me out of trouble, it’s just that simple.” And that is why she’s here.

Irene: ((laughing softly)) That is what she said!

Lizzie: Isn’t that exactly what I said? Didn’t even think about it. I just looked at her and said, you’re here to keep me out of trouble. And I have always maintained, because she’s had enough heartache, and everything else in her life with things that have happened, I’m not going to do anymore. The rest of her days will be as peaceful as they can be, and as happy. She’s got all her grandkids and great grandkids around her. Once she goes, I reckon my black spot will just explode.

Irene: By the time I go, she’ll be too old for that - to do anything. ((laughs))

Lizzie: Well, I’ve always maintained that I’ll be ninety years old and still able to stand, then I won’t be too old. I’ve said that on more than one occasion and people have sort of looked at me, “that’s a nut.” But I don’t care.

Recalling her vision of revelation in the chapel grounds as that which she’s “always maintained,” kept awakened in her fields of perception. What appears to her is not simply the belfry from where she believes her father was shot, but a future perfect scene. If the original thrust of unsettled temporality born out of the “Battle of St. Matthews” for the Provisional IRA is for the sake of a *past future* that will reveal itself through a salvific moment, then Lizzie reminds us that during Revelation at the end of time not only the saved, but the damned will be judged as well. Lizzie has devoted her life to a distinct *future perfect* project in which those responsible for killing her father are damned. Whole lives counted out as if on a ledger, expunged from the records during the final judgment, the day after time ends.

Though Lizzie did not speak to me much about her memories of her father while he was alive, she and her mother repeated a fond memory to me of time spent with him. On the weekends as a child, Lizzie’s father would take the family on the train to Bangor, a seaside town, and walk them down to the beach:

Dad used to say ‘see when you’re down near that water, even if the beach gets packed, and there’s loads of people, see the seawall. See up there?’ He’d make you look and pick out bits. ‘This is where we are. Look at the actual line of sight.’ That’s what we were always told. That’s how you get back.

Lizzie's father kept her eyes on the horizon. He made her look, and see, beyond the flux. He told her, "see the seawall." Fix her eyes on something permanent. By seeing what was permanent on the horizon, she would know where she was, and she would know how to get back. This was one of the few memories of her father she shared with me. And I come to see that her eyes are still fixed on the horizon, keeping sight of what is permanent. The truth of what happened to him. Lizzie's willful work of being with her father is not a happy story, though she says she's had "loads of happiness" with her family since his murder. And sometimes, the family trips to Bangor and her father's words "that's how you get back" slip into her thoughts, an all-too-brief memory with her father catches her attention as a moment she'd like to experience again.

Chapter V Death All Over Again

Anna's memorial to her husband is a rough, irregular granite column two feet high. The stone stands on the consecrated ground of St. Matthew's Church under a linden tree. The tree itself marks the place where her husband was fatally shot. An indentation in the hard bark marks the place where one of the stray bullets fired towards him was once lodged. A wreath leans against the foot of the stone, placed by a friend on the anniversary of his death. On the top surface of the stone and under his name are carved the words:

Died 29th June 1970
*Remains Interred in
Milltown Cemetery*

“For Those Who Think
Of Him Today,
A Little Prayer To Jesus Say”

Today, Anna thinks of him. “It doesn't get any easier,” she says. Though it is acceptable to interpret these words as expressing the never-ending work of adjusting to death, the melancholic incorporation of loss that grounds the experiential self, the “it” haunting this utterance means so much more for Anna. To be sure, the accumulated losses that emanate from suddenly losing a husband, including those future plans that will never arrive, remain part of the difficulty. But what she means by “it,” in this moment, is a heartbreaking deception maintained by many of her friends, neighbors, and family. This deception, she discovered, structured her way of life unbeknownst to her, for over three decades. This deception, as much as the loss of her husband, hurt her.

Anna holds the kettle under the tap to fill it. Handfuls of potatoes soak in the sink and a roast cooks in the oven. Today, to steady her emotions, she also thinks about their five boys they had together over an eleven-year marriage. She's nearly sure, on last count anyway, that she now has a total of fifty-six grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There is, she says smiling, another baby on

the way. Hank was the sort of person who would have been over the moon with all of his family. He would have delighted in them. Days away from his memorial mass, we sit at her small kitchen table cramped with too many chairs waiting for the kettle to boil for teatime. When the kettle does boil, she asks how I take my tea, and I say with milk and no sugar. She takes hers the same way. She sets down the teacups and lifts a package of Mr. Kipling cherry bakewells from the table. She tears the plastic wrapping haphazardly and a saucer-shaped tart, topped with unnaturally white fondant and a red glacé cherry, falls onto the table. After she bites the tart, she recollects the graveyard. I sense this is a recollection she'd been pushing away.

“I was at the graveyard this morning. I'm not a graveyard person. I don't really like graveyards,” she says. The repetition of graveyard, first as a recent memory, second as a negation of identity, and third as a dispreference, jointly pulls our attention back to death and away from speaking about generations of family she began with him. Heavy bags rim her reddening and wet eyes, and she reaches for a tissue that she then holds to her chest, her heart. Then she describes two emotions, anger and hurt, from two periods of life that merge into one emplotted narrative experience: “I was angry at the time. I thought: ‘well okay, there's a clash, there's been terrible things done on both sides.’ But I was so hurt to learn the truth.” When her husband was killed, the marginally alleviating thought that terrible things were distributed throughout both communities at war helped to check her own anger. This emotional management, as Arlie Hochschild (1983, 2002) notes, is how individual emotions, reflectively or unreflectively, become shaped through the expectations of social contexts and being with others. The temporal constitution of emotions, for Hochschild, occurs in the “juxtaposition of an up-until-just-now expectation and a just-now apprehension of reality” (2002, 6). And sometimes, Hochschild explains, the individual must remove themselves internally from the collective to feel otherwise than one should. The juxtaposing “now” moment can break apart meanings and transform one's experience of the world. Often times these

moments must still be managed to adhere to social expectations. Anna often draws from the sacrificial script prevalent during the conflict, a performance common to those who lost loved ones, especially those still invested in Sinn Féin's political apparatus. Yet, the script rarely holds. In conversing with her about the initial years after her husband's death, Anna finds herself at pains to describe what she was experiencing, especially since her experience of her husband's death had recently become completely reassembled.

Though the acute and painful mourning dissipated over time, decades later, she learned a new truth about how her husband died. This truth was an open secret within the community but shattered her sense of self as a parent and wife. She says she was "hurt" – a dramatic understatement in this case. In conversations with Anna, anger and hurt, two emotions from two distinct intervals of time, entangle to disclose an unsettled existence. On the one hand, she still experiences the original account of his death: he was killed by Protestants in defense of the district. She lived with this structuring reality for so long that it became easy to forget it was untrue. On the other hand, she must reconcile the new truth about his death: he was killed by friendly fire by an incompetent neighbor and the local Provisional IRA and police concealed this truth from her. Even if the temporal logic of narrative places anger as the original emotion and hurt as the secondary supplement, her anger and hurt cannot ultimately be placed within different times. Over multiple conversations with her, anger and hurt appear inextricably linked. And, subsequently, both become funneled into moments of temper against the community who denied her a truthful narrative for her work of mourning. Because of this, her husband's death remains an unsettling structure of lived experience. Emanating out into her community and striking straight into the mythic heart of Irish Republicanism, the truth of her husband's death is a foundational lie. A truly unhealable wound that, if spoken, breaks what remains of the idealism of a gun battle in which, it is said, Irish Republicanism rose from the ashes to deliver Ireland once and for all.

Anna just celebrated her 80th birthday. She is an elderly woman with an athletic build, long arms and sturdy hands. I've heard her called a *strong Irish mother*, that well-worn identity and social script that conceals the complex dynamics of her existence. Her husband's death during a shootout with Protestants was a foundational moment for the Provisional movement. His name was originally placed on many Irish Republican Honor Roles as one of the first Provisional martyrs enchained to the centuries of patriot dead. She often refused this burden by insisting that Hank acted like any other man would in defense of his family and community. Yet, she understood her restricted ability to counter the narrative about his death's significance for the Irish Republican movement. His death became a recruitment tool for the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s, immediately coalescing as a primal scene of martyrdom. It was the first death of the first successful defense of a Catholic district by Republican volunteers going back at least to the 1920 pogroms against Catholic districts in Belfast. When he died from wounds incurred during the gun battle in the grounds of St. Matthew's chapel, Anna says,

it was hard, hard, really hard. There's no use in me saying you just have to take it. Some nights I went to bed and I didn't care if I wakened in the morning. The only thing *kept me going* was these boys and to keep them out of trouble.

Anna further explains that though she was forever altered by her first husband's death, as time went on and with the support of her husband's good friend, Jeff, her life's purpose shifted. To keep at bay the "bitterness" from encompassing her and her children's lives, her children's futures came to mind. She imagined them either dead or in jail. She acknowledges that her children's futures "kept me going." Anna's moral imperative as her children were growing up was to keep them from enacting revenge against Protestants across the road – the very same Protestants she had been told were responsible for her husband's death. To add complexity to her decision, her own father was born to Protestants in that selfsame area across the road from where she thought her husband's killers had fired upon him. To this day, she's sure she has unmet cousins residing there.

Anna was given funds from a judge for her husband's death. Many widows during the conflict received compensation due to the inability of the British Army and police forces to protect them. Anna believes she received a smaller amount because her husband was seen as involved in paramilitarism, even though he was not in the IRA. With these funds, she purchased a small cottage in a fishing village with Jeff. Jeff, Hank's good friend, married Anna and helped her to raise their five sons. The family travelled as often as possible to the fishing village. Through keeping going for the sake of her son's futures, Anna willfully cultivated what Sarah Willen (2014) calls an "*inhabitable space of welcome*, a small zone of familiarity, comfort, meaning, and safety" during a time of war (86, emphasis in original). By leaving the district, especially during the weekends or during tense periods of conflict, she created an inhabitable space free from bitterness and the ever-present desire to seek revenge. She prevented her sons from joining any Republican organization. She kept her family going.

What Jarrett Zigon calls "moral breakdowns," as the "moments that shake one out of the everydayness of being moral," indeed present the individual with the slipping away of familiar meanings (2007, 133). If we thus articulate Anna's experience through the lens of a "moral breakdown," her husband's death provoked her to rearticulate her moral project. She felt anger and an urge to give into the bitterness against Protestants. But, she made a decision to *keep going* for the sake of preventing her five boys from becoming bitter. For Anna, to keep going is a mode of *willing* for the sake of her sons. The high moral stakes of this decision meant that she had to devote herself to willing a future where her sons survived, rather than ending up jailed or dead on behalf of their dead father. Such willful work of keeping five sons away from the fight is not easy in a community under siege, and it requires orienting one's moral project far into the future. Recall that the Short Strand is a literal island surrounded by Protestant paramilitaries and she raised her children through over thirty years of conflict. Anna thus preserved futures for her sons outside of conflict. Anna's

decision, however, was not simply oriented towards her sons. Remarkably, Anna considered deeply the lives of the Protestants across the road. Though she's a practicing Catholic, which of course structures her morality, her reasons for caring about those whom she thought killed her husband turned out to be much closer to home. Of course, Anna felt anger towards the Protestant community when she thought they had killed her husband (they did not). Yet her own father was born "across the road." He was a Protestant. Because of this biographical fact, Anna "kept going" for the Protestants too, for the community from which her father was born and from where her husband, she thought, was killed. Her moral breakdown could not have been more fraught with irony.

Ultimately, Anna prevented what she imagined as an intra-familial blood feud – her children against her father's family. The moral reflexivity precipitated by the breakdown, which solicits a response to the sudden *unhomelike* experience of home, requires a "turning" back upon oneself or against oneself. This moral reflexivity, as Judith Butler notes, inaugurates a new subject or sense of self (Butler 1997, 3, 140-42). The breakdown in the world thus becomes part of a psychic structure of conflict, a "renewed scene of conflict," to borrow from Butler's phenomenology of internal melancholic life (141). The ambivalent mixture of love, hate, bitterness, aggression, and guilt were present after Hank's death. Through these emotions the social world appeared as unreliable. For many in the community, and certainly the hardcore Republicans, the ideal Anna should have followed was that of the sacrificial Irish woman who offers not just her husband, but her sons, for the sake of the Irish cause.

As Butler notes, melancholia is often seen as a radically individualized and asocial psychic experience in which the world appears as impoverished and less vibrant. Even still, the "psychic form of reflexivity melancholia elaborates carries the trace of the other within it as a dissimulated sociality," as a "polity" (181). The scene of breakdown for Anna, of turning within to judge an

appropriate response, encountered multiple conflicting social residues: her children, the Catholic community, the Provisional IRA, her father, and her father's Protestant community. What emerged out of this internal conflict was the anticipatory resolve of preserving life. This decision failed to inaugurate her identity as a sacrificial Irish mother. Zigon notes that,

one must be committed to finding a way to resolve the particular ethical dilemma or problem faced in this particular ethical moment. No matter the difficulties, struggles or temptations the ethical moment may provide, one must persevere and 'Keep Going!' in order to get-through (2007, 139).

Anna preserved the life of her children and those she never knew across the road by willing another future into existence. As she says, "the only thing kept me going was the boys."

In some ways, the return to the everyday after a moral breakdown is similar to Freud's conception of the work of mourning. In this model, the individual withdraws some of her attachments to the lost loved one for the sake of re-embracing an altered world. Together, Anna and Jeff kept bitterness at bay for their family. However, a belated anger erupted nonetheless for Anna and her sons. Today, their anger is aimed towards their own community who kept a secret for thirty years. The Provisional IRA lied about how her husband died and this disclosure precipitated a more long-lasting moral breakdown that completely collapsed her world. Getting-through the breakdown became impossible this time. The rippling effects of withholding this secret are felt every day by Anna. Both the Provisional IRA and RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police in Northern Ireland pre-1998) had been dishonest about who had actually been responsible for Hank's death. Both organizations – in a rare convergence – simultaneously covered up the fact that neither the UVF nor local Protestants killed Hank. His death was caused by friendly fire.

Second Death

I met Anna's second husband, Jeff, while producing a photographic project on working-class sports. He had invited me to his house to discuss the history of pigeon-racing and boxing in the district; two working-class sports that still have a vibrant all-Ireland following. Jeff is a short and stout man in his eighties. His thick fingers are involuntarily driven to clench from time to time as if his fists still readied for the ring. He speaks slowly and mindfully and is utterly candid with his words. Unlike many "old-time Republicans" who operate by the code of omertà, or secrecy, Jeff does not preface what he says to me as dangerous knowledge or something I should not know. I did not know much about him when I called in to his front room to speak with him about sports. When the subject turned to pigeon-racing, he explained why he took a break from pigeons during the conflict in the 1970s and 1980s. During this break, he co-founded the Short Strand Catholic Defense League (CDL or "the CD") in 1970. The CD was a men's organization tasked with defending Catholic houses from "being burnt out" by arson fires lit by Protestants. Every working-class Catholic district since the outbreak of the conflict in the late 1960s had some kind of defense association. Defense associations were not originally ideological or aggressive, Republican or militaristic, even if in later years some members joined the IRA. Jeff himself was a member of the IRA before the split in 1969 into Officials and Provisionals.

Jeff points up on the wall to an enlarged photograph and tells me the image is of Anna's first husband, Hank. I recognized his face from Republican-produced history books. At the time, I had given up asking about the gun battle at St. Matthews, as no one wanted to speak with a "blow-in" about it. I also was starting to understand that much of the mythos about the night was a fabrication, as Jeff would soon explain to me in greater depth. Since Jeff drew my attention to Hank's image, I asked him about this gun battle and about Hank. Jeff explains that during that night in 1970, he kept

watch on the opposite side of the church from Hank. Jeff's job was to protect the priest's house on Bryson Street. He said of the night:

When you heard the thuds of the lead hitting the back of the priest's house, you realized that you could be shot dead like that. I mean if it hit you, you wouldn't have knew. But the bullets were going over our heads and hitting the priest's house and you heard a *plonk! plonk! plonk!* type of thing.

Jeff bluntly admits that Hank was not killed by Protestants. He says Hank was killed by Provisional friendly fire:

They maintained it was it was somebody else. They didn't want to say. That was a big thing for them. Big honor, the Battle of St. Matthews, and it wouldn't have looked good if it had come out that that shit shot that killed Hank, and the other, the head of the Provisional IRA at the time. Some will still tell you that it was two big Protestants and all. They're lies...I couldn't tell you [his name]. It wouldn't matter anyway. Local fellow it was. He got a machine gun. Why did no one tell him there was men down there? Down that side of the chapel? He lit 'em up with automatic fire, so he did. He got Hank. But he only come out, well, a lot of people knew about that, but Anna didn't know for thirty odd years.

Jeff explains to me that a police detective from England working for the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) told the family what had happened. The detective relayed that Hank was killed by a Provisional, a neighbor, who either was ill-trained to wield, or was too small in stature to adjust to the recoil, of a Thompson submachine gun. The small man shot Hank multiple times.

Compounding the deception, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Northern Irish police force, knew the next day Hank had been killed by friendly fire upon inspecting the cartridges. The cartridges unmistakably showed the direction from where the bullets were fired. This knowledge, however, was not made public.

Jeff was the second person after Ollie from Chapter I to open up to me about that night. As mentioned, Jeff was part of the old IRA before the 1969 split into the Provisionals and Officials. He helped start the Catholic Defense League along with Hank and other mostly non-Republicans in the district. Jeff says that when the IRA split occurred, he had his choice about which group to join, or to leave entirely. He took the opportunity to leave, however:

because I knew what happened before, during 1916. Brother shot brother and everything else, over the same thing. And I says, well, it even happened ‘round here like families ‘round here shot one another. So they did...I wouldn’t fancy that, wouldn’t like that. You’re sitting in your own district, you’re doing good, then somebody else comes in and shoots you just because you’re in the wrong organization.

Jeff’s prescient vision of the nested forms of intra-Catholic and Irish Republican clashes – brother shooting brother, family against family, and organization against organization – would come to fruition in the district. The feuds of Irish Republicanism, so prominent for constant breakaway groups and schisms, impacted countless families. Jeff and others did not want the CD to be a sectarian or militant organization, but, rather for defensive purposes. Jeff’s vision of the fated blood feuds was also shared by Anna.

Anna enters the room as Jeff speaks to me about Hank. I expect the conversation to shift away from these tense recollections, but Anna, without missing a step, eagerly moves the conversation forward. She says she was furious when she found out that many in her own community as well as the police knew for decades what had happened to her husband. Yet they never told her. Her neighbors, and even some of Hank’s family, knew what had happened to him. She found out nearly ten years ago, and says, “it’s like death all over again.”

“Death all over again” is a deeply complex structure of experience. Not only was Hank’s death brought from the margins to the center of everyday concerns, but “all over again” expresses that her unfolding temporal relationship with his death has altered her memorial consciousness about him. Though having her memories of his final days annulled is a disturbing experience, her newly modified memories have also afforded the opportunity to “see” things that had remained foreclosed to her. In many ways, she has become more attuned to recollections from the past that offer her more certainty about how she will be spending the rest of her life. “All over again” revealed a more willful aspect of her “existential imperative” to keep his name outside of the logic of ideological interpellations. It reinforced “the imperative need of every human being to be recognized

as a person in his or her own right, and not be reduced to an object of other people's wills" (Jackson 2005, 181). With Anna's sons now grown and moved out of the district, her existential imperative, her "will to be," remains oriented towards her dead husband's future biographical life that inheres in his name (181). She guards his name against being used as the object of other people's wills and moral projects.

As a mood or emotion, "death all over again" also attunes Anna to a bitterness against those in the community who lied to her. The original experience of bitterness she once actively avoided brings her into the past like a time machine. Again, she says she has to attempt to ward off the same bitterness, as she's done for years, but this time towards her own community. Mostly, she says she feels hurt, though her temper, she admits, does get away from her. To name "death all over again" as a mood, of course, is not to diminish the tangible memories of those who died. Rather, it shows how this complex and belated understanding of death is not simply substantive, but directive. Death, and the new knowledge about a loved one's death, attunes Anna to altered experiences. It leads her to see certain kinds of things that had been withdrawn from sight and mind. By showing that much of the work of mourning has as its object a duplicitous narrative, she recasts her previous years under the pall of an inchoate melancholia. For Anna, her original attachments to Hank after his "first" death lead to a new moral liveliness and imperative of raising her boys in the right way. Decades after the initial work of mourning had ended, his "second" death has her questioning whether the moral project was a waste of her life. She feels foolish for not knowing. Indeed, death in its repetition reassembles social relations, memories, perceptions, and the very durative texture of existence. That is, Anna comes to question the entire duration of her moral project. Borrowing from Freud's evocative description of melancholia that "behaves like an open wound drawing to itself cathected energies on all sides," the truth about her husband's death creates a melancholic eruption decades after the work of mourning had been completed (Freud 1957, 253).

Anna had “kept going” for the sake of her children, but now she had kept going for a lie. The truth matters so deeply to her, and no truth matters more deeply than the truth about her husband’s death. She never needed to know the motivations about why he was killed. She understands what life was like back then between Protestants and Catholics, but her community misled her about the circumstances of his death. Anna’s eyes are tearful whenever she speaks about the years she had been misled. She holds tightly onto a tissue as she tells me about when representatives from the Provisional IRA appeared at her house ten years ago and confirmed the truth revealed by the police detective. “They,” Anna tells me, sent “a big giant fellow and I went *oh god look what they’re sending*, you know, the size of him.”

* * *

In two days, Hank will be remembered during his 47th memorial mass at St. Matthews. Anna has already passed money in an envelope to the chapel secretary who will pass the reminder along to the priest. The priest will announce Hank’s anniversary during mass on Sunday. His name will be remembered in the weekly bulletin. One of Hank’s friends from the Catholic Defense League will lay a tricolor wreath at the marker behind the grotto of Mary and in front of the linden tree on his way to the mass. He will say a silent prayer, which he performs each day on the way to mass. This will be the extent of formal remembrance, an out-of-sight ritual, at a marker that stands in opposition to the local wish to memorialize him as patriot dead.

Hank was fatally wounded mere yards from the sacristy door in the grounds of this church while protecting the church from a riot of Protestants and Loyalists. His marker is placed where he fell to the ground after being shot. Anna placed the marker as a memorial act, but also as a willful act of resistance against the leveling effects of time and Provisional IRA mythmaking. She claimed him for her family, and for herself, after she discovered the deception about his death. Her claim on his

name, and his biographical existence, is endlessly challenged by the Provisional IRA who to this day ask her to change her mind to allow the organization to use his name.

If we understand myth in an existential mode, as part of the sediment of one's bedrock of understanding, we can see Anna's act as questioning the understanding of an entire way of life consecrated and fixed on the church grounds. The irruption of the *provisional* into history created a new reality on 27 June 1970 through a space already imbued with the irruption of the sacred Catholic sphere. Anna's memorial accrues yet another temporality against this provisional time. It is a willful memorial.

Reawakening the Deathbed Experience

As mentioned, "death all over again" attuned Anna to aspects of past experiences that she didn't know were there. When Anna at last heard the truth about how Hank died, her final conversations with him irrupted in her conscious life. Certain aspects of these nearly five-decades old conversations became insistent objects of attention. She realized for the first time that her husband had been attempting to tell her what had happened to him in the church grounds. She realized that Hank himself had known the truth, and tried to tell her. Anna retained more than she had previously thought about these deathbed conversations, and they took on new sense and affective force. In particular, she recalled an ambiguous pronoun. This pronoun announced itself with insistence out of a long since veiled memory. Anna's attention turned to a pronoun - a mystery "he" - which had remained latent for thirty years. Hearing the truth about how Hank died disclosed these deathbed conversations under an altered aspect. They had never made much sense to her before. In making sense, Anna's anger towards the community boiled over. The way she once understood and remembered final moments with Hank had been denied to her by multiple layers of deception. Reliving her conversation with Hank, Anna speaks with the persistence of the novelistic convention

of dialogue tags, which I've configured below. She tells me this deathbed conversation turns over and over in her mind. As if the conversation were finally dislodged from forgetting, she recounts:

He said, "where's the kids?"

I said, "they're all right there in the house. They're okay, they're fine."

"Tell them I'm at work. Don't tell them I'm in hospital. Tell them I'm at work."

I said, "right."

He got all fidgety and angry and said, "couldn't hit the fucking broad side of a barn."

Now, I didn't catch if he'd said *I* couldn't hit the broad side of a barn, *they* couldn't hit the broad side of a barn, or what was it he said.

"Oh, I know," he said.

Now I know he was angry at *somebody*. He knew.

Here, Anna's reawakening of this deathbed conversation with her husband reveals how her misinterpretation of her husband's words emerged out of mishearing, or not hearing at all, the correct pronoun. That he "knew" who shot him, or that there was anything to *know* at all, becomes an issue for her thirty years later.

Properly understood, this conversation was retained, but not remembered until she heard the truth about how Hank died. This shook awake an obscurity about the pronoun and about what Hank knew. As a retention, this encounter was buried, walled off from consciousness, until her world was altered through learning the secret, the dangerous knowledge, about her husband's death. Though she always recounted that he was angry the night he was shot, the subject of his anger – the man who shot him – was never brought in relief. She now reckons that though she "never picked it up that way," her husband expressed anger at the neighbor who shot him. She assumed, and then the Provisional IRA confirmed, while the police didn't dispute, that he was shot by Protestants. The ellipses of a pronoun in Hank's reported speech during Anna's narrative recounting of this deathbed conversation marks an absence, one that always needs to be supplied. But she simply could not

recognize the conversation's significance until recently. More than just an absence, the "couldn't hit the broad side of a barn" idiom itself indicates a form of friendliness and familiarity not associated with enemy fire. Anna's memory here becomes like a crime scene, and she the sleuth attempting to fit it all together for the sake of recreating a past in which she knew.

She reinterprets this deathbed experience with her husband as him trying to tell her the truth about what had happened to him. "*He* couldn't hit the fucking broad side of a barn." This is why he was shot. This retention of the pronoun had been foreclosed to her for years, but now she dwells on it and recalls more of the conversation:

I think he was saying to me "fucking" - sorry for the language - "*he* couldn't hit the broad side of a barn and hit me instead." And I [now] know what he meant.

Some Sisters in the hospital and they were saying to him, "Hank, who's that [you are talking about]?"

"We went fucking Mickey Mouse Sisters...Fucking Mickey Mouse." He was irritated.

And I went, "Oh Sister I'm awful sorry."

And she said, "Don't worry. I don't care if Hank swears all night with me. The doctor told me he should have been dead on arrival. We pumped eight pints of blood into him and he bounced back and he started to talk to us."

But I didn't know the one in his neck. It was said he couldn't move his legs.

He kept saying to me "Anna, I can't move my legs."

So I went to the doctor and said "is his legs hurting?"

He says, "it's the nerves and they heal."

Well it was a young doctor. I suppose he didn't know what to say, but to explain to me afterwards that it was a severed cord, and even if he had lived he wouldn't have been able to lift a spoon to himself. Well Hank couldn't have lived like that. So God was good in taking him.

Remarkably, 46 years after his death, Anna discloses an experience of her husband telling her the truth about what happened to him; "*he* couldn't hit the broad side of a barn and hit me instead." Her dramatic rendering of his reported speech on his deathbed and her sleuth-like investigation into the

mystery of the elided pronoun, represents the agony of finding out after all this time what happened. She cannot change the fact that he's dead, but she is in a search in memory and narrative, to shape an experience for herself where her husband told her the truth. She supplies the elided referent either from memory or from her newfound knowledge of the situation. The pronoun "he" suddenly becomes accessible and allows Anna to understand that all along Hank was trying to tell her. His neighbor "went fucking Mickey Mouse." That is, his neighbor was an amateur, a child. He was pretending to be something he was not – a soldier – by taking up a gun he had no business handling. And this Mickey Mouse moment of an incompetent boy playing at being a Provisional IRA soldier could have destroyed the mythos emerging around this gun battle for a community at war.

Significantly, the moment of apparent misunderstanding between Anna and the young doctor further shows the miasmic haze of truth that night. Anna didn't understand why her husband couldn't feel his legs. Upon asking the doctor, the doctor seemed to dismiss her – provide her with some empty patter about how "nerves heal." This was a confusing exchange for Anna. After all, she above all others could see what her own husband's body was undergoing. The doctor's almost flippant response to her about "nerves" was a dismissal of her; a dismissal mirrored by untruths when she was most in need of a true narrative. Anna was scorned by the Provisional IRA, the police, neighbors, and even the doctor. Now she has remembered and crafted a narrative where out of all her social relations, only her husband tried to tell her the truth.

His Name

In one of the 1970s publications dedicated to the last posts of the Republican dead written by the National Graves Association, Hank is included for the first time on the hallowed Republican Role of Honor for those "Shot by UVF while on active service." But nearly everything about this description is incorrect. He was not shot by the UVF. He was not on active duty for the Provisional

IRA or any other Republican paramilitary. And the omission of the month of being killed in action, in a memorial book dedicated to the “last post” of the Republican dead, was an unintentional slip that seems all the more prominent considering his contested status.

Anna has always resisted calls for putting his name on Republican memorials, though that has not prevented his name and story from being added to many Republican Honor Roles. She is upset that Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, mentioned Hank in his book, especially since Adams never met him. Hank became integral to Irish Republican lore as a protector and then martyr for the district and the Republican cause. Out of the ashes, publications about the parish say, the *Rising of the Phoenix*. The Provisional men wear black neckties with the phoenix embroidered on the shell during funerals, memorials, and commemorations. Pagan images emerging out of Catholic sacred grounds. Anna and Jeff worked hard throughout the years to prevent their sons from the trappings projected by such attire: “I’m particularly repulsed of them thinking it was the other side that killed their father. I was more afraid of them getting involved to take revenge, you know.” She continues: “Some of them could have ended up in prison. Over a lie.”

Anna had always held that her husband was not part of the IRA, though few believed her, both Catholics and Protestants. Some even accused her of holding to this narrative in order to receive a larger payout from the State. Victims and family members of victims of the Troubles were often awarded monetary sums, and if their family member was a member of a paramilitary, that sum would be decreased. The compensation to victims has long since been mired in controversy for the unequal payments dispersed to families. These reparations likewise incite anger over paramilitary members or their families receiving any compensation at all (McAdam 2009; O’Neill 2018).

Yet, Anna has always been willful against the community and the Republican movement. She opposes their co-opting Hank’s name as one of their fallen volunteers and one of the first patriot dead of the new rising against British Rule. While she lost many battles about where her husband’s

name was placed during the conflict, her first act of willfulness was denying Hank a traditional Republican funeral. This spectacle of an honor guard, tricolor and black gloves laid upon the coffin, and the “final salute” of pistols fired over the coffin by masked men in 1970 would not occur. From the beginning, protecting his name and his identity, an identity intrinsically bound to Hank’s friendship with Protestants, became paramount for Anna:

When he died, the fellow who was over everything, now I didn’t know that he was this person, so he come in and says to me, “Anna,” he says, “the only thing we can do to show our respect is to give Hank a military funeral.” And even from then I said to him, “But Hank wasn’t with youse.” And he says, “oh no he wasn’t, but I’ll make it okay with my superiors.” And I says, “no you won’t. He’ll be buried the way he lived. Hank worked with – Protestant men came down to his funeral.

When it was revealed to her that Hank had died from friendly fire, she was even more committed to keeping his name away from the Republican honor roll. That day, as I sat with her in her kitchen, Anna’s thoughts about the afterlife of Hank’s name turned to anger. In 2008 when the IRA admitted what happened, after years of many in the community already knowing the truth, the IRA/Sinn Féin planning committee intended to include his name on a memorial built for the 40th anniversary of the Battle of St. Matthews. The IRA solicited funds to build *An Tine Bheo* in 2010. Anna donated twenty pounds and agreed that those men on the memorial should be there: “I gave to it, the people’s names that’s on it. I agree with them that they should be on it and all if that was their way of life.” But she consistently refused to let Hank’s name go on the memorial, to the detriment of her own standing in the community. She describes the big IRA men coming to her house and how her anger towards them would make them meek. Only belatedly did she think maybe she shouldn’t be speaking to these men this way:

And they were going to send for me to come round and help pick the stone for this monument. And like it got up on my nerves...So I went round to him and I said, “Hank’s name is not going on that monument. I’d already given to it.” And I says, “the people who’s going on it, I honor them as well as you guys, but Hank’s name is not going on there.” And he says to me, “why?” And I says to him, “why! You and I both know why!” My temper got the better of me. I wasn’t frightened of them, “you and I both know why!” And he says, “what does the boys say?” And I say, “the boys will agree with me because I brought them

kids up telling them that I had told them the truth from the word ‘go,’ and now it turns out I brought up my children telling them lies.” And that’s what’s hurting. But thank God we’re never bitter.

Anna’s recounting of losing her temper at the IRA volunteer collecting money for the Republican memorial contrasts sharply with her insistence that “thank God we’re never bitter.” At the time, and listening to her say this again, I cannot tell whether there is an ironic undertone to this admission. Bitterness is an all-encompassing mood, an attunement to the world where hatred-towards-the-other is thrown from the past and out in front of one’s self such that when the future arrives in the present, only hatred appears. Bitterness is chronic. Though I sense that Anna may sometimes accept the bitterness she’s kept at bay for so many years for the sake of her sons, I interpret her confrontation above as a willful anger rather than sheer hatred. She stakes a claim for her husband’s name. She says “no.” Sara Ahmed argues that in such moments “the will can be rearticulated in terms of the not: whether understood as possibility or capacity, as the possibility of not being compelled by an external force...or as the capacity to say or enact a “no” to what has been given as instruction. Indeed, willfulness as a judgment tends to fall on those who are *not* compelled by the reasoning of others” (Ahmed 2014, 15). Anna decided to plant her own marker to his memory where he was fatally shot by his neighbor, a material manifestation of her own willfulness. It was not enough, after all, to say “no” to her husband’s name going up on the Republican memorial garden. Anna needed, additionally, to mark out her own space for willful mourning - another space that would not elide the factual narrative behind the event of her husband’s death.

Significantly, the current parish priest was wary of setting down a marker and needed time to come to a decision about it. He did not want the marker to be sectarian, nor for it to be an obvious shrine to Irish Republicanism in the hallowed church grounds. Once Anna explained to the priest that Hank’s marker was not going to be an IRA memorial, the priest ultimately acquiesced, but

insisted that the memorial marker state clearly that Hank's body was not actually buried "here" in the church grounds. When Anna tells me this, I cannot help but think of how the priest, perhaps inadvertently, borrows from *hic non est*, "he is not here" of Christ's empty tomb. By emphasizing the absence of Hank's body, the priest's inadvertent evocation of the absent body imbues the marker as an excessive site that cannot contain the very body of the dead and thus deictically points towards the numinous.

At the same time, the marking of the church ground with the "here" of the marker establishes a horizon of reference and brings about a new place where counter-time, and a counter-narrative, can accrue in opposition to *An Tine Bheo*. Because the priest was worried about an uncontrollable future when someone might think a body was in the ground, on the marker was chiseled that he was buried up in Milltown Cemetery on the Falls Rd. Yesterday, a few days before his memorial mass, she went to clean off his grave. She rarely visits him, she says. Sometimes on Christmas and occasionally near the anniversary of his death. His second eldest son, a gardener, tends to the grave otherwise.

Hank's death, and the maintenance of the lie told about the circumstances it, have created a sense of risk when broaching the topic of the gun battle amongst certain residents. This is especially true for those whose livelihood depends on cultivating cross-community relations for the purposes of securing governmental funds for their organizations, positions, or projects. And in general, there is an unwillingness to embarrass or critique the IRA or Sinn Féin too much in Catholic communities. The sense amongst those who support Sinn Féin is that the causal chain of death and maimed bodies and psyches always links back to the same origin: the British colonizing enterprise. Raymond, the local historian introduced in the first chapter, has me turn off my recording equipment when we pass by Hank's marker. What he tells me about the circumstances of the deaths that night he does not want me to repeat. He was a child that night, and he knows that the district

would have burned if not for the IRA. Raymond explains that he does not attach his real name to his publications, especially the ones he wrote about the Battle of St. Matthews. He explains this is because they are publications for the community. Publications in service of the “we” experience; one that he does not want to usurp as the sole expert. But I also sensed that he does not want his own name near this poisonous event and distances his accountable self from the knowledge of that night. He tells me to ask Joe, a former Sinn Féin politician and the strategic director for the cross-community non-profit I volunteered for, about the gun battle. When I ask Joe about the gun battle, and it is common knowledge he was in the area that night, he tells me he cannot answer any questions. After going back and forth with Joe about interview questions, it becomes clear that his standing as working for a non-partisan, non-profit organization would be threatened if he were to say anything at all about the evening.

Anna’s willfulness persists into her 80th year, even as Hank’s name and identity continue to be contested. Anna recounts to me a recent conversation at a wedding where a negotiation over Hank’s name occurred. In this remarkable narrative recounting, Anna’s use of pronouns performs an existential struggle; a furious interaction with one of the leaders of the community, between “he says” and “I says.” Her dramatic shaping of the narrative through the pronouns, or dialogue tags, evokes courage and persistence for the sake of her dead husband:

I was actually at a wedding there the other day and one of the men, the father of the bride, came over to me.

And he said, “Anna, I need to talk to you.”

He said to me, “That night like.”

He says, “Hank.”

He says, “Look would you not change your mind?”

He says, “Let us put his name where it should be on the top.”

I says, "His names in the right place. It's on a stone that I put in round the churchyard, so it is."

I says, "The family needs proof that there."

I says, "We don't forget him. We never forget him."

I says, "But he's not going on that monument."

I says, "Not if you live to be a hundred,"

I says, "is he going on that monument. He was not an IRA man."

A battle is staged and plotted in this unabridged narrative encounter concerning the ownership and placement of Anna's husband's name. An IRA man concerns himself with memorializing Anna's dead husband at his daughter's own wedding – a jarring place and time to concern oneself with the IRA's honor roll. For this IRA man, Hank's name emphatically belongs at the top of *An Time Bheo*. For Anna, Hank's name emphatically belongs in the right place, the stone in the churchyard. Moreover, through a spatially and affectively negative deictic – "he's not going on that monument" – Anna distances her husband's name from the space of the Republican memorial. And, marking the distance in terms of years, repeats the deictic gesture: "not if you live to be a hundred...is he going on that monument." Throughout this face-to-face conflict, she again retrieves Hank's name and identity from the other's grasp. Within this narrative disclosure, Anna restages the active work against the increasingly *uninhabitable space* of her own community. Her discomfiting presence punctures the thinning membrane of a preserve built for the conditions of another time. Every evaporating ideology leaves behind its residuum, the dead head on which the far gone suspend. Amidst the sopor, Anna stages a perilous scene of individual decision against the *We*. She risks fraying communal relations during a conversation about a memorial to the dead at a wedding. Unwilling to sacrifice the truth of her husband's life, "he'll be buried the way he lived."

Chapter VI Partitions

He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors." - Robert Frost



Figure 18: Bryson Street Peace Wall

Good Fences

"You haven't found that the walls make good neighbors, have you?," Tom says to me dryly, presuming my answer, when I meet with him and Janey in the Department of Justice offices in east Belfast weeks after the always-contentious Orange Order and Loyalist parades¹⁷ in 2015. A fatalistic

¹⁷ The Twelfth, occurring every July 12th, commemorates the victory of Protestant King William of Orange over Catholic king James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. This definitive victory during the "Glorious Revolution" cemented the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. During July, the Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal order, marches throughout the streets accompanied by Ulster loyalist marching bands. Bonfires are lit the night before the marches and parades, and lampposts and houses are adorned with British flags and Union Jack bunting. These have, in the past, become intense periods of sectarian hatreds and riots.

question posed by one of two officials in the DOJ department in charge of maintaining, building, and as it turns out, *counting* the peace walls. Recently, he and Janey have been tasked with implementing a program aimed at removing the peace walls segregating Catholics and Protestants by 2023. Tom, in particular, remains pessimistic towards the efficacy of this removal program. Tom's sardonic reference to "Good fences make good neighbors," a stock phrase in east Belfast too often used by residents to justify the continuing desire to keep the walls, belies a shared sensibility in Belfast towards the walls. Properly categorized as a proverb, "Good fences" unavoidably recalls the old neighbor in Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall." The neighbor in the poem first utters and then repeats the proverb as he lifts and balances stones without deeply considering by what cause and for what purpose he was repairing a wall between him and the speaker of the poem. This speaker, noticing the myriad ways in which the nonhuman "something" sunders the wall apart over time, gently nudges his neighbor to reflect on the necessity of mending: "If I could put a notion in his head: *why* do they make good neighbors?" The speaker does not utter such a direct question, however, because he thinks his neighbor's desire to repeat his father's saying is too imbued with moral sentiment. The neighbor *likes* having thought of *good* fences make *good* neighbors so *well*.

The wall, a durative object of human artifice, secures and evokes a moral sense through the act of mending for the neighbor. But the dissensus and dislocating effects of "something there is that doesn't love a wall" over which the wall was built, and the mending occurs, speaks to the fundamental tension of fixing a limit, of imposing and maintaining an order. The peace walls in Northern Ireland were originally built in the name of public order. The issue of economic and social precarity, let alone infrastructural possibilities, remained subordinate to maintaining that order and quelling the emerging disorder. The 1972 Taylor Report (CAB4/146/9), the first official policy proposal concerning the walls, admits that the walls "have not achieved an end to disorder, but at least they have ensured that its general form would be that of confrontations between a

homogeneous crowd and the security forces, rather than inter-communal disturbances.” The “general form” of such disorder, of course, became the fixed borders of the working-class estates, while the content of the disorder were the people residing within.

The walls partition and distribute sensory experiences against which people make sense of their world. The wall, as an implicit law governing sensible experiences, demarcates the locations of one and the other and in doing so the wall *makes* the neighbor in a fixed and emplaced way. The wall, to be sure, points back to a distinction which is more basic than the territorial apportioning: the unique and unexchangeable position of the one “there” from the other’s non-identical positional “here.” But this temporally unfolding non-identical positioning of oneself in relation to the other necessitates that individuals continually appear to one another in a shared world. The wall, especially the 30- and 40-foot walls in Belfast, renders one and other less visible, and thus the ability to transpose from one’s place to the other or go along with each other in an embodied way becomes hindered. The peace wall, as an afterimage of previous decisions, continues to sediment distinctions from a particular place and time. It is only through understanding this dialectical ossification of the space of appearance – the sensible world – can a phenomenological investigation commence. These walls, deterring the progressive “deterritorialization” of social, economic, and political processes of the contemporary, show that the anterior posited limit, over which consciousness wants to absorb into the next dialectical moment of progress, still obtains. From a previous time, and simultaneously shaping and blocking the movement of empirical life, these walls inevitably ossify the anachronistic limits about Catholic vs. Protestant, Republican vs. Loyalist, Irish soil vs. British land. These distinctions, and all their attendant animosities, remain stubborn. By the time I am coaxed to accompany a “Catholic” to the “Protestant side” of the wall to capture a virtual Pokémon residing on a Protestant street for his Pokémon Go account on his smart phone, what remains of the delimiting of identity here is tragicomic, an inability to sublimate the limits of identity but able to cross

over just briefly to capture a Pokémon, which signifies, to me, the diminution of the wall's sublime overpowering domination through the act's absurdity. I asked this Catholic, in his early 20s, about this ludic act. I wondered whether he thought he'd actually be attacked as a Catholic walking into this neighborhood, and he says not a chance, yet still his mother would get angry at him if she found out, and he still feels a low level of fear in Protestant areas. This experience of collecting digital Pokémon characters across the boundary line shows that what remains of the origin of the work of walling is tragicomic.

The question of how a wall can make moral beings requires some speculation in the very grounds on which these peace walls were erected. The “Good fences make good neighbors” proverb, spoken by Catholics and Protestants alike, is not just one anonymous discourse proliferated by American poetry. The proverb, and the moral sentiment it evokes, has an indigenous dimension in the context of Ulster where reside Northern Ireland's six counties. Folklore research has shown that “Good fences...” is likely Irish in origin and specifically from the province of Ulster. The folklorists Williams and Meider (2004) show that the English and Irish language versions of the “Good fences...” are prevalent throughout Ireland. They also note that English language versions of the proverb is attested multiple times in east Belfast throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, which my own research proves continues into the present. The folklorists decline to posit how the divisions between Protestants and Catholics, the histories of British settler colonialism,¹⁸ or the penal laws that denied property rights to both Presbyterians and Catholics in Ulster until late into the 18th century (Boyce 1982) helped to constitute such a proverb. Nor do they discuss the phenomenon of the so-called “settler natives,” the English and lowland Scots Protestants, who settled, often on

¹⁸ In addition to the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century that dispossessed and displaced indigenous Irish and Catholics with English and Scottish populations, another common phrase “beyond the Pale” finds its origins in English settlement law. The Pale was the region controlled by the King Edward III according to the 13th century “Statutes of Kilkenny.” The original Pale included Dublin and its environs as well as other settled lands. Beyond the Pale were the Irish natives and within the Pale were English settlers.

dispossessed lands of indigenous Irish, during Plantation of Ulster (1609-1690). This settler process continues to partially structure the urban and rural residential and cultural patterns in Northern Ireland and thus perpetuates “an ethnic differentiation between English and lowland Scots and the resentful Irish dispossessed” (McKeown 2013, 3). Though speculative, it does seem likely that this proverb could have easily emerged from such territorial and ethnic differentiations. Indeed, Williams and Meider list many English and Irish Gaelic variations of the proverb and posit that Irish speaking land surveyors in the 1820s moved to America and brought some variation of a similar Gaelic proverb with them. One example, found in *Seanfhocla Uladh* (Ulster Proverbs) published in 1907, goes “*Cha raibh cómbursana agat ariamb chomb mhaith le teóirinte (teoranntaibh)*/ You never had neighbours as good as boundary fences” (in Williams and Meider 2004, 333). The Irish noun *maith*, meaning good or goodness (the commonly used phrase *maith thú!* good on you!), can also be used in the transitive verbal form meaning forgive or pardon an offense (*go maithé Dia dom é!* God forgive me!). Regrettably, this sense of forgiveness remained unexpressed in the proverb, especially in its English variation. Nevertheless, tarrying with the proliferation, and possible origin, of the proverb in Ulster, a moral sentiment concerning the goodness of the boundary between one’s neighbor finds its historical formation in both the English and Irish speakers of Ulster. And further, this proverb, strictly speaking, combines aesthetic and moral experiences. Boundary fences evoke not just an intangible moral sentiment found in thought, speech, or action, but affects and moods. Through encounters with the fence, morality *affects* the senses. I borrow the term “moral sentiments” from recent work by Throop (2012) who seeks to rehabilitate the ways in which our embodied emplacement in the world encounters morality through the very sensations impressing themselves on the body. This concept of moral sentiments was first articulated by Francis Hutcheson in his

theory of moral sense¹⁹ and then made thematic by Adam Smith. The Irish philosopher, Hutcheson, was born ten miles outside east Belfast in 1694, and thus his speculations about how man “feels” the moral from the world through pleasure or displeasure are indigenous to Ulster. Throop appropriately recasts moral sentiments as moral sensibilities,²⁰ which provide “a means to account for the diverse range of embodied experiences that may be implicated in the culturally constituted emplacement of sentiments in the articulation of local moral worlds” (Throop 2012, 151).

The phenomenal world of appearance in Ulster, then, has long since been gathered around the division of the sensible world through the colonial territorial apportioning, residential patterns of segregation, and, of course, the wall. Borrowing the notion of *portage du sensible*, the partition or distribution of the sensible, from Jacques Rancière (2004), who defines it as “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it” (7), the peace walls in the Short Strand and Inner East are constitutive of particular ways of perceiving. Because neighbors cannot easily see each other face-to-face, other forms of sensory engagement (particularly auditory and tactile) emerge as heightened modalities for making sense of the sensations of the other. Part of Rancière’s political program is to provoke redistributions of such partitions and distributions to include those who do not have voice, or appearance. In a word, those who *disrupt* the order of the sensible world by appearing. These emergent forms of sensory engagements may contribute to redistributing or at least revealing the possibilities for existence. As will be considered

¹⁹ “[A]s the Author of *Nature* has determin'd us to receive, by our external *Senses*, pleasant or disagreeable Ideas of Objects, according as they are useful or hurtful to our Bodies; and to receive from *uniform Objects* the Pleasures of *Beauty* and *Harmony*, — so he has given us a MORAL SENSE, to direct our Actions, and to give us still *nobler Pleasures*, so that while we are only intending the Good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest private Good” (Hutcheson 1969: 1, 123-124). Hutcheson’s theory of the human capacity for moral sense, an internal sense basic to human nature as smelling, provides an early articulation of the importance of feeling and emotion to morality: “our mind is directed to perceive beauty or excellence in the kinds of affections of rational agents and to admire and love such characters and persons” (Hutcheson 1969: 1, 108).

²⁰ Etymologically sentiment and sensibility both derive from Latin infinitive *sentire* “to feel”

below, sometimes humor and laughter are the modalities in which sense becomes redistributed and negotiated.

When considering the peace walls in Belfast, I want to keep in mind how moral sensibilities, the very impressions and vibrations of sensations pressed against the bodies of those who live up against the walls, may evoke disjunctive and disfiguring temporal encounters. These walls, moreover, are not simply for the purpose of segregation and surveillance.²¹ The walls are also part of the infrastructure that allows everyday life to happen. In seeing the walls as infrastructure, I borrow from Gupta (2018) who draws our attention to “infrastructures as a process that is characterized by multiple temporalities, open futures, and the constant presence of decay and ruination” (62). While Gupta notes that infrastructure and infrastructure projects often have utopian goals aimed towards desirable futures, the peace walls as infrastructure can often conjure dystopian, feared, or impossible futures. Importantly, these dystopian futures, the case of the peace walls, were already expected when the plans to build them were discussed. The peace walls, which are constituted not just by corrugated iron, concrete, brick, and steel but also by bus depots, (nearly) abandoned shopfronts, roads, shrubs, and other buffers, minimally keep the “two cultures” from spilling over one into the other. There are also walls *within* the communities as well: 10 foot or higher brick walls separating neighbors back gardens from one another to allow for individual and familial privacy, which is lacking in working class districts consisting of joined terrace houses. One notable visual aspect of being in the Short Strand and Inner East is that the windows of the terrace streets and of the courts all face outward. Because of the frequent glare of the overcast sky off the windows, it is difficult to see inside the houses. Like a one-way mirror, those residing inside can easily see outward, and this practice of watching those who walk by is extremely common, as the practice was cultivated during

²¹ Though, to be sure, multiple swiveling CCTV cameras bolted on their tops and the British-Army developed “courts” around which social houses were built in the 1980s certainly evoke Bentham and Foucault’s theory of the Panopticon, the always already being-surveilled experience of living in a disciplinary society.

the conflict to warn of army raids or suspicious outsiders. Often in my fieldwork, I've arrived at someone's home and they would have already known I was coming from a phone call or text from a resident down the way. In time, I developed the habit of caving my body, of ducking my head down, popping my jacket collar up. Feeling tense, always, from the sensation of being watched.

The peace walls inevitably evoke the “forever war” for future of Ireland and in this sense, they signify the conditional deferral of the end. Like many districts with peace walls zigzagging through them across urban Belfast, the Short Strand and Inner East communities are often rogue states with local forms of sovereignty. They also are a popular tourist definition for posting “selfie” images on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, and though this dark tourist economy that flourishes in West Belfast has yet to find footing in east Belfast, plans are being made to monetize these structures through historical tours. Ultimately, though, the walls are productive of complex experiences that allow for the cultivation of moral dispositions and palimpsestic dystopic social futures, as well as and fleeting moments of redistributed moral sensations. Here, on the edges of the walls, there are also moments of unpredictability occurring that aren't easily subsumed to narratives reinforcing a “us” vs. “them” social identity. Sometimes, what wells up here on the edges of the walls are excessive moments where possibilities and impossibilities reveal the absurdity of the situation and the desire to be otherwise. Indeed, while the Short Strand can exist as a microcosm of Provisional temporality, as the site for the rebirth of an Irish Republic (see Chapter II), the walls can also evoke disdain for Republicanism or for the entire statecraft project of Northern Ireland.

Counsel of Despair

In 2013, the first and deputy first ministers of Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive, Peter Robinson of the DUP and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, publicly announced they had drafted a plan that would remove the peace walls separating the Protestant and Catholic working-class areas

by 2023. Outlining “the foundation for peace and prosperity for future generations,” the proposal *Together: Building a United Community* was specifically centered around young people. The word “future” appears 50 times in the 116-page document including appearing as the final word: “The findings from these evaluations will be valuable in highlighting how best to shape a sustainability plan for our community in terms of preparing for the future” (OFMDFM 2013: 116). Various permutations of the activities of “building” and “shaping” and “preparing” the future weave their way through the document. The future itself pairs with the attribute “better” 11 times in total. One question that remained unasked by the proposal concerns about what kind of future is already being built, shaped, and prepared *there*, or as this chapter lays bare, the immediate *here* amidst the walls themselves. This proposal must be understood in light of another recently unearthed a 1972 proposal that demonstrated a utilitarian outlook leading to the formation of the peace walls.

In April 1971, Northern Ireland’s Minister for Home Affairs John Taylor submitted a report to Brian Faulkner, the final Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, entitled *Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation*. This remarkable document serves as an origin points of sorts for the State policy of permanent walling between the Catholic and Protestant “ghettos.” Each page is marked SECRET on top and bottom and only 52 copies were made. The report’s Working Party consisted of Protestant Unionist politicians, a major-general of the British Army, and an assistant chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and one representative of the British government who submitted a minority report opposing the construction of the peace lines. What came to be known as the “Taylor Report” amongst local journalists, academics, and the general public showed definitively, for the first time, that the peace walls were a rigorously planned policy from top to bottom with input from the political and military apparatuses. These walls were considered a coherent policy conceived, in part, right after events such as the gun battle at St. Matthews (see Chapter II).

A memorandum written by Taylor and affixed to the front of the report makes clear that the outbreak of sectarian violence in 1970, the Prime Minister “set up a Working Party to consider inter alia the existing areas of confrontation and peace lines in the city and to advise as to future policy” (CAB4/146/9). More than just a document about how to prevent such outbreaks, the document served another purpose: to offer recommendations for urban redevelopment aligned with a policy of using peace walls and other infrastructure such as motorways, roads, factories, warehouses, natural barriers were accepted “with reluctance... reinforc[ing] this tendency towards segregation.” For the first time since the partition of Ireland in 1921 into two separate countries, segregation between Protestants and Catholic social housing districts was proposed as the official state policy. As an early precursor to the current proliferation of walls, this report confirms Wendy Brown’s (2010) recent observations about “what appears at first blush as the articulation of state sovereignty actually expresses its diminution relative to other kinds of global forces....the ungovernability by law and politics of many powers unleashed by globalization and late modern colonization” (24). The officials drafting the report would, in little over a year, find themselves without a sovereign government in Northern Ireland. And though the Government of Northern Ireland including the Northern Irish Prime Minister office was abolished in 1972 while London assumed direct rule, much of the findings and projections of the Taylor Report would be implemented in subsequent years. What ultimately occurred, of course, was the creation of a multitude of relatively homogenous enclaves that constituted heterogenous sovereignties - each area developed its own set of rules and institutions separate from the State, and each was ideologically unique even when compared with their overall affiliations within larger Loyalist or Republican organizations.

What the Taylor Report lays out is not only a vision or imaginary of the future, but also implicitly lays the groundwork for how the future should be sensed and perceived, including self- and other perceptions. The document puts to language a vision of the sensorial world through the

re-development of housing and infrastructures. Framed in that linguistic phrase of utility “in order to,” the report reads,

in order to minimise the risk of future confrontations it may well be essential to provide in any re-development plans for the maximum natural separation between opposing areas. Instead, however, of ugly and psychologically damaging feature like a peace line, there might be some sort of physical cordon sanitaire.

“Cordon sanitaire” cannot help but remind one of the emergency practices of quarantining infectious diseases. Reminiscent of Mary Douglas’s (1966) insight that “the purity for which we strive and sacrifice so much turns out to be hard and dead as stone” (162), the hard and dead stone of the peace lines were used to prevent the differently polluted bodies of the poor working-class Catholics and Protestants from spilling over one into the other. That “ugly and psychologically damaging” is opposed to “cordon sanitaire” remains a most perplexing binary. The latter is supposed to signify green spaces, storefronts, or warehouses. As mentioned in Chapter III, the green buffers become today so saturated with detritus - “diapers, golfballs mostly for some reason, flasks of soup, packs of sandwiches, band batons, of course red, white and blue! Detritus of drinking: bottles, cans and bags and plenty of piss!” as Thomas listed - that the cordon sanitaire itself became a place where one might actually become infected. Many of the storefronts and warehouses buffers on the Newtownards Road, moreover, are empty, vermin-filled, and have trees growing out of their collapsing roofs while glued to their exteriors are vinyl posts of shop fronts are glued, the simulacrum of economic activity.

Arendt makes the important distinction between the “in order to” of utility characteristic of the activity of work and the “for the sake of” characteristic of the meaningfulness of human existence (Arendt 1958, 154). The former signifies a form of fabrication in which the ends always become the new means for some further ends. For example, the peace walls were built for the ends of preventing sectarian violence by “maximizing natural separation.” When this “in order to” becomes the content of “for the sake of which,” that is when the end becomes the content of the

means, utility becomes the center of meaningfulness. Arendt argues that in this case, the world indeed begins to degrade and slip into meaninglessness. While work can set up a world, what gathers in that work cannot be reducible to such instrumentality. And indeed, the minority report warns about the fabrication of such despair for the sake of the utilitarian “in order to.”



Figure 19: Storefront Simulacrum

Written by a lone dissenter, the minority report offered a different prophecy of the future, and was perhaps more sociologically informed than the majority arguing that “[w]hen a city is re-developed a pattern of life is laid down for at least a century.” The future envisioned by the minority thus focused on how walls often become permanent structures structuring a “pattern of life.” Foreseeing the kind of affective communities that would come to fruition, the dissenter called the report’s advice a “counsel of despair” and speaking in terms that evoke the asylums of the time spoke of “straight-jacketed communities:”

I find myself in disagreement on the proposals that the divisions in the community should be accepted as a feature of life which must inevitably persist for a hundred years or more. This seems a counsel of despair. A despair which it is proposed should be expressed in terms

of bricks and mortar. For example, the paper proposes a physical cordon-sanitaire in the shape of factories, warehouses and high walls between.

[...]

We cannot say that either the Protestant or Catholic populations will be content to remain in straight-jacketed communities. These themselves are likely to become sources of major discontent. The word ghetto has been lightly and loosely used in the past. These proposals would give the name substance, and would attract criticism from all over the world.

Indeed, this minority voice speaks prophetic today as Northern Ireland approaches the 50th anniversary of the first British-sanctioned peace walls. Attached to the Taylor report was an appendix marking the “areas of confrontation” with black outlines nearly identical where the peace lines would subsequently be built from the 1970s until today built in the Inner East around the Short Strand. These outlines correspond nearly identically to “imaginative geography” of Thomas’s drawing from Chapter III.

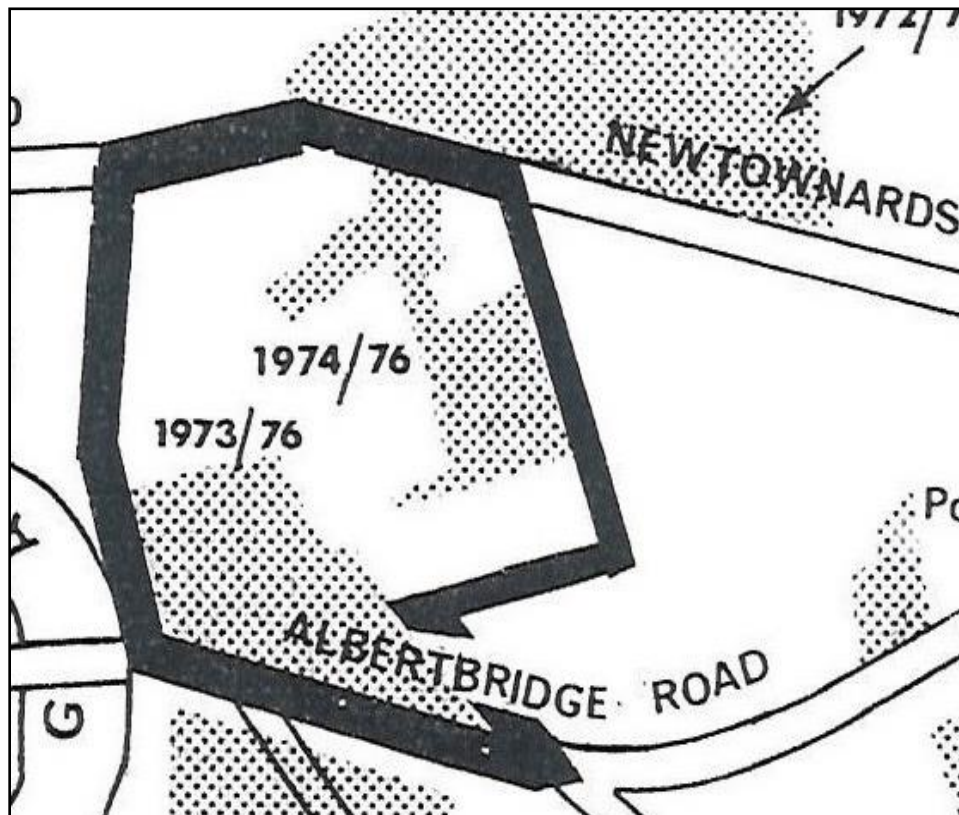


Figure 20: Areas of Confrontation



Figure 21: Thomas's Outline of the Short Strand

The “counsel of despair” was perhaps the last word on the peace wall policy until Robinson and McGuinness’s 2023 removal proposal. The two appeared side by side together at a news conference to announce the proposal. During the news conference, Robinson framed the proposal by negating a possible fear-inducing image for Unionist Loyalists of the near future in which Catholics and Protestants would be sharing space, saying “no one has anything to fear. The bulldozers will not be arriving in the morning to take down any of the peace walls.” McGuinness, in contrast, followed Robinson by framing his remarks in terms of the forward-looking sloganeering characteristic of contemporary Sinn Féin political discourse, saying that the proposal would “finally make a huge decisive step forward in terms of uniting our community, uniting our young people, and moving forward to build a better future for all them.”

With this proposal, the walls became a focal issue of attention in Belfast, including much publicity and ridicule at the implausibility of setting down a date. The palpable feeling of disdain by the public, and in particular the residents who live in these working-class communities, towards

setting down a datable year of removal was perhaps the longest lasting effect of this proposal. A few months after this announcement, a retractable wire mesh net was erected in the grounds of St. Matthew's Catholic Church after an intense period of Protestant riots following Belfast City Council's decision to cease flying the Union Jack flag in perpetuity. What did remain protracted in perpetuity, however, was the new wire fence.

The Count

In Block B of the Castle buildings on the magisterial Stormont Estate in east Belfast, I am to meet with two Department of Justice officials tasked overseeing the walls. These were the very buildings used to gather and house the various factions negotiating the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998. I am driven to the DOJ office by Joe, the director of the Belfast Interface Project (BIP), and long-time resident of the Short Strand in his 60s. His house abuts the Translink Bus Depot, which is surrounded by a wall. For Joe, this depot is a peace wall. He says, however, that the DOJ does not classify the bus depot as a peace wall and then warns me about the DOJ's inability to count. The DOJ counts 59 walls he tells me. He counts more than 100 structures, reminding me that he hired researchers at BIP to count the walls. While Department of Justice, Department of Infrastructure, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and local Housing Associations each have various, and not entirely consistent, jurisdiction and ownership over walls and buffers, Joe still finds it humorous that the DOJ only acknowledges their own count. Their reluctance to count, and thus be responsible for other walls, bespeaks to the larger issues of those bodies living up against and amidst the walls who are rendered invisible by the way the Department of Justice understands how the area is partitioned. The bus depot is an infrastructural site of great worry to the residents of the Short Strand. On cold mornings, as the diesel engines run, one can see the brown yellowish exhaust hanging in the air with the morning fog. The particulates settle on the sills and in the nostrils and lungs of residents living

up against it, and many believe the higher cancer rate²² in the area is because of the depot. To not acknowledge this bus depot as a wall, and one which the residents smell every morning, shows the work that needs to be done to recognize such sensations as morally and politically efficacious. The sensory modality of smelling diesel, then, evokes a future in which cancer becomes a real possibility. The noises of the engines chugging in the morning evoke similar dread. Residents of the Short Strand, spearheaded by Sinn Féin, have publicly protested this bus depot, and have held picket lines in front of the Department of Infrastructure offices in the city center reading “Short Strand Needs Facilities Not Fumes Aiseanna Atá Uainn - Ní Neamhaird!” Mairéad, the local Sinn Féin, councilor writes in a Facebook post: “I say Translink must go, stop polluting our community and give us a future.” The uncounted wall, then, becomes an encounter for disagreement and for recognition. This very wall is the site from which a future in which one get cancer comes to be. There is a very struggle to get the wall to even *appear* and thus signify the greater issues with the health and infrastructural issues in the district.

Joe, who is Mairéad’s older brother, was once also the Sinn Féin councilor representing the district. As he drives me into the Stormont estate to meet with the DOJ officials, we pass through what he calls an “an upper-middle class,” replete with age-old trees and grandly ornate detached houses, a mile outside of the inner east of Belfast. Joe tells me some of these people didn’t even know there was a war going on. He talks about how the Strand used to have 10,000 residents, but the housing was poor and so many of them moved up to Turf Lodge and Twinbrook in the 1950s. He tells me the Unionist politicians in charge probably thought the Short Strand was going to turn Unionist, but at some point, people refused to leave. He thinks the peace walls were a solution to contain the Catholics, to keep them under 4,000.

²² Between 2001-2010, the BT5 postcode for the Short Strand/Inner East had the fifth highest rate of cancer with 2842 incidences according to the NI Cancer Registry. <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/nov/01/cancer-diagnosis-deaths-northern-ireland-by-postcode#data>>

Joe drops me off and the security attendant at the front desk is asleep on his hand and when he takes a rather long time to wake. He is seated next to a four-screen panel of CCTV screens monitoring the inside and outside of the building. In the waiting area, I notice that the furniture is all orange – plushy chairs and couches. The wall, too, is painted orange. There is a new sign on the orange wall that reads: “Department of Justice” with its website www.dojni.gov.uk and underneath a plaque that reads “Building a fair, just and safer community.”

An attendant comes to get me and holds the door open, as he tells me that every door from here on would be locked. He tells me to go up the stairs to the door immediately to my left. Upon ascending another employee holds open a door for me. Then we go through another door, unlocked by her keycard. She jokes about getting lost and about the amount of doors. She escorts me to a room with three desks, in two of which are seated Tom and Janey.

Tom rises to shake my hand. I see that his mousepad is made from a photograph of a peace wall overlaid with “do something about this shit,” though the computer mouse occluded the final letter, I’m fairly certain of my perceptual fulfillment of “t” in its absence. This is a remarkable phenomenological imperative captured on this mousepad: “do something *about* this shit.” Precisely what this “something” means is what is at stake in my conversation with Tom and Janey. I tell them about my research and about my internship work with the Belfast Interface Project on an oral history of the peace walls and Tom begins to speak, “you haven’t found that the walls make good neighbors, have you?,” he says dryly. And then what I perceive to be irritation sets in as he says I can absolutely not record him with a device, so I take out my notepad and begin to write as he recounts the history of the DOJ. He says that the DOJ was formed in April 2010 and wasn’t originally part of the devolved power-sharing government originally. The DOJ took over the peace walls from the NIO (Northern Ireland Office), which is headed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, appointed by the Prime Minister of the UK. He said the NIO had patchy records about the history,

makeup, and even the amount of peace lines in existence. He says that the DOJ started with what they counted to be 59 peace lines as reported by their engineers. He also admits that they could count different numbers, but 59 is what they agreed upon, so this is their definitive count. Their second task in 2010, after figuring out the count, was a concern for the health and safety of people living near the peacelines. The walls could topple, after all. They needed to figure out how high and in what state the walls were in.

He says they also conduct maintenance: they fix gates and gate locks. Remove the bits hang off and scrape the rust. They contract repairs out to the laborers who erect highway barriers. They also find contractors for the metalwork. The metalwork is more problematic than the brickwork because of corrosion. The wind can topple shoddy metalwork down and potentially injure people. Tom asks Janey if any of them have their original metalwork. Janey thinks about it, but evidently takes too long, so Tom answers his own question by saying one or two still have the original metalwork. The metal falls into ruin more quickly, while the brick just needs paint.

I ask if any have been heightened since the formation of the agency. He says in East Belfast where they have been asked to heighten the peace walls along Bryson St., “but we haven’t, don’t want to do it.” He says this rather defiantly. He says that the peace walls are at a maximum height of 30-40 feet, that’s all the structure can take. Then he broaches the topic of St. Matthews: there were major riots, he says, and this increased tensions. There was engagement with local people and an add-on to the existing structure was completed. I ask him about the net material, how they decided on that kind of peace line. He says they were looking for engineering solutions to make the peace wall less permanent and retractable. “No great science behind it,” he says, which surprises me, especially since he says it with such futility. I am getting the sense with his pessimistic comportment that there is a certain despair to this position. I ask asked him if the net has worked. He says it’s provided a level of protection. “Would I use it again, this kind of net? Probably a one

off,” he says. Janey finally speaks. “It’s always stayed closed and never been retracted,” she laments. Tom says that a DOJ contractor is the one who would retract it if it ever came to it, but I get the sense that everyone knows this isn’t going to happen.

I ask him about 2023. He says the walls were originally put up for “public disorder and terrorist activity.” The problem now is that “barriers are in people’s heads, must look at the socio-economic problems. Social housing is single identity and these areas rate highly on indices for social deprivation.” The DOJ is the lead department for the 2023 removal dates. He admits that the “plan to remove” is “simplistic” and each peace wall has its own nuance. It must be done with community consent, he says. He says there is plenty of anxiety, useful and not useful, about this 2023 date. A recent report on the attitude towards the peace walls show that “attitudes have hardened.” He says that it has to be a “stepping-stone approach.” Janey says that there has to be double of everything because of the peacewalls: parks, centres, gyms. Tom says even the way the housing is constructed, it faces inward, so if a wall comes down, you can’t see your neighbour anyway, as the front doors face inward. Anti-climb paint is used from time to time. CCTV cameras: done in a couple of places; “we fund [the cameras] but it’s part of the PSNI.” The Bryson Street wall in the Short Strand, he says, is funded by DOJ: “Our guy puts up the pole but connecting the camera to the pole is done by the PSNI.”

I ask about cleaning walls, remembering how Pat, a resident who lives facing the Bryson Street peace wall in the Short Strand, abhorred their appearance. Tom says the weather cleans them, and that once in a while the DOJ will clean an odd bit of graffiti. He says there have been requests to paint at Bryson Street, but if it’s not effecting security, “we like not to touch it.” Every two years, the DOJ gets a condition report: “we don’t clean, if we do it’s mainly for rust.”

Janey, though she was often spoken over and did not get a lot of time to speak, seemed like she wanted to be more proactive in altering and removing the walls. Tom, however, who took

control of the conversation seemed as if inactivity was the best policy. He was hesitant to build, modify, or even clean the walls, let alone remove them. His mousepad, however, said “do something about this shit.” Tom’s work station, and the mouse pad, the very ground upon which he conducts his virtual work through pointing and clicking and highlighting, shifting, and moving of texts and images through his computer mouse, discloses the very significance of an intentional orientation towards the wall: “doing something *about*.” Rather, and echoing the warnings of the 1972 minority report, what the DOJ office responsible for the removal of the walls projects is yet more despair, more *impossibility*.

Impossibilities

Witty and absurd banter, so difficult to capture outside of the moment of performance, often emerged in conversations while speaking with those who lived up against the so-called “peace” walls. In one exchange between sisters-in-law, Claire complains to Aoife that during the summer, especially during Protestant periods of commemoration and celebration including the Twelfth, the Protestants on the other side of the wall keep her “on her nerves.” During the Twelfth morning, she says “after having to listen to Stock Aitken Waterman remixes all night I’m glad” that the rains have come to ruin the parades for the Protestants. Claire says they also blared a “raved-up ‘Simply the Best.’”²³ Aoife says she hates that song and asks Claire, tongue-in-cheek, if she couldn’t get requests played. Claire jokes that they need to change their DJ because he’s worse than their DJ neighbor on the Catholic side known for playing impossibly bad rave music. These auditory experiences, however, have real impact on Claire. She does not sleep often, even during quiet periods. The rave music lingers in her mind, like phantom sounds, for weeks and months, as do the sounds of the

²³ Originally composed and sung by the Welsh pop musician Bonnie Tyler, and made most famous by Tina Turner, “Simply The Best” has become an anthem of the UVF, a Loyalist paramilitary, though in general even non-UVF affiliated Loyalists also blare the song during celebrations, parties, after football matches, etc.

revved-up engines of the PSNI armored land rovers and the crack of bottles and bricks hitting the houses, cars, and roads. The “thuds” and “thunks” are anticipated, even in the sound’s absence it remains present to sensory perception. One of Claire’s neighbors often takes anti-anxiety tablets to help rest and quell anticipatory thinking about the “thunks.”

Yet, as mentioned, these walls also afford humorous interactions. As Claire says, “if you couldn’t laugh, you’d cry.” These interactions altered the way in which I understand the way in which the walls reinforce nationalism and sectarianism, which is a common belief in Belfast. In fact, echoing Tom’s, the DOJ official, statement that “the barriers are in people’s heads,” one sedimented belief about these walls is that they are external manifestations of sectarian bigotry and, in a feedback loop between the internal and external, promote nationalisms. While the walls can be constitutive of antagonistic forms of self- and other-making and psychic and embodied tensions, there is also an underlying experience of absurdity that emerged unexpectedly in this following conversation with Brigid, and absurdity that makes light of nationalistic and sectarian traditions and ideologies.

Today, Brigid swipes her iPad and sits cozily under throw pillows on a silver couch in the front room. Her silhouette announces itself against the massive Bryson Street wall outside the two shatterproof front room windows. Brigid lives with her mother, Claire, in this three-story terrace house, the top floor of which overlooks onto Protestant side of the wall. Between the two front room windows, Claire hung Brigid’s framed formal photograph. Her red, draping formal dress contrasts brightly against the drab and dreary spikes, mesh, and bricks constituting the wall outside. Across from Brigid sits Claire and her uncle, Brendan. Brendan is Claire’s oldest brother. While they unwind in the front room, Aoife warms a dinner plate in the kitchen for Colum, her ten year old son by her late husband John. John was Claire and Brendan’s younger brother. Aoife remains close to the family, and she and Colum call in daily to Claire’s house. During a conversation about the

necessity of walls, Brendan asks Brigid whether Irish Republican traditions are important to her, and a boisterous interaction follows:

Brigid: Not really. Only on St. Patrick's Day.

Brendan: Aaah!

Claire: For a swall!

Brendan: And that's not really a Republican thing, is it? I don't think fucking St. Patrick was in *the Ra* like.

Brigid: heh heh

Claire: You never know.

Brendan: ha HA.

Aoife: Sure, Gerry Adams wasn't.

Brendan: Well, he wasn't either!

What emerges in this conversation is perhaps more important to tenor of everyday life in the Short Strand than Irish Republicanism: a good laugh. Indeed, a good laugh rolls through the interaction, supplemented through interjections by family members. This unfolding exchange of wit and humor is indicative of *sleggin*, a kind of sustained and dialogic wise-cracking, often aimed at someone. This instance of *sleggin*, however, is rather gentle perhaps because Brigid is young and shy and her mother and aunt move the interaction towards targeting the very thing Brendan was attempting to affirm: the importance of Irish Republican traditions. Many believe that these traditions flourish because of the protection of the walls. One only need to look at the wall to be reminded of one's identity. The very sameness of the wall, and the interpretation of the wall - to keep us safe from Protestants - bolsters the sense of one's identity and possibilities.

Unpacking the layers of interlocking humor in this conversation will of course make the joke less humorous. But, when Brigid answers that she experiences Irish Republicanism only on St. Patrick's Day in front of her mother and uncle, both of whom lived through the worst of the

Troubles, including being burnt out of their house by the UVF during what the locals call the “Battle of St. Matthews” in 1970, everyone bursts out in uproarious laughter. The deeper context to this subversion of expectations thus includes the fact that Brigid descends from a family with deep Republican roots in the district, whose mother and uncle were put out of their family house by Protestants where the wall stands. St. Patrick’s Day, as it is currently practiced in Ireland (and the world) through binge drinking, is widely seen as an American import. Brigid’s uncle, Brendan, lets out an astonished gasp - “Aaah!” - when he hears her response about St. Patrick. He clearly expected a reverent, if stock, paean to Irish Republicanism. Never one to let an opening for sleggin to close, Claire interjects with the real motive for St. Patrick’s Day: having a “swal,” that is, a drink. Claire lightly slegs her daughter with this reveal. Brendan sardonically poses the rhetorical question about whether St. Patrick’s Day is really a Republican tradition, and then with ironic understatement posits that he didn’t think St. Patrick was in “the RA,” a colloquial idiom for the IRA. Claire, not willing to let this moment recede and perhaps not pleased with her brother sleggin her daughter, reminds every one of the secretive society of Irish Republican Army membership. She suggests St. Patrick, the 4th Century Irish Saint known in folklore for converting the Irish to Catholicism, may have been a balaclava donning volunteer: “you never know.” Aoife, listening from the periphery of the conversation, pipes in with the true punchline of the co-constructed joke: “sure, Gerry Adams wasn’t.” Everyone deeply laughs, contributing to a carnivalesque send-up of *Gerry Adams*, the proper name that functions as the *sine qua non* master-signifier in Belfast, an affectively loaded name for both Protestant and Catholic communities alike, a metonym for contemporary Irish Republicanism and indeed the entire political situation in Northern Ireland. And in this joke, St. Patrick, the master-signifier for all that is stereotypically Irish Catholic becomes subordinated to Gerry Adams. Adams, the former president of Sinn Féin (he stepped down as president in 2017 after 34 years), the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA or IRA), has long since been known to have

held multiple leadership positions, including sitting on the Army Council. He consistently denies all of these paramilitary positions in interviews. Adams is equal parts beloved and hated, and these two poles of desire overflow with Aoife's brilliantly timed litotes - "Sure, Gerry Adams wasn't." If Gerry Adams could lie about not being in the PIRA, then surely St. Patrick could be a member, and thus Brendan's sleg towards Brigid - "I don't think fucking St. Patrick was in the Ra like" - comes full circle to make *him* the target of sleggin and putting him on the defensive. "Well, he wasn't either!" Brendan exclaims, perhaps knowing he has lost a battle of wits to his sister and sister-in-law. The initial absurdity of Brigid not knowing anything about Irish Republicanism other than the decidedly un-Republican St. Patrick's Day cascades into a dialectical reversal that discloses the absurdity of Irish Republican traditions. Indeed, how exactly is Brigid supposed to have knowledge about Irish Republicanism when the entire movement is based on secrecy and strategic denials? If Gerry Adams wasn't in the PIRA, perhaps St. Patrick was. We can take Brendan's exasperated "either" to admit the short circuiting of his initial sleg. Somehow, through the disclosive contingencies of interaction, the end of this interaction sees Brendan absurdly admitting, to more laughter than can be properly entextualized, that both Gerry Adams and St. Patrick were *not* in the IRA. And thus Brendan's initial question about Irish Republican traditions in Brigid's everyday life ends with a co-constructed and hilarious joke with Brendan having a bit more egg on his face than he could have possibly predicted. Brigid, for her part, seemed to enjoy the banter, but I could imagine her getting irritated if the sleggin kept up too long and if the women around her hadn't moved away from her subversive admission about her lack of care for Irish Republican traditions. In this way, her mother and aunt do not fault, and perhaps even support, Brigid's unfamiliarity with Irish Republicanism.

Though she's never properly met a Protestant from the Inner East on the other side of the wall outside her front windows, Brigid desires securing a good job, traveling around Europe, and, most importantly, moving out of the Short Strand and away from this wall. The walls encourage

such desires because they are not just constitutive of hatred or fear, but of infrastructural impossibilities. That is, the peace walls delimit what happens in the district, thus contributing to Brigid's desire to move away, though the prospects of leaving the district are slim without a fairly high-paying job to pay for the increasingly-high private rents. And as a single woman without a child, Brigid will be on the bottom of the social housing list. The Short Strand has few facilities: two express grocery shops for a minimal selection of products, an off-license, a bookmakers, a Chinese take-away, a social club and a bar, the former a drinking spot for Provisional IRA men, the latter for Officials and other kinds of Republican. The Doyle, a building housing a youth club and a football pitch, is for ages 16 and younger and provides after school and summer activities. The Short Strand Community Centre houses a crèche, a cantina for reduced priced lunches, and provides programs for pensioners, but lacks a gym or leisure facilities. In discussing how the walls impact people her age, Brigid gets into a less humorous conversation with her mother and uncle. As the conversation unfolds, what results is the reciprocal agreement that what the walls constitute is precisely the experience of "nothing" of called infrastructural impossibilities:

Brigid: There's nothing for us to really do here. Like I don't have anything to do around here. I would just go into town or something. There's the Doyle but like I'm too old for the Doyle. But there's nothing like people age sixteen to eighteen. Well I'm nineteen, but I'm still around that age group. So that's probably why people start drinking when they're younger. Heh. Just to do something...

Claire: ...and the drugs...

Brigid: ...and drugs.

Brendan: So there's no facilities.

Brigid: No.

Brendan: Nothing for you.

Claire: Nope.

Brigid: No.

Claire: There is nothing like.

Brendan: There is nothing really is there...

Claire: There's not a thing.

Brendan: ...for older teenagers.

Brigid: Not even a swimmers or nothing. No gym.

Brendan: No leisure facilities.

Brigid: Nothing like that at all.

Brendan: Nothing.

Like the mutually constructed joke above, the family's conversation emphatically discloses the negative aspects of social life as constituted by the walls. Beginning with Brigid's preface of "there's nothing for us" and ending with Brendan's final "nothing," the back and forth and parallel constructed utterances reveal a primal sensory experience within these confines of these walls: nothing, no, nope, and not. What fills this nothing are drinking and drugs. If the walls evoke a sense of durability, of an objectivity standing against those who quite literally stand against them, part of what is retrieved in these encounters with the durable object by Brigid, and to some extent her family, is precisely this depriving sensation of "nothing." This account given for the social existence of Brigid by her and her family members, shows that a future for the sake of which she can flourish is limited by the infrastructural possibilities in this enclosed district. What prevents the infrastructural possibilities for Brigid's generation - often dubbed the "post-conflict generation" - are the various ways in which the peace dividend and investment developments in the working-class districts lag behind the developments seen throughout the newly developed commercial areas. This infrastructural development is most stark in east Belfast, where walls and buffers almost entirely enclose the Short Strand. A mile away is the Titanic District, which consists of a new multi-million-dollar Titanic museum, an all-purpose sports and events arena, hotel, executive apartments, a

technical college and film studios. And though this new district, funded with peace dividends and tax breaks, would be a five minute walk from the working-class districts in the east, there are a lack of accessible footpaths that keep this development cut off, especially those without a car like Brigid (though one of her immediate goals is to purchase a car to get out of the district more often).

Encounters with the Walls

Many on either side of the wall do not think they could be safe and thus flourish in their own way without the walls, that their way of life could not continue to exist let alone be cultivated. Alice, Brendan and Claire's mother, and Brigid's grandmother, who fled her home on the mixed side of Bryson Street across from the chapel with family during the gun battle at St. Matthews, experiences them as a safety blanket:

And you know, when that peace wall went up it was like a safety blanket. They were speaking one time about bringing this wall down and me and my husband were coming down Bryson Street and there was a girl, she was a reporter, and she says "we are here about the peace walls. What do you think of bringing them down?" And my husband says "bring them down? You can build them up another six foot because those walls can never come down. Never." I feel safe with the walls up. We are surrounded. This is a wee small enclave. And, you know, it's a dangerous place for Catholics to live. If there was a really, really bad outbreak, we wouldn't stand a chance. There's a bridge there, nobody could get over. You'd just be blocked in here. That'd be it. The peace walls are a safety blanket and you can't never take them down. Not here, not here in the Strand anyway. Maybe in other places, I don't know how they feel, but I would say a hundred percent of the people would say no. No. We need the walls.

Alice's house, which she and her husband had saved up and purchased in the late 60's in order to move out social housing and begin their "big Catholic family," was bricked and eventually torn down to make room for shopfronts, a doctor's surgery, and, later, a portion of the Bryson Street peace wall. Alice moved back into a "two up, two down" social house where she would raise her five children, never moving out of the district again. Alice's future, and the future of her community, are constituted through the safety of the wall. In this way, their durability also allows for their identity and community to appear stable: Catholics from the Short Strand. But, this identity found through

sameness is constituted, in part, through fear. Alice fears what the other will do to her (again) and if this fear comes to pass, there is nothing she or the community could do about it (“nobody could get over... That’d be it”).

While the walls make invisible most forms of immediate face-to face sociality - though some shouting matches occur from the high second or third floor windows when gazes meet - they are productive of different sensorial modalities of sociality and human-material interactions. Loudly playing music or beating drums can raise tension. Various missiles such as golfballs and paintballs are consistently thrown throughout the week. During more tense periods, glass bottles and bits of brick or paint bombs and petrol bombs. Two of Alice’s young great granddaughters – Claire’s granddaughters – were hit on separate occasions by missiles coming over the Bryson Street wall as they played. In 2013, a petrol bomb (a glass bottle containing petrol and sometimes sugar to make the mixture sticky, topped with a cloth wick out the end of the bottle) landed near Claire’s four-year-old granddaughter. The flames rose higher than the child. A neighbor reacted quickly to undress her as some of the petrol and flames splattered her and then she was rushed to the hospital. She had minor burns on her hands. Claire can still smell the petrol on her granddaughter today when she looks at the wall, and never lets her grandchildren play near it anymore. After the incident, immediately went to the newspapers and said the walls should be built higher. Another of Claire’s granddaughter’s was hit with a paint bomb that landed through the open door to her house and up through the hallway, which Claire once accidentally called the “wallway” before correcting herself, which I take to be a paradigmatic slip of the tongue speaking out of a singular truth.



Figure 22: Wallway

Another of Alice's granddaughters, Cadence, now in college in her early 20s recounts one of her first experiences with Mickey Mouse when she was five:

I remember my da - we lived in a flat - there's riots in Clandeboye [estate in the Short Strand]. It was really bad and he went "here, I got you something." And it was a golf ball. A Disney golf ball that was threw. It was threw back round. And he left and brought it home to me. Like he was around obviously rioting.

[...]

That's when I realized there would be trouble. That young. I had a golf ball that was threw from the Protestants with Mickey Mouse on it.

She recently joined Sinn Féin while studying politics at Queen's University in Belfast. She credits her grandmother's staunch Republicanism for persuading her, and perhaps even that Mickey Mouse golf ball, a whimsical token of sectarianism, for reminding her about the stakes of complacency towards the Protestant politicians and the British state apparatus. Cadence's journey to Republicanism stands in stark contrast to her cousin, Brigid, who just wants out. Indeed, the Mickey Mouse golf ball became a sort of turning point for thinking about what it would mean to be in opposition to Protestants political parties.

Other objects of perceptual attention draw from the international crises in the media. A house on the other side of the Bryson Street peace wall from St. Matthews Church taped an Ulster banner to the second-floor window facing St. Matthews, the former flag of Northern Ireland used today as a symbol of Ulster loyalism. FUCK ISIS was written on the banner:



Figure 23: Fuck ISIS Ulster Banner Flag

The message is clear: Short Strand residents, the IRA, and the Catholic church are terrorists like ISIS. That the flag faces chapel in which the Provisionals were formed imputes the speech act with more potency. There are also political messages tying current conflicts to other conflicts on one side of the bus depot wall. In particular, Irish Republicans and Nationalists are fervent supporters of Palestine and many fly the Palestinian flag more often than the Irish Tricolour. In the image below, taken on in the Short Strand up against the bus depot wall, US President Barack Obama is keeping at bay a UN inspector and an anthropomorphic figure of the world and while the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dressed in a butcher's apron wields a cleaver against Palestinians drowning in blood in one bloodied hand and with the other shushing:



Figure 24: *Tacaíonn an Trá Ghearr Le Gaza (Short Strand Supports Gaza)*

President Obama’s arm, too, performs the act of walling and thus contributes to a particular partition of the sensible. The depiction of this sensible partition on the very material surface of a partitioning wall brings together form, content, and material while linking another conflict to the current conditions in the Short Strand.

On the bus depot wall, graffiti is also used to call out men or women cheating on their husbands or, worse, “touts,” informants for the British Army. One of my own participants, a lifelong and still active non-mainstream Irish Republican recently had his name written out for being a “tout.” He responded by saying, “sticks and stones when people resort to that shite I must be doing something right.” He believes people are fearful of the influence he’s having on the mindset changes within Republican movement, as he’s leading the charge away from Sinn Féin towards a more militant and anti-peace agreement Republicanism. He says those opposed to him generate gossip about him. He texts me later when he finds out who wrote the graffiti: “2 boys who

swallowed a lie that i killed thir brother they got out of gaol the friday before the graffiti and on the monday burned down 2 homes of casual friends of mine in Turflodge.”



Figure 25: "He's Fucked"



Figure 26: "Tout"

Some nights, as darkness falls, a single teenager is sent out on a bike at the mouth of the Mountpottinger Road where he scouts to see if Protestant girls are gathered. This leads to meet ups on the edge of the walls, and sometimes older Protestant males get word and start throwing bottles, *sleggin*, or *slabberin* (less witty, often drunk, "shit-talking"). Sometimes these can lead to riots, though Facebook groups - both Catholic and Protestant - monitor the movement and size of of the groups and post the latest updates. Combined with the CCTV cameras running along the peace walls and throughout the east, concerned parents and the police are never too far behind. The youth often then play Keep Away from the police land rovers that chase them through the district. There are interesting patterns of flocking and dispersion the kids use to duck into alleyways or side paths and courts to confuse the police, though the police are happy to keep the attention on their armored and fireproof vehicles rather than on the other side. The walls are also focal points over which bottles, golf balls with nails pounded into them, paint balls, and when the "aggro" - aggression and rage - is

really up between the two communities, petrol bombs. Very infrequently guns are drawn, even if threatened on Facebook posts. The last account of a gunfire was 2013 during an intense period of riots on the walls.

Future Despair

What kind of neighbors will these good fences make in the future? As the future comes into view for people living with these walls, yet more sociality organized around despair emerges. As predicted in the 1972 minority report, the walls have changed the patterns of life. One pattern that has emerged is the drug economies. The walls have recently become territorial markers for drug economies as well as for easily locating individuals who haven't paid their drug debts. And the various walls within the communities separating the alleyways or the gardens from one another can be used this way, and in many ways are forms of intra-community "peace walls" as well that give residents some modicum of privacy in heavily monitored communities. These walls within the communities allow for covert routes for drug trades and debt punishments.

The Short Strand residents lament that there are more drug dens and drug dealers in the district than in any other in Northern Ireland. Drug dealing takes the form of (often overlapping) kinship and paramilitary networks. Cocaine is the premiere illegal drug sold by the so-called "kingpin families," though heroine has recently entered into the market. "Tablets," the catchall name for drugs prescribed for anxiety or depression, have long since been used in Belfast throughout the conflict to treat "the nerves" (Sluka 1989). This intergenerational practice of taking prescription tablets continues with the youth, but new prescriptions have entered circulation.

Epileptic drugs, in particular, are popular because of their euphoric treatments. Lyrica is known as "bud" or "Budweisers" because I'm told they make individuals feel as if they're drunk, but more euphoric. Lyrica is often ground and snorted. One effect is also becoming a "zombie."

Individuals will stand on a footpath or even in the middle of a street barely moving, eyes glazed or droopy, for upwards of an hour. This is a common sight in Belfast, especially during the weekend evenings. One of my interlocutors was once held himself upright leaning against a peace wall, and though I tried to coax him to his house several yards away, he did not want to move. This embodied moment was striking for me, as the materiality of the wall, which metonymically serves as a demarcation and constituting impetus for drug economic activity, actually props up the very drugged body. The walls thus constitute this “zombie” form of subjectivity by delimiting the areas where drugs can be sold. The police, it is widely believed, is more concerned about sectarianism and riots at the interfaces, which has allowed drug economies to flourish. During my fieldwork, there was one major drug raid in the Short Strand, which as locals will tell you, was a token raid compared to the massive amounts of drugs inside the area and on the outer rim of the district that constitutes the Protestant Inner East. In Protestant territories, dealers that often associate under the mantle of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), though many in the UVF would deny their affiliation, work the streets of the Inner East. Recently, a feud between Ian Ogle, a UVF member and community worker, and drug dealers who claim the mantle of the UVF ended in the ambush of Ogle on his way home to Cluan Place, a street-long Loyalist enclave completely surrounded by peace walls that juts into the Short Strand. Ogle was stabbed multiple times and died on the street outside Cluan Place. The memorial to Ogle, built on the site where he was stabbed to death by drug dealers, marks the despairing futures yet to come in the shadows of these “good fences.”

Chapter VII Litany

Martin hid a gun on the other side of the security gate to his house. His neighbor says he had erected the fence and stashed the gun for the moment he knew they would come. If he had moved a second faster when they did come, he might have fought them off. That is why, so the district logic goes, the killers had to swiftly “stiff” him before he entered the gate. Martin was a former top assassin for the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and if his killers missed their shot, there was no way Martin would miss his. But Martin did not make it. He was shot six times. Six bullets to the head. The murder appeared as “professional,” the frequent attribute used by locals in the days following. Whether the Provisional Army Council (which was not supposed to exist) used his old comrades, a next-door neighbor, or a “crew” from Dublin to assassinate him, the truth is known only to a few.²⁴ It was there at his front security gate that Martin died. It was there at the gate that his

²⁴ Though to this day no one has been charged with the murder of the person I call “Martin,” most people inside the community believe it was a “sanctioned” hit by the PIRA. This could mean there is a robust PIRA structure, a loose structure of affiliated individuals, or something in between. Regardless, the PIRA exists in some form and the rumors about the existence PIRA constitute an important aspect of the social life of Northern Ireland. I know this because, of course, I worked in a community in which their existence was evoked, though more in terms of “community activists” or “the lads in the background.” The current existence of the PIRA and the PIRA Army Council is always a part of daily rumors and discourse as any secret society. Specialists of Northern Ireland, however, have strong opinions on existence of the PIRA. This chapter was rejected in an abbreviated article version by a major anthropological journal, in part, because the editor did not trust the veracity of the ethnographic claim that the PIRA structures still exist and were very likely to have been responsible for Martin’s assassination. One anonymous reviewer, a specialist in Northern Ireland, on whom the editor relied to question the veracity of my claim, remarked: “...references to an organization which no longer exists (PIRA) and therefore could not have been involved in this assassination/killing in 2015. By 2005 the PIRA had disarmed...and by 2008 they had entirely disbanded.” Following the murder of “Martin,” a 2015 assessment by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland called *Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland* concluded: “All the main paramilitary groups operating during the period of the Troubles remain in existence: this includes the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Red Hand Commando (RHC), Ulster Defence Association (UDA), Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Seventeen years after the 1998 Belfast Agreement, paramilitary groups remain a feature of life in NI” (1). And, further, “The structures of the PIRA remain in existence in a much reduced form. This includes a senior leadership, the ‘Provisional Army Council’ (PAC) and some ‘departments’ with specific responsibilities” (3). Though members of these organizations today to refer to themselves “community workers,” “ex-combatants,” or “active Republicans,” because belonging to any one of the aforementioned groups is illegal in the UK, I stand by my ethnographic claim that PIRA structures were responsible for the assassination, understanding fully well that this claim is backed up primarily by “the word on the street” and secondarily by the fact that even the UK (via MI5) admits that these organizations “remain a feature of life in NI.” Martin’s family, to be sure, blames the PIRA frequently on social media and in newspapers for his death.

neighbor administered the last rites over his dying body. Overnight family members consecrated the gate as a sacred memorial for Martin. The memorial graced the fence facing outward toward the courtyard, and any neighbor who had aided as lookout or safehouse to those responsible for his assassination would see and remember what had been done. Despite Belfast's inclement weather there would stand an Irish tricolor flag, enlarged photographs of the man's face, and funeral flowers arranged to spell out his name: M-A-R-T-I-N.

Alby had known Martin his whole life and speaks at length about Martin's last moments as he administered to his dying neighbor the last rites. Alby feared and disliked Martin because of what he had done to Alby's friends – because of Martin's violent inclinations. So why did Alby administer to him the last rites? He questions his thinking and his actions, and nested within this questioning is an attempt to understand his own moral sense of self in relation to the Short Strand community in which he was born and has always lived. Alby's narratives about Martin fit into the genre of Irish storytelling – especially in Northern Ireland and border regions between the North and South, that long have been a staple in ethnographic, folkloric, and popular imagination (Cashman 2008; Feldman 1991; Glassie 1982; Saris 1995). Yet, very few studies of Irish storytelling have unpacked the rich, often conflicting, moral worlds depicted in stories of troubling experiences recounted in the company of friends and family. Such stories reveal moral uncertainties in which tidy, formulaic plots often fall apart as interlocutors piece together events (Ochs and Capps 2001). To be sure, the deliberated accounts of the conflict in Northern Ireland related among intimates were performances that evidenced rhetorical gifts of the co-tellers. Yet, as Alby's telling and re-telling of his story shows, the aesthetic structuring of stories distill and heighten a lingering inquietude and still-to-be-fathomed personal toll of acts of violence on the streets of Belfast. Such storytelling, which has yet to cohere into a polished account, unravels the moral and ethical constructs of the tellers and co-tellers who attempt to make sense of their fractured worlds. Alby's story, though under two minutes, makes a

mess of flux of time, dilates and contracts, in a movement of its own. His story, though time-like in its transcription, halts like a breath through durative intensities as will be shown below. Here, the patience of “being for death” renders anticipation inoperative, where Levinas says “the temporality of time is an obedience” (52). *Saying* for Levinas, gives rise to the tale of the *said*, and to understand Alby’s transcript, a re-presenting of the saying, I need to provoke a sense of the limen of exposure behind signification, the kind of exposure in the face of the dying other that tears away words, and yet compels us to respond to the dying face, despite our lack, with the very words taken.

Narrating life experiences, like other language practices, affords exploration of actions, dispositions, and conditions surrounding events. In the course of narrating, events can be bracketed for reflection, reinterpreted, and re-experienced with interlocutors. As such, narrating provides a platform for working through life dilemmas as reflective ethical. Indeed, much of the “ethical turn” has debated the distinction between un- or pre-reflective postures and reflexivity (Mattingly and Throop 2018, 479). Both James Laidlaw (2014) and Jarrett Zigon (2008) have both proposed that morality is intrinsic to the process of when people “step out” of their everyday practices actions to reflect on the norms guiding their life. This point seems like such common sense. Webb Keane’s counterproposal on “ethical life” argues that reflexivity is not a necessary precondition to the ethical but, rather, “*can* play a catalyzing role in producing public knowledge that feeds back into people’s unself-conscious responses to other people” (2016, 25, emphasis added). Yet, much of the ethnographic work on the moral aspects of reflexivity or ethical intuitions neglect to theorize how everyday moments of being reflective *about* reflexivity, i.e. about what other people are thinking, a building block of ethical life, can render one vulnerable to the moral gaze of others, leading them to seek moral affirmation as a continuous, lifelong process. Conversational storytelling reveal just how much moral complexity inheres in the everyday life of reflecting about being reflexive. In formulating, repeating, and revising details of events in the here and now, storytellers proffer ethical

reflections, including ethical reflections about reflecting itself. Alby's following story, told in naturally occurring conversation with others, explores the way in which ethical positions are generated, fashioned, and then embedded within storytelling, through what the anthropologist Michael Jackson (2013, 31) calls the "subjective-in-between." The ethical positions linger, soliciting responses from others, and may be drawn upon and negotiated in the future vis-à-vis the telling and co-telling of life experiences.

Addressing a central concern of Joel Robbins (2016), for whom the transcendence of ideals, values, and exemplars in religious experience is too often backgrounded by the morality and ethics literature in anthropology, the *sacred archē* inherent in the sacramental structure of the last and baptismal rites is front and center as an ethical frame in Alby's story about Martin's last moments. In Alby's threshold encounter of administering the last rites to Martin and his subsequent story about it, the sacred arises – and is contested – in the threshold space that constitutes an energized moral world *in potentia*. The way Alby responds in the face of Martin's death – indeed to his very face – following Hannah Arendt's (1958, 189) framing, constituted an *arché* in the sense of setting something in motion, an act that begins something new that may be joined by others. He transforms the body that could be – and was – murdered into a complex sacred phenomenon, opposed to scapegoating, and consecrates a new moral way of being with others outside of the logic of feuding.

René Girard's (1978) theory of the scapegoat sees sacred rituals covering over the originary act of when a community, in unison, funnels violence against one individual. Following this line of thought, Martin's killing could be seen as a mimetic act of the same violence he committed towards others. His sacrifice was necessary, according to Girardian logic, because prior to being assassinated, he had committed acts of violence against members of the community way beyond normative circuits. Martin's acts threatened the community, and indeed the entire Northern Ireland peace process, with being overrun yet again with an unpredictable contagion, violent conflict rearing its

vicious head once more. Accordingly, the murderous act of the collective many against the individualized one thus stanches the overflowing circuits of violence. Yet while Alby's actions allow for the consecration of the sacred out of the collective killing of the individual, his *way of thinking* fights against the belated and secondary Girardian origin of the community – the hidden aspect of the collective murder – to disclose a more fundamental and purposive *archē* conditioned by Catholic rituals, but not reducible to them. The purposiveness inherent in Alby's act in the face of Martin's death (as shown below) is first experienced as a lack, of sacrificing his own ability to know what to do. Recounting this disfiguring and shattering experience of facing Martin's death, Alby's body shakes – outward he holds his trembling hands and says, "I'm shaking." Language fails. Alby sees his hands as if they still had Martin's blood on them and stammers, "*ab-fa-ma-ab*," an articulation that interrupts sense. In response to this lack, he draws upon the rhetorical and religious trope of the "litany" to help guide him, evoking both imaginary and real interlocutors. Alby's story about his threshold encounter with Martin thus follows from an experience with the transcendent and allows for the constitution of a fragile ethical world in which heterogenous modes of experience - unexpected ways of thinking, modes of address, and narrative tropes – to emerge as possible examples of how to be ethically with others outside the cult of death and violent circuits that so often envelop communities like the Short Strand.

Threshold Encounters

One way to understand the sacred is through a cultural phenomenology of limit experiences, which helps to frame Alby's experiences of administering the last rites. Thomas Csordas notes that "[t]he sacred is an existential encounter with Otherness that is the touchstone of our humanity. It is a touchstone because it defines us by what we are not – by what is beyond our limits, or by what touches us precisely at our limits (1994, 6). To frame Alby's encounter, however, I want to draw

from Kant's original exposition of what he calls the sublime. Kant's descriptions of the sublime, or threshold encounter, captures the moments when we attempt to make sense of a situation which exceeds our comprehension. Our imaginative powers feel threatened and we teeter on edge of the "chaos" and "ruleless disarray and devastation" while also being moved towards grounding a way of thinking *about* the threshold encounter (Kant 1987, 99-100). The encounter compels us to surpass our standards of sense, and in turning away from "an abyss in which the imagination is afraid to lose itself," we come to reflect (115). In doing so, we dwell in the unknowing interstices between our imagination's inability to draw from previous knowledge, our desire to make sense and render judgement over the particular, and the immediacy of the sensations for which we are unprepared (115). In his discussions on the sublime, then, Kant articulates the severing and painful attunement when comprehension attempts to make sense of apprehensions to which we cannot apply prior knowledge or experience (rules, norms, concepts and values). When we experience the tension of reflecting beyond the immediate and sensible world to make sense of the situation and thereby recognize our finite power to understand, Kant argues we may experience a moral feeling correlated to purposiveness. We may also, according to the existentialists, experience a kind of nothingness or nihilism, an ungrounded ground propping up our structures of sense. But Kant's story perhaps better fits Alby's experience. Purposiveness, an underlying *arché* at the core of human existence for Kant, is experienced in the mode of "as if." It is "as if" a purposive alterity precedes knowledge and underlies the phenomenal world and thus imbues our thoughts and actions with a moral sense (Kant 1987, 19, 29). For Kant, this expands our mentality through a "sacrifice" (*Aufopferung*) inherent in stretching imagination beyond the sensible and intelligible and depriving it of a retreat into the comfort of the known (129, 131). And thus, Kant gives us the resources with which to understand the moments such as Alby's experience of administering the last rites, and the dynamic process of narrating such a threshold encounter, and how part and parcel of moral thinking is the tearing of

though, the *sacrificing the ability to know* while not dwelling in the comfort of normative cultural scripts and frames. What is most remarkable about Alby's moral act is that he identified, even if momentarily, with someone he normally recoiled from, and his story shows below that Alby, with a deep understanding of the plurality of the human condition, narrated *as if* from Martin's own perspective, dislocating his own coherent sense of self in the process.

Through being reflective *about* reflexivity, which expands our ability to account for others, the finite human condition of being amidst the dead, the living, and future people yet to come itself becomes an ethical position. Following Arendt's development of Kant's theory of judgement (1982), the byproduct such a reflection is the *example*. The example, a moral signpost for what Arendt (1991, 94; 1998, 97) extols as *bios theōretikos*, the way of life of thinking, arises from the work of reflection and the inadequacy of knowledge. As a side-effect of tarrying with a lack of knowing, the ethical example can be shared and drawn upon as a moral resource by others.

Prelude to a feud: breaking the rules

Three months before Martin was murdered, Jimmy Whelan was murdered. Jimmy and Martin served together in various Republican capacities and were longtime friends. According to newspaper and televised reports, however, they had fallen out. In addition to investigative journalists' reports, in the literal seconds – going by the Twitter and Facebook posts – after Martin was killed, it was posited that the PIRA had killed Martin because Martin had killed Jimmy. When Jimmy, a former PIRA commander, was gunned down in the Catholic Markets area of Belfast in March 2015, Irish Republican leaders and activists, as well as community workers and residents within Catholic social housing estates became “tense,” a commonly used word that give some sense to foreboding expectations that “another shoe is going to drop.” As discussed in Chapter I, the unsettled temporality – the endemic provisional time still coursing through everyday life – conditions this

tension. Relations are always fraught and unstable between the personalities and ideologies of competing Republican organizations, the police, and Protestant Loyalist neighbors. It takes little for communities to recall, and to vividly re-experience, the prolonged conflict. This apparent and high-profile assassination brought back memories of the exceptional state of everyday life. Paramilitary and sectarian killings have subsided drastically – but have not ended – since the signing of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Peace Agreement. As the slash separating the two names of the agreement signifies, the former for the Protestants and latter for the Catholics, what resulted is a precarious and divided para-State. This apparent assassination became instant fodder for the media, tabloids, and politicians alike.

At the time of his murder, Jimmy was community worker in the community center in the Catholic social housing estate of the Markets across the bridge from the Short Strand. After the 1998 peace agreement and the 2005 PIRA disarmament, many volunteers were given positions by the Catholic and Protestant power-sharing government within the burgeoning “peace industry,” an industry built, in part, with billions of pounds from the Peace I, Peace II, Peace III, and recently released Peace IV funding from the European Union and United Kingdom. It is quite common for community workers to be current or former paramilitary volunteers who have signed onto the peace agreement. Equally common is for old friends to fall out from the unequal and nepotistic distribution of salaried positions. Most non-mainstream Republicans agree that the British government decisively won the conflict, not with superior might, but with flooding peace money into the hands of members of Sinn Féin as part of the peace agreement.

In the Short Strand district, storied for producing Republican volunteers and patriot dead, inter-familial and intra-familial *feuds*, as well as *grudges*, are commonplace. The conditions of these feuds and grudges, entangled within a nexus of State and para-State structural violence, personality clashes, and peace industry economies, are exacerbated by current ideological and economic

tensions. Family and paramilitary feuds can also be seen as counter-hegemonic activities that challenge the legitimacy of post-peace agreement state institutions. The family and the working-class community in colonial contexts are always storehouses of counter-moods, practices, and discourses against authority. The Irish postcolonial theorist David Lloyd (2000), moreover, sees such social forms as “melancholy survivals” of colonial development that can produce a way of life that subverts the modernizing efforts of colonial contexts (219). Feuds are such melancholy survivals.

Roughly, feuds involve organizations or extended families.²⁵ A grudge, or a “grudge hit” (killing of the subject of the ill-will) has a more personal motive. Yet, grudges, too, are sometimes difficult to classify, and have opaque histories entangled within the epistemic murk of living through prolonged conflict and both structural and acute state violence. There is also the matter of breaking rules set down by the PIRA or by generally falling into disfavor. Even today, residents in Republican districts can be “put out” of their homes for breaking too many rules or running afoul of too many important figures in the area. Breaking rules was a pivotal impetus for Martin’s fallout with the PIRA. Martin acted with violence against a well-respected elderly woman, a member of the Short Strand, and this breach of rules set him on a collision course with whatever remained of the PIRA structures.

As mentioned, part and parcel of rising tensions in working class communities are the anxieties about who receives (the unequally distributed) peace funding, as well as which families get

²⁵ I have limited my discussion on feuding to Northern Ireland within this particular Catholic and Irish Republican community. Of course, both “gangland feuds” in the Republic of Ireland for family control over illicit drug markets, which began with the Dunne family and associates in 1978, as well as paramilitary feuds occur cross-border (Hourigan et al. 2018, 129). Extended families tend to be social base out of which the drug economies emerge and thus feuding often occurs between families, not individuals. Though Martin and Jimmy are focal in this chapter, it must be noted that Martin’s family was feuding with other families in the district at the time of his assassination, feuds that continue to simmer today. Of course, feuding between paramilitary organizations may very well exist because of the desire for (or failure of) leadership and thus often have little to do with kinship structures. Yet, kinship networks are always inevitably entangled with “gangland” and paramilitary feuds. The bodies buried, and the emotions this stirs amongst family members, will continue to haunt the feuds yet to come.

a free pass to engage in drug-dealing economies. As the peace process and paramilitary disarmaments gripped Belfast, Jimmy and Martin started an organization responsible for punishing and killing drug dealers who had been historically kept out of the district by the PIRA. But Jimmy would eventually become a salaried community worker, and Martin would become implicated in controlling the flow of drugs.

When Martin was assassinated three months after Jimmy's own murder, "even the dog on the street," borrowing a local idiom, knew that Martin was assassinated in retaliation for Jimmy's murder, though both murders remain unsolved. Though longtime friends, the two had a falling out after Martin was punished by the PIRA for attacking a Short Strand family. Martin received a "six pack" punishment shooting in which he was shot in his ankles, knees, and elbows for, amongst other reasons, assaulting an elderly woman in the district after she had scolded one of his children. Martin blamed Jimmy for this punishment. The circulating discourse surrounding Jimmy's murder, then, holds it was Martin's act of revenge for Jimmy allowing the PIRA to enact a "six pack" punishment. Martin's death, it was then understood, was revenge for Jimmy's murder. Martin would be shot six times again, this time in the head, as he entered the gate to his house in the Short Strand district of east Belfast. He died minutes later.

Martin's assassination occurred during the third week of my fieldwork in the district. Leaving the district after an evening of watching *Game of Thrones* with some interlocutors, I continued towards the city center scrolling through Facebook mindlessly, when I saw a new thread about a shooting in the Short Strand in my feed. I returned back to the district, hesitantly. The police arrived and cordoned off the court where Martin was killed, and a half dozen heavily armored Land Rovers further blocked the area from onlookers, though this didn't stop many residents, photojournalists, and me from trying to get a glimpse of what was happening. Reporters were told to leave by some residents and were called "scum" and "disgraceful." A few hours after the assassination, Brendan,

one of my interlocutors who lived a few streets over, received a phone call from a friend, an investigative journalist. “He’s dead,” Brendan says, reporting verbatim the entire utterance of the journalist. Brendan says this with palpable relief as he twists open a bottle of whiskey and pours himself a drink. He toasts Martin’s murder. I don’t quite understand Brendan’s sense of peace that he gets from hearing about Martin’s death. In time, however, I begin to see the transformational force of that phone call for Brendan, a speech act that changes the state of affairs for Brendan and his family through announcing Martin’s death into the world. With this death, the world appears anew to Brendan, disclosing an altered horizon of experience, a new reality, in which Brendan and members of his family, his mother in particular, receive respite from years of quiet anger and suffering. Indeed, another feud between Brendan’s family and Martin had been one small concatenation in the chain of events that lead to Martin’s assassination.

Martin was an intimidating force in the district, someone who locals referred to as a “psychopath,” which is a variation on the Belfast subjects of the “gunman” and “hardman” (see Feldman 1991), but unlike latter two, the psychopath’s death is less grievable for the community. A psychopath, whether a paramilitary member or otherwise, is said to have no conscience or hesitancy about hurting or killing others. The role or subject of “psychopath” existed during the Troubles but has become more prevalent after the peace agreement and ceasefire. The arrival of the psychopath constitutes a limit concept that puts into question the categories of the unstable quasi-state of Northern Ireland and para-NGOs run by former para-militaries that are tasked with keeping a “para-peace.” The psychopath is a kind of life that cannot be wholly subsumed into the post-peace process “biopolitical” (Foucault 1990, 139) order, nor the “thanapolitical” order (Agamben 1998) where certain deaths (from suicide, drug and alcohol overdoses, feuds not involving psychopaths, and other forms of death associated with trauma) are grievable (Butler 2004). The psychopath in circulating discourses is pathologized as outside the normative frame of grievability.

Martin, often characterized as a psychopath, was killed seemingly without repercussions (to date, no one has been tried for his murder), similar in some ways to Agamben's (1998) notion of *homo sacer*. *Homines sacri* are individuals who, through a sovereign act of exclusion, an act which constitutes sovereign power in its decision to exclude, is placed outside the profane and divine laws, and thus can be killed without repercussions from either jurisdiction.²⁶ Such negation of bare life, following Agamben, is "unsacrificable" but "may nevertheless be killed" (113). Applied to this paramilitary killing, when a psychopath is killed, *bios*, a meaningful human way of life, crosses over into *zōē*, bare life, thus constituting a "thanatopolitical" movement (1998, 122-3).

Yet, bare life rarely lacks biographical life, and even the death of bare life has the possibility of acquiring biography. Martin's death, to be sure, spurs a thanatopolitical response, as the Northern Irish Assembly collapsed due to the presence of the PIRA on the street. His death was used by Protestant politicians to avoid working with Sinn Féin in the power-sharing government. But more than the political, Martin's death, for Alby, spurred what might be called a *thanato-ethical* moment in which Martin's way of life and the way of life of those who assassinated him, compel moral questioning and narrating. For Alby, Martin's death, even if he was reduced to something like bare life, enters back into *bios*, into meaning. He does so through Alby's way of life, what Arendt, borrowing from Aristotle, calls the praxis of *bios theōrētikos*. *Bios*, for Arendt, "ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography" (1998, 97). The death of Martin, through Alby's response to him and his subsequent story about this response, constitutes a fragile, but potent moral position.

The time of the telling: the story preface

²⁶ Though it is important to note that Martin's death is primarily a punishment for breaking communal rules (which are entangled with PIRA codes of conduct), and Agamben elides discussions on the *homo sacer* who is an antagonist to the community, so while Martin's murder in some ways follows the logic of the sovereign act (as called forth by the IRA), his murder perhaps resembles more the restoration of the community after violence by sacrificial act as suggested by Girard.

It is July 2017 – two years after Martin’s assassination – and a minor feud, that could also be classified as a “grudge,” has just broken out between Alby and his friend. His friend had flashed a gun at a local bar and said he was going to shoot Alby for an unclear reason (at least Alby was not entirely sure or willing to share the source of his friend’s antagonism). As Brendan and I are looking at photographs on his laptop one evening, Alby bursts through the door and sits across from us. He carries a blue duffle bag inscribed with the words “Royal Navy.” He carries this duffle up the Newtownards Road to the shops so that the Protestant Loyalists surrounding the Short Strand do not give him any trouble. Inside the duffle is a carton of Harp lager. Brendan lives on the same street as the friend with whom Alby was feuding, and so Alby was now “making his presence known” in an attempt gain an apology. Alby settles in with his lager tins and allows me to record the conversations during the evening.

When I express worry that Alby might draw himself – and perhaps Brendan and myself – into a dangerous situation, Alby remarks that feuds never end in violence anymore, and even when they do, he tells me proudly that he’s never been shot. During arguments about Republicanism, political ideas, and the efficacy of an armed campaign against the Brits (which he has always been against) with his mates, he often breaks into a lilting song “there’s no hole in my legs,” a boastful leitmotif he weaves into stories about his ability to avoid kneecapping. I probe his assertion that feuds do not end in violence anymore, and I remind him about Martin’s assassination just two summers ago. Alby’s smile drops. He stares at me for what seems like a long while. He has forgotten that he mentioned giving last rites to Martin in a previous conversation about trauma (McCoy 2018), and he considers this dangerous knowledge. To break his silent inspecting of me, I ask him what he *said* to Martin in those last minutes. He answers by telling me a narrative that will have high moral stakes for his sense of self as well as for his status within the community:

Alby: Fuck what did I say?

Matthew: Did you say...

Alby: Fucking killed my fucking mate. Didn't he? Desmond.

Brendan: Desmond? Aye.

Alby: Eamon. Killed the loads of people. See when I come over to the house and I was sitting there. I'm not ballsing you, Matthew. I'm serious here. Now I tell - don't, don't mention my fucking name here, what I'm talking about. See when I went back over to the house and I had my child, my wee lad, back in and she was sitting there and I'm going ((breathing heavily and squeezing fists)). She says, "you alright Alby? You alright?" I said, "No. Know what I would love to know? How the fuck did he feel like when he's like in the same situation that he put loads of fucking bastardin' people into?" She says, "Alby, you're watching a man dying and you're thinking like that?" Here's me: "fuck up." I told you that there Brendan.

Brendan: Mhmm.

Alby: And that's because your mother...

Brendan: Some situation to be in.

Alby: Yeah and I hated...

Brendan: But you're fucking right cus I, I was thinking the same thing.

Alby: Did you? Sorry. Did you? Did you think that?

Brendan: I thought it when I right wondering what he thought like when he was fucking dying. The way he probably watched his other victims.

Alby: Well, I was in that position.

Brendan: Mhmm.

Alby: I was there and I seen it and I looked in his face and I was helping him. I wasn't even helping him. There's nothing you can do.

Brendan: Nothing you could do, aye.

Alby: And I'm just looking at him going "many people did you put in this?" You don't know how devious I am. I'm an evil bastard. See when I was looking at dead man dying - I was giving him the last rites - what was I thinking? What was I thinking? See when I get into the house, I fucking flipped. See with my first phone call I rung my mate up Brian, wee Brian. And I says - cus he rung me when Jimmy Whelan [had been killed]. Calls me eight clock in the morning.

Brendan: Uhhuh.

Alby: And I said, I rung him up straight after. *Ab-fa-ma-ab* ((holding out hands)) blood on my fucking hands and I said “did you hear the fucking news?” “What are you talking about?” Here me: “your fucking mates dead!” “Who?” Me: “Martin Murray’s just after getting stiffed.” “Aye your ballix.” No, you-you heard him last night ((heard Brian’s gruff voice)). Here me: “Brian I’m going to have to give him the last rites. He’s dead.” That’s Jimmy Whelan and fucking Martin Murray between the two of us. We got heavy duty. Heavy fucking duty. Brian asks me why didn’t I go to fucking Jimmy Whelan’s fucking funeral? Because he’s a fucking Provie bastard! Trying to stiff me my whole fucking life! “Why did you go to Martin Murray’s?” Cause I fucking gave him his last rites! I had to. Had to! I’m not shouting by the way. Yo. Fucking. I’m shaking. Fucking. So I am.

Brendan: Calm down, calm down.

Alby: I know, I know.

Matthew: Did you, did you try to resuscitate him?

Alby: No I didn’t!

Brendan: ((blowing laugh))

Alby: Fuck. What you laughing at?

Brendan: Probably youse strangle him.

Alby: Looking at him, couldn’t do nothing to that.

Brendan: Nothing to be done.

Alby: Cunt ye.

Brendan: Shocked.

Alby: Ah terrible. I just said, “this boy’s gone.” That’s wha- that’s what I actually done ((gets up from chair, leans over ground, makes sign of the cross over empty cardboard beer carton)). I went: “Gone.”

It is important to return to individual sections of Alby’s story here – as delineated by his particular logic which, notably, adheres to many of the formal conventions described by Harvey Sacks’s lectures on stories told in conversation (see also, Mandelbaum 2013). When reproducing these

sections, the pauses, overlaps, latching, stressed words, some other features of conversation will be included using basic conversation analysis codes (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1978; Sidnell and Stivers 2013). I borrow from Sacks's micro-phenomenology of conversations to show the unseen and distributed existential work – the subjective in-between – that goes into telling a story in conversation with others. Sacks tracks how verbal and non-verbal phenomenon emerge by drawing and binding oneself and others into the remarkably sequential, distributed, and durable structure of the storytelling experience. By using the insights of Sacks, Jackson's notion of the *existential imperative* gains new footing. For Jackson, an existential imperative is one's "sense of agency" that underlies the constant formation and dissolution of boundaries and strategizing that goes on between humans (2013, 33). For Jackson, such imperatives indicate the "human need to *imagine* that one's life belongs to a matrix greater than oneself" (34, emphasis in original). While any student of literature can point to characters who evince such existential imperatives, from Antigone to Stephen Dedalus, very few anthropologists take seriously how these imperatives are disclosed through the temporal unfolding of conversational storytelling. While storytelling can be interactional sites of boundary sublation, Sacks notes that one must be entitled to have certain experiences, which become regulated in conversation: "part of the experience involves telling about it...in which you lay yourself open to having...experienced it wrongly" (Sacks 1995, Vol. II, 248). This is precisely what is at stake throughout Alby's story of this threshold experience where he performs the last rites in a potentially blasphemous way by considering the malicious things Martin had done to others.

In response to me, Alby's narrative begins with "fuck." Alby will often draw from "fuck" as an affective resource of the "response cry," a ritualized act of "overflowing, a flooding up of previously contained feeling, a bursting of normal restraints" (Goffman 1978, 800). My question to Alby prompts him to speak first about Martin's victims, especially Alby's own mates, rather than

about Martin himself. Holding back like this dramatizes the pronominal reference of Martin. Thus, there is immediately a naming differential and an ambiguous positioning of Martin:

01 Alby: Fuck what did I say
02 (1.14)
03 Matthew: Did you sa[y
04 Alby: [fucking killed my fucking mate
05 (1.13)
06 Alby: Didn't he? Desmond.
07 Brendan: Desmond? Aye ((clearing throat))
08 Alby: Eamon. Killed the loads of people

Alby elides Martin's proper name or even a pronoun referring to him, while disclosing the names of his mates whom Martin had murdered. Beginning with these proper names appeared unusual at first, but I've come to strongly believe and thus argue that Alby draws from an ancient liturgical element to preface his story about what happened to Martin. He invokes two proper names and a collective noun phrase: Desmond, Eamon, and loads of people. Properly speaking, this constitutes a "litany," which is a rhetorical trope found in both Catholic masses and in Irish Republican ballads.²⁷ The Litany of the Saints, among the oldest litanies in the Christian tradition,²⁸ is sung during Easter Vigil during the procession to the baptismal font and back to the altar. A shorter version of this litany is invoked during infant baptisms. Understood as capturing a form of experience, a litany is a public prayer in which various figures are invoked and petitioned through their reciting their names. Recalling, then, its Latin influence, *litania*, a string (of names), and further its Greek origins, *litē*, prayer or entreaty, we can see how Alby's experience is structured through this oral form that solicits reception from not only Brendan and me, but from the string of names beseeched. Desmond, Eamon, and loads of people are part of the expanded and distributed ethical world unfolding

²⁷ Ó Cadhla (2017) notes, "[t]his dramatic ploy of reciting lists of martyred republicans from previous generations is a consistent feature of Republican song, described by Zimmerman as 'strings of names ... repeated in a litany like names of saints'" (120).

²⁸ "Disseminated throughout Europe by Irish missionaries, the litanies of the saints appear in prayers for the sick and the dying in the ninth century" (Join-Lambert 2004)

throughout this story. And, in fact, Alby will *not* petition Martin through evoking his name through most of the narrative. Martin must undergo Alby's response to him before the last rites transition him into after death.

Alby's recalling of what he said during the last rites of Martin is cast through elicited self-reported speech that attempts to hook Brendan (and me) as co-participants. Harvey Sacks calls this formal element of storytelling the "story preface" (Sacks 1995, Vol. II, Part IV, Lecture 2). The story preface, for Sacks, contains many elements, but for the purposes of this particular preface, we borrow from Sacks his understanding that the preface attempts to control the floor, announces itself as a story, requires recognition from recipients, and contains within it a sense of the end. All of these formal elements begin in the first line of the story preface. Here, Alby's particular story preface contains an important reference to a transcendent structure which, in part, is located in status of the proper names Desmond, Eamon, as well as in the unnamed and, perhaps, unnamable "loads of other people."

Before Alby can tell a story, he needs control of the floor. When Sacks speaks about taking and controlling the floor, he notes that the speaker needs to be given time and space to speak more than one utterance. Sacks defines an utterance as a "turn" of talk, and in order to build a story one often requires multiple utterances. These are given by others in the conversation. As Sacks notes, "[i]n storytelling you give them the floor to give it back to you" (Sacks 1995, Vol. II, 227). Taking the floor turns out to be a reciprocal process. Alby must gift the floor to Brendan (and me), and then we must reciprocate by gifting him back a cleared ground out of which he can build and extend his story, which we do.

What Martin thought before he died matters to Alby in a deeply existential way. To answer my question about what Alby said to Martin, Alby opens up a deeply complex moral world through storytelling, out of an existential imperative becomes disclosed that solicits Brendan's response and

weaves it warp and woof into the fabric of Alby's moral world. This imperative can be described this way: to be ethical is to be reflective *about* reflexivity. One must cultivate a broadened and many-sided way of thinking. Alby's reasoning, judging, and knowing as grounded by a transcendent structure will be precisely what is at stake in the story. Whether his story ultimately manifests as a public example that can drawn from by others, which, as Arendt notes, "is the only chance for an ethical principle to be verified as well as validated" (Arendt 2006, 243), is left to those who hear it and grapple with it.

The time of the story: "know what I would love to know"

Instead of immediately describing the scene of performing the last rites, Alby begins with the time of the story immediately *after* he gave the last rites. He went back inside his house with his son and girlfriend, and reports his experience:

09 Alby: See when I come over to the house
10 and I was sitting there
11 I'm not ballsing you, Matthew. I'm serious here
12 Now I tell- don't- don't mention my fucking name here
13 what I'm talking about
14 See when I went back over to the house
15 and I had my child, my wee lad back in
16 and she was sitting there and I'm going
17 (5) ((breathing heavily and squeezing fists))
18 She says you alright Alby? you alright?
19 I said no. know what I would love to know?
20 How the fuck did he feel like when he's like in the same
21 situation that he put loads of fucking bastardin people into?
22 She says ALBY, YOU'RE WATCHING A MAN DYING
23 AND you're thinking like that
24 Here's me fuck up

Layers of moral reflexivity thread the narrative. Returning to the suggestion that moral affirmation from the other is critical to solidifying one's emerging moral stance, we can begin to see the importance for Alby to reckon with others' perspectives, including story protagonists and storytelling interlocutors. In fact, Alby's worry about his very name being attached to this story signifies his precarious actions. Alby sets the scene: he goes back into his "house" and his child is

“back in” and his girlfriend is “sitting there.” These place-indexicals bind Alby, his girlfriend (as a sitting-perceiving-responding witness), and child as co-participants to the drama. The girlfriend, through Alby’s reported speech, solicits him with a question about whether he was “alright.” This elicits Alby’s distressful psychological response “no” and precipitates the telling of his problematic ethical behavior: his comportment towards Martin (unnamed during the telling) as he lay dying.

Alby’s interrogative to his girlfriend (“Know what I would love to know?”) is strictly speaking rhetorical; he knows that she does not know. What the rhetorical question accomplishes is to garner the girlfriend’s attention to the information that Alby is about to reveal. But much more is elicited in this rhetorical question; Alby elicits the girlfriend’s participation as a ‘knower’ in an ethically charged web of knowing and not-knowing, involving primarily Alby’s desire to know the feelings of the dying murderer about the feelings of those he murdered as they too lay dying. Once the girlfriend is drawn into Alby’s thinking, she is herself morally implicated as a cognizant witness.

Here is a brief guide to the web of reflective states entertained:

- 1) Alby asks his girlfriend if she knows [Girlfriend’s Knowledge]
- 2) What he would love to know about [Alby’s Knowledge]
- 3) How did the dying murderer feel like [Martin’s Feelings]
- 4) In the same situation (dying) that he put “loads of fucking bastardin people into”; [Martin’s Victims’ Feelings]

Alby unsuccessfully solicits sympathy in the time of the tale from his girlfriend. She upholds a differing moral viewpoint, yet, there is something in excess of the situation being performed here, especially in front of Brendan. Alby’s moral story, in the process of being woven, will also attempt recruit Brendan’s affirmation of the vulnerable moral positioning of Alby vis-à-vis the traditions of the Church, larger Irish community, and differing Republican ideologies. There is a struggle for moral affirmation from others both in the time of the tale (from his girlfriend) and the time of the telling (from Brendan and me), and, perhaps even from other people in the community to whom he or Brendan tell the story, such that multiple temporalities become intertwined. These others to

come, including the readers of this story, will also have the potential to pass judgment on, and chose to represent or not, the very *name* of Martin, those who carried out his assassination, and the social world itself that allowed this violence to emerge in the first place. We have already seen how Martin's family has disclosed the potency of his name in the form of a spontaneous floral memorial at his front gate, a memorial that borrows both from the iconography of Republican memorials and from the practices of Irish Catholics who keep the gravesites of their loved ones as active sites of remembrance and recollection with figurines, flowers, clothing, and other objects. The family is forcefully making visible his service to Republicanism and the community. This memorial act claims Martin as sacred, not only for his family, but for an historical line of Ireland's Patriot Dead. It is also an act of protest designed to sew dissent within the community by targeting the PIRA's decision to kill their family member who, after all, had served well as an PIRA volunteer.

There are moral high stakes connected to Alby's potentially blasphemous thoughts while giving the last rites, which may have prompted Alby to elaborate the trail of thoughts about the possible mental states of the murderer and about the "loads" of victims Martin murdered. In doing this, he's not simply condemning Martin's thinking, but the entire apparatus of the PIRA. As a Marxist and a "Stickie" (Official IRA member),²⁹ Alby believes that the armed campaign against the British Army was pyrrhic, and that the only way to overthrow the British capitalist system is uniting the Protestant and Catholic poor. The PIRA in 1998, he contests, came around to the same political platform of the OIRA from the 1970s: equality, solidarity, and uniting the working classes. "You eventually came around to my way of thinking!" Alby shouted to two former PIRA members – his mates – in an argument a few days prior.

²⁹ In 1969, as mentioned in Chapter I, the IRA split into two camps, the Provisionals and the Officials. The Officials abandoned an armed campaign in 1972, though retained guns for the purpose of defense.

Regarding the working out of mental states in the time of the telling, Ochs and Capps (2001) consider a conversational narrative of personal experience as the bedrock, the proto-narrative, out of which more polished narratives come to emerge. In this narrative excerpt, Alby struggles with an emergent, as yet unachieved intersubjectivity laden with multiple, situated, conflicting moralities. When we bring our gradients of experiences of the world into language, and conversation with our self and others, we do not immediately produce polished narratives. Instead, conversational narratives question, clarify, challenge, and speculate (19). In this encounter between Alby, his co-participants *within* the story, and his co-participants (Brendan and me) in the telling of the story, there is an “uncertain, fluid moral stance” being stitched together (Ibid: 23). In this “subjective in-between” is precisely where Zigon locates the moral import of narratives. For Zigon, the meaning-making and mutual understanding process of narrating, while important, is subordinate to the more fundamental way that narratives articulate “the embodied struggle to morally be with oneself and others in the social world” (Zigon 2012, 205). For Zigon, moreover, “charitably” being with one and living through the “moral breakdowns” that precipitate narrating is the true site of the ethics of narrative (218). As I hope Alby’s story told in conversation shows, language precisely discloses the existential imperative to live through morally fraught struggles. As mentioned above, Sacks rightly notes, “part of the experience involves telling about it...in which you lay yourself open to having...experienced it wrongly” (Sacks 1995, Vol. II, 248). Arising from this openness towards others, however, may be the meaningful byproduct of storytelling in the form of a new ethical position, or example, that can be drawn upon in the future. This is why mutual understanding, though convincingly argued by Zigon to be a secondary achievement, is important in situations where life has become unlivable. As Oresteian blood for blood feuds continue taking their toll in working class Belfast, the emergence and *articulation* of another way of being becomes a necessity.

The experiences of Alby's girlfriend, Alby, Brendan, Martin, and Martin's murdered victims stitched together in this narrative has great potential for thinking on-the-ground ethical reflexivity. This accords with what Keane finds in interaction, the manner in which individuals can draw on ethical affordances "in the process of making ethical evaluations and decisions, whether unconsciously or not" (27). Alby's story told in conversation thus opens up a space of ethical struggle in which an affordance is coming into being for the first time, and this affordance arises out of the dense nexus of elements: the sacred situation of giving the last rites, his girlfriend's moral position, speculation on Martin's thoughts and Martin's victims' thoughts, and the appropriate ways to think and feel. Having these haunting thoughts about Martin in the time of his death is precarious business, especially considering that he was a PIRA gunman tasked with defending the district against British occupation. He was a protector – one of the best – of the district for many years regardless of the way his life ended. There are no shortage of memorials and commemorations to Republicans lost in feuds in Belfast.

Ethical reflexivity here entails an agonizing conflict among moral domains and an uneasy, unanswerable exploration of others' ways of thinking in this fieldwork context. The process of living ethically can lead us, like Alby, to reflect upon the ways of thinking of others, and to draw on others' viewpoints in fashioning our own ethical affordances. Importantly, Alby is weaving and unweaving this moral space on his own. In this riveting incident in Alby's life, it matters to him whether Martin thought of the feelings of those he had murdered (or, even if he thought of their *names*). However, just because Alby negotiates the logic of what his utterances are ethically affording, he desires others for recognition of his position. It is crucial for his place within the community that others align to his stance. It matters that Brendan *affirm* his thinking about what Martin and Martin's victims were thinking. This is an ethical example in the making, but it cannot solidify as shareable without recognition, and then affirmation, from the other. Thinking morally – and then drawing upon this

thinking in making future judgments – is how “we compare our judgement not so much with the actual as rather with the merely possible judgements of others, and [thus] put ourselves in the position of everyone else” (Kant 1987, 160). For Kant, the reflective power of judgment reveals a purposiveness underlying being with others and treating others with respect and as such it “indicates a man with a *broadened way of thinking* [*erweiterter Denkungsart*] if he overrides the private subjective conditions of his judgement, into which so many others are locked, as it were, and reflects on his own judgment from a *universal standpoint* (which he can determine only by transferring to the standpoint of others)” (161, emphasis in original). Decidedly, this Kantian orientation in thinking, while acknowledging the abyssal grounds, does not tarry long with this negativity, as many existentialists and psychoanalytically inspired critical theorists are wont to do. For Arendt (1981), such purposiveness, indicated by *need* to think, is precisely the moral way of life, the *bios theōrētikos*. For Arendt, an “enlarged mentality” is the hallmark of moral thinking. The immediate experience of broadening our *way* of thinking comes about from the reflective practices of thinking about and speaking with others. We experience this clearly than when we attempt consider how to think about others, as well as consider how others are thinking about others. This is risky, to be sure, and imputing inner states to others may lead to (dangerous) misunderstandings.

Much recent work has been done on empathy in anthropology (Flaherty and Throop 2018; Hollan 2008; Hollan and Throop 2008; Throop 2010). This work builds on phenomenological insights and conceives of empathy as form of other-directed understanding operating through various culturally informed gradients that range along a continuum from conceptual or reflective levels to more an emotional, expressive, and immediately experiential levels. Basic empathy names the experience of always already encountering others as thinking and feeling humans. It is the basic intuitive and experiential grasp we have of others inner and affective states through their expressive and meaningful performances. In Martin’s case, Alby (and eventually Brendan) will demand of

Martin, even as he's dying, that he thinks about his situation in terms of the same situation in which he put others. This expectation that even as he's surpassing the limit experience of death, Martin was not freed from thinking about what he did to others. Hollan (2008), borrowing from the work of Jodi Halpern (2001), expands the purview of empathy to include "how others imagine or allow themselves to be known and understood," especially through ongoing dialogic encounters like we see between Alby and Brendan (487). For Hollan, empathy is a struggle for how one allows others to understand him or her, and it requires a great deal of imaginative work and (repeated) intersubjective encounters. His position that empathy includes imaginative perspective-taking deviates from a phenomenological approach that often only emphasizes the basic grasp of the other (and not-mine) experience, but in doing so, he adds a more robust account of empathy that enables something like moral thinking. As Throop notes, moreover, empathy should be seen as "very seldom, if ever, an all or nothing affair" and by this he means that as empathy temporally unfolds, the various sensorial and cognitive modes of understanding others encounters resistances, ellipses, and excesses along the way (2010, 780). What Mattingly refers to as the work of "narrative mind reading," which is the "practical capability of inferring (rightly or wrongly) the motives that precipitate and underlie the actions of another," requires us to place, and thus articulate, these motive inferences into the temporal unfolding of narrating (2008, 137). For the purposes of Alby's experience, and thought together with Throop, such mind reading limns the troubled realms of not-knowing. When the face of the dying – and despised – other overwhelms sense and disfigures thought, Alby wishes to read his mind, an act built off of basic empathy to be sure, but one in which the web of reflective states entertained gesture towards an expanded mentality and moral world.

This empathic and imaginative work of being with others, of understanding others, often leaves signposts along the way. Stories, for example. Stories can serve as exemplars for being with others, and they are byproduct of the reflective and narrative work we do. Arendt draws upon the

story as example as a moral resource: “to verify, for instance, the notion of courage we may recall the example of Achilles, and to verify the notion of goodness we are inclined to think of Jesus of Nazareth or of St. Francis; these examples teach or persuade by inspiration” (2006, 243). This exposition requires others, and it requires, in the case of Alby telling Brendan and me, a story. Alby transcends the “here” and “now” not only of the storytelling situation but in the time of the last rites itself. He transcends his particular point of view, disclosing through narrative a conflicting many-sided viewing, affirming the singularity of the situation, but also the necessity of making this singularity communicable by giving it sense and shape. The duration between the threshold experience and its communicability does not need to be a onetime affair, as Alby’s narrative is laying bare. That is, the ethical struggle to respond to an existential imperative continues through reawakening the experience and living through it again, even if the immediate sensations have undergone modifications through subsequent reawakenings.

In the time of the telling II: “I was thinking the same thing”

Recall that Alby entered into the story after he had given the last rights to firmly situate the setting of the story within his house when he was discussing Martin’s death, and how he thought about it, with his girlfriend. Alby thus deferred telling Brendan and me about the actual experience encountering Martin as he lay dying. One way to interpret this deferral is because he is waiting for some response from us about his disclosure to his girlfriend of what he thought about when Martin was dying. If we respond negatively, Alby may have not disclosed the encounter with Martin in the way he does. So after he tells us about his argument with his girlfriend, Alby waits. And neither of us respond. Alby then attempts to draw Brendan into an ethical position regarding being reflective about reflexivity, about what he thought about when Martin was dying:

25 (5.5)
26 Alby: I told you that there Brendan

27 Brendan: mhmm
 28 Alby: and thats because your mother=
 29 Brendan: =some situation to be in
 30 Alby: yeah and I hated=
 31 Brendan: =but you're fucking right cus I- I was thinking the same thing
 32 Alby: DID YOU. SORRY. DID YOU- DID YOU THINK THAT?
 33 Brendan: I thought it when I right wondering what he thought like
 34 when he was fucking dying.
 35 Brendan: the way he probably watched [his other victims
 36 Alby: [well I was in that position=
 37 Brendan: =mhmm=
 38 Alby: =I was there and I seen it and I looked in his face
 39 and I was helping him.
 40 I wasn't even helping him. There's nothing you can do=
 41 Brendan: =nothing you could do aye
 42 Alby: and I'm just looking at him going
 43 many people did you put in this?
 44 you don't know how devious I am. I'm an evil bastard.
 45 see when I was looking at dead man dying
 46 I was giving him the last rites
 47 what I was thinking, what I was thinking
 48 see when I get into the house I fu:cking flipped

The 5.5-second silence felt riven with tension, even in playing back the recording. Alby waits for a response to his admission about – and his girlfriend's admonishing of – his response to Martin as he administers the last rites. The silence becomes too much, and Alby reminds Brendan that he told him something previously. Brendan agrees. But Brendan's acknowledgement is not enough. Alby makes another move; he elliptically evokes Martin's (unnamed) menacing of Brendan's mother. Recall that the chain of events that lead to Martin's death was breaking the leg of an elderly woman who had scolded his child. Martin received a six-pack punishment for this act. This elderly woman is Brendan's mother. Brendan's moral positioning in this story could not be more consequential because Brendan's family helped to seal Martin's fate by complaining to "those in charge" about Martin's vicious acts against the elderly family member. This is made more precarious because Brendan's nieces are still good friends with Martin's children.

And so, after a long silence, Brendan's recognition - "aye" and "you're fucking right" - is characteristic of what Harvey Sacks calls "recognition-type description." A recognition-type

description, Sacks notes, “is to get from its recipient something like a ‘Yeah’, where it will run on until it gets the ‘Yeah’” (1986, 133). Recognition solidifies the status of co-participant, and it also allows for a shared moral world out of which a novel moral stance might emerge. It is an initial step for a more complex account of morality. As Ochs and Capps note, the “*sine qua non* of membership in a community is recognition and respect of moral standards of right and wrong. Every community holds members morally accountable for their actions, thoughts, and feelings” (2001: 102).

Alby can barely contain his excitement at Brendan’s recognition that his thinking was *right*, and he nearly shouts at Brendan to request confirmation of what he just said. He shouts, “Did you think that?” and stands up from his chair. Brendan then confesses, “I thought it when I right wondering what he thought like when he was fucking dying.” Brendan was thinking about what Martin was thinking, and then compares Martin’s thinking to the “the way” Martin watched over his victims. This is an astonishing moment. Brendan comes to affiliate and affirm Alby’s moral stance by saying that he, too, has a theory of what or how Martin should have been thinking as he was dying. The existential imperative to respond to Martin’s dying, as guided by the last rites, prepared a novel form of ethical response – thinking about those who Martin killed and expecting, at least optatively, that he be thinking about them.

With this recognition, Alby discloses the most fraught aspect of his engagement with Martin, which stands as perhaps the most remarkable ethnographic insight into morality during my fieldwork. Once Alby receives Brendan’s affirmation, Alby’s speech quickens, overlaps, and latches onto Brendan’s affirmative utterances. Alby reveals the struggle of the threshold encounter and its effects on his thinking and sense of self:

I was there and I seen it and I looked in his face and I was helping him. I wasn’t even helping him. There’s nothing you can do. And I’m just looking at him going “many people did you put in this?” You don’t know how devious I am. I’m an evil bastard. See when I was looking at dead man dying - I was giving him the last rites - what was I thinking? What was I thinking?

Alby responds to the face of his dying neighbor, and the moral and theological stakes could not be higher. For Levinas, the face of the other is the site of an ethical responsibility exceeding any sense, concepts, cultural scripts, or social norms. For Levinas, the “face of the neighbor signifies for me an unexceptionable responsibility, preceding every free consent, every pact, every contract. It escapes representation; it is the very collapse of phenomenality” (Levinas 1998, 80). We may of course typify, banalize, or approach the face as a thing amongst other things, a “caricature” easily placed out of mind or concern. Worse, we may “renounce comprehension completely” and see in the face only “sensible datum” that can be killed, murdered (1979, 198). For Levinas, because the face is ungraspable – an epiphanic disruption of sensibility and thus phenomenality – one may attempt to overpower the ungraspable. Our primary ethical responsibility to the other, however, remains.

To be sure, Alby could have been drawn into this responsibility because of communal and Catholic obligations and constraints. He does, after all, administer the ritual of the last rites. However, Alby’s story resonates with Levinas’s own language. Though entangled with the guilt or shame or obligations arising from his social conditions, Martin’s face shatters such social conditions as explanatory frames to understand Alby’s acts. Undeniably, Alby’s story offers a strong sense of the ethical response to the face of the other. But to which face? Alby’s ethical response to the face of the neighbor, partially articulated through the form of the litany, discloses the fundamental existential structure of *plurality* inherent in the broadened, many-sided way of thinking I’ve been developing by construing Arendt as ethically building on Kant’s account of the sublime. In Kant, Arendt discovers an account of the noetic experience of an enlarged mentality and the noematic moral signpost emerging out of such an experience. Ultimately, Alby’s story exposes the plurality of faces of the face of the neighbor.

Recall that for Levinas, the face of the Other is a numinous structure, one that expresses infinity. The excessiveness of the face in Alby’s concrete face-to-face with a dying (passing over into

murdered) other expresses multiple modalities of the face, as well as multiple spectral faces that no longer wholly appear in the phenomenal world: Desmond, Eamon, and loads of people. The face encompasses, but is not limited, to the empirical (Martin's actual face), memorial (the faces of the dead), social and religious (district's Catholic and Republican identities), and noumenal (the excess including and beyond these faces). On the one hand, then, this moment is an inversion of the Levinasian face, or at least an altering of the terms. Alby responds immediately to Martin's face with disdain. He thinks of how many people Martin killed. Alby calls himself *devious* and, beyond devious, *evil*. On the other hand, Alby ethically responds to Martin's face for the sake of other faces whom Martin himself has not responded. Levinas notes that "the possibility to pose a question to oneself...would never be possible without the Other [*Autrui*] and the question mark of his face had come about" (2000, 114). Alby's exposure to the concrete exposure dying face of the other precipitates first the question of others: "many people did you put in this?" In fact, I am unsure whether to place a question mark at the end of this utterance. Alby elides the interrogative "how." The utterance itself hangs undecided between the question and the statement, while recalling the litany with which Alby began his story: Desmond, Eamon, and loads of people.

The subsequent unfolding of contraries hints at an ironic reversal – "I was helping him. I wasn't even helping him" – that discloses the ambiguity, and exhaustion, of responding to someone for whom certain death awaits, but also the absence of cultural scripts, norms, or frames with which to know what "help" could even mean in this situation. And perhaps most of all, Alby's experience proves Levinas's point about the face more viscerally than Levinas himself. To ethically respond to the other, one must not only respond to the plurality of faces, but one must wrestle with whether *one is evil*. There are no certainties that one is responding that one is ethically, and Alby reminds us that his response may very well be evil. For how can one be ethical if one has not claimed evil unto oneself? Alby passes through evil, but does not remain in this station for long, unfolding into the

true question marked on Martin's face, "what was I thinking?" Alby repeats the same question, "what was I thinking?", signifying the excessive moral struggle before him.

In the time of the story II: "I had to"

Alby is not just questioning Martin's individual ethical comportment; rather, he's putting into question a social world in which feuds continue to tear apart neighbors and families in the Short Strand community. Alby questions the entire thinking of the PIRA and its administering of Martin's death. Recall Alby ends many of his conversations with the light-hearted sing-songy utterance "there's no hole in my legs," signifying his experience as avoiding the (often violent) logic of paramilitary punishments. Alby could see decades ago that those like Martin involved in overflowing circuits of violence would end up dead. Alby's friend Desmond, for example, was allegedly killed by Martin during the so-called "Night of the Long Knives" in which the PIRA killed the leadership of the IPLO (Irish People's Liberation Organization) in 1992. And Alby's friend Eamon was killed in the city center, allegedly also by Martin.

Last Rites have been given countless times by priests and neighbors alike to those killed on one of the 22 streets in this district and Alby's own sacerdotal inclinations to act as priest in absentia for Martin is no exception. Indeed, Martin's assassination goes entirely against Alby's own ethos of nonviolence. Alby explores this idea for us here, in describing a phone call with his friend Brian who was once a PIRA volunteer:

49 Alby: see with my first phone call I rung my mate up Brian, wee Brian.
50 and I says cus he rung me when Jimmy Whelan ((was killed))
51 calls me eight clock in the morning.
52 Brendan: uhhuh
53 Alby: and I said I rung him up straight after a-fa-ma-ah
54 ((holding out hands)) blood on my fucking hands
55 and I said did you hear the fucking news?
56 <what are you talking about?> ((imitating drunk slurred speech))
57 here me your f:ucking mates dead!
58 who?

59 me, Martin Murray's just after getting stiff:ed
 60 <a::ye your ballix> ((imitating gruff speech))
 61 no you-you heard him last night ((heard Brian's gruff speech))
 62 here me Brian I'm going to have to give him the last rites
 63 he's dead.
 64 (5.08)
 65 THAT'S JIMMY WHELAN AND FUCKING MARTIN
 66 MURRAY BETWEEN THE TWO OF US.
 67 we got heavy duty. heavy fucking duty.
 68 Brian asks me why didn't I go to fucking Jimmy Whelan's fucking funeral?
 69 because he's a fucking Provie ba:stard ((Provisional IRA))
 70 trying to stiff ((kill)) me my whole f:ucking life
 71 why did you go to Martin Murray's?
 72 cause I fucking gave him his last rites. I had to
 73 (2.1)
 74 HAD TO.
 75 I'm not shouting by the way yo
 76 (2.08) ((breathes in through nose and mouth))
 77 f:ucking I'm shaking fucking ((unintelligible)), so I am.

The argument between Brian and him is precisely where the moral stakes lie, where Alby specifically evokes the subjective in-between (“that’s Jimmy Whelan and Martin Murray between the two of us!”) in which moral worlds are constituted, held open, or broken to bits. In between the two friends, who also belong to opposing Republican ideologies, Provie vs. Stickie, are the ghostly others who haunt this phone call, Jimmy Whelan and Martin Murray.

Part of belonging to a tight-knit community Irish Republican and Catholic community of 3,000 where everyone knows everyone else, where there are multiplex ways in which people are related by blood or by marriage, and where everyone knows your business, is the constant ebb and flow of “falling out.” Falling out is not on the same level of a feud or a grudge, though it can sometimes escalate, and falling out can last decades. There is often exhaustion in maintaining relationships in this small community. While telling me about Martin’s death, Alby “recruits” Brian and re-tells the two phone calls they made to each other. The first, from Brian to Alby, is about the murder of Brian’s mate Jimmy by Martin. The second, from Alby to Brian about the murder of Martin and Alby’s duty to him. Martin’s full name, which had been deferred until this moment, is

coupled with the supposed victim of his wrath. His name is belatedly uttered to reveal how Alby, Brian, and Jimmy are inexplicably linked together with him. This dialogue further shows, then, the distributed responsibility of belonging to a Republican community in which so much blood has been shed. It is exhausting for everyone involved. Alby embodies his response to this responsibility: he reenacts having blood on his hands, holding them up to himself as he stammers “a-fa-ma-ah”, a response cry signifying the very limits of language to signify. *A-fa-ma-ah* appears to me as a moment of sensation, a disfiguring, an after-affect of experiencing something beyond words. Alby will later shout “had to” and breathes heavily, and shakes. Telling the story has exhausted him, and he’s embodying this exhaustion in his telling of the story.

It is exhausting precisely because belonging to this community makes Alby complicit for the murder even though he has not committed it, even though he is the one who has given last rites over Martin’s dying body. Alby, despite his own way of thinking, is still part of the collective “we”, part of the collective that declared Martin killable. Alby is a crucial witness – the first witness – in the exact moment when the “we” sacrificed one its own. The circuit of violence, which began long before Martin’s birth, was channeled against him in the transmuted form of the community against the individual. In the telling of the story, he recruits Brian as someone with whom to argue about the proper way to treat Provies at their funerals. After all, Jimmy Whelan, whose murder sealed Martin’s own fate, had tried to stiff (kill) Alby “his whole life.” Jimmy Whelan, too, is called to account in this story. Alby recognizes, in going to Martin’s funeral, that he indeed had a part to play. Significantly for him, it was he, and not a priest, who administered the last rites. In this action Alby is compelled by a sacred *archē* that connects Ireland’s living and dead, and is transcendent to his own existence. After all, he must make the sign of the cross over Martin as the dying man passes into the afterlife.

Sacred Beginnings

Alby is tied to something more transcendent than a situational ethics. Last Rites form the penultimate embodied ritual in Catholic tradition before an individual's funeral. The end for this particular story concerns death: the giving of the *last* rites. The last rites in Catholic tradition require more than a saying, more than words. They require action in the form of a gesture: the sign of the cross. This is a peculiar act, both constituting and constitutive, that also brings about the singular being in the first place through the baptismal rite. The baptismal rite is an *archē* in the sense that it's both a beginning and a (ecclesiastical) rule, but it's important to recognize that the former discloses the latter, even though we are habituated to think of the rule as underlying the rite. What the baptism institutionalizes is the heterogenous emergence of the new. Recall Arendt's articulation of the *arché*, which sets something in motion, an unexpected newness is brought into a world of others. This existential structure of natality is enacted and institutionalized through the baptismal rites.

At the heart of the Short Strand in East Belfast, mere yards from where Martin died, is the church in which he was baptized and christened, and where his funeral will also take place: St. Matthews Catholic Church. The sacred *archē* focalizes here. When one is christened in the Catholic church, he is given his proper name and then blessed with the sign of the cross and with holy waters amidst others from his family and community. Alby, in the time of the tale (and, as it turns out in the mimetic telling of the tale), is going to have to end with an act in the form of a *gesture* to complete the ritual function that began at the baptismal font. But the way in which he tells the story about the many-sided way of thinking of others, is also a potential example to be repeated for others as a moral signpost or what Throop calls in the context of world-destroying pain, "indexical markers of cultural virtues" (Throop 2010, 161-2). Though Alby's traumatic threshold experience is not the result of the acute pain of breaking a bone endured by young girl in Throop's ethnographic account of virtue, the pain, the tearing of thought, inherent thinking a new ethical practice out of endemic and exhausting violence are such an indexical marker. This partly accounts for why evoking the

litany of names, which can be read as much as a repetition of the baptismal as the funereal utterances, though it ostensibly answers my initial question about what he *said* to Martin, is not the end of the story. The story had to be told, yes, but an embodied gesture has yet to be performed after rigorous moral deliberation.

There is a formal structure laced in the content of the story that follows the formal conventions of Catholic sacraments. This is a strong claim. I argue that the *archē* of the story related to the formal conventions of the sacred is located in the *story preface*. When I ask what he *said* to Martin, Alby utters two proper names and a collective pronoun of Martin's victims but *not* Martin's own name. In considering the formal sacred structuring of this narrative we need to think through the two sacraments: the baptism and the last rites, the beginning and the end. Recall that a shorter version of the Litany of Saints is performed during the baptisms. But this is not the only invocation of the name. In the beginning, a proper name is uttered towards an infant, the one unable to speak, and then the infant is blessed with the sign of the cross. Importantly, the utterance of the proper name does not lose its force in death, especially in Irish Roman Catholic tradition, which still observes the Month's Mind and the Requiem Mass on the anniversary of the deceased. Not only are the names of the deceased uttered by the priest on the anniversary of their death, but the names of the dead are displayed in the Book of the Names of the Dead atop the side altar. Here, the name lingers. Desmond and Eamon and loads of people, too, appear in this book. The long sonata of the dead.

We cannot understand why entreating others is so important without understanding the importance of the proper name within the local context. Initially, I figured that by evoking the dead mates "Desmond," "Eamon" and "loads of people," Alby was being normative in the way he was trying to evoke recognition from Brendan. *If* Martin killed my (our) friends, *then* you must agree that my transgressive response (questioning, even spiting, Martin's way of thinking) was justifiable. As

mentioned earlier, priests performing mass in the Irish Roman Catholic Church tradition recite the names of the dead one month after they die and then on every anniversary of their death so long as family members or friends request such requiem masses. Alby and Brendan would have heard the names of the dead read aloud during Mass every day as children, especially as the death toll mounted in their small, tight-knit district which was disproportionately affected by the conflict. Further, the IRA roll of honor, a recitation of the deceased, is often read during public commemorations following the form of the litany, and the Short Strand district has plaques with lists of those who were killed during the conflict throughout many areas in the district. If there is one genre of speech that is most common to Belfast, it is the litany of the dead, the endless concatenation of their names. And, to be sure, the ethics of naming is also entangled with the violent histories of British colonization, no better evinced than by the novelist Anna Burns whose narrator in the *Milkman*, a novel set during “the Troubles,” remains nameless and refuses to give proper names to others. As the narrator explains on the potency of naming in the (unnamed) Catholic enclave in which the novel is set:

The couple who kept the list of names that weren't allowed in our district didn't decide themselves on these names. It was the spirit of the community going back in time that deemed which names were allowed and which were not. The keepers of the banned list were two people, a clerk and clerkess, who catalogued, regulated and updated these names frequently, proving themselves efficient in their clerkliness but viewed by the community as mentally borderline aberrational for all that. Their endeavour was unnecessary because we inhabitants instinctively adhered to the list - abiding by it without going deeply into it (Burns 2018, 22)

Alby, like this narrator, is drawing upon an oral and written tradition in Catholic working-class districts, by listing these names to elicit recognition from Brendan, while simultaneously not yet giving Martin a name in the story until more than halfway through the telling, thus he is not given an animate status through a pronoun. Uttering a proper name is a fraught speech act, and in years past, your name could mean the difference between life and death. From it, you can hear immediately whether the person was friend or enemy. Martin, before he receives his last rites, which completes

But that victory does not resolve the narrative *arbhē* of the sacred and it does not end the story. In Brendan's dimly yellow lit front room, in the grave still night, Alby instead redirects his narrative to reenact the powerful ritual of the last rites, and he does so with a gesture. He takes the gold crucifix from his chest and grips it away from him. The example or *proof* that he properly ended Martin's life manifested in a perfect embodied performance in front of Brendan and me. Giving the last rites in front of us repeats the pre-narrative abyssal ground, the threshold encountering, out of which the proto-narrative formed. His body bridges the excess and its repetition. Martin returns here and now, and the beer carton transforms into an altar on which his body lies. Body-to-body, face-to-face, Alby and Martin appear together again at the limit between life and death. Passing between the sensible and the supersensible moves the sublime itself, from the finite to the infinite, to the edge of the threshold and then "Gone." Purposive, he speaks it resolutely. It was not enough to tell us about administering the last rites. Compelled, he performs the excess. More than words, tears stream his face. He makes the sign of the cross as if Martin faced him.

And while the performance might be ethical for the rules of the community, responding to might of the situation in a way that sacrificed an easy answer let emerge a multi-voiced ethics out of the threshold. By orienting his thinking towards the plurality of the face, an imperative existential as ever was, and by questing and questioning amidst this realm of thought, Alby told us a story about to *think and act* ethically. Alby acts out the sign of the cross he made over Martin in Brendan's living room over an empty cardboard beer carton an example of having performed the selfsame act that brought him, and all of them, into existence at the baptismal font. Natality and finitude transversed by an infinite gesture. A storyteller's performance that reproduces the originary acts, while at the same time, creates something new, a paradigm that articulates the emergence of an ethical way of thinking.

Coda

In white marble floor and circling the raised altar is cut a passage from Isaiah 43:1, “I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME AND YOU ARE MINE.” At this altar, the names of Jimmy and Martin are read aloud during mass each year in May and August, respectively. For the time being, Martin and Jimmy reside on the same page on the Remembrance Book on the side altar of the church, inextricably linked in death as in life.

In July 2018, Alby called Brendan to his girlfriend’s house to take his photograph. He had been diagnosed with throat cancer and it had spread. Alby desired a handsome photo for his insertion (for his memorial mass card and for his obituary in *The Irish News*). Brendan snaps two photos. In the first, Alby winces uncertain, a slight rictus. Brendan tells me later that Alby must have been thinking about what this act of photographing meant. Perhaps that the finality of his situation had hit him, Brendan says. In the second photograph Alby smiles widely. In the unmeasurable gap between the two photographs lies the depths of the human condition. As Brendan leaves, Alby sings to him, one last time before he too joins the litany of names, as he is wont to do when he’s mischievous and true: “there’s no hole in my legs.”

Chapter VIII Tower Street Project

Field Notebook

23 June 2016

The Vote. James wore Union Jack socks, shorts, shirt. He sledged Woody for not voting. The two were working out the Battle of the Somme speeches. Because of the vote, this was put in: "While the world we know today is completely different from that of which these brave sods left, the profound reasoning in which they took up arms stands resolute. Freedom, valour and loyalty."

24 June 2016

Woke up to yellow snot, steady rain, and the UK voting affirmatively to leave the EU. Perhaps this is eventual, yet the thoughtless masses already have immediate responses and opinions. David Cameron resigns, McGuinness and Adams call for a border/Irish unity vote, the masses on Facebook and Twitter all glean the future: doom or blissful sovereignty. Some are more nuanced and see the EU as a failed neoliberal project run by lobbyists and the unelected, stiffing the working classes who always follow millionaires. Regardless, the moment is already leveled-down, not held open - no waiting. Opinions descend as fast as the rain outside my window. "At least the suffering is over" says a woman in an alley to another while watching children play.

Ulster's Sacrifice

It was day after the Brexit vote. The results were in. The United Kingdom voted, as a whole, to leave the European Union (52% to 48%). Though Northern Ireland voted to remain (56% to 44%) along with Scotland, when the results from Wales and England were totaled, it was clear that the future for the union was in uncharted waters. There was palpable excitement, however, throughout working-class Protestant estates in east Belfast. Belfast East, a majority-Protestant voting constituency, voted to leave 51% to 49%. For the first time, especially after the hated 1998 peace agreement, working-class Protestants and loyalists cautiously felt as if their way of life might survive in the face of Irish Republicanism.

On Tower Street in the Inner East, sandbags of jute and hessian were being filled to prepare for the final push over the trenches for the commemoration of the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme. This celebration of one of the deadliest battles of the First World War was merely one week away on July 1. There was much left to do. While the Brexit news was greeted with guarded

optimism within this loyalist community, the commemoration preparations took precedence. When I asked Tower Street residents about the Brexit, I discovered that the optimism was countered by a deeply engrained fear that they would be forgotten by the Westminster politicians. Though many in the Conservative Party (“the Tories”) were pro-Brexit like the loyalist and unionist votes from Northern Ireland, east Belfast Protestants worried that the party may see the Brexit as an opportunity to hand Northern Ireland over to the Republic of Ireland.

As I write this chapter now in October 2019, Belfast’s loyalist community has been mobilizing as Prime Minister Boris Johnson has recommended an arrangement that would lead to an all-economic Ireland, ostensibly placing a customs border at the Irish Sea. The loyalist discourse surrounding this imminent event is still emerging, but some in east Belfast are already referring to this potential agreement as the “grand betrayal” of the unionist and loyalist communities for the sake of appeasing “IRA terrorists.”



Figure 27: *Ulster Says No, Again.*

In late 2019, a “Resist the Betrayal Act” banner was placed on the entrance to Templemore Avenue, just off the Newtownards Road in Belfast’s impoverished inner east, where even today the

paramilitary murals elicit memories of a century of conflict. On the freshly applied banner Boris Johnson foregrounds an historical photograph of men running past the barbed wire and muck of the trenches of the First World War. This image of soldiers inevitably recalls the Battle of Somme, a battle in which east Belfast Protestants (and many Catholics) featured prominently. One of the massive Harland & Wolff shipbuilding gantry cranes rises in the background. These cranes, once the livelihood of generations of Protestant shipbuilders, sit unused. The shipbuilders, too, sit unused.

The shipyard is a site of perpetual discord for east Belfast residents – many of whom were once gainfully employed there. The Brexit vote offered the unemployed shipworkers a moment to express their disdain at the economic policies that lead to their impoverished livelihoods. Willie, who lives on Tower Street, is a former shipworker. He explains to me his dual love and hatred for the shipyard. It takes him a long time to speak in between breaths – he wheezes and coughs constantly – because he suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Willie tells me the disease soon will kill him, if his alcoholism does not get him first. He speaks about his lung disease alongside his drinking and admits that he is rarely without a tin of beer in his hand. Since his release from prison for paramilitary activities in 1986, Willie had worked in the shipyard for Harland & Wolff, the local shipbuilding company. He was made redundant three times over the course of his tenure as boat cleaner at Harland & Wolff. Though he is not necessarily “blaming” anyone – he stresses this repeatedly during or conversation – he does insist that government-mandated austerity over the years impacted his job security. After the final redundancy, he found himself spending more time inside his house. To make matters worse, Willie recalls that there were few safety precautions when he worked cleaning the boats at the shipyard, and he notes that his current COPD and continual reliance on disability benefits is a result from his time working in hazardous conditions. Willie’s job was clearing the rust off the sides of the boats with a sandblaster. He and his fellow workers, he says, never wore masks, and he tells me he could feel chemicals and rust particles settling inside him as he

cleaned the boats. He says that back then he knew that if he survived the conflict, the toxic particles would get him. No one back then, he laughs and wheezes softly as he tells me, ever expected to live into their fifties anyway.

I am fortunate to be speaking with Willie. He stays indoors. He is generally a private person, not given to interviews or speaking with the researchers who have tended to invade Belfast since the peace agreement. Though Willie is more soft-spoken about the history of researchers and journalists in the area, his neighbors have outspokenly expressed to me the manner in which various journalists and academics “are all nice” when they are in the area, and subsequently go on to write “horrible things about them” such as calling the local residents backwards, racists, and sectarian bigots. Additionally, I have myself frequently heard kids in the area refer to themselves defiantly and proudly as “scum.” This despairing identity is worn in a dual act of insubordination and resistance by those who believe the people around them already think of them as “scum.” Giving themselves this name before anyone else can is a form of pre-emptive identification, an agentive act of nomenclature, a defensive move.

Today, a week before the Somme Centenary commemoration, Willie engages in rare conversation with his neighbors. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves. They stand under a World War I trench-style hut they have built on the corner of Tower Street. Men and women are drinking tins of Carlsberg and smoking cigarettes, and the ashes are flicked into glass ashtrays with the Union Jack emblazoned on the bottom. The children who live on the street play on a wooden Mark 1 tank built for the imminent recreation of the Somme that will take place here in one week’s time. This is a new experience for people in this area. People around Tower Street rarely leave their homes, but everyone I speak to credits a local young man named Woody for these recent developments, for organizing the upcoming commemoration. Woody, according to those here on

Tower Street, has kept up his end of the bargain and built something for the kids to learn about their culture and tradition.

The first time I met Woody, I learn about his burgeoning Tower Street Project, which is on a road just off of Templemore Avenue. He eagerly reads aloud to me from a play he has just completed. For each character, he delivers individual dialogue and inhabits each unique persona with convincing realism. His reading grips my attention and I imagine he would find easy work as an actor: gravitas and good looks and a disarming earnestness contiguous with his tattoos. His newest ink still reddens the back of his hand, a clock with Roman numerals, the hands marking the precise time he met his fiancé. Woody's friend James and I have frequently compared Woody to a tow-headed Justin Timberlake. A recently posted side-by-side pictures of the two appeared on his Facebook wall, and this incited much online banter (and approval by his fiancé). Woody is keen to be known as creative. He has been writing a historical play about two Catholic brothers in their early 20s, actual brothers who lived on Kilmood Street in the Short Strand, and who fought in the trenches during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. The play begins with a Catholic Priest calling on two boys from his parish, Paul and Damien O'Hara, to enlist and fight the German menace during WWI. In the first scene, Paul, eager to fight out a sense of romantic adventure, and Damien, eager to stay home, argue with one another.

Scene 1³⁰

PRIEST

My dear boys it is your duty to fight the German menace

PAUL

see Damien it's the right thing to do

DAMIEN

I don't care am not going

³⁰ The participant I call "Woody" has allowed me to reproduce scenes his play as he wrote them. I have kept the content of the script unedited. I have formatted the character names and scene numbers according to standard play formats.

PAUL
well what is there for us here

DAMIEN
our my ma and da for a start

PAUL
it's a chance to see the world you empty head a free ticket and we will be back before you know it

In this first scene, Paul convinces Damien to enlist, but this only furthers Damien's doubt. As the play progresses through Woody's dramatic reading of the two characters, Paul becomes more resolute in his decision while Damien, whom Paul calls an "empty head," becomes more worried. For Paul, Damien's doubt empties his head of the adventurous possibilities of finally leaving Belfast and seeing the world beyond. Damien, however, worries about leaving home, being found out a Catholic, and most of all, he's terrified of the stories he has heard from the trenches. The tension between the two brothers builds throughout each scene of the play: waiting in the queue to enlist, enlisting face-to-face with a sergeant, the feelings afterwards about enlisting, telling their parents about their enlistment, arriving in France, marching onto the battlefield, and then engaging in battle around the River Somme. Paul's romanticism continues to conflict with Damien's realism, and Damien begins to question more insistently the decision to enlist up until on the morning of July 1, 1916, when the two boys are sent headlong into the maelstrom. Moments before the orders to breach, Damien again questions the future of what is to come while Paul rushes headlong into the present situation:

DAMIEN
I can't stop shaking Paul

PAUL
it's the vibrations of the shells just

DAMIEN

it's not is fear

PAUL

its normal we will be ok there is no way that the Germans have survived that shell fire

CO DICKSON

Right my boys yous our over next

Woody's play depicts the boys going over the trenches, and in the thick of changing forward, the artillery shells begin to fall as the gunfire seems to come from all sides. Paul is the first to get hit through his left thigh from a German rifle round, fracturing his tibia, and is resigned to waiting for help to arrive. Damien yells to Paul and offers his aid, but Paul responds, "go on don't stop."

Damien continues to advance, within Paul's line of sight:

NARRATOR

Lying waiting on help Paul could see his brother advance watching on he heard the whistle of a German shell and right before his eyes it fell were his brother stood

PAUL

Dee Dee No my brother my brother, please Dee no

Paul, sedated, had yet to learn of his brother's fate and beseeches his nurse to find Damien amidst the smoke and fog. But the narrator tells us that the "shell slammed into the position he stood leaving no trace of him." And then Woody reads the final lines to me:

NARRATOR

The nurse never found Damien as his body was never recovered from no mans land, one of many brave man and woman that paid the ultimate sacrifice in the great war. Paul recovered from his injuries and went back to fight in the front line in the battle of Cambrai in 1917 but when the cold of winter struck it effected his wound and was extracted from front line duties. In January 1918 he enlisted in the Labour corps as he was unfit for front line duties. Paul returned home to Belfast after being discharged in March 1919. He enlisted a healthy man along with his brother to go on an adventure to see the world little did he no he would return with a terrible leg injury and without his younger brother.

(Flute plays abide with me.)

Damien's characterization as possessing an empty headedness foreshadows the emptiness left when the German shell ultimately evaporates him, "leaving no trace of him," a negative space. It is as if

Damien had never existed. Paul returns to Belfast, to the Short Strand, with a wounded body and the absence of his brother, not even a corpse that would allow for a site of grieving. The narrator's didactic epilogue, read with omniscient detachment by Woody, ends the drama on an uncomfortable, ambivalent note. What Ulster has sacrificed, after all, often leaves no trace, not just with the soldiers used as fodder during the wars, but also those invisible losses like the kinds that occur with startlingly frequency in working-class areas like the Inner East. After getting to know Woody's own road to becoming a community worker, which he narrates as a kind of redemption arc from a drug addict at eleven years of age and a sectarian rioter once affiliated with a paramilitary organization to a role model youth worker, I see echoes of Paul and Damien's experiences in his own life.

Woody is often interrupted by what he calls his "sore stomach," an understatement for the crippling pain he often experiences. In his stomach, he holds the history of his anxiety, depression, and stress, a remainder and reminder of the damaged temporality of redemption arcs in Belfast. Though Woody likes to speak of himself as overcoming his past, he admits this is for the sake of maintaining a positive attitude for his children and the youth he mentors. Indeed, there are numerous echoes of Woody's life that can be seen flickering throughout the acts of his play, most notably Paul's loss of Damien. Woody's sore stomach carries with it the suicide of his best friend over a debt to drug-dealers, the remnants of a childhood fear of paramilitary-style debt punishments, a life-long struggle with anxiety and depression, the surprise at still being alive. There is much he holds in his stomach which periodically plagues him with searing pain. During the first months knowing him, Woody briefly alludes that the reason he is a community worker today is because of the suicide of his best friend when he was younger. Over time, he speaks more often about the impact of this loss on his life, an absence I cannot help but compare to Paul's loss of his brother in Woody's play. Ulster's sacrifice at the Somme encompasses both the absences of the soldiers, 2,000

of whom never returned home, over 3,700 lost during the troubles, and those lost to suicide after the 1998 peace agreement. As mentioned in the introduction, more than 5,000 people have died from suicide since 1998 peace agreement, more than during the Somme and the troubles, respectively. Northern Ireland's 2018 rate of 18.6 suicides per 100,000 is the highest in the European Union and in the top-15 of countries with the highest rates of suicides in the world. As a metaphor, suicide also seeps into discourses about working-class Protestant Loyalty. Protestants have spoken to me about the "cultural suicide" endured by loyalists since the peace agreement. The Tower Street project, and the social relations and historical experiences evoked by the project, emerges during a time of despair for working-class Protestants.

Woody plans on making his play the centerpiece of his efforts to commemorate the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme. He wants the kids who live in the Protestant Inner East, those who live right out back from the building in which his organization is housed, to act out these scenes he has written. Woody's goal is to turn Tower Street, which is one street away from the peace wall on Bryson Street, into the trenches of the Somme. Woody, a self-taught carpenter, plans this meticulous transformation of Tower Street into "Ulster Tower Street," even altering the very street sign bearing the name. Though it is not legal to change the name of a street in the United Kingdom outside of the correct channels, Woody knows that no one would notice any change he might make. The Inner East, he believes, has been abandoned by those who would even care to enforce any such regulation. "Stop me," he says. It is his pervading attitude. Ulster Tower Street borrows its inspiration from the Ulster Tower in Tiepval, France. Completed in 1921, the Tiepval Ulster Tower commemorates the 36th Ulster Division.

When I asked Woody about why he wrote a historical play focusing on two Catholic soldiers from the Short Strand (a strange vantage point, I assumed, for a Protestant from across the peace wall to take), Woody admits that he wrote the play out of desperation for funding. Though Woody,

like many working-class Protestants, takes a keen interest in local military history and found this local story compelling, he specifically chose to write this drama about Catholics because he was desperate for funding to keep his family-run organization afloat. Significantly, the non-profit he works for has seen its funding dwindle for years. Woody writes this play, not because he has any pretenses about bringing Catholics and Protestants together, but because the idea of a Protestant researching and writing a sensitive play about Catholics is a “funding dream.” The small, family-run organization he works for, which won awards from Queen Elizabeth, replete from a visit from Prince Charles in 2013, is on the verge of shutting down. Woody’s play about Catholics fighting for the British Army in the Somme is his Hail Mary – pun intended – to secure a future for the organization. He admits to me that if he were to get Inner East “Protestant kids researching Catholics and then acting them out, it’s an awarding funders dream. Tower Street Project had no financial backing.” Unfortunately, Woody’s play would never receive funding to hire extra community workers to help prepare the children to act, and so the play remained unperformed.

Ulster Tower Street project is Woody’s last gasp, and final tribute, to the people of Inner East Protestant he has worked with for nearly a decade. Woody works without pay. He plans to work without pay until September, when time is truly up for him and the organization. Even when he was paid a salary, he was working sixty hours a week for a wage of only 637 pounds a month.

The Inner East Youth Project (IEYP), though over 20 years old, is consistently overlooked by funders and what Woody calls “the bosses,” an oblique term referring to prominent Protestant Loyalists and Orangemen, politicians and community leaders, who have sway over to which organizations receive pots of funding from Community Relations Council Core Funding and small grants schemes, Belfast City Council schemes, and community and peace funding programs. Woody explains that part of the reason why IEYP does not get the funding is because they, as a small organization that delivers quality programs and on-the-ground relationship building, make the other

organizations “look bad.” Community workers for IEYP are out each night walking the street, liaising with the Protestant youth centers (and if need be, Catholics in the Short Strand), and engaging in the on-the-ground interactions with the youth that the other organizations claim to do, but too often do not (or have never attempted). Though I could not, of course, witness every community worker throughout Belfast tasked with such interface work, my own experience in the Inner East testifies that IEYP, along with some church-run organizations that have to remain hands off if they see drug or alcohol use, were usually the only community workers on the ground every night in the Protestant Inner East. The IEYP, moreover, will engage with local individuals even if they see drug and alcohol use or abuse. Woody and those at the IEYP (his fiancé, future father- and mother-in-law) worked tirelessly, without pay, and engaged with young people nightly. These four family members themselves stopped riots in the making, provided food and car rides to hungry or despondent teens, and contacted paramedics in the case of drug overdoses or other injuries.

I experience some of Woody’s community worker skills, and his remarkable ability to anticipate future riots, when driving back from McDonald’s with him on the lower Newtownards Road. His attention, his eagle-eyed sight, noticed a nearly-imperceptible stone which had been thrown upwards in the air from the Protestant side of the road to the Catholic side of the road. To me, this was an nearly impossible-to-detect moment, but Woody is habituated to the throwing of these stones and other missiles – in part, of course, because he used to throw them and dodge them in his youth – but also because he truly wants to prevent young Protestants from getting hurt or ending up before a judge. On this occasion, Woody immediately pulled the car off the road and jumped out of it. I sat haplessly by and watched him start up a lively conversation with the Protestant youth involved in the stone throwing until they successfully dispersed.

Woody knows his organization cannot continue without the meagre funding it currently receives. Government officials explained that the funding for IEYP had been suspended, in part

because of the collapse of the power-sharing assembly that disperses funds, and in part because the EU Peace IV funds had yet to be released. Woody believes even if the Northern Irish Assembly were operative, his organization would be overlooked. Because of the dynamics of the funding situation, CharterNI, a group run during my fieldwork by an active member of the UDA, which historically has been a rival paramilitary to the UVF, had a stronger network of funders than Woody's organization which is associated with the UVF.

Even though many prominent men in the Inner East are UVF or Red Hand Commando (a branch of the UVF) veterans, they were still wary of Woody's organization because of their past experiences with politicians promising programs, activities, and youth centers. The following images show the vacant lot where a youth center had been promised for years, along with a warning to CharterNI, which also failed to deliver programs to the youth:



Figure 28: Broken Promise



Figure 29: Discontent

Though Woody's organization is more accepted in the area, in part because Woody is from the east and aligns with the same strand of loyalism as the residents around Tower Street, the residents of the Inner East had simply abandoned hope that the community sector, the politicians, or the state would help them. The Inner East suffers from multiple deprivations (high rates of suicide, mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, and PTSD), not in least because of the conflict, but also from the confluence of New Labour's late-90s neoliberal reforms and recent Tory austerity cuts that lead to the outsourcing of the shipbuilding, aerospace, and other industrial workforces combined with the cutting of services and benefits. These decisions hit this area hard. The organization Habitat for Humanity found the area to be so deprived of quality housing, that it replaced several dilapidated houses with new ones. An elderly resident of the Inner East, who despite being in his 60s still works at as a paramedic, was able to earn a deposit for his house by working for 300 hours on building it

with Habitat for Humanity. This man is quite proud when he tells me this and smiles widely, but he also admits that the new houses, situated right on the peace wall, did nothing to bring other forms of infrastructure or economic investment into the area. He says that the “Protestant community is lost for true leadership.” Protestants go to the ballot box and vote for who is there, “even though you know it won’t make a difference,” he says, adding “the community is treading water and searching for answers.” One of the more problematic demographic issues with the Inner East is that it is located only one mile down the road from affluent middle and upper-middle class areas of privately-owned houses in east Belfast, and so policymakers often neglect this area. A recent report commissioned by the Northern Irish Assembly on deprivation admitted, for example, that though east Belfast is considered less deprived by spatial ranking, the government’s spatial analysis lacks the finer-grained analysis on how some areas have “pockets or spatial clusters of multiple deprivation, such as the inner city areas of Belfast East” (Devlin et al. 2018, 12). Defining the “domains” of deprivation as Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access to Services, Living Environment and Crime and Disorder, the report gives the impression that Belfast East is less deprived than Belfast West, even though the Inner East, especially those around Tower Street, suffers desperately from these indicators of deprivation. There is a common sentiment as well that the area is one of the most difficult to work with, and indeed, locals often vociferously voice their lack of patience for false promises and reports that hide the difficulties of living in this struggling area. Woody describes how the area is viewed:

Because that area was already seen as a hot spot for trouble because you had the interface [peace wall] behind the houses. And it’s a horrible thing to say but I’m going to say it, but anybody who sort of wanted to live in that area were all outcasts and down-and-outs. Why would you want to live there when bricks and bottles get thrown there every night? Why would you want to bring your kids up like that? There were all seen as outcasts or down-and-outs. They’d have been [seen as] too difficult to work with. [But] you’ve seen yourself. They were ordinary decent people.

[...]

They say never judge a book by its cover. Now people who are maybe living in the likes of that vicinity who live in that interface, each family had a few kids. What you'll maybe find is tired of having a big family in a one bedroom flat, the family moved out there. That's how they ended up there. They ended up there not by choice, but by situation. I open my mind up and look at all aspects of things, that's the truth, that's my personal opinion. People just didn't want to work with them.

Woody focused on creating activities for Tower Street children in order to cultivate relationships with the wider community. He tells me the first activity that he introduced to the area was a simple First World War word finder puzzle (with words like "poppy," "Somme," "artillery," "Ulster") that he designed on the computer, made copies, and distributed to the children of the area. He said this small act created some good will amongst some of the parents, and by word of mouth, this word finder puzzle became the gateway for more activities. Woody was encouraged to produce more activities for the local children, such as the painting of banners that could be placed on Tower Street. He invited locals to the East Belfast Network Center that houses Woody's Inner East Youth Project organization (along with other, often competing, non-profits). Notably, though the Network Center is on Templemore Avenue, one street up from Tower Street, Woody says locals rarely bother engaging with it.

However, the good will engendered by the word finder printouts, facilitated the possibility of residents to engage with Woody on further projects for Ulster Tower Street. For the next phase, Woody wanted the community to make posters of poppies to hang around the area. Woody's friend had "come across" (i.e., stolen) some "To Let" signs from letting agencies and some campaign posters from local politicians (especially from disliked politicians). Woody had the parents and children cut them in the shape of poppies, the traditional symbol of British war remembrance, often worn during Remembrance Day, and then paint them red. Soon enough, parents began chipping in money, time, and resources for building up the Ulster Tower Street project. Small businesses began donating paint, scrap wood and pallets, twine, and other supplies. In time, though Woody was not getting paid and the Ulster Tower Street project lacked funders, the community funded the project

by themselves. During this time, a private Facebook group page was started by Harry, a longtime resident of the area. The page, called “Ulster Tower Street Project” kept residents up to date about the project, and quickly gathered over five hundred members. This Facebook page had its own successes: people supplied paint, wood, and other resources for the project. Since it was Harry who usually strung up flags and bunting during the July marching season, he thought an online presence would help to expand the commemoration. Despite all this, Harry warned Woody that the Inner East community was fractured and tired of promises not coming to fruition.



Figure 30: Painting Poppies



Figure 31: Tank Building



Figure 32: Ulster's Sacrifice

For the most part, the residents of this area detest the peace agreement and believe that Northern Irish government seated at the Stormont estate a few miles down the road and the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) are now run by Irish Republican terrorists. Woody, too, thinks that his culture is on the wane, and a United Ireland is all but certain to come about. He even admits he has lost his passion for playing in the Shankill Stars, the loyalist band he has been a part of for more than a decade. He has been more introspective of late about the future of loyalism, and his place within his culture. Though he has obligations to loyalism – bouncing at the Rangers Club, monitoring Twelfth bonfires, and playing in a band, he is started to think that his family’s future will become radically different. Significantly, Woody was recently accepted into a degree program at Ulster University, and though he likely cannot attend because his family – his fiancé and their child together and her two children from a previous relationship necessitate that he financially contribute – he wears his university acceptance as a badge of pride against his hated father who never thought he’d do anything with his life, who thought his son was drugged-out “scum.”

In hanging out with working-class Protestants youths in the Inner East, as mentioned earlier, I’ve heard them refer to themselves as “scum,” an identity that Woody and IEYP attempt to overcome through offering after school projects, jobs-training programs, and schemes aimed at promoting pride in their cultural identity. But even amongst Woody’s generation and older, there is a sense that their culture is dying, that they were on the losing side of the peace agreement. Derisively, the middle and upper classes of all backgrounds, as well as poor Catholics, also refer to poor loyalists as “fleggers,” a mocking slur that mocks the working-class Protestant dialect when they say “flag.” The flying of flags has long been contentious in Northern Ireland, and more restrictions are being put on where and what kinds of flags can be flown. In 2013, the Union Jack was lowered from Belfast City Hall to be flown only on special occasions, and this led to massive riots and violence throughout the east between Protestants and the PSNI and spilling over into the Catholic

Short Strand district. This sense of lost is made more acute when community workers, or former paramilitary leaders, flaunt their newly acquired peace and/or drug wealth through posting their holidays on Facebook, wearing bespoke suits and jewelry, and driving expensive automobiles.

In order to combat this sense of being “scum,” then, Woody devised his last and most important project: Ulster Tower Street. Woody wanted to give the kids a period to be proud of themselves. Woody does not quite realize it now, but he is actually on the cusp of something that has not been done in this area since the conflict. He is bringing the Inner East community out of their homes, and as he says “breaking down barriers” by engaging not only with youth, but with their parents. Inner East Belfast has been notoriously difficult to establish working relations with – even for people like Woody from east Belfast – because the residents been let down time and time again by community workers, politicians, and the entire State apparatus. Decades of empty promises of youth facilities, investments in the area, and regeneration projects have left the Inner East suspicious, bitter, and most of all – tired of any more promises that the future might hold.

Flags

Each year in June, Protestants from working-class areas begin flying Union Jack, loyalist paramilitary, and Ulster flags and bunting in preparation for the “marching season,” in which loyalist bands and Orangemen, a Protestant fraternal organization, take to the streets to reaffirm, and reterritorialize, Northern Ireland as British. Flags in Belfast have long been associated with territorial displays with sectarian intent, often placed where the gaze of the hated other can see. The fear that wells up in Catholics, in particular, when entering an area with a proliferation of Union Jack, Ulster, and paramilitary flags, is a commonly described emotional response and reminds Catholics of years of oppression, dispossession, and violence.

In the days leading up to the commemoration of the Battle of the Somme, I am with Harry who shows me a map he finished drawing of Tower Street and the surrounding streets and courts. On the map he has color-coded and organized the kinds and patterns of flags to be strung up. Putting up flags is considered, especially by Catholics, but also by the middle and upper classes of all backgrounds, as a sectarian practice. In working-class Protestant communities, moreover, resisting putting up flags can get one kicked out of the community. One resident told me that a few years ago, when she asked for the Union Jack bunting not to be attached to her house, she was violently threatened with having her windows broken, and the member of a paramilitary drilled a fastener on the outside of the house on which to attach the bunting regardless. Harry, however, laments these forms of intimidation used by “headers” in the past, and he tries to keep communication open between neighbors so that he can best accommodate the wishes of the area while still celebrating Britishness.

While flags are a contentious issue in Belfast, I also have observed ways in which setting up the flags can also be a form of care amongst neighbors, and a way for adults and parents to care for the children of the area. After Harry consults his drawn map of the flag placement that he keeps in his pocket, he immediately begins putting up Union Jack bunting for his neighbor across the way. I think it is strange that he does not begin by decorating his own house, but I follow him as he sets up a ladder in front of his neighbor’s house. A middle-aged woman appears from the door and watches him fasten the rope and flags, and overwhelmed by emotion, she begins to cry. Harry descends from the ladder and embraces the woman. She says, “didn’t know how I was going to manage it. He always took care of it.” She goes back inside her home and Henry tells me quietly that her husband had committed suicide last year and that he’d always been the one that put up the flags. He says he she doesn’t leave her house often. Though putting up the flags is seen as a sectarian, in this moment, the Harry’s act takes on a form of a small act of caring for his neighbor who has endured the

unspeakable loss of her husband. This is why he started with her house, to show her that he remembered her husband.



Figure 33: Raising Flags

Woody and other Protestants understand that tying up flags is a precarious act for non-Protestants. As I was holding the ladder steady for Harry, Woody takes my photograph in astonishment. Few researchers have ever engaged with Protestants when they hang up flags. He said, lightheartedly, “I thought you were supposed to be cross-community,” referring to my research on the Catholic side of the peace wall. This act, he knows, would be considered a sectarian act by those on the other side. Yet for these Protestants today, it’s an act of care, not just for the woman whose husband committed suicide, but also for the children in the area who join in. One man, Andrew, and his son fasten the flags to rope to string above and across the road. Andrew says that he is former military. He then slightly corrects himself in order to clarify: “*real* military.” What is unspoken in this clarification is that many of the men on these streets are current or former members of the UVF or Red Hand Commando. Andrew says he was stationed to go to the Iraq War “but Bush backtracked

and didn't invade," referring US President George H.W. Bush's First Gulf War. He is meticulous with hanging the flags, making use of black ties to fasten the flags to rope, spacing each out using a ruler. Andrew's son watches, and when the flags are fastened, Andrew gives him one end of the rope to hold as he climbs the ladder.

As mentioned earlier, tying up flags is thus also a way of caring for the children in the area. An essential aspect of planning the Ulster Tower Street project, after all, is giving the children something to do. As Woody explains, though hatred cannot be separated out of the socialization process, Protestant and loyalist culture also sustains kinship relations irreducible to hatred. Woody understands the paradox that hatred can never be removed from the traditions, but he's also sure that without these practices, families could not cope with their situations. There has simply been too much loss and too much bitterness. Woody says of his own son, Edward:

We live in a society here in Northern Ireland where hate is bred into you from a young age. And I'm going to be honest, it was bred into me at a young age. Did I breed hate into my kids? Not too much hate, that's in the culture. But with the culture comes the hate. He loves anything to do with the bands, loves Rangers, as Edward grows up, he's asking questions: "Why can't we walk there?" "Why are they stopping us from walking down the road?" And I tell him, "we're not allowed to walk down that road because the Catholics don't want us walking down that road." And he actually took it upon himself to say to me "I don't like Catholics here." So there's another generation. What did I do? Did I take him out of his culture and his traditions just because Catholics won't let us walk down the road? And I know people physically remove their kids from the likes of bands because of how hard those questions are. When I was growing up I always remember a phrase Gerry Adams said, he was speaking at a Sinn Fein conference in Dublin, and his exact words were, "We need to beat these bastards with a trojan horse." So basically what he meant was "we're in it for the long haul." Chip, chip, chip away. People think the bands are sectarian, but people don't realize what families actually do.

Woody explains that though hate is inevitably part of the culture of Protestantism and loyalism, even to the point where his son, before his 5th birthday, has begun making claims about not liking Catholics. The "chip, chip, chip away" of these traditions has not been replaced with economic mobility or security, or other forms of cultural or political identity. Being "scum," "fleggers," or "hoods," the latter of which is often seen as anti-social behavior or a "wannabe gangster" that often

leads into drug dealing and use, are two ways of life he's actively trying to avoid for his son Edward. Though the Inner East drug economy has constituted important forms of identity and social relationships outside of sectarianism, Woody rightfully believes that drugs have destroyed loyalism beginning with the loyalist family structure centered around commemorations, bands, and bonfires. Woody is intent to prevent his own children from succumbing to such a life like he had during his early years when he grappled with paying his drug debts. The traditions, built partially around hate, also strengthen kinship relations – and as Woody repeatedly tells me about the importance of family structures, “people don't realize what families actually do.” To convince Tower Street and the Inner East to allow him to transform their neighborhood, Woody thus began by offering activities for the children that would teach them something about their history.

Ulster Tower Street



Figure 34: Ulster Tower Street Mural

During the early morning of July 1st in Andrew's house on "Ulster" Tower Street, Woody and his friend James finish dressing in WWI infantry uniforms. They wrap and tie puttees, long strips of cloth the color of wet sand, from ankles to knees. Woody keeps to his side a blackthorn cane he found at a secondhand shop. He fastens a medallion on it from the young UVF on the knob. Several residents and the local Church of Ireland vicar have been given their scripts written by Woody and James, and they read over the words a final time. By seven in the morning, the commemoration begins. Woody has chosen this time because it coincides with that of the soldiers who, one hundred years ago to the minute, rushed over the tops of the trenches during the Battle of the Somme. After checking the smoke machine, microphone, speaker, along with some impromptu horseplay with some of the younger neighborhood boys who, dressed as soldiers, pretend to shoot their rifles at Woody, everyone is ready to begin. The local girls are dressed as British Red Cross nurses, and several older men are dressed in infantry uniforms. The crowd count has reached about one hundred people, and this number includes local politicians, prominent community workers, and paramilitary leaders. The morning is sunny and bright, but minutes into the commemoration, as so often is the case during a Northern Irish summer, the winds pick up and blow a darkening pall over the performance. The mood seems to darken along with the clouds. I sense people palpably straightening their backs, become more solemn, grave. The commemoration begins with a two-minute silence in front of a massive Ulster Tower mural, which Woody with the help of friends glued and painted to the side wall of the corner house on Tower Street. It is a magnificent mural, undeniably a work of art under which have been affixed six plaques to those from these streets who died during the Somme, including a Catholic man from the Short Strand.



Figure 35: Remembrance

Standing aside the mural, in front of a large board painted with the words, BRITAIN AT WAR, a flautist breaks the two minutes of silence by performing an instrumental version of “Willie McBride,” also known as “No Man’s Land,” a folksong about the gravestone of the Ulster soldier killed during WWI, Willie McBride. A local woman, Elizabeth, dressed in a black mourning dress and hat, welcomes everyone:

Welcome on this early morning to Ulster Tower Street Belfast. We have come together on this, the 1st day of July 2016 to remember and honor those who answered the call, took up arms and fought in the name of freedom. We will soon begin our remembrance service during which there will be sound effects throughout. Throughout the service we will endeavor to place you in the shoes of one of the brave souls who a century ago was awaiting the command to take part in what was to become the bloodiest battle of all times for the British Army. At numerous points there will be short silences and we ask that during the act of remembrance we all respect a two minutes silence. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, we give you Z day.

1st July morning, 28 degrees, a misty night was beginning to life with clear skies above. After almost a week of constant bombardment by the Royal Artillery across our 18 miles from corner to corner of the front line. The closest figure agreed upon was in excess of 1.7 million shells had been fired, although a third failed to detonate...

There are further descriptions of the Somme that morning, and then Woody plays sound effects from his laptop, the whistling and crashing of artillery shells blared from speakers, the tattoo of rifle fire. The Church of Ireland vicar then takes the microphone and says “here, at Ulster Tower, in the heart of Ballymacarrett, east Belfast, let us remember the Ulstermen. Let us begin. I have here a copy of John the Gospel. This is an exact copy presented to the men. Many millions were issues to soldiers in training camps, distributed through the tea huts in the front...”

Finally, a recorded bagpipe belting “Amazing Grace” backgrounds a local listing of many of the battalions of the 36th Ulster Division, before inviting those in the crowd who would like to lay a wreath at the base of the mural. Several prominent loyalists set wreathes of intertwined, crimson poppies down, and then there is a final recitation of the “Ode of Remembrance” stanza from Laurence Binyon’s oft-recited war remembrance poem “For the Fallen:”

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

The bugle call, “Last Post,” sounds out, and the commemoration is finished. The event lasted about thirty minutes, but for the next few hours, residents prepared the street for the late afternoon festivities for the children by lining the street with tables and treats, and two small merry-go-rounds, amongst other entertainments. In the evening, bands from all over Northern Ireland participate in a march throughout east Belfast, which they perform every year.

The Ulster Tower Street project, remarkably, attracted media attention. Woody gave an interview to the BBC, which we watched shortly after the conclusion of the commemoration. The mood of the area, especially when the children began to fill the streets after the solemn and spectacular commemoration, was one of resolute pride. For most of the people there on Tower Street, this had come as a surprise, a shock – there had not been any feelings like this on this street

ever before. The residents who had been reticent about Woody and his Ulster Tower Street commemoration eventually came around and even joined in the festivities. There was a sense that something new had happened. Of course, it was the marching season, and at this time of year nearly all of Belfast is preparing for the bands and the marches. In the past, there has been a sense that Protestants and loyalists necessarily have had to “defend” their culture, and this notion has always resulted in violent altercations and “aggro” as the locals call it. Woody admits that the normal “aggro” had been absent from Tower Street today. In fact, he tells me, it was as if everyone saw each other under a new aspect, as creative. Residents who have never spoken publicly took to the microphone to recite lines or dressed in period attire and stood in front of the crowd. It was a world unafraid to “lose” their culture; instead, it was a shared moment of generative pride.

As Jarrett Zigon writes, “worlds are a process of gathering, an assemblage that holds together temporarily” (Zigon 2018, 79). Worlds are limited, though not determined, by the background conditions of their emergence, and catching sight of how the world discloses itself in an altered way, even amidst the most familiar circumstances – flying the flags, stringing up the bunting, commemorations and memorials – makes all the difference for articulating what has not been put to words before, the potential futures freed from current forms of deadening constraint. What Zigon calls the “unbearableness” of existing in worlds in which one’s ground project is either impossible or unintelligible, bespeaks to the demand to alter the way very worldhood of the world, the way things hang together. And through being open to altered ways of existing, and through being *closed* to ways of existing that choke out one’s unfolding existence, one can get an altered grip on one’s existence, or what Zigon (2018) and Throop (2018) call becoming “attuned” to emerging worlds of significance. Though attuning to such emerging worlds, which may well take the shape of absorbing oneself in the task at hand – indeed, I am utterly shocked at how few fieldnotes I took during the commemoration as Woody had me running around checking cables, babysitting children, and taking

photos – attunement also prepares the ground for that reflective moment when one’s existence becomes a question.

Woody’s own existence, the way he involves himself in the world, becomes a question for him, and this question, flickers in his awareness of others attuning to the moral project, in which he involved himself, as the project comes to a close. Although he has spoken to me at length about the his hopes and dreams for Ulster Tower Street and for himself, Woody begins to open up to me about another significance that Ulster Tower Street has for him. Something else has surfaced in his awareness, and as the commemorations come to a close, he suddenly speaks up to me about his past – above and beyond the existential questioning he has posed to me before. The following section expands upon why the Tower Street Project has taken on a moral valence for him.

“Leave Them Speechless”

Woody, who is in his late twenties, cares deeply for many of the young men and boys of the area. He is a natural teacher and has an easy, but charismatic way about him. One thirteen-year-old boy in particular takes a shine to Woody, and eventually joins the same marching band as Woody in order to be just like him. Woody, after all, is a leader in the community, a member of the Shankill Stars band, and he is soon marrying into one of the area’s most prominent loyalist families. He is a teetotaler, as well, and keeps himself in good shape by playing football. Admittedly, he does smoke cigarettes frequently, a habit that he tells me he would like to quit, but simultaneously, he reveals to me that cigarettes are “good for keeping his stress at bay.” Though Woody appears as an ideal role model now, he fears that kids in his area may follow the path he took when he was younger. This is part of the reason he feels personally invested in this area. Woody admits that he was a “down-and-out” kid. As mentioned earlier, he began drinking and using drugs at age eleven, which soon led into harder drugs. Though caring kinship relations do emerge out of drug use between fathers and their

sons, especially concerning drinking, Woody did not experience this. At the age of five, he climbed into his father's recently packed suitcase. He would learn that night that his father was leaving for New Zealand and not returning. His father gone, Woody's drug use and his status as a local "hood" in the Inner East produced further problems. He began to incur drug debts from local drug dealers. Throughout east Belfast, drug dealers have often operated under the banner of a historical paramilitary. The Protestant UVF, for example, is subdivided into two groups: those who are ideologically militaristic or are veterans of the Troubles, and drug dealers. Notably, within the UVF, drug dealers and veterans are often in open conflict with one another. However, I must intervene here and state that when I mention either group – "drug dealers" or "veterans," I am speaking about people with whom I cultivated many meaningful relationships with both during my time in Belfast. These individuals are not just typifications or fatalistic identities to me – drug dealers, combatants, paramilitary members. Many have become my "mates." I have been shown infinite patience and kindness and familiarity from all manner of paramilitary members in east Belfast. I have met grandparents, parents, and their children. This is, of course, the paradox of engaging in fieldwork in working-class Belfast where those with whom you become close also engage in violent and/or self-destructive acts.

Drug dealers operating under the paramilitary banner perform paramilitary-style "punishments" familiar to those who lived through the troubles. The most common kind of paramilitary punishment is kneecapping. Kneecapping involves being taken from one's house and shot in the knee. The victim, most often under age eighteen, is usually resigned to this punishment. Parents often negotiate with the paramilitaries for more lenient punishments. During my time in the Short Strand, one of my participants in his early twenties ran afoul of drug dealers to whom he owed a significant amount of money, and subsequently had his fingers smashed by a hammer. Yet, his mother was able to eventually pay his debts, and his punishment was limited, never escalating to a

full kneecapping. Sinéad O'Shea's 2018 documentary, *A Mother Brings Her Son to Be Shot*, explores this legacy of the conflict within the context of a dissident or non-mainstream Republican family. In the documentary, the mother, who like all dissidents refuses to interact with the police, takes her son to be kneecapped. In 2017 alone, there were 101 such punishment beatings or shootings (McDonald 2018). O'Shea, speaking about her experiences making this movie in an impoverished area of Derry/Londonderry, echoes my own experiences in Belfast's Short Strand and Inner East. I quote her at length because she articulates the paradox of being-with others in these heavily oppressive communities, that no matter how dangerous or tough it is to live here, there is also the capacity for compassion tied to this way of life:

It took months of visits before I could begin, as this community is defined by its distrust of outsiders. Many felt isolated. Paradoxically they also felt very controlled. I was repeatedly told that their phones and computers were under surveillance and that I, too, was being watched.

It was almost impossible to plan anything. Appointments were rarely kept. Eventually I realised this was significant. This is a community that considers itself still at war, and these were people so used to conflict that it was a struggle to live without it. And so arrangements were forever in flux, problems were exaggerated. I never knew who was telling the truth. I saw tiny misunderstandings escalate into shootings and feuds.

Yet every person I met was idealistic and aspired to do the "right thing". Life is tough in this part of Northern Ireland. Unemployment levels are among the highest in the UK, alcohol and drug abuse are rife, but people still lived compassionately. In difficult times of my own, they offered me advice, and made me laugh. (O'Shea 2018)

Similarly, Woody has opened up to me about acts that cannot be written about, and in many ways he still lives in preparation for conflict. He stridently admits to me that if eventually an all-economic Ireland results from the Brexit, he is prepared "to do what needs to be done," even if it means he ends up in jail and never gets to experience his son's childhood.

Yet, Woody's compassion revealed itself through his work with the young men and women on the Ulster Tower Street project. Because his organization, he knew, would not be funded anymore, he wanted to give the children of the area one last project to help them care about their

traditions. Naturally, like other Protestants in his position who have encountered the Gordian confusions and nepotisms of local funding agencies, Woody also wanted to “stick it to the other funding organizations.” As he says, he and his organization “had one final trick up our sleeves that would leave them speechless” – referring to the extraordinary commemoration event that he has managed to almost single-handedly organize and follow through. After the Ulster Tower Street Project is complete and the commemoration successfully over, Woody moves on. A self-taught builder, he becomes gainfully employed and begins making a healthy wage for his family. When I speak with Woody over the years that pass after the project ends, he begins to open up to me about things he has never told me before or elaborate on topics to which he has only briefly alluded. He tells me about his own youth, and how his experiences as a young person in the Inner East compelled him to give similar Inner East “outcasts” and “down-and-outs” a hopeful and prideful project. One afternoon, Woody suddenly tells me about how he lost his best friend:

Woody: Me and my best friend basically got involved in drugs and obviously got in debt with drugs. I'm a strong enough person, I'm a hard-enough person to accept that. I was anyway, he wasn't. I knew I had a - not that I had a problem - we got ourselves in debt anyway. To cut a long story short my mate hung himself. My mate hung himself. He couldn't deal with the pressure of owing the paramilitaries. So he hung himself.

Matthew: Did you have any idea that was coming. What kind of pressure did they put him under?

Woody: No, and I'll tell you why I didn't know what was coming. We had a sort of routine. We had a type group of mates there, and we used to go after to school and play football. I lived near east Belfast. So we were associating ourselves with a youth club. And we were going away on a residential, an overnight stay with the youth club. So everybody who played football, and everybody went from to get their dinner, and get ready go away on this residential, and everybody “right we'll meet at six o'clock” say for talks sake, “everybody meet at six o'clock at the wee van.” There was a van at Ballybeen and it was basically a sweet shop and it sold, like a shed in somebody's back garden, like a wee tuckshop, that sold cheap cigarettes and things like that. So everybody meet the van at six o'clock. We'll get our cigarettes and we'll get our munchies or sweets and all and all for going away overnight. So everybody met up at six o'clock, no sign of Toby. So tried phoning Toby, get ahold of Toby, Toby's not answering the phone. Kept trying and trying. No answer. So went and rapped his door. Toby still wasn't answering. So we automatically thought Toby had went home, got himself washed and fell asleep and we couldn't get him up. So everybody left to go on the residential. And we got to the residential, and we got fifteen minutes after I arrived there, I

got the phone call. And it was his Mum. And it was his Mum in hysterics. And I says, “What’s wrong?” “Toby hung himself. He’s hung, he’s hung, he’s hung himself.”

He’s hung, he’s hung, he’s hung himself. Woody delivers this hurried and disturbing reported speech from Toby’s mother, told to him merely moments after she found Toby dead. The insurmountable pressure of owing a drug debt to threatening paramilitary types, including the very real threat of an imminent punishment beating or kneecapping, Woody asserts, was what precipitated Toby’s suicide. After Toby killed himself at age fourteen, Woody began reflecting about his own life. Woody, too, was fourteen at the time. Woody often describes how during this time he had to do everything himself to cope with his emotions and his own drug dependencies. He taught himself a form of self-reliance, trained himself to overcome overwhelming sadness, drug abuse, depression, eating disorders, consequent steroid abuse, panic attacks, and what he terms is his chronically “sore stomach.” Through it all, Woody says, he had no one to depend upon for help, and he began a self-made program of “self-training” which he imposed on himself after Toby’s death. Regarding this, Woody reflects:

Toby obviously hung himself and I had to look, sit myself down, and go “you’re sad because you’re going to end up like this.” So from that point I trained myself to become teetotal and I become an advocate for anti-drugs. I struggled for years after that with depression like. Had another bad bout of depression about twenty-five as well. Yet again, through illegal steroids. I started using steroids. And they didn’t affect me in anyway bad, but when I stopped taking steroids, I see myself sort of losing size and losing muscle mass, and I started getting depressed again then too.

He turned to youth work afterwards, which he realizes was a strange and perhaps disingenuous decision because, as he says, a good portion of youth work in Belfast is helping children through their own depression. He says that in helping others, “you’re basically out teaching people how to deal with sort of issues, and how to deal with depression, and what’s the best way to deal with it. And take time. And what to do. And I was never doing that for myself!”

This is an entirely common phenomenon, however, amongst community and youth workers in Belfast, who must necessarily cope with forms of their own mental anguish while caring for others going through similar situations. Woody knows it is strange that he is called upon to teach the youth to cope with the same mental health problems he suffers from. Woody tells me, again, that he had to teach himself techniques for coping with his depression, anxiety, and, especially, managing his panic attacks:

I'd do stupid things. I tell them maybe coming home from work and having half an hour to yourself, like get into a warm bath, light candles and a bit of soothing music, just taking time, let your body recover. Stupid mindfulness techniques, do you know what I mean? It's just self-taught. Because I've lived with it too long. When I used to get panic attacks, when I first started getting them, I used to properly freak out. Panic and "what's going on with me!" I had to run up to bed and lay there for two, three hours panicking.

Apart from the sore stomach that sometimes still manages to bother him when he is particularly stressed at work, Woody's more harrowing mental health problems and physical traumas have subsided. Taking care of himself and managing the legacy of his personal traumas and drug abuse that surged in the aftermath of Toby's suicide were done alone, and any tips or tricks he managed to pick up along the way, he had seen either on television, on internet forums, or on social media. Yet, even in his actions on Tower Street, I can see Woody's self-care emerge through his desire to show the "down-and-outs," the other children (many of them no older than Toby when he committed suicide) that their existence matters. Though they might be ridiculed by the mainstream and wrapped up in sectarian hatreds, the community of Inner East Tower Street – for at least a few months – brings out both the best in Woody and in themselves. They come out of their own isolation and out of their houses. Woody knows that many of the children face pressures like he and Toby once did. Drug dealers still control swaths of the east and call in debts under threat of kneecapping. He knows that many of the boys and girls of the Inner East suffer from untold mental health issues like him, and indeed, not long after the completion of the Ulster Tower Street Project, a local girl had been

hospitalized due to complications from an eating disorder. Woody, having suffered following Toby's death with steroid abuse and body image issues, immediately sympathized with this story when he heard it. In those days, he told me quietly, he would look at himself "in the mirror [...] going, 'you look like nothing.'" It is this "nothing" he has longed to avoid for others on Tower Street from seeing in themselves.

Postscript

I return to Tower Street a few days after the commemoration is over. Woody, James, Harry, Andrew, Willie, and other residents of the neighborhood are tidying the area up for their upcoming visitors. High school students from the United States were coming to visit the Ulster Tower Street project – a visit negotiated between CharterNI and Inner East Youth Project. Woody is reticent, of course, to have CharterNI in the area, but he thinks that for the sake of Protestant unity – as well as to highlight the work which he himself has completed with zero funding – this is a good opportunity.

The night before the commemoration had been Andrew's birthday, and the men had found an old rusted stove to place in the Tower Street hut to keep warm. Willie – famously shut-in and rarely venturing out into the street itself - said that he had sat out, drank, and celebrated in the hut with the other men into the late hours. Neighbors like Willie who Andrew hadn't properly spoken with for years came out to say hello, even if for five minutes. I listen to the sentiment spoken here: grown men and women are experiencing a childhood they never had in this area. While the kids have been enjoying the street, the adults are playing fort, are getting to know each other. Having a laugh. One woman even scolded one of the children for stepping on the sandbags instead of walking around it. She was protective and keen to keep the structures in good shape. Another neighbor proposed building a memorial garden in tribute to the community coming together, and this struck

me deeply. I worried that though the sentiment to remember the Ulster Tower Street Project was promising, the idea of memorializing the event signaled to me that the newfound community spirit had already ceased to exist. A memorial, after all, comes after a burial, after something has gone out of being. That nostalgia for a return to what had occurred days previous was already gripping at least one of the residents again spoke to the sacrificial experience of the area, the experience that what was best about them was always already lost.

Harry, for his part, tells me there have been fewer cops in the area too – “they would be buzzing this time of year.” He says the armored police cars only drive by once in a while and “give the thumbs up.” Willie tells me that he never bothered leaving his house before now. Harry cracks a joke about it, saying his house was “an open admission to drink...with his tins!” The Ulster Tower Street Project brought people out of their homes, an act so extraordinary that the residents want desperately to remember that it, indeed, had happened. Even though the commemoration itself is finished, it was as if they had seen a world where social relations could be different, a glimpse of something so incredible to them that they wished to commemorate the commemoration itself.

Chapter IX Thinking Things Over

“I’m pretty stuck. I’ve hit a blank. The words are my struggle at the minute,” Brendan says. He taps cigarette ash into the palm of his cupped hand, and he blows smoke from the side of his mouth out the hung window. Outside it lightly rains. From here you can faintly smell the fetid waters of the Belfast Lough. Children kick footballs off the red brick walls of the terraced social houses adorned with faded Housing Executive signs reading “NO BALL GAMES” in this working-class district in the east of the city. As he gazes out the window, Brendan speaks intermittently. Quiet moments are drawn longer by his chain-smoking and then punctured by episodic utterances about John, his dead brother: “my brother didn’t have the will, always worrying about what people are saying in the district”; “God save him, all the glass houses”; “he couldn’t get his head around it”; and “I’d move away if I could.” Brendan tries to make sense of his current situation—to give some thematic framing to the loss of his sense of self—through thinking over the experiences of his brother. In this moment, Brendan’s judgment is that he’d move away *if he could*. It has been a difficult few months for Brendan, and this chapter elaborates closely upon a single, important day in his life, a day that appears as a microcosm of the broad shifts occurring within the Short Strand, Brendan’s Catholic and Irish Republican community which is currently facing an unbundling of shared practices, identities, and concepts.

During the recent 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement’s 20th anniversary, in commemoration of perhaps his administration’s most enduring foreign policy contribution, United States President Clinton remarked to an audience in Belfast within this newly-wrought political arrangement, “the most interesting thing was by creating a space for the identity and the interests and the values of all the people involved—in a framework which protected democracy and let future demographic, economic and political changes take Northern Ireland wherever it would go—it was a

work of surpassing genius” (BBC 2018). President Clinton’s phrase “wherever it would go” is particularly significant in the context of conjuring a future via thinking of Belfast’s past; the phrase is a striking modal utterance which points towards an as yet unactualized future, a future-in-the-past that has yet to be actualized here in the present. To understand my proposed concept of *past futures* as they might be understood in Belfast, and to envision that the present itself may indeed go “wherever it would go,” we must consider the 1998 Peace Agreement vis-à-vis its legacy of potentiating and problematizing historic hostilities in the area.

Indeed, since the signing of the agreement, the Irish Catholic district of the Short Strand has seen its “peace walls” and similar security infrastructure raised ever higher in steady increments since 1998. Currently standing around 30 feet tall, these walls provoke residents on either sides of the wall to call their respective districts both a “fortress” and a “prison.” In the Short Strand, particularly because of its status as a Catholic enclave in the predominantly Protestant East Belfast, the massive structures and the legacy of conflict continue to shape possibilities for self-making. Mattingly notes that “emergent and fleeting moral laboratories provide vantage points on familiar or prior ways of seeing, acting, believe that are actively brought into question” (2014, 15). Through familiarity, then, unseen marginal possibilities may solicit us into concerned and engaged reflection about our existence. In considering the Short Strand as a “moral laboratory,” I suggest that *existential solicitations* provides a way of capturing the ways in which we are drawn into active engagement in the world which includes involved varieties of reflective consciousness.

Throop and Duranti’s recent work help us to see the ways in which our attention becomes “responsively engaged with [phenomena] in order to be interpreted and integrated with the predictable and scripted aspects of social life” (2015, 1058). Because of our socially sedimented habits and understandings, certain aspects of objects may “pull” our attention because they are so startling or strange. A loud sound may *break through* one’s absorbed flow into her awareness, and it

may irritate or grip the listener and pull her attention, even if slightly, from her current engagement. We can take Throop and Duranti's notion of the breakthrough further and show how *familiarity*, and not just strangeness, may pull one's attention. For one whose ear is attuned to Irish music sessions, she may be immediately stirred by the first bright high notes of a fiddle. The familiar song *solicits* her, and her response is drawn from her, perhaps in the form of a memory of music lessons as a child, the sore fingers and developing calluses become recalled and even felt. Rather than stepping back into detached reflection, the individual's memory consciousness steps in to the pull of a solicitation.

Notably, the concept of "solicitation" is borrowed here from Dreyfus and Kelly to describe what happens when worldly phenomena draw responsive activity from the individual. However, to augment their original idea, I further suggest that there are a range of solicitations, from those that solicit my basic skills to those that drastically alter my understanding of the world and my self. These more profound solicitations I call "existential solicitations." Solicitation, in this existential sense, draws from the original Latin sense of the word *sollicitare* meaning to agitate, arouse, or set the whole in motion. An existential solicitation stirs me to think over my existence, and in a deeply involved way. As Throop notes, varieties of reflective experience may emerge through the "dissatisfaction with one's existential condition" (2014, 69). But before describing the efficacy of thinking through existential solicitations, let us clarify the manner in which phenomenologists employ such terminology. For Dreyfus and Kelly solicitations draw us into absorbed activity in a certain way:

To say that the world solicits a certain activity is to say that the agent *feels immediately drawn* to act a certain way. This is different from *deciding* to perform the activity, since in *feeling immediately drawn* to do something the subject experiences no act of the will. Rather, he experiences the environment *calling for* a certain way of acting, and finds himself responding to the solicitation. (2007, 52; emphasis in original)

Dreyfus and Kelly focus on how our surrounding world solicit our basic embodied coping skills. When shifting the gears of a car, the driver unreflectively responds to a nexus of involvements within the driving environment. When the driver cultivates this dispositional know-how, the stop

sign in front of her solicits a seamless and unreflective embodied action of pressing down on the clutch and shifting gears. Drawing from Heidegger's theory of how objects are primarily encountered during our practical dealings and tasks, Dreyfus argues that through a disturbance or "breakdown" do our cognitive capacities kick in (2014, 35, 191). When a breakdown occurs, depending on its intensity, we become detached from the situation, and our experience becomes mediated by conceptual deliberation about rules in order to get back on track with our unreflective coping. Borrowing from this paradigm, Zigon's concept of the "moral breakdown" describes what happens when our moral dispositions become disturbed, and we must step back, reflect, and work through the disturbance "to once again dwell in the unreflective comfort of the familiar" (2007, 138). The familiar, which I take to mean what people are most acquainted with in their everyday way of life, in the context of the Short Strand, is characterized by conditions of crisis stemming from decades of conflict and poverty. In this way, the familiar background in the Short Strand is similar to Vigh's account, which understands crisis as a persistent existential condition and as "fragmentation; a state of somatic, social or existential incoherence" rather than a momentary rupture (2008, 9).

Following calls by phenomenologists and anthropologists (Braver 2013; Noë 2012; Throop 2009, 2014; Zahavi 2013) to avoid overintellectualizing the intellect, and, instead, to consider the rich gradients of involved and situated reflectivity, I propose that solicitations draw our reflective capacities into involved worldly activity. Our familiar world also draws us into absorbed reflective acts of consciousness and self-consciousness. Because consciousness is always a *consciousness of something*, an experience conversing with our friends and family may solicit us into the activity of concerned *remembering of a memory* with which we become deeply involved. For Gurwitsch, moreover, our field of consciousness always contains marginal phenomena (things, others, thoughts) that remain copresent, though on the fringe of awareness, alongside our thematic, focal involvement with primary phenomena (1985, xliv). These copresent marginal phenomena are unthematic and go

along with us in our everyday concerned dealings without much attention, as when we pass by anonymous others on the street or when the faint melody of a song plays in the “back of our head.” Another way to think about these absent phenomena is as a variety of *presence*. For Alva Noë, the hidden, out of view, or concealed phenomenon are *there* as absent, for “presence-in-absence is a basic perceptual phenomenon” (2012, 94). While the backside of a Guinness bottle is not present to us, it remains present in its absence. We rely on the backside to be there as we lift the bottle and, as such, it always remains copresent for possible thematic attention. These margins of consciousness are what Gurwitsch calls a “domain of *contingency*.” In this domain, a hail from an apparent stranger might draw us into seeing the familiar face of an old friend; otherwise, a missed connection occurs. The contingent aspect of the margin may be brought to the center of attention through soliciting a response: “to see an object is either to have it in the margins of the visual field and to be able to focus on it, or actually to respond to this solicitation by focusing on it. When I focus on it, I anchor myself in it, but this “pausing” of the gaze is but a modality of its movement” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 70). Importantly, as Noë argues, thinking a thought can often be characterized as an extended perception (Noë 2012, 27–28). Just as embodied coping skills respond to solicitations from the phenomenal world, the conceptual skills of thinking, too, responds to solicitations.

While thus far I have focused on individual experience, it is important to remember that solicitations emerge amidst a familiar social world. As Butler (2005) insists, giving an account of oneself as an “I” always necessitates that the individual, whose conditions of emergence always remain partially opaque to self-consciousness, make use of the norms, scripts, and language granted by one’s social nexus. Heidegger (2008), moreover, refers to this nexus of social significance as constitutive of the public “one” (*das Man*) or shared being in the world (*Mitsein*). These accounts are in dialogue with Husserl’s concept of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity, as Duranti notes, is not simply a mutual understanding or conceptual comprehension. It’s deeper than this. Duranti

describes intersubjectivity as such: “we have, to start, the possibility of exchanging places, of seeing the world from the point of view of the Other. Intersubjectivity is thus an existential condition that can lead to a shared understanding—an important achievement in its own terms—rather than being itself such an understanding” (2010, 21–22). Duranti reminds us that what characterizes intersubjectivity is not primarily mutual understanding, which may or may not arise in an encounter, but, rather, the *existential condition* for the possibility of “trade places,” or better, coming to understanding with others.

Building on these phenomenological insights in the context of engaged dialoguing with a friend, we often become solicited to conceptually alter or frame experiences of trouble. A lifelong friend may help us to put words to experiences. As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, Brendan uttered a profound truth about the process of sense-making when he said the “words are my struggle.” By remembering the familiar, in the deepest sense of the word, his familial relation to his deceased brother, Brendan imagines trading places with his brother John’s way of life. However, it is not only through being drawn into remembering his brother that prompts Brendan into thinking deeply about his self. Brendan, instead, is gifted the “words” from a close friend to help him think over his situation. Because there are limits to what the “I” can think over against its socially sedimented “self,” those limits often become utterable and transgressible when we engage in face-to-face dialogue. In this way, “second-person engagement” is a unique form of intersubjectivity. Zahavi, drawing from Husserl, notes that “when I experience and internalize the other’s perspective on myself...I take over the apprehension that others have of me” (2016, 5). As psychoanalytic anthropologists (Hollan 2012) have long since shown, the particular individual other facing you, and your shared and sedimented history with him or her, matters for the kinds of experiences that appear within dyadic interactions. Such a meaningful interaction occurs between Brendan and his childhood friend, Alby.

Over the course of a day with Brendan, after spending a year engaged in person-centered ethnography with him (Levy and Hollan 2014), I track the arrival of a contingent opening in Brendan's sense of his self, an open space of co-remembering through which the activity of *thinking things over* lets gather scattered and contradictory memories to form a provisional, yet intelligible framework for understanding an altered sense of self. What I am referring to as "thinking things over" is *involved* thinking that responds to solicitations from the margins of one's familiar way of life. This *bringing to presence* appears within a precarious disclosure between Brendan and Alby. Through sharing familiar experiences, and through sharing language, images, and metaphor to make sense of these experiences, Brendan comes to frame his sense of self and his future orientation. He comes to think familiar things over.

For Hegel, "thinking things over" (*Nachdenken*) encompasses both a thinking over and after thinking different from, though dialectically entangled with, everyday modes of thinking, and these latter modes are for the purpose of knowing, calculating, and getting back on track (2010, 29). Thinking things over is a reflective consciousness that engages directly with handed-down presuppositions given in experience. Importantly, thinking things over is not a detached or overtly theoretical mode of thinking. It responds to solicitations and helps to frame and alter one's experiences. This image of framing is especially apropos to Brendan. As a photographer, he often speaks about how to "frame" a shot. The work of framing sets up and makes use of familiar possibilities as they transition from the margins to the center of awareness. In using the term "framing," then, I'm simply drawing on a common sense of the word as making use of what lies before us for some project. In this way, framing is also the work of orienting toward the future. Yet, even as we orient toward the "not yet" of the future, thinking things over must also be understood in terms of remembrance, or what Heidegger calls "commemorative thinking": "the thinking that retrieves [*Nach-bolendes Denken*] is commemorative thinking...to retrieve [*nach-bolen*]—to take into

nearness' (2012, 21; emphasis in original). Rather than leading us away from the world, then, thinking things over is a “thinking that retrieves” possibilities—past futures—that have been with us all along.

A Place in the Community

Brendan’s brother John was the youngest of his five siblings. He drove taxis for a local company in the Short Strand catering solely to its Catholic residents. In the dispatch depot where John taxied, his memorial mass card is wedged in a framed black-and-white photograph of starlings blotting out the sky over a nearby bridge. Brendan took this photograph years ago, and he could never have known that his younger brother’s image would come to rest in its frame. There are dueling sentiments about loss in this Catholic community articulated clearly by two contradicting generational views. The first, expressed by a long-time Irish Republican activist in his sixties: “As friends and comrades we do not let anyone go through that sadness alone because that's the way we as friends and neighbors have been brought up in our wee unique community. Your sorrows is everyone's sorrows.” Juxtaposed against this view is John and Brendan’s nephew in his early twenties who says: “I hate when someone dies and everyone cares! But when they’re alive no one could give two fucks about them! Always the way. Sad, but true.”

Brendan’s thoughts have always been embedded in the former sentiment, but he’s coming to agree with his nephew, as he sees the breakup of his brother’s marriage, a breakup magnified and refracted through a thick and volatile net of community gossip layered upon drastic social and economic shifts, as the main cause of his brother’s isolation, return to “the drink,” and to his eventual death. In the present, Brendan’s own relationship with his girlfriend has dissolved, and his own dependence on alcohol has increased. “The district *does my head in*,” Brendan often says, as a refrain, and does so with more frequency of late. He has long since stopped imagining a united

Ireland, and while he unabashedly identifies as Irish and is sympathetic Irish Republicanism, his imagined and real communities stand opposed to living a life where he can flourish. Brendan believes he is following the same path as his brother.

Brendan once brought me along to visit John's grave. As we walked through the municipal cemetery in east Belfast, a traditionally Protestant cemetery that many Catholics have had to use because of the shortage of plots in the Catholic cemeteries, he showed me where other members of his community were buried. Too many headstones etched with short intervals between birth and death. He says to me, "there is no division in death, we're all lumped together" as we pass by a Protestant grave decked out with the royal blue, red, and white motifs of the Rangers F.C. On top of his brother's black marble headstone, he notices bird droppings and says "get that bird shit off" and flicks at it with his finger. He readjusts the new plastic flowers his mother laid a week earlier. She switched to plastic on account of rabbits eating the fresh flowers.

Back in Brendan's front room, I think about this trip to the cemetery, the uncanny modality of the familiar, and of being with dead family members as Brendan speaks about his brother and smokes at his window overlooking the street where he played with his brothers and sisters as children. After he draws and exhales the end of his cigarette, he switches from speaking about his brother to speaking about his latest girlfriend, his latest failed relationship. He remarks, "Poor Rebecca, you can understand why she hated the place. I kept saying I hated the place and that would have affected her. And the darkness. The long winters. I know I'm an alcoholic. I've said it a few times now. There's something inside of me: Dr Jekyll/Mr. Hyde thing. You know that way? I keep working out that day she left." He blots out his cigarette and steps around a tin of Dulux primer paint on the bare floor where he'd torn up the carpet a few weeks earlier. He wanted to make his council house more of comfortable home for her, but she left him one morning while he slept. He hasn't heard from her since. He tells me he understands; he tells me he had "been getting on like a

dick,” and he cannot remember (or more likely he does not want to tell me) what he said to her the night before her sudden departure. But he knows it’s something bad.

After Brendan’s girlfriend left, he abruptly stopped drinking, and sought help for his severe withdrawal symptoms at the local doctor’s surgery. At this time, the local physician told him he should be seen for post-traumatic stress syndrome and referred him to a specialist. All of this suggested to Brendan that he was following his brother John’s own path. Caught in the acts of kinship repetition, Brendan feels stuck in the working-class district where generations of his family have lived, fought, and died. He comes from a *good Republican family*, and members of his extended family have traditionally been involved with the *Cumann na mBan* and the *RA*. When Brendan was in his midteens, he flirted with joining the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). He tells me the INLA is a “rowdier” organization than the RA, which better suited his anger towards the British government’s response to the Irish Republican Hunger Strikers. After Bobby Sands 1981 hunger strike and death in Long Kesh prison because the British refused to grant political status to Irish Republican prisoners, Brendan says that he had his mates went “out of our minds.” At the time, Brendan’s parents did what they could to help the Republican cause, but they were insistent that Brendan himself avoid joining up because they feared he would be killed or jailed. Brendan listened to his parents; without officially joining any of the paramilitary groups, he unofficially supported the Republican movement.

Many, perhaps the majority, of Short Strand residents say that the spirit of the community has changed since the 1998 peace agreement. The doors aren’t left open as frequently, and the influx of “peace money” has created winners and losers. Some neighbors have been able to purchase their social houses by taking advantage of an early 1980s policy enacted by Margaret Thatcher, the hated British Prime Minister. With the formation of salaried community-worker jobs funded by peace money, many of those who served in the IRA or who politicked for its political wing, Sinn Féin,

secured steady incomes for the first time. This exacerbated internal class divisions. Those awarded salaried positions “from the Brits” are often lambasted by Republicans who rejected the peace agreement. Other residents in the community are envious of the unequal distribution of wealth and express irritation that fully employed Republicans continue to espouse the traditional Marxist and socialist ideologies of the Republican movement. Some former active Republicans who could not secure jobs turned to selling hard drugs and prescription meds, which were always kept out of the district by the IRA during the conflict. Others became active in Republican organizations opposed to both the peace process and Sinn Féin/IRA’s decision to embrace politics and disarmament. The more militant of these organizations are labeled “dissidents” by the media, police forces, and pro-peace-agreement Republicans. So-called dissident Republicans attempt to revive the practices and concepts of an older world and seek the allure that comes from embracing the old Republican ways of total opposition to British rule. Republican veterans aligned with Sinn Féin and the peace process often laugh them off as “dizzyheads.” Dissidents or non-mainstream Republicans are rarely successful at disrupting everyday life. This is not to say that the dissidents cannot (re)discover militant practices, but their tactics as of now remain little more than a simulacrum of a fading world: infrequent and ineffective pipe bombs, occasional kneecappings, and militaristic marches. While non-mainstream Republicans can be dangerous, they are often parodied by memes on Facebook as playing dress-up. Much of their “gear” is obsolescent and malfunctioning, as displayed when, during one of the skirmishes I documented over the course of my fieldwork, a hand grenade culled from an 80s or early 90s arms cache was thrown at the nearby police and failed to explode.

Thus, there is a larger story of a shifting background of thought for Brendan’s community, a story about a world of possibilities fading away. Generations who reside in Brendan’s district were born into fighting, and the fallen among them are considered by the community as the patriot dead of Ireland. Not every child joined paramilitaries during Brendan’s youth. But there was an

expectation for the youth to fight cheek by jowl in defense of the district against the police forces, the Protestant-controlled State, the British Army, and the Loyalist paramilitaries. Brendan himself, though not part of a paramilitary, “had to do his part” and report information and look out for security forces. The philosopher and soldier J. Glenn Gray writes of fighting man, or *Homo furens*, that “his moods and disposition are affected by the presence of others and the encompassing environment of threat and fear. He must surrender in a measure to the will of others and to superior force...The emotional environment of warfare has always been compelling; it has drawn most men under its spell. Reflection and calm reasoning are alien to it” (1998, 27–28). In Catholic working-class districts during the Troubles, children were often the first line of defense, and offense, for the district, especially the youth wing of the IRA, the *Na Fianna Éireann*. They gathered intelligence, started riots, and even engaged in gun battles. Today, children and adolescents perpetuate this legacy. They are the first to riot when things kick off in flashpoint areas between Protestant and Catholic areas, yet today many of the children experience rioting as a bit of a lark. The world in which protecting the district as a matter of life and death is no longer a lived experience. And unlike the past where a riot could be deadly, the skirmishes often begin and end with “slegging” or “slabbering” at one another (i.e., shit-talking), while a few stones may be thrown. The meaning behind the engagement against the “them’uns” on the other side has been covered over by time, yet the semblance of the practice remains. As Lear observes in the case of the Crow tribe, the world that makes sense can break down, such that thoughts, acts, and practices that gained “identity via its location in a conceptual world” become impossible, and eventually unintelligible, and this can happen quite suddenly, or over the course of a generation (2006, 32).

“We were a closer community during the Troubles,” Short Strand residents say like an old habit. The changing institutions and community norms emerging after the peace process have created a sense of contradiction between Brendan’s sense of self and the (newly capitalized)

apparatuses propping up the community. I see Brendan's thinking becoming less rooted in the community, and as it weighs anchor, it seeks a different orientation. And yet, the conditions for "weighing anchor" are precisely the resistances constituted by the retention of previous meanings, practices, and socioeconomic conditions. Brendan lives off meager dole payments and the occasional pot of city council grant money for artistic projects devoted to showing the "shared vision" of a postconflict working-class districts. His possibility to be otherwise emerges against a sedimented history of being in conflict, staying in one's community, and of impoverishing economic structurings, which delimit his choices to simply "move away." To weight anchor, then, is not a flight into the fantastic, but a thinking things over that plunges us into our contingent relations in a *place* of familiarity. For Brendan, on the precipice of turning 50, an age he was certain he'd never reach, it's a struggle to make sense of his current sense of self and his place within the community.

Existential Solicitations

The concept of solicitation complements and builds upon Gibson's notion of affordance by capturing the experience of being drawn into embodied or reflective activities. The concept of affordance has long been a useful analytic that shows the pragmatic character of objects in the environment, and it has enjoyed renewed interest in anthropology (Keane 2016). The concept has ethnographic limitations, however. Foremost of its limitations is its inability to account for both first-person experience and a genetic account of how an affordance comes to appear as meaningful within a particular way of life. While Gibson rightly claims that "[p]henomenal objects are *not* built up of qualities," he undermines this account by creating a gap between experience and the affordance's functioning: "these positive and negative affordances are properties of things *taken with reference to an observer* but not properties of the *experience of the observer*" (2013, 126, 135; italics in the original). In addition, affordances are "an invariant combination of variables" (126). Without a

robust account of mutual interaction and creation between self and world, sensibility and sensible, it's unclear as to how one might become drawn into using, reflecting, or modifying affordances. A bottom-up phenomenological account allows for a more ethnographically sound explanation as to how humans engage with and are drawn into a range of activities amidst a background of familiarity. Phenomena appear as significant, as affording use, within our concerned dealings amidst this background out of which our way of life is organized.

Dreyfus observes, for example, that “the chair draws me to sit in a setting that is *already organized according to my way of life*—an organization that makes all the relations make sense and the solicitations draw on me” (2013, 30; italics added). That is, the surrounding world already makes sense in terms of affording use, or better, *soliciting* use, because of how my way of life is organized. In short, following Taylor, we need to account for “the fact that anything can *appear* or come to light at all” (1995, 9; italics in the original). The affordance properties of objects become determined after we are “already engaged in coping with our world, dealing with things in it, at grips with them” (11). For Dreyfus and Taylor (2015) we need some sort of epistemic bodily skills and habits accrued through repeated and cultivated situational experiences, socialization practices, and cultural involvement to draw on affordances. Only then can the socially sedimented background offer affective enticements that solicit, pull, and motivate our attention, calling us to turn towards what Husserl describes as unthematic “objectlike moments” or “formations” (2001, 70, 73). If the allure is strong enough to draw responses from us, we can let these formations become thematic and focal objects that allow for a variety of affordances. The point here is that being solicited is a pregnant moment of potential sensemaking, of being altered by and altering the familiar, while the concept of the affordance is an already circumscribed and static phenomenon.

I suggest that it is through letting ourselves become involved with solicitations from the background that thinking things over emerge. Borrowing from Hegel (2018, 35) who sees experience

as encountering and reencountering the rhythms of the (social) world, conceptualizing and idealizing our encounters over time, then part and parcel of experience is having our ideals and meanings broken apart and altered. In this way, the muscle of experience, as it were, is torn asunder and repaired, and over again, as we encounter a social world full of resistance, contradiction, and enticement. These encounters often awaken memory, which is the site for thinking things over. On this awakening, Husserl notes, “it is evident then that belonging ideally to every remembering is a possible continuity of awakening, a continuity of possible rememberings that will lead to the living present in which we stand right now” (2001, 244). Steinbock, expanding on Husserl’s insight, observes that “[r]emembering is a reproductive awakening that turns backward and reanimates the affective force that now lies sedimented in the retentional past in a kind of dormancy” (2004, 32), or what we’ve been calling the marginal domain of contingency. Solicitations, then, affectively motivate us to turn towards them so they “can get through to us from the background with insistence” (Husserl 1973, 76). The turning towards is not yet thematizing or sensemaking. Rather, we have been drawn into thinking things over where *past future* possibilities on the margins of the familiar may become thematic and brought to language.

The phenomenological modification from being drawn on by an existential solicitation to responding to it allows for what Husserl calls the “consciousness of ‘otherwise,’” a moment of becoming overpowered by the “not so” of our expectations (2001, 68). This is how I understand what it means for individuals to be “otherwise” amidst the familiar in contradistinction to accounts that see the “otherwise” as emerging through moments of rupture. While the “not so” may seem unfamiliar, following Husserl, the unfamiliar is but a *mode* of familiarity. The solicitation that

affects us from the current passively pregiven background is not a completely empty something, some datum or other (we have no really exact word for it) as yet entirely without sense, a datum absolutely unfamiliar to us. On the contrary, unfamiliarity is at the same time always a mode of familiarity. What affects us is known in advance at least insofar as it is in general a something with determinations” (1973, 37–38).

While we may not have exact words for the otherwise, an affecting and generally familiar sense guides it into language. Husserl further notes that when this “otherwise” arises out of the familiar, some aspect of our current situation may be in conflict, and we may find that the sense we had about something in our situation has altered. Consequently, as we are drawn into an awareness of our existential situation, we may come to an altered understanding of our self, others, and world, and when this occurs, the old sense undergoes a “retroactive crossing out” (Husserl 2001, 69). We bring to bear freshly constituted *sense* in lived experience. Some aspect of our way of life may now make sense in a modified way, and this modification paints over retentions of the past. The old sense that something had for us may of course still be recalled; however, when there is a retroactive crossing out, this old sense has been annulled for the time being to make room for a modified understanding.

When this happens, we may experience the slipping away of previous ways of coping with some aspects of social world. At the end of a long day, Brendan says to me, “I will not die on this street.” How these words came to abide begins with an encounter with a friend.

Alby’s Place

The potentiating ethnographic encounter for Brendan’s sense of self occurs during a conversation with his close friend Alby, both of whom have spent their entire lives in the Short Strand. Outside his house, Alby shows me the material effects of living on the interface, a volatile gray zone jutting up against the Protestant area. A 30-foot-high concrete and steel mesh wall out back of his patio segregates the two communities, the remaining and reminding legacy of the bitter feuds and warring between them. Standing on Alby’s back patio is a statue of a young boy with his arm over a young girl, his sister perhaps, eerily facing the spot where paint and blast bombs thrown over the wall by Protestants have battered and scarred the brick, like a sectarian Jackson Pollock painting.

Inside we sit in the reception room, and Alby rolls a joint with loose tobacco. Alby's hands slightly shake. I sit on a red leather chair, and Brendan and Alby sit on a matching couch. A framed black-and-white print of a photograph of Joe McCann, an Official IRA leader, sits on a shelf next to Alby. This iconic photograph was taken on the night of August 10, 1971. Between August 9 and 10, the British Army interned suspected Republicans without charges in order to quell increasing insurrections throughout Belfast. In the photograph, McCann's silhouette kneels and holds an M1 carbine in front of a stark white explosion while the OIRA flag, the Starry Plough, waves stoically above him. I ask Alby about the picture, but Alby instead recalls a different photograph of internment morning taken by his father. Brendan, too, knows well this photograph. Alby and Brendan begin speaking about internment morning through this absent photograph familiar to both. By jointly retrieving this memory image, they open up another world of significance, which they bring to immediate lived experience in the present. An intimate space of retrieval and nearness solicits Brendan's current existential dilemma:

Alby: "Internment morning. The one with the bottles flying."

Brendan: "8 bottles flying through the air."

Alby: "You can count them."

Brendan: "8 bottles of Guinness. Full bottles of Guinness too. Flying through the air and you can count them. They're all caught by the camera. They all must have threw them at one time together. And you can see the Brits at the bottom of the street. Blair's Yard starting to burn in the background."

Alby: "Do you want a wee glass?"

Brendan: "I'm off the drink nearly a month."

Alby: "Good for you."

Brendan: "It's fucking torture for me. The devil's milk."

Alby: "Not shattered over that girl are ye?"

Brendan: "I'm shattered over it, but it's not the reason I'm fucking off the drink. I had to." This event 45 years ago is co-narrated as if it were happening in the *now* moment. The memory of this photograph, or memory image, solicits them into deep description, and they do so by speaking mostly in the *present* tense of another world, the upheaval of internment morning ("bottles flying," "You can count them," "Flying through the air," "you can see," and "Blair's Yard starting to burn"). It's all brought to presence. Lisa Stevenson notes that memory images attune us to the world and that "being attuned to the world *is* pictorial" (2014, 45). During this exchange, being attuned to a shared memory image actualizes an ecstatic and transhistorical space in which Brendan and Alby become absorbed. They awaken and thus (re)perceive the rhythms of past experiences, a duration of past time, in the present. Importantly, the uttering of the subject "they" who resisted the Brits on internment morning is belated, arriving only after multiple present-tense descriptions of the bottles. These predicates of the "they" are uttered in a way that elides and defers the subject, relaying instead fragmented and broken experiences. This harkens back to Vigh's (2008) contention that fragmentation is a condition, part of the familiar background, rather than a rupture. When Brendan finally utters the subject "they," the Short Strand community comes forth as the agents of internment morning. This pattern of pronominal uncertainty will be repeated below, as Brendan's "I" slowly emerges out of the fragments of the familiar.

Through bringing to presence this absent world of the photograph, the phenomena of the full bottles of Guinness solicit the attention of Alby and Brendan who each add more description to the memory image. Alby is then prompted to ask if Brendan wants a glass of Strongbow alcoholic cider. This is the moment where Brendan's current situation is laid bare: while he's "shattered over" his girl, he's been "off the drink" and "it's fucking torture." The unopened bottles of Guinness flying in the air opens up the world of their youth consumed by conflict and thus merges into

Brendan's current existential dilemma. Before this moment, Brendan had not told anyone in the community about being off the drink.

Alby passes a joint to Brendan and turns toward a horserace on the television. He turns up the volume. Two horses, Gurkah and Hawkbill, race along the final furlong, and the announcer excitedly says, "little between them here, neither flinching an inch." Hawkbill places second and Alby is irritated: "that's 50 quid on that bastard." Alby placed a bet on Hawkbill a few hours earlier at the bookies next to the taxi depot. His attention then moves back to Brendan, who also expresses surprise at how close Alby came to winning. Alby begins speaking about a local IRA feud. Earlier in the year, Alby had given the last rites to his neighbor, a former IRA gunman, as he lay dying outside the front gate of his house, after being shot six times. At first, it's unclear why Alby has switched to this topic, but he slowly reveals an experience to make sense of what it means to be "shattered:"

Alby: "I gave him his last rites. My wee lad was out playing and I heard the shots and I bolted out. She was over here with the child. We were going away in the early hours of the following. *Bang, bang, bang, bang.* Here's me: Jesus Christ. First thing comes into my head, pulled it out [the crucifix he wears around his neck] and he was just lying there. I gave him his last rites because he was fucking dead."

Brendan: "Did they shoot him in the head?"

Alby: "Shot about six times. Blood was coming everywhere. Coming out his nose and ears and mouth. Bubbles. *Boof, Boof.*"

Brendan: "Then the bubbles stopped?"

Alby: "No, the bubbles were still going, but I put the blanket up so no one could see it. And then the ambulance came and I just bolted over to the house. Sick as fuck. I used to go to school with him. He's the same age as me: 54. 55 this year [...] sure, went to the shrink and all after it. Well, I done the course. It's just like fucking sitting and talking to yourself."

Brendan: "Was that like post traumatic?"

Alby: "Stress."

Brendan: "I'm getting referred for that too. Jesus Christ we all have it."

Alby: "You don't realize you have it."

Brendan: "I didn't realize. I hadn't a clue."

This haunting retelling of administering the last rites to a dying neighbor shifts the conversation into a mode of personal revealing where vulnerable experiences can be shared. Alby's telling of witnessing his neighbor die closes with the aftermath of bereavement treatment. His sharing solicits a question from Brendan about the diagnosis, and Alby finishes Brendan's phrasing, bringing forth what Brendan couldn't quite remember as the diagnostic category. After co-constructing the diagnosis, Brendan shares that he's being referred too. Sharing of clinical diagnoses and experiences of therapy in the context of everyday conversation amongst men is rare in Belfast in my experience, and even more so without using humor as the mode of expression. "Mates" will quickly point out when you're not being yourself or if you're "being a dick," but a serious discussion of mental health in everyday conversation seems to be a rare occurrence.

By speaking through the experience of the death of another, Brendan and Alby disclose a communal comportment. "Jesus Christ we all have it," Brendan says in recognition of this communal "we" experience of "it." The narrative of death and diagnosis disclosure is recounted using pronouns and the frequent deletion of personal reference altogether. The episode contains not a single personal name. Three crucial moments elide attribution ("pulled it out," "Sick as fuck," "went to the shrink and all after it"). These also happen to be the pivotal moments of the plot structure to Alby's experience of the death of another and its aftermath. These moments have no reference to Alby's self as an experiencer or agent. Perhaps the elision of the subject indicates that these experiences are too painful to be spoken of in terms of self-reflexivity. In any case, these three moments are about what happened, but not to whom they happened. The bounded "I" or the experiencer is often up for grabs during Alby and Brendan's dialogue as seen most clearly during the continuation of the conversation below.

Recalling Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity as one's ability to "trade places" with others, a common first-person engagement with Alby distills an understanding of the "we" that encompasses Alby as well as Brendan. Again, this is the communal "we" that shares the "it" experience. I sensed that this moment was made more pregnant by Brendan's memories of his dead brother not an hour earlier. In this narrative co-told by Alby and Brendan, speaking about another's death also disclosed their vulnerability to their own deaths. "Thinking about death" may evoke a therapeutic desire to get right with our self. We can be thrown back on our "I" who questions and seeks meaning in the face of a socially sedimented and psychologically "stuck" self. But before Brendan utters "I didn't realize," Alby offers a description of the "it," using the generic second-person pronoun "you." This generic second person still retains a sense of the familiar, as it's not a "you" that encompasses me, the ethnographer, for example. That is, this pronoun, though generic, retains a particular existential condition of familiarity to both of them, but not an existential condition wide enough to encompass, for example, "one" or "anyone." It is the "you" of the Short Strand community that was first glimpsed when Brendan and Alby describe the conflict of internment morning.

Brendan revoices Alby's descriptions of his experience ("You don't realize" / "I didn't realize"). Brendan feels his way through this disclosing and shared comportment where Alby seems to offer up a familiar communal experience, which solicits Brendan and draws from him a response that bounds this familiar experience with a subject, an "I."

As they continue their dialogue, they speak with a shared voice through the insistent use of the pronouns of impersonal "you" and "your." And through this shared voicing, they point out aspects of their experiences to each other that had remained opaque and unthematic until now:

Alby: "You don't realize you have it. It's other people that notice it about you. You don't notice it yourself. You haven't a clue. It's just the way you get on. You get on like a dick and you don't know it."

Brendan: "That's exactly it. You don't know. And you're getting on like a dick."

Alby: “Your mates tell you. Your girlfriend doesn’t tell you. It’s just fuck you, I’m away.”

Brendan: “Well [laughs]. That’s exactly what happened here. See the people that are close to you, you push them away. Did you feel like you wanted to be on your own? Isolated?”

Alby: “Sure. That’s why I’m always sitting in the fucking house. All you want to do is get stoned and drunk.”

The insistence of the impersonal “you” is remarkable. Alby’s recognition that there is a lack of self-reflexivity towards noticing the “it” points towards the opaqueness of self-experience and the necessity of others for his self-apprehension. The generic impersonal “you” distances both Brendan and Alby from the “it,” which allows them to grasp onto an accruing and co-constructed understanding. Rather than use the diagnostic category, Alby and Brendan provide an ongoing cascade of descriptive experiences. “It” is a happening that belatedly surfaces to conscious understanding. Alby’s framing of his experiences becomes affiliated with Brendan’s own framing. In recognition of a shared and familiar experience, Brendan amplifies Alby’s descriptions (“exactly”). Both of them speak about how this experience has remained just beyond articulation and understanding. Brendan says, “you don’t know,” while Alby admits that his experience had to be pointed out by his “mates” but not his “girlfriend.”

Alby’s characterization of his girlfriend’s experience of him reveals the important gendered aspect to this intersubjective understanding of “it” within the community. Brendan recognizes the exact same difficulties that he had with his own girlfriend. Only mates (i.e., other men) point “it” out. Once Brendan grasps more clearly what his self has been going through from Alby’s personal narrative, the dialogue shifts to Brendan’s concern for his potential future self. As they collaboratively weave this narrative, a music video of Neil Young strumming an acoustic version of “Ohio” plays on the TV, which adds a somber mood to the room. The two of them begin to speak about their sense of self through enacting a therapeutic scene:

Brendan: "See, when you go for that post-traumatic, what do they talk about, Alby? Suppose you have to talk about your past and all. Aye. What's troubling you."

Alby: "They just sit there. Your first thing: you just fill in a booklet like a brew form. Your name, address, insurance number, why you are here. What are you going for? What are you saying is wrong with you?"

Brendan: "What am I saying? I wasn't the same fucking person for six months there. More heavy drinking. Nightmares recurring."

Alby: "Photographs of things."

Brendan: "All that. Flashbacks. Turned me into something that wasn't fucking me anyway."

Alby: "That's the whole thing to say. Tell your history."

Alby gives a generic account of his treatment and then he asks Brendan "what are you saying is wrong with you?" Brendan responds by repeating the question and answers that he wasn't the same person. Brendan enacts for Alby—perhaps treating him as a would-be counselor—what he could say to a therapist (in fact, Brendan will never follow up on his referral to the therapist). When Brendan says, "turned me into something that wasn't fucking me," he elides the attribution of a precipitating event attached to the experience. He referentially distances himself in the present time of this discussion from the past six months. In doing so, Brendan splits his self into a past self and current self. The therapeutic finishes with a beautiful, and considering the previous pronominal uncertainties, ironic, collapsing of the generic and personal second person. The preceding utterances up until then contained so much ellipsis, so many deferrals of the subject and lack of personal pronouns, that this moment feels a long time coming. "Tell your history," he says to Brendan. The final bit of the conversation ends with a discussion about when the "it" *hits* them and about their own mortality in relation to this experience. And as the closing exchange shows, this history, and the effects of being hit by one's mortality come to be characterized as *missing time*:

Alby: "Just *hits you*, there [pound his chest with fist] like a shovel."

Brendan: “See that’s another thing too. I don’t know how you handled 50. That five-oh, that milestone.”

Alby: “I didn’t think I’d last that.”

Brendan: “What way did it hit you? See it *hit me*. That’s another thing too. I was dealing with all these emotions and things about hitting 50 and how to deal with it...you are two-thirds away through your life.”

Alby: “You haven’t done fuck all.”

Through engagement with Alby, Brendan comes to an altered thinking and language, borrowed from Alby himself, to describe *being hit by turning the age of fifty*. His finite existence becomes the focal concern. Thinking through loss in an intimate withdrawal with a friend allowed previous experiences, memories, and thoughts to emerge and become reconfigured and imbued with altered significance. For Alby and Brendan, the discussion of a deadly feud transposes into a discussion about post-traumatic stress, aging, and failing relationships. Ultimately, an altered sense of self as vulnerable becomes solicited through co-constructed accounts. Alby and Brendan engage in an intimate sphere, opened up by actively responding to each other, and what solicits Brendan is a concern for his own mortality. He comes to “make sense” collaboratively through disclosing and apprehending shared and familiar experiences of conflict. These conflicts transverse temporalities and scales, bringing to bear the impacts of a 30-year conflict, the loss of relationships, and the opaqueness of psychological distress.

Brendan’s Street

In moments of thinking, we may question our historical and socially embedded self and put into question life. We’re called into thinking things over by existential solicitations, which emerge through the familiar and point towards the “not so.” Back at Brendan’s, we sit soundless, thinking. The conversation with Alby is on our minds. After a while, Brendan tells me he feels “less crazy” and repeats “we all have it.” Yet this repetition of the “we” transitions into a discussion about not

feeling at home, and he begins to imagine aloud. His niece, he remembers, expressed worry about raising her young daughter in her council flat away from her family. He speaks about swapping his council house with her, which is permissible by the Northern Ireland agencies who own the social housing. His niece lives just outside the district, beyond the walls, in a fifth story flat facing the banks of the Lagan River. Brendan tells me the sight of the river might help his state of mind. He speaks about sitting out on the balcony to watch the starlings. They nest in the thousands under the Albert Bridge. In the dusk, they take flight in coordinated murmurations. Brendan says he'd like to have a glass of wine and watch them fly. He corrects himself: "scratch the wine." I don't take this moment to be idle fantasy or escape, but a real possibility for Brendan. He's thinking through real, tangible futures within his way of life.

The starlings in flight, in turn, remind me of a previous moment I shared with Brendan. On his laptop, we looked up a series of articles on Wired.com about the physics of starling flocks. The articles provided a mathematical analysis of how the movement of each starling influences every other starling no matter how large the flock: "Starling flocks, it turns out, are best described with equations of "critical transitions" – systems that are poised to tip, to be almost instantly and completely transformed, like metals becoming magnetized or liquid turning to gas. Each starling in a flock is connected to every other" (Keim 2011). This striking phenomenon, the being critical of starling flock patterns, evocatively frames Brendan's existential questioning amidst the emergence of real possible futures. When speaking with Alby, the "we" of the community transitions into the "I" attached to Brendan's experiences. His understanding of the community, and of his self, shifts. During times of conflict, the community banded together. "We have everything to lose," Brendan told me in one of the first times I spoke with him. Today, another formation emerges out of necessity, as the practices of the past are becoming impossible and as many individuals have been pushed to the brink of change. Brendan's conversation with Alby solicits him into thinking things

over, and he comes to an altered understanding of the community—*we all have it*—and of his own sense of self.

After speaking about his niece's riverside flat far away from the cares of the district, Brendan upward lifts his head and says, "I swear to God. I will not die on this street." He says this with a particular determination. I take this to be a profound utterance, and I believe he does too. Here, a promising act becomes established in the utterance and at the same time an "I" bound to the "not so" and "not here." The otherwise emerges out of the familiar: the street on which *not* to die. The possibility to die elsewhere. Brendan's comportment is motivated by an existential solicitation responded to and held in the remembering that thinks things over. In this way, his utterance is both a memorial act out of which a retrieved image of watching starlings from his niece's balcony brings near the sight of something other than this street. Thinking over death points away from itself towards the possibility of moving beyond, just beyond, the confines of the community.

Brendan positions himself in relation to the "not yet" of his death and his *place* of death. His utterance is expressed in the modal future, an intention to be fulfilled. He's being solicited by an *actual* possibility, and not a fantasy of escape. In thinking over one's death, old meanings, concepts and possibilities may become altered. The "I" emerges individualized from the "we" of the social world even if for a fragile moment. While the activity of thinking may very well take place in a now moment, the matter for thinking, the thought, is properly understood as an after-thought waiting to come to presence, and this belated character of thinking is intimately entangled with the retrieval of things past—a brother's death, internment morning, a dimming community spirit, the loss of a relationship, and an uncertain sense of self. The utterance, through well-travelled streets of memory and inherited language, is sometimes guided into being by the thread of friendship that helps solicit our thinking toward the future, letting us respond to the stirring demand of our existence, wherever it will go.

Conclusion

Much of this dissertation was written under the long, wavering shadow of Brexit, of seemingly interminable referendums, negotiations, elections, and general vacillations by politicians, pundits, and members of the Belfast political elite alike. In many ways, the ideas brought to the public consciousness that constitute “Brexit” best exemplify the “unsettling futures” which I have outlined in this dissertation. After all, the journey of Brexit (if it can be called such a thing) has meant so many contradictory things for so many people in Northern Ireland, and the notion of leaving the European Union brings to this impoverished region a myriad of mixed feelings, of hopefulness for a richer future, of helplessness in the present, and of wistfulness for the past. Beneath Brexit’s pall remains the as yet unanswered and unsettling questions which can be seen throughout this dissertation: what constitutes care in a working-class communities in Belfast, what moral logic did the Troubles leave behind to those who must live with its consequences, and most importantly, what will the future bring? Even now, the question about whether a hard border will be erected between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland lingers, and one need only to enter any pub in Belfast to get a motley assortment of answers as to what the right thing to do might be, and what futures such borders might engender.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I mention a blunder that I committed during my fieldwork. In many ways, this dissertation might not have been possible without this naïve error. I had asked an ill-timed question amidst a fragile moral situation between Short Strand residents Alby, Billy, and others calling in together in Alby’s front room. My error was in asking Billy – as he reached for his cane – whether he meant to leave Alby’s house. Unbeknownst to me, at this moment I had breached an unwritten rule by ascribing to Billy an autonomy that was intentionally constrained by Alby on behalf of the community. As a result of my ill-timed question, Alby became angry and explained to me that Billy could not leave, and indeed, that he would not be permitted by

the others in the front room to leave. Alby further explained that his duty was to care for Billy and others, even if cruelly, as they drank, interacted, and ultimately coped with their physical and psychic wounds day after day. Alby, in turn, was cared for by those who called in to his house each morning, and the caretaking of these men for each other in this way exemplify a moral orientation towards keeping out of sight of the community for the sake of the children and young parents outside the window. For Alby, Billy, and the other men who call in day after day to drink, to hospice, as the church bell rang out, the children are the ones who are the sole purveyors of a hopeful future.

Amidst the interactional mess I created, I began to understand what it meant for those within Alby's room to care for the sake of persevering the possibility of a more hopeful future for those younger than them, a future radically different from the despair they now face. The men's acts of caring for each other, and the control they exert on those like Billy who would otherwise suffer in public view, are ultimately grounded in the project of letting a new moral world emerge for those children and young parents outside their window. This front room functions as a site that allows the *question* of another way to be, an existence untied to previous troubles, to arise, even if momentarily. Alby indeed believes that those outside the window may yet question their existence in such a way as to create an alternative time and space in which their world shows up *as* a place to flourish, an open future of hopeful possibilities outside of Belfast's conflicted and deadly past.

This dissertation has thus been an ethnographic exploration into how the unsettling future is experienced in the everyday lives of people living in historically marginalized and segregated social housing estates in east Belfast, Northern Ireland. During my fieldwork, many public discussions about the future of Northern Ireland arose in the aftermath of the Provisional IRA assassination in my fieldsite that led to the collapse of the Northern Irish Assembly and its subsequent reconstitution after the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement. Alby administered the last rites to the aforementioned victim of the assassination, his neighbor, mere seconds after the man had been shot. Alby uses his

narratives about this event to deeply reflect about the ever-growing litany of dead by way of feuds and assassinations, and he comes ultimately to questioning the morality of the logic that allows such a death. He sets a moral example by responding to the dying man in a way that calls into question the entire logic on which his current moral world is built. By responding and challenging the foundations of the past, Alby confronts the unsettling future that is about to unravel before him.

Discussions about the future abounded and intensified during the 2016 Centenaries for the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme, the Brexit referendum, and the twentieth anniversary of the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Peace Agreement in 2018. Media presence in Belfast during the 2015-2019 years reached a frenzied peak, and almost daily news articles and television specials about the Irish border, the effects of Brexit on a state with special status as Northern Ireland possesses, and the historical Troubles could be seen. Programs like *Derry Girls* premiered on Netflix and showed a different, humorous, relatable side to the Irish people during the Troubles, and Anna Burns's *Milkman*, a coming-of-age novel set during the Troubles, won the 2018 Booker Prize. Despite this public forefronting of Northern Ireland in popular culture, however, the person-centered accounts of lived experiences of those living within working-class communities are too often passed over. The future, after all, is being lived in the *here and now*. And too often, seemingly determined futures structures the moral experiences of those suffering from multiple levels of deprivation, including some of the highest suicide rates in the world. And yet, my research has shown the ways in which people envision and fleetingly build hopeful worlds even if amidst suffering, structural violence, and the ineffective governmental and NGO programs meant to bring distrustful communities together.

Yet, the massive peace walls segregating the Catholic Short Strand and the Protestant Inner East remain. Claire's house faces these walls. She responds to them with humor. She knows why the walls exist because she was burnt out of her house as a child where the peace wall now stands. Because she experiences this traumatic history when she sees these walls, she admits "if you couldn't

laugh, you'd cry." Her daughter, Brigid, already knows her future if she stays in this enclave. These walls will limit her possibilities just as they limit the infrastructural and economic development within her community, and she plans for her escape. The prevalent unequal distribution of funds and peace process resources have meant that many communities like these continue to be unconvinced about the precarious and unsettled state of Northern Ireland. The Catholic Short Strand and the Protestant Inner East were the focal ethnographic sites for understanding how people lived moral lives worth living in the continued penumbra of colonial conflict and sectarian hatreds, amongst other formative structures underlying everyday life. These two communities remain among the most impoverished and overlooked social housing communities in Northern Ireland, even after enduring unspeakable losses during "the Troubles" (1969-1998) and during the conflict's aftermath.

Through person-centered ethnographic accounts, this dissertation shows the future as an aspect of existence that is lived in the present and is experienced in the everyday activities, interactions, and practices that constitute the ground projects that orient a person's way of life. The future is not a position "up ahead" but, rather, a condition upon which humans are able *to be* in the first place. Thomas, for example, maintained the chapel for the sake of caretaking a temporality in which a united Ireland would arise from the ashes of British colonialism and Protestant dominance. At the same time, Ollie, a former combatant for the Provisional IRA, haunted by his past experiences of torture at hands of the British secret service, finds his current future unlivable and plans for his own death. As a fundamental existential structure, death came to orient many lives in this dissertation. For nearly 50 years, Lizzie has cultivated a melancholic mood of hatred that keeps alive her fundamental ground project of seeking justice, or revenge, for her father who was killed during a paramilitary shootout. Her perceptions of the world include a future vision in which she finally enacted revenge in the time of judgement. Her mother, Irene, finds that the work of time, and

the voice of Jesus, alters her way of life. She overcomes her bitterness so that she does not have to carry a boulder of hate into the future. Further, Anna discovers that the circumstances surrounding her husband's death to have been a lie, and when the truth is revealed to her, she lives for the sake of maintaining the truth of his life for the rest of her life.

The ethnographic accounts in this dissertation show how human existence is already futural. The future is a way of being, of projecting one's possibilities in such a way that one comes towards oneself. Brendan, wrestling with the loss of his brother and the disintegration of his relationship, envisions a future death for himself outside of the community. In speaking through his suffering with a friend, his existence becomes an issue and he is solicited into questioning a future in which he dies in despair. Brendan experienced an openness towards the future that offered him a vision of an altered way of existing unbound to the melancholic communal ties. These melancholic ties, cultivated over a century of loss and dispossession in Irish Republican and Catholic communities such as the Short Strand, are revealed during public commemorations and memorializations such as the 2016 Easter Rising in which actors re-enact the doomed insurrection of Padraic Pearse, James Connolly, and others for the 1916 rebellion in Dublin. This is a time for mothers to mourn the losses of their sons who died for the sake of self-determination in a United Ireland. But this future did not come to pass, and the vision of this future borne out of the past can weigh on the minds of the living. Past futures can therefore suspend time. But because we are finite beings, we come to care deeply about our futures, and failed futures often must be abandoned. The future, as much as the past, exists in the present in everyday life, and in the wake of conflict and peace, such everyday existence is characterized as unsettling. In one sense, some futures unsettle many individuals' ability to be, suspending possibilities for existing in ways that promote one's ground projects. What are often seen as obsolescent markers of identity – Catholic, Protestant, republican, loyalist – even by those who identify them, remain rigid ways of keeping intact the us vs. them aspect of everyday life

so long endemic in Northern Ireland, as rigid as the peace walls that continue to segregate the two communities. Indeed, one aspect of life in Northern Ireland that has altered since the peace agreement is the sense that no one wants anything to do with the “other” community. This commonly held sentiment holds that there are simply two ways of life that must exist separately, even if streets apart. And as has been shown by many voices in this dissertation, there is a larger sense in which “nothing has changed” and that the absence of overt violence is simply part of an ebb and flow cycle that has been repeated for more than a hundred years in Northern Ireland/The North. This binary optic that exists in the ideological, material, and discursive realms often breaks down on a person-centered level. In the other sense of “unsettling futures,” there are some futures that unsettle the constraints of the past and offer a glimpse of something otherwise than has been possible before. On Tower Street, Woody, Willie, Harry, Andrew, and others build a world outside the constraints of NGOs, funders, and politicians. The Ulster Tower Street Project, a joint effort, gave the community a hope that despite the project being about the past – the Battle of Somme – the way in which people engaged with preparing the street for the commemoration offered a glimpse of a hopeful future. A new community spirit emerges, even if briefly, when those who have endured economic, political, and moral dispossession experience a caring community outside of the obvious deprivations in their community and political upheaval from the Brexit.

This dissertation also offers an account of the phenomenology of the ethnographic particular, arguing that 1) the particular gets us back to real life as it is really lived; 2) the particular becomes a critical element for disentangling larger discursive, material, and sensory regimes; and 3) the particular, though its excessiveness and critical function holds out the possibility of another way to see things and other worlds on the margins of the horizon just coming into existence. By focusing on the ethnographic particular, out of which new concepts and experiences of the future might

emerge, this dissertation shows the vital relevance of first-person lived experience for understanding the human stakes in sites of (post)conflict such as Belfast.

A key claim of this dissertation is that by tarrying with “the particular,” immediate ethnographic moments in which existence is questioned and envisioned in alternative ways, human existence proves not to be a succession of one thing after another, but a thick and durative movement in which past, present, and future are entangled. This movement contains the fragile moments in which one’s *struggle to be* appears. Existence becomes an issue and people tarry amidst and against the confluence of temporal horizons as embedded within a particular social lifeworld. The past, present, and future exist together in human experience, as shaped by one’s lifeworld, and as this dissertation lays bare, by one’s encounter with death. Death takes on a prominent salience in the ethnographic accounts in this dissertation because death always orients one’s sense of self and one’s ground projects. Importantly, being with the dead can also change the shape of one’s ground project, as deaths in Northern Ireland remain potential sites of worldbuilding and self-making. New aspects of the dead emerge belated that fundamentally alters one’s understanding of his or her existence. As in the case of Anna’s husband whose cause of death was kept from her for years or in the case of Alby whose hated neighbor was murdered in front of him, death alters one’s sense of self, morality, and future-oriented ground projects.

The way the future is lived in everyday experience becomes important in light of Belfast’s new social crisis: suicide. Future ethnographic research that takes seriously how the future is experienced in everyday life must examine the rampant proliferation of suicide; this remains the most pressing social issue facing working-class communities in Belfast. As mentioned in the introduction, Northern Ireland has the highest age-standardized rate (18.6) of suicides in Western Europe and is the top 15 of countries in the world. Between 2015 and 2018, there were 1,228 suicides, of which 929 were men and 299 were women. In Belfast alone, 360 suicides occurred

during this period. Since the end of the conflict in 1998, there have been over 5,000 suicides, eclipsing the number of people lost during the conflict.

Tragically, in the final weeks of writing this dissertation, suicide shook one of the families that I had spent so much time with. How to describe who was lost? A son, brother, father, brother-in-law, and uncle, the center of a family. One of my regular interlocutors during my fieldwork, whom I consider today my good friend, texted me to tell me, “Hearts broke mate.” Minutes early I had glanced at his wife’s Facebook post on my feed that contained a single haunting word, “Why!!!!” Though I did not know what was wrong, I feared what was the case. He explained over text that he had taken the call about his brother-in-law’s suicide hours earlier, which I have reproduced,

I took the call off [his mother] this morning n I will never forget that voice till the day I die it has played over n over in my head all day my head actually hurts with it

This interlocutor tells me that his family is “tore to bits asking questions that no one can answer.” In the wake of war, a precarious peace agreement, a chronically dysfunctional Assembly, unequally distributed resources, paramilitarism, Brexit, and the unknown status of Northern Ireland as a country, quasi-state, failed state, or part of Ireland, understanding how the future is experienced by families and communities coping with suicide remains the most urgent moral imperative of all.

Epilogue The Question of Dreams

To know they dreamed and are dead...
Yeats, "Easter, 1916"

This epilogue is an imaginative provocation for ethnographers to take seriously the dreams of their interlocutors alongside their own dreams as important analytics for anthropology. Dreams are a universal form of human experience, and yet very few anthropologists take seriously the ways in which dreams disclose existential anxieties and questions about one's sense of self. Recently, however, there has been renewed interest in capturing the role of dreams in the lives of our participants amongst a handful of anthropologists (Groark 2017; Hollan 2004; Mageo 2012). Stewart (2012), in particular, draws our attention to how dreams are not simply about past traumas erupting from the unconscious, but, rather, suggest existential possibilities for the future. Yet, even amongst these accounts, little, if any, attention has been paid to the moments when ethnographers find themselves dreaming about their interlocutors. Dreams, as Hollan notes, may tell us about the ways in which people currently organize their way of life and sense of self. Hollan calls these *selfscape*

dreams:

I use the term 'selfscape' to refer to emotionally and imaginally vivid dreams that appear to reflect back to the dreamer how his or her current organization of self relates various parts of itself to itself, its body, and other people and objects in the world. These are the dreams that, anywhere in the world, awaken people in the middle of the night or the emotional residues of which carry over into the waking life of the following days, weeks, or years. Such dreams, I argue, provide the mind with an updated map of the self's contours and affective resonances. (2004: 172)

Hollan, though influenced by Freud, draws our attention back to the manifest content of dreams, rather than the latent, hidden content. Recall that the traditional Freudian interpretation of dreams require long-term commitment to free association in order to decipher the repressed realm of wishes and desires concealed and disguised from awareness. Differing from this approach, Hollan borrows from Heinz Kohut's (1977) notion of the "self-state" dreams in which the surface or manifest

content of the dream is understood as a way of encountering our current anxieties. This anthropological approach to the dreamwork forefronts the intersubjective processes currently shaping the experience and self-understanding of the dreamer. During and after my fieldwork, the dreams of my interlocutors, along with all the anxieties and ambivalences inherent to being with others, began to spill over into my own selfscape dreams.

In one of my most startling dreams during my fieldwork in east Belfast, an interlocutor dies while I speak with him over the phone. I wrote down the dream shortly after waking. Through writing, the dream became more narratively coherent than during the dreaming experience. In the liminal state between dreaming and waking, my body was wracked with strange sensations: buzzing static, dry ash on my tongue, a struggle for breath. I was frightened, and also felt guilt. This guilt remained in the margins of my awareness throughout the day and seemed to drain the vibrancy from the world. I wrote the dream as follows:

We are speaking over the phone. Ollie tells me about a political act performed in his youth. He brandishes an Irish Tricolour at Protestant Orangemen marching in front of the chapel to infuriate them and then they begin shooting at each other. He begins to wheeze while telling me about this act and I feel irritated that he is still a smoker. Though I am talking to him over the phone, I simultaneously see him on the other end flickering in and out of sight, then his head droops and face obscures. His drooped head is made opaque by smoke and I can barely see his cropped black hair. The wheezing continues, and I worry. As he wheezes, I do not speak to him. My throat locks. I know he is dying. He wheezes very loudly for some time. Then nothing. I know he is dead. I do not react for some time. I feel that my mind is stuck, unmoving, and unable to engage in any other acts of consciousness than seeing the frozen image of dead Ollie. Then his brother suddenly appears in my thoughts in the form of a memory. His brother complains about how Ollie keeps a mourning portrait of their dead father on his nightstand, a photograph taken moments after the father's death in a hospital bed. I regain the ability to think and act and I try to call his brother to tell him to go to Ollie's flat to resuscitate him. Then I recall - again still in the dream - that Ollie's brother only uses burner phones and his laptop was confiscated by security forces so I cannot message him on Facebook. Then I hang up the phone.

Opening my eyes, I am stuck between dream consciousness and waking life. I feel surging contractions of fright and guilt. My throat aches. Then as I wake a little more, memories from the previous day appear. I remember I spoke to Ollie in person, but these memories are entangled with the virtual dream conversation and distilled into the same event. I cannot tell which conversation is real, and awake now, I think that Ollie might be dead. Disoriented, I shame myself for having done

nothing, for hanging up the phone. And it takes time, seemingly endless minutes, for sense to catch up to this situation, for the recognition from the margins of waking life that Ollie's death was in fact a dream, and that the two conversations were actually different: the first a lived waking experience, the second a dream experience of a possible world.

The drama of my fieldwork dream weaves together many different images – what Freud calls the process of “condensation” – into an imagistic performance. Some of “real” elements of this drama include Ollie's story of waving a tricolor flag before a gun battle, his smoking and wheezing, the way his head droops from a neck injury, the mourning portrait of his dead father, and his brother, an outspoken Irish Republican, whose house is often raided by police. This thick drama affectively resonates with me in the dream – I am irritated at Ollie's smoking, then frozen with fright when he dies. This exposure to his death shakes me to the core in dreaming and waking life and presents questions about the role of the ethnographer's psychic life in constituting his ethnographic subject. The dream also presented me with the question about the role my interlocutors take in contributing to my own subjectivity. Part and parcel of the ethnographic process, of course, leaves us vulnerable to the suffering of others, even to their social or actual death. Attached to this anxiety, moreover, is the ambivalence and confusion of the ethnographic practice itself. Dreams spill over with an excess of meaning and mourning, and my dream may very well contain Ollie's own ambivalence towards his family, towards his actions as a Provisional Irish Republican Army (hereafter written as “IRA”) volunteer, the effects of colonial and structural violence, and his own ambiguous sense of self. The primal ambivalence for the anthropologist concerns the question about whether our questions are hurting others, about whether we are merging with them in empathic ways or whether we are using them for our own benefit. Yet, the dream also is a way of grieving, an awareness of our common sensitivity and fragility in the face of loss, a melancholic intersubjectivity.

If Hollan is right that “selfscape dreams” are ways in which our current anxieties find expression and organization, then the anxieties in my dream about Ollie also hinge around a constellation of encounters with him in which he shares his own dreams, desires, and fantasies. It is significant that Ollie talks incessantly about his own death. Over the course of our years of conversations, Ollie continually questions why he continues to exist and admits that in his dreams, he’s often in a battle for his life.

While dreams partake in the image-making, ordering, and organizing of one’s past and present experiences, they also stand in close proximity to chaos, to disfiguring the world. They can be harrowing, frightful experiences. Dreams may mutilate our sense of self and make us question the future – our own futures. They can make us feel guilt or remind us of the fragility of our relations with others by giving us a glimpse of the different future possibilities. I want to reawaken this prophetic aspect of dreams. My dream about Ollie, for example, speaks to various aspects of the future - specifically to my anxiety that Ollie is going to die. Indeed, Ollie often speaks to me about the time he tried to kill himself in jail after being tortured, and he muses about what it might be like to never awake from his upcoming medical procedure. These are anxious moments between us. Ollie suffers from severe depression, though his chronic pain, he says, actually keeps his attention towards managing his body. Focusing his attention on alleviating the pain, he says, often serves as a distraction to his depression. He notes this paradox: he is depressed because his body is broken yet his broken body is precisely what distracts him from depressed, dark thoughts.

* * *

In March 1886, the British Prime Minister William Gladstone and his cabinet formally announced their support for Home Rule for Ireland. In April 1886, a Home Rule Bill was placed before Parliament where it was defeated. During this period, Gladstone also published a small tract titled *The Irish Question*. In this tract he makes the argument that it was unjust British rule in Ireland

that gave rise to the question of Irish self-determination in the first place. He frames this questioning in terms of the dream: “Only superlative iniquity led Ireland even for a moment to dream of separating” (42). For Gladstone, this existential questioning, which takes the shape of a dream of separation, is the inevitable result of the manner in which English rule ‘in Ireland raised tyranny and sanguinary oppression, as well as the basest corruption, to their climax’ (42). It is notable that the epigraph on the title page of Gladstone’s book is the final verse of the “Parable of the Growing Seed” (Mark 4:26-29): “When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” In the context of Gladstone’s book on the Irish Question of self-determination and Home Rule, we can see this parable and in particular the harvest-to-come imagery evokes the sense of a future and final judgment, the moment when the seed’s growth becomes fully ripe, and in the context of nationhood, the Irish nation. The sickle comes to separate the fruit from the tree out of which it was grown. For Gladstone, it is inevitable that if not now, then soon in the future, the final judgment rendered on Ireland would be one in which the dream of separation is realized.

The Irish Question emerges in the 19th century parliamentary discourse in Great Britain. It is a frame or a trope through which the indigenous Irish come to be understood as an object of concern. In discourses found in late 19th century parliamentary speeches, we see debates with how to properly transition Irish tenant farmers and peasants into more secure arrangements with absentee landholders and, perhaps, for allowing the Irish themselves to become landholders. After centuries of dispossession culminating in *An Gorta Mór*, or the Great Hunger, in the mid 19th century, the Irish Question appears on the historical scene as entangled within the idiom of Enlightenment rights, of viewing Irish populations as capable of receiving the Rights of Man; a way of transitioning the belated Irish out of a feudal system into capable, property-desiring individuals, as people who can self-determine. These rights, as Karl Marx famously noted, inaugurate a split within

a subject who, on the one hand, must struggle against others – “separation of man from man” – to solve the immediate problems of existence while on the other hand must treat others morally (42). This political life, Marx notes, leads to the “decomposition of man” into various antagonistic identities (35).

Marx, too, takes up the Irish Question. He declares “The Irish question is therefore not simply a nationality question but a question of land and existence. Ruin or revolution is the watchword; all the Irish are convinced that if anything is to happen at all it must happen quickly... [the Irish are the] preliminary condition for the proletarian revolution in England.” (1972: 142). It was as if, for the first time, Marx had given orientation to his famous haunting image of the spectre of communism. It was as if the spectre could finally stop its wayward, Pan-European wandering and find in Ireland an embodied incarnation in a specific location time and space.

Like many Irish Republicans in the working-class Catholic Short Strand district in the east Belfast with whom I conducted ethnographic research, Ollie owns a copy of Marx and Engel’s collected writings, *Ireland and the Irish Question*. The book sits between a hardback edition of the *DaVinci Code* and a VHS cassette tape labelled ‘IRA Funerals’ – staunchly fixed between conspiratorial fiction and melancholic reality. As Ollie speaks to me about Marx, he struggles to find a comfortable position, shifting around an array of pillows to prop his body. His head droops downward, and so he has to lean back, keeping one leg elevated on the couch and a steadying foot pressed against the floor so that his eyes can meet mine. He also has difficulty gripping objects. His fingers are often numb or unresponsive - his dishes have chips and cracks in them from being dropped. He has long since stopped placing his dishes in the cupboards and permanently keeps them in the dishwasher racks, which he runs every night regardless of what is clean and what is dirty. A vertebrae in his neck is mangled from when, in his early twenties, British soldiers used his body as a battering ram, slamming his head against a moving Saracen tank after he resisted arrest. Ollie

was an operator in the IRA out of his home district. He is 60 now and slated to have vertebral body replacement surgery in a few months for which the surgeon gives him a 50/50 chance of survival. Ollie explains his decision to have surgery in the idiom of negative hope: he says he hopes to die on the operating table. When I ask him why he hopes to die, he tells me he's a failure at killing himself. As I mentioned before, Ollie often speaks about killing himself; but this tendency he qualifies as merely his "dark Irish humor." I come to understand that Ollie's current isolation - he lives alone with the curtains drawn and ventures out of his flat infrequently - and cynicism towards his own life are embedded and anchored in the after-effects of a decision to forgo a leadership position and quit the IRA, nearly 40 years ago. About the Irish Question, Ollie himself reflects:

Does Ireland have the right to exist as an independent entity free from British rule? The notion of the Irish Question as it was seen in Britain was divorcing the men of resistance from the 'gentlemanly' way of democracy. I see it as the English Question; merely the illusion that the Irish are the problem. My question then is why will they not get the fuck out? How many more years before a force arises which will make them leave and make them never wish to come back even as tourists? When they will be wishing for the return of the IRA who are too soft by comparison to what they are creating?

Ollie activates the ossified and historical Irish Question through a series of dynamic interrogatives about the future of Ireland, about the creation of a new spacetime, and a new force that will drive out factions loyal to the crown: Loyalists, Unionists, Orangemen, and the Northern Ireland State apparatus. The creation of a new subjectivity, or New Irish Person, emerges out of the Irish Question for Ollie. Ollie offers an image of the future. After the British are forced out,

there will be no democracy for about 10 years and no state party either. The military will rule and will erase the historical lies. This requires re-education - Gaelicization and forced cooperativism to destroy the culture of 'self' over all. It worked in Israel, the kibbutz. Assuming that some self-righteous prick will insist on 'his right' he must prove why and how it is his right since it asserts separation from all.

Ollie's image of the future coincides with the destruction of a form of the self that has rights and acts as an individual. His striking evocation of how asserting rights creates a "separation from all" stands in stark juxtaposition to Gladstone for whom the dream of separation seeded itself as the

result of English misrule. Rather, for Ollie, the Irish were separated from themselves by England's emphasis on individual rights. The idea of separation is itself the problem, and what is needed is a withdrawal and a return to a holism, an "all" – a communal, egalitarian Irish State which he frequently fantasizes about.

Indeed, not only is Ollie antagonistic towards democratic and individual rights, but he believes that the downfall of the IRA began with adopting the logic of individual rights. These, he believes, created divisions within the community. Ollie believes that the Irish psyche and the psyche of the IRA itself was infiltrated by British notions of individualism and selfhood which eroded what he calls 'the we,' which is analogous to 'the all.' He complains that the IRA mimetically adopted techniques for beating down fellow Irishmen from the Brits, as they formed beating squads to control Catholic districts during conflict. He says this experience of

being beaten stultifies the mind and breeds hate...the IRA beating squads roamed the district until the 90s and after the peace agreement they became community workers. The easiest way to sew dissent in the district is to take a kid and kneecap him with a pistol. You lose the whole family. We talked about this strategy in jail as we were losing the support of families. Some genius came up with the idea of smashing their knees with breeze blocks instead. What do I know? They ended up torturing me for months in jail. I can't talk about it. Anyway, when you get beat, your mind gets poisoned. As for the community, the we falls by the wayside. People become individuals.

For Ollie, there is a constant tension between "the self" and "the we." As I got to know Ollie, I found that his current sense of self traverses complex experiences, the content of which moves at times from visions of himself as a messianic self who could have brought about a United Ireland through a single tactical decision and at other times his sense of self has the character of what he calls "being-beaten" with a "poisoned mind." This personal sense of embodying the messianic, of course, may appear antithetical to his views on individualism, but Ollie often argues that during his time in the IRA he was merely the expression of a "we," a vessel of an Irish future to come, a future that returns at last to "the all" of Ireland's past.

Ollie's current self also reflects and refracts within a genealogical matrix of "being-beaten." This genealogy of being-beaten moves from the colonist prescriptions of the British parliament that first solidified the Irish Question and through the premature revolutionary predictions of Marx; through the unsuccessful insurrection of the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin to the impasse of the IRA and other Republican paramilitaries throughout the 20th century to unify the island. The Irish Question emerges in the context of Ollie's lived experiences as a trope of ruin, of being-beaten. I consider the existential structure of being-beaten as constituting live experiences for Ollie, working on multiple temporal, psychic, and embodied levels. The conditions for Ollie's psychic life in particular constitutes a haunting continuum embedded in the failure of previous Irish uprisings, including the IRA campaigns in which he operated, and stretching into the personal experiences of being habitually beaten by his father, being beaten by Protestants, being beaten by the Brits, and being beaten by his IRA comrades when he resisted joining in their so-called beating squads. He is isolated from his former IRA comrades now, and unrepentantly disavows the 1998 peace agreement brokered in part by Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA.

Ollie thinks a specter is haunting his dreams. In his dreams, Ollie is often attacked by evil presences. For example, he's had a series of dreams about an incubus-like figure who attempts to inhabit his body, and in less phantasmagorical dreams, he relives being beaten by British soldiers and agents. And yet, in these dreams, he wins out, defeats those presences who would do him harm. Clothes sopping with sweat, he wakes from these dreams exhausted but resolute from battling back against being beaten. When speaking with Ollie about his memories, dreams, and reveries, it becomes clear that his immediate experience is often anchored in the past hauntings of being-beaten, as if what was hammered into him by his social world was the after-effects of the Irish Question. Shot through these varieties of experience is a desire for agency and agentive action, the kind of power he gave up as a young IRA operator, and which is denied to him in the present. What

makes his situation most unique is he did something rare in real life: he gave up power. This decision to give up power, a power which he believed could bring about a (re)united Ireland was, in many ways, an empathic decision, but one which has become more poisonous to Ollie as he's grown older. He describes his current depressed state as "purgatorial mode," and he sees a single act of compassion as creating the conditions for this mode of existence.

Ollie tells me about this decision made through compassion as we watch, and he excitedly critiques, a suddenly emerging coup on July 15th, 2016 against Erdogan's government in Turkey on BBC. He frames his decision in the context of a dream he had after being offered an IRA leadership role in the 1970s:

I saw everything, every person that ever lived or would ever live and die. They just all crumbled. Like that was a very cathartic dream for me because it was about whether I decided to go for leadership. It's about choice, you know. I get to witness all of this, you know, wars that have occurred and nuclear explosions and fucking massive numbers of people in their misery dying.

This dream gave him a prophetic vision of this future. He explains that it contributed to his decision to not to take a leadership post where he would have implemented his unique plan to launch a deadly full-frontal attack against Loyalist paramilitaries and Protestant civilians alike. He describes to me his strategy:

In fact, it would probably be the ugliest conflict that Ireland has ever seen since 1916. But an incredible amount of, and probably innocent Protestants would have been killed too, we don't have room for prisoners, we don't have a system for this. We have to hit and move. So it's kill everybody and keep moving. And I wouldn't have been giving people a chance to get away. So you're talking about a massive slaughter. People in Ireland have never gotten over losing their lands, and they want them back, and they want these invaders kicked out. And was I prepared to initiate that kind of slaughter? No. I wasn't. But there would be very few people capable of bringing that about, and I was one of them. It was the start of compassion in me.

This dream presented Ollie with a future image of himself, one that he could not bear. The first time I met Ollie he told me he wanted to write a science fiction novel set in a united Ireland sometime in the future. The idea for this novel came to him in a series of dreams. Ollie describes the novel as

transitioning between dystopia and utopia after a destruction of the islands of Ireland and Great Britain after a fierce war. In his imagination, the Irish would have emerged victorious, and the surviving British inhabitants would have been pushed across the sea. I came to understand his unwritten science fiction novel as a sort of promissory note through which Ollie remakes his previous decision, and rewrites his self in the process, indexing the way the world would have been if he had been a leader within the IRA. In reality, however, Ollie decided against leadership, and in his current assessment, he thinks was a grave error. What he had once seen as an act of compassion, he views as an individual decision that broke from the logic of the Irish “we.” He is alone and separate, he believes, because he acted as an individual. He promises me he’ll write his novel soon.

* * *

A month before a UK-wide vote to leave the European Union, I am speaking with Ollie about the future. He tells me the Loyalists are arming themselves again and soon society will breakdown. He says he knows how to escape from the district. He knows that if he is to be killed, he will be able to cause enough damage to be worth it. He is prepared for what is coming: ruin or revolution, life or death; a total war deferred. In the middle of our conversation we are suddenly interrupted by the creaking of the letterbox. Ollie becomes distracted by the mail slipped through it. He asks me to pick up the mail because “it’s doing his head in” knowing that it is just sitting on the entryway floor. There is a lot of mail today, and many fliers. I give him a bundle, and he looks at each piece. He reads some of the fliers, which concern the looming vote. Ollie sardonically reads some of the fliers and spits out his condemnation:

“The most important vote in my life. Here are some reasons to leave: protect ourselves from the waste, overspending and misappropriation of funds in Brussels. Safeguard us from laws and regulations passed by Eurocrats who have never visited the UK. Become part of the family.’ Wow! Leave EU. I don’t know, maybe I should join this party.

‘Time for a real fresh start, east Belfast matters. More jobs, lower prices. Your family is better off with your family in Europe,’ Did you know you were in Europe? Yes, this is Europe.

‘Thank you for voting Tory.’ This is so fucked up.

After reading each flier, he rips them in half. When he is finished, he takes a long drag on his fag. He turns to me and says, ‘Go back to the question, where was I?’

* * *

Go back to the question, where was I? Ollie goes back to the anthropologist’s question and asks where was the “I” who speaks. In my dream, this is the very question that becomes a melancholic formation where Ollie dies. In the dream, firmly situated in surreality, I am helpless and speechless before the threshold: Ollie’s drooping head and obscured face afflicted on me, impressed on my senses. Despair befalls me, revealing the guilt and shame inherent in the act of ethnography, of writing down stories that are not ours, investing attachments in others for the sake of which such stories can be written.

Ollie’s father, an ideal of Irish Republicanism who commanded great respect from the community, once gambled with the family’s money and lost, a gratuitous risk that placed Ollie’s family in a precarious situation. Ollie’s image of his father was shaken when he realized later in life the impact of this loss: “that caused me to change a little bit the view of my father. So reality could interrupt his little fucking fantasy world?” His separation from his father’s ideal perhaps inaugurated his first separation, a foreshadowing of his “start of compassion,” when in his dream about the bloody effects of taking up IRA leadership, he decided against it, and in doing so adopted a new sense of self. Ollie, however, comes to experience ambivalence from breaking away, from separating, and wants to rewrite his inauguration as an “I” who speaks against the “we.” Now alone, with a broken neck and severe depression, Ollie lived towards a reunification, even if only through the genre of science fiction, through fantasies about the great merger of death.

Go back to the question, where was I? The question of existence is answered by existing, and the “I” that questions emerges out of a rift, separation from, the dense matrices of ambivalent relations with others. The ethnographer’s dream, like all dreams, are shaped by encounters with those we question along the way. The experiential core of the ethnographic act is an exposure to vulnerability to others who impress themselves on us and seep into the very capillaries of our psychic life. To be sure, as I said before, dreams may evoke a sense of our anxiety when questioning others for the sake of the anthropological endeavor. Dreams, however, are not an all or nothing affair. They may guide us to make empathic connections with others and show us ways of understanding that remain foreclosed to consciousness. They allow us seek answers to questions found beyond where life cannot go.

Notably, Ollie does not die in his dreams. He dies in *my dream*. As if through my dream, Ollie faces the counterfactual to his individuality, a fantasy wish to return to the “we” through the lowly road of death. In his dreams, he wins out in his life or death battles. In my dream, he loses. In my dream, he dies while telling me a story about brandishing the Irish tricolor, and his father is here too, waiting on his literal deathbed, in the mourning portrait on Ollie’s nightstand. Ollie, his father, his brother, and their world of Irish Republicanism stage a thaumaturgical fantasy in my psychic life. It may be that my dream has little to do with my anxieties as an anthropologist, but everything to do with Ollie’s desires foreclosed to him in his own dreams. Understood this way, Ollie dreamed through my dreams.

My final day in Belfast I stayed with Ollie late into the evening. We watched the film *The Bedford Incident*. The film ends when the crew of the *USS Bedford* melt away after being hit by Soviet nuclear torpedo, the final haunting image of a mushroom cloud on Ollie’s television and like during so many evenings we have spent together, he tells me more of his dreams. After I left that night, Ollie went to sleep like he always does, next to a photograph of his dead father, an Irish Republican

who taught him to question and to act against those who oppressed him, a man who has yet to figure explicitly in any of his dreams, but who gave him the “grounds to think things that could be opposed to the way things are.”

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