

***‘(Re)Writing on the Wall: Disarming
Weaponised Murals and Masculinities in
Loyalist Northern Ireland’***

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Loyalist Northern Ireland’*

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Abstract

Despite considerable interest in Northern Ireland and its tradition of muralism, the relational dynamics to its host communities have yet to garner serious scholarly attention. This research contributes to addressing this omission in the literature on Ulster loyalism and serves to strengthen our understanding of intricacies seldom acknowledged. Originality of this commentary is derived not just from a gendered analysis of murals but a consideration of their psychosocial impact on the environmental construction of masculinities. This thesis, both theoretically and through inclusion of practical fieldwork, should be understood as a work of applied history in its study of the past to explicitly illuminate current challenges and opportunities in the present. This is achieved by comparing what the symbolic loyalist landscape is and what it could be. Part one documents an evolving weaponisation from the early 20th century to the present-day, defined in three periods. The hegemonic and hypermasculine archetypes throughout confirm a persisting dominance of highly restricted themes as expressions of cultural violence in their glorification of conflict. These tropes also make blatant appeals to deeply gendered behaviours, expectations, and emotions. These ultimately act to reinforce a siege mentality of insularity and aggression. Part two argues for a radical reversal of both form and function, a counter-hegemonic vision undoing the representative imbalances of women, ethnic minorities and alternative masculinities, including non-violent and queer varieties. By shifting authority away from the few to the many, murals may ‘speak’ the visual voice of the once powerless. The relevance of this thesis’ implications are abundantly clear given the ongoing threat of paramilitaries, their control over mural production, and the underlying instabilities in the region which propagate such contested misuse. Ultimately this project’s contribution is not limited to a description of difficulties but seeks to advance viable solutions.

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List of abbreviations

AIA Anglo-Irish Agreement
C-HV Counter-Hegemonic Vision
CIRA Continuity Irish Republican Army
CBRJ Community-based restorative justice
DUP Democratic Unionist Party
GFA Good Friday Agreement
LVF Loyalist Volunteer Force
OIRA Official Irish Republican Army
OO Orange Order
INLA Irish National Liberation Army
IPLA Irish People's Liberation Organisation
IRA Irish Republican Army
NI Northern Ireland
NICRA Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NILP Northern Ireland Labour Party
NIWC Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
PIRA Provisional Irish Republican Army
PSNI Police Service of Northern Ireland
RAM Radical Alternative Media
RHC Red Hand Commando
RUC Royal Ulster Constabulary
SEFF South East Fermanagh Foundation
UVF Ulster Volunteer Force
UDA Ulster Defence Association
UFF Ulster Freedom Fighters
UUP Ulster Unionist Party
UYM Ulster Young Militants
VPP Volunteer Political Party
WSN Women Support Network
YCV Young Citizens Volunteer

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this commentary has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted through the Researcher's submission to Northumbria University's Ethics Online System on 16 August 2022.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 101,460 words

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Date: 30 November 2022

Chapter One: Introduction, literature review, and structure

1.1 Research questions

This thesis is based on the turbid relationship between the visual environment and the development of the self. The environment under consideration are loyalist communities, more precisely those whose very homes have become a staging ground for the contested pictorial performances of murals. By ‘development of the self’ we are focused on the construction of masculinities from late childhood up to early adulthood, which is to say a formative period of gendered identity. The first research question posed is what effect could the visually invasive gallery of murals have on the masculine construction? Initially we are concerned with their potential to promulgate traits that are generally considered to be toxic. These refer primarily to a thoroughly negative perception of ‘the other’. The implications of this first research question address a rather incessant tension in NI. We are therefore compelled to contemplate the extent to which murals contribute to civil hostilities, sow further seeds of discord and even escalate this tension into open violence. These tensions should not be understood in a limited fashion, referring only to ethno-national sectarianism but a series of prejudices against demographics deemed to be in ‘opposition’ to hegemonic masculinity.

The second question this research will answer is, despite a pattern of problematic depictions, how might this cultural practice be amended to repair some of this damaged society? In other words, if murals are part of a problem, could they become part of a solution? To be clear, the latter is not solely conditional upon confirmation of the former. Even if hard evidence of causality between murals and masculinities was somewhat wanting, this does not discredit the hypothesis that they could still act as a force for good. In essence

we will see when we move from part one to part two, how murals have helped to keep a social distance, to the detriment of desiring peace, and wonder how they might assist in closing this distance. This second question takes over from the risks of representation set out in part one and embraces a socially conscious responsibility of representation. It examines what role public art and history can play in the disarming of weaponised mentalities expressed in hypermasculine behaviours and visually embodied in a symbolic landscape of murals.

1.2 Literature review

The literature review is divided accordingly into three sections, each dealing with one of the fundamental components to this project. Firstly, is an analysis of relevant trends in the historiography of Ulster loyalism, covering crucial aspects such as conceptions of the past, siege mentality and a spectrum of internal differences. Next, we delve into the rationale behind a study of masculinity. Here we observe the need for intersectionality, define the core term ‘weaponised’ and explore the lesser-discussed victims of this weaponisation, both the tarnished individual self and demographics such as the LGBT and BAME communities. Thirdly, notable works and ideas around the medium of the mural are evaluated. This involves debating their existence as either advertising or propaganda, defining another core term ‘disarming’ and placing loyalist historical traditions and contemporary practices in the context of a culturally globalised view.

1.2.1 Why Northern Ireland?

This project, though focused on one of the most researched conflicts in the world, deals specifically with Ulster loyalism and a conspicuous gap in its visual culture. In relation to

their republican counterparts, loyalist muralists were vexed by their inability to draw from a global vocabulary of anti-imperialist imagery. Their surfaces were repetitively and predictably populated with paramilitary men—heroes, masked and armed, calling upon history, God and the use of force in a cause that is politically, religiously and morally legitimate.¹ These brutally militarised scenes came to almost monopolise the symbolic landscape throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s. Even with non-figurative subject matter: flags, shields, banners and other heraldic-like emblems, the apparent confidence in the solid, competent depictions can seem somewhat forced.² For in their presence they spoke of an absence of non-militarised role models. Since the dark days of the Troubles, more light has been cast upon forgotten narratives, but the source of light is often within academic research. Whenever situated within the cultural environment, their presentation has been both decidedly limited and overtly gendered.³ A common example would be how loyalists, among many others— Irish and Russian nationalists to name a couple— refer to the nation in the feminine. From the field of political psychology, David Winter discusses men’s traditional role in protecting the otherwise vulnerable and defenceless nation.⁴

Not only can republicans position their struggle as one opposing a mighty imperialist foe, they can also access a rich reservoir of imagery. Whether in the roots traced back to the Easter Rising of 1916 or gazing wistfully across the ‘Celtic mists’ of the 6th century and before, culture is sometimes regarded as the sole intellectual property of nationalists.⁵ This

¹ Martin Forker & Jonathan McCormick, ‘Walls of history: the use of mythomoteurs in Northern Ireland murals’ *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 17, Issue 4 (2009), p. 424.

² Bill Rolston, "From King Billy to Cú Chulainn: Loyalist and Republican Murals, Past, Present, and Future." *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1997), p. 13.

³ Sara McDowell, ‘Commemorating dead ‘men’: gendering the past and present in post-conflict Northern Ireland’ *Gender, Place and Culture* Vol. 15, No. 4 (August 2008), p. 335.

⁴ Sandra McEvoy, ‘Loyalist Women Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland: Beginning a Feminist Conversation about Conflict Resolution’, *Security Studies* vol.19 issue 2 (May 2009) p. 277.

⁵ Bill Rolston, *Politics & Painting: Murals and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, U.S.,1991), p. 33.

republican wellspring contrasted with a veritable loyalist drought is just one glaring misconception this project seeks to rectify. The political value of an attractive narrative was not lost on the Young Unionist Council, who in 1986 bemoaned: ‘for too long we have been content to neglect our culture while Gaelic nationalism has made every effort and used every opportunity to propound Irish culture.’⁶ In their search for greater cultural depth they embraced the dramatic Cruthin theory of Dr. Ian Adamson. This served as an alluring origin story counteracting nationalist mythology but also had profound revisionary implications.⁷ In a direct case of applied history, the pre-Gaelic Cruthin identity found emotional sympathy in the UDA leadership though failed to embed itself in the mainstream.

Often a time-honoured approach can underpin a failure to adjust accordingly to morphing circumstance. So it was that rapid social and political change in post-war Britain diluted a sense of UK-wide Britishness. Continuing secularisation, immigration and multiculturalism have signposted an increasing divergence between the ‘mainland’ and Northern Ireland (NI hereafter).⁸ Aside from broader societal transitions, there is a marked difference in how the crucial transition from conflict to peace was reflected in murals. By the time the IRA declared its ceasefire in August 1994, republican communities had essentially been prepared for it via this painterly mass media. Furthermore the murals did not predict or worse promise any sudden, radical breakthroughs, but rather suggested that a painstaking task lay ahead. In anticipation of their own ceasefire— issued a few months later— loyalist imagery, conversely became even more militaristic.⁹ This does not, however, indicate there was no appetite to record other aspects of the changing times, for no muralist acts

⁶ Ibid p. 35.

⁷ According to Adamson’s version of history, the 17th century Scottish planters were actually descendants of a pre-Celtic people called the Cruthin whom, after being expelled to Scotland following their defeat at the Battle of Moira (637 A.D.), were returning to reclaim their ancient homeland.

⁸ James W. McAuley, Jonathan Tonge & Andrew Mycock, *Loyal to the Core? Orangeism and Britishness in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd., 2011), p. 15.

⁹ Rolston, ‘From King Billy to Cú Chulainn’, p. 23.

independently, especially within the circumscribed artistic freedom of loyalist commissions and intense control. Whilst the opportunity exists for muralists to take a lead in historical education, they could not be expected to do so in isolation. In illustrating the limitations of optimism, Rolston claims they may reflect, even popularise ideas but they do not create them.¹⁰ This notion that murals cannot be expected to articulate what has not yet been articulated within a contemporary community is one that this thesis will question. The educational significance of loyalism's rhetorical visions should not be overlooked. They seem to leave little room for flexibility and illustrate an historical consciousness 'interred...petrified...locking in an unresolved memory.'¹¹ Without any resolution, memory bias will likely contribute to the egoism of victimhood which hinders a group's capacity to empathise with another's suffering. A further consequence in extreme conditions is a group's dehumanisation; this is linked to enemy imagery and an attack on victims' basic dignity.

1.2.1.1 Structures of loyalist history

Any project wishing to understand loyalism must grapple with how the past informs the present, the fundamental structuring of time. Ireland is often considered to be deeply troubled by evocations which inhabit a mythic time and space—which yet continue to reverberate with resonance.¹² Consequently, from its inception, the new state in the north of Ireland was a world where fantasy and lived experience co-existed on a daily basis. Along with these reverberations, successive unionist and nationalist generations hand down a catalogue of

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

¹¹ Forker & McCormick, 'Walls of history', p. 453.

¹² Guy Beiner, 'Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 46, Issue 2 (2007), p. 366.

historical sins, underscoring the ‘imprisoning power of the Irish past’.¹³ In addition to national myths feeding and shaping grand narratives which solidify either group identity, a spectral quality hovers over the island. In reference to the Somme legacy, Evershed calls historical performance a ‘ghost dance’ when facing ontological uncertainty: ritualising the past is therefore not exclusively, or even predominantly, about looking back, but about looking to the future.¹⁴ Among their contemporary functions, these ghosts establish a palliative continuity in moments of acute political flux. Though many themes seem defensive and pessimistic they serve to conflate past difficulties with those of the present thereby setting them in an overarching narrative that weaves back through history.¹⁵ Rendered as a singular strand, complex issues become more intelligible. A similar desire for a straightened and simplified endurance is observed with the Orange Order (OO) claiming—somewhat dubiously given Protestantism’s diversity—to be the ‘common thread in the fabric of the Protestant community.’¹⁶ Despite an apparent simplicity, the loyalist experience is more complex, in part due to the collapsing of linearity. The untidy reality evinces that the unbroken line stretching back to the ‘glorious victory’ of 1690 is as fallacious as a cultural continuity over three centuries. Contrary to the neat weave, reality is entangled in what Alvin Jackson calls ‘the skeins of historical reference.’¹⁷ Momentary collapses do not completely disrupt a linear model, loyalist formulations of memory can simultaneously incorporate a cyclical mechanism of commemorative repetition: invariably these pivot on the ‘menstruous

¹³ Jane G. V. McGaughey, *Ulster’s Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarisation in the North of Ireland, 1912-1923* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), p. 22.

¹⁴ Jonathan Evershed ‘Ghosts of the Somme: the state of Ulster Loyalism, memory work and the ‘other’ 1916’ in Richard S. Grayson and Fearghal McGarry (eds.) *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 244.

¹⁵ Kris Brown (2007) ‘Our father organization’: The cult of the Somme and the unionist ‘Golden Age’ in modern Ulster Loyalist commemoration, *The Round Table*, Vol. 96, No. 393 (2007), p. 711.

¹⁶ McAuley, Tonge & Mycock, *Loyal to the Core?* p. 20.

¹⁷ Alvin Jackson, ‘Unionist Myths 1912-1985’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 136, Issue 1 (August 1992), p. 185.

mirabilis (month of miracles) of July, compressing three years into a mythical time frame.¹⁸ Given the sensitivities around a living dimension of culture, this thesis engages in a process of critical and creative interpretation of myths. This—argues philosopher Richard Kearney—is what is required should the different cultural traditions in Ireland be reconciled.¹⁹ A problematic distinction in this process is to what extent some traditions can be considered ‘genuine’ while others ‘invented’; many scholars note that all traditions are inventions.²⁰ Of concern for this thesis are those elements of heritage infused with the epic imagery of war. This not only being a cornerstone for myths of a warrior masculinity but also standing in direct opposition to a modernist rejection of such epic romance.

1.2.1.2 Siege mentality

A commonly useful point of departure of this kind of investigation are the dramatic events of the late 17th century. The Williamite War (1688-90) in Ireland split along already entrenched sectarian lines stemming from a prior period of colonisation and resistance. From the victors’ view, salvation was confirmed by privileges granted by the crown during the Protestant ascendancy. Yet, for all the triumphalism, Protestant memory never shook off the foundational fear of ‘papist’ atrocities resurfacing. Rebellious episodes of 1641, 1689 and 1798 were perennially recycled in the deep memory of loyalist suffering. Though derived from earlier conflict, this siege mentality was updated for more recent threats: the 1921-22 IRA campaign against the infant state, the Border Campaign (1956-62), as well as two

¹⁸ Battle of the Boyne (1 July 1690 Old Style [O.S.]) is placed alongside the subsequent decisive Battle of Aughrim (12 July 1691 O.S.) and the prior “breaking of the boom” that lifted the siege of Derry (31 July 1689 O.S.) Beiner, ‘Between Trauma and Triumphalism’, p. 372.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 389.

²⁰ Such a distinction was made by Hobsbawm in his seminal 1983 work. Gregory Goalwin, ‘The Art of War: Instability, Insecurity, and Ideological Imagery in Northern Ireland’s Political Murals, 1979–1998’ *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 2013), p. 193.

propaganda campaigns against partition from Dublin governments in 1938 and 1948.²¹ Given this traumatic series of experiences, it is unsurprising that the social capital of strong bonding should be a feature of close-knit communities: their insularity seen as necessary for survival. Amid peaks of anxiety, groups can seek comfort in clarity and the emotional forcefulness of striking mnemonics. Murals as condensation symbols are saturated with such devices and allow for communities ‘to drop their heaviest cultural anchor’²² in the hopes of withstanding the buffeting of socio-political transformation. A ‘siege’ can therefore be waged without overt physical challenge or open conflict: fluidities in definition or identity formation are sufficient as a covert clash of values. How this mentality is manifest in the visual environment breaks down the most ultimate form of insularity— one’s own mind. It has been suggested that ‘politics is no more than a series of pictures imprinted in our minds’.²³ Though not often expressed in militarised terminology, we can also consider the crises of masculinity to be another siege layered on top and triggered by the same stimuli namely uncertainty and change.²⁴ Any crisis emerging from the contradiction between experience and expectation is exacerbated in a post-conflict context, leading former combatants to grip onto entrenched, outmoded and violent masculine identities.

1.2.1.3 Differences among the ‘PUL’ (Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist)

²¹ John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 147.

²² Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985), pp. 101-112.

²³ Edelman ‘*Symbolic Uses*’ quoted in Forker & McCormick, ‘Walls of history’, p. 428.

²⁴ MacInnes (1998) states crisis has dogged masculinity as a result of ongoing transformation of modernity [as]... ‘men’s material privileges in the law, economy and politics are under increasing scrutiny and attack’ in Alan Bairner ‘Masculinity, Violence and the Irish Peace Process’ *Capital & Class* Vol. 23, Issue 3 (October 1999), p. 127.

It is incumbent for any research to acknowledge that every part of the facile ‘PUL’ shorthand is complicated by internal distinction. Some of this compelling detail is too often drowned out by incendiary rhetoric or display. Those stressing the religious dimension to the Troubles should ingest the bridge-building work of church leaders and members in assuaging community division.²⁵ Though perhaps a truism, in a climate painted as black and white, it is worth reiterating the many shades of grey that lie between (whether a liberal/fundamental or progressive/regressive spectra, religious or political respectively). Whilst unionism too has undergone splintering, the OO was an integral part of the Ulster Unionist Council from its inception in 1905. Indeed this alliance remained firm from the 1920s until the 1960s with the arrival of O’Neill’s modest reforms heralding a new direction.²⁶ More recently the Order has engaged in an extensive rebrand of its image and activities within Northern Irish civil society since 1998. The public relations behind ‘Orangefest’ seem a sincere attempt to explain heritage with educational outreach, though another motive maybe the priming of Ulster-Scots music, dance, drama and storytelling as further ammunition in the ongoing ‘culture wars’.

While loyalism is usually marked out from unionism by its minority position of militancy and vigilantism it persists as an influential actor. The twisting, turning branches of loyalist identity are summarised by Jarman: political loyalism, lacking a clear constituency; cultural loyalism, defending traditions; community loyalism, developing projects to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour; and paramilitary loyalism, looming large over other components and in the public imagination.²⁷ When this diversity goes unrecognised, an attitude of sole representation heaves into view, such is the DUP’s insistence of their role: strength is in their

²⁵ This view according to Gallagher and Worrall’s ‘*Christians in Ulster, 1698-1980*’ (1982) as well as Ian Ellis’s directory ‘*Peace and Reconciliation Projects in Ireland*’ (1984) lists 84 projects, 36 of whom have an explicit religious basis both mentioned in Whyte *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, pp. 27-28.

²⁶ Though we should note that O’Neill remained an Orangemen, indeed it would not be until Mike Nesbitt when a UUP leader was not in the OO. McAuley, Tonge & Mycock, *Loyal to the Core?*, p. 112.

²⁷ Neil Jarman, ‘Ulster loyalism is a rather curious beast, beyond mere allegiance’, *Irish Times* 31 March 2018 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/ulster-loyalism-is-a-rather-curious-beast-beyond-mere-allegiance-1.3446052> accessed 10 October 2019.

defence just as weakness and treachery is found in others. A more sophisticated account is revealed by the PUP's crystallising self-awareness:

The Unionist/Loyalist is a particularly elusive entity to track down, constantly shifting, subject to a myriad of influences, opinions, beliefs and external trends...When a community is struggling to identify itself in acceptable terms, and when uncertainty prevails, it is vulnerable to the overtures of political opportunists.²⁸

Such astute observations are fittingly expressed by a party linked to the UVF, itself a curious contradiction, responsible for both some of the most blatant sectarian barbarity and most imaginative policies for peace.²⁹ At the forefront of the latter's evolution was Augustus 'Gusty' Spence, the hard man 'gone soft' whose emotional intelligence led him to call for 'abject and true remorse' for all innocent victims.³⁰ For all the merging of democratic socialism and bold commitment to human rights, none of this new ideology appeared on the walls, instead murals doggedly celebrated paramilitary 'heroism'. This dearth of habitual inclusion in the public cultural sphere may partly explain why such work is 'under-recognised, under-appreciated and, therefore, depressingly under-valued.'³¹

The importance of class cannot be under-stated: a certain social behavioural hegemony may reside in working-class males, but politically hegemonic power is reserved for an upper socio-economic tier of men. Rolston goes as far as to dress this uneasy relationship in military garb with the aristocracy and business elite as 'generals' commanding

²⁸ From the journal *'Progressive View'* (June/July 1997) quoted in Alan Finlayson 'Loyalist Political Identity After the Peace' *Capital & Class* Vol. 23, Issue 3 (October 1999), p. 63.

²⁹ Tony Novosel *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity: The Frustrated Promise of Political Loyalism* (London: Pluto Press, London, 2013), p. 162.

³⁰ Peter Shirlow 'Loyalists stop riots, create jobs, challenge racism and promote inclusion, so why do we only ever hear about regressive elements who want to turn the clock back' *Belfast Telegraph* 23 October 2019 <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/news-analysis/peter-shirlow-loyalists-stop-riots-create-jobs-challenge-racism-and-promote-inclusion-so-why-do-we-only-ever-hear-about-regressive-elements-who-want-to-turn-the-clock-back-38624488.html> accessed 23 October 2019.

³¹ *Ibid.*

working class ‘foot soldiers’.³² When musing over class, one should be mindful of assumptions of class unity around collective interests. Such reductionist idealism has been a characteristic of left-wing analysis of NI.³³ A further attack on a Marxist interpretation is made by Rose: when conflict is over the sharing of material benefits it is more bargainable than those over religion or nationality.³⁴ This point suggests that, given the intransigence rife in NI, the conflict must belong to issues which are harder to resolve. According to Connolly’s ideas, updated by Farrell and McCann, two devices were deployed to prevent interdenominational solidarity (e.g., the Outdoor Relief Riots, 1932). First was the beating of the sectarian drum: stirring up Protestant fears of a takeover when unity was nascent. Secondly was the technique of differential discrimination as Protestant workers, though exploited, had a narrow margin over their Catholic colleagues. Consequently, an anxiety to maintain this privilege swayed allegiance toward the bosses.³⁵ Class impresses upon mainstream politics in the comparing and competing for the title of true representatives of ‘the people’. While the DUP portrays itself as the only defenders of Ulster, the PUP also claim a superior knowledge of the working class. The latter’s focus on horizontal linkages between societal concerns (poverty, unemployment, gender and housing) gives the impression of ‘organic intellectuals’ rising up from below.³⁶

Since labour constitutes another site of gendered violence, its inclusion may advance the aims of this research. Among social movements worth considering are ‘Commonists’ fostering harmony but based on an isolated point of salience e.g., housing rent increase or gentrification. Transformationists however seeks a more ambitious overturning of a zero-sum

³² Rolston makes this metaphor in the context of a Protestant alliance blocking the series of three Home Rule bills between 1886 and 1912 in *Politics & Painting*, p. 17.

³³ Finlayson, ‘Loyalist Political Identity After the Peace’, p. 48.

³⁴ This argument appears in Richard Rose’s *Governing without Consensus* (1971) quoted in Whyte *Interpreting Northern Ireland* p. 192.

³⁵ *Ibid* p. 180.

³⁶ Finlayson, ‘Loyalist Political Identity After the Peace’ p. 66.

ethnonational frame of mind. Such non-partisan thinking promotes ‘a renewal and realignment of Northern Irish politics’ in order to eradicate ‘the intolerance and introversion which still bedevil this society.’³⁷ In warding off accusations of the aforementioned idealism, Nagel references the encouraging turnout of the 2005 Belfast May Day march: 6,000 people protesting racism against the city’s migrant population.³⁸ What’s more is that this political tradition occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s, when sectarian violence was most intense. Despite representing another viable mural subject matter, May Day has only figuratively provided an image for working-class unity.

1.2.2 Why masculinities?

There is a glaring paradox in that research on men is as old as scholarship itself, whilst masculinity has only recently been explicitly examined.³⁹ By a crude ‘logic of enumeration’, men— generically recognised as ‘human’— were the categorical default. It was against them that a familiar list: women, minorities, indigenous populations, children and the elderly, were judged to have somehow deviated. During the early years of second wave feminism men remained analytically genderless. By the 1980s a studied category began opening up before a profusion of curiosity occurred in the 1990s. But while masculinities became an inquisitive gold rush in many geopolitical contexts, in NI it remained ‘politically uncharted territory’.⁴⁰ For example, most discussions around segregation and its impact concentrate on the basis of religion with far less attention paid to gender. In Western Europe and North America

³⁷ Statement from ‘Platform for Change’ (Belfast, 2011) in Nagle ‘Unity in Diversity’, p. 80.

³⁸ Ibid p. 8.

³⁹ Kimberly Theidon ‘Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia’ *Human Rights Quarterly* vol. 31, No.1 (Feb 2009), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Fidelma Ashe & Ken Harland, ‘Troubling Masculinities: Changing Patterns of Violent Masculinities in a Society Emerging from Political Conflict’ *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 37, Issue 9 (2014), p. 747.

especially, social adjustments that weakened traditional models and identities were a catalyst for interrogations into masculinity. While not immune or cut off from these forces, the onset of the Troubles insulated the region creating conditions that resulted in the ‘fortification of men’s power.’⁴¹ Throughout this thesis an intimate causality between genders is not only pragmatically sound but theoretically consistent with the origins of critical studies of men and masculinities (CSMM). The framework, set out by Hearn and Morgan, was designed to consolidate and extend feminism’s critical scope onto the foreign terrain of masculinities. The kernel of their argument was that masculinities are context dependent, shifting and multi-faceted, none of which are biologically determined.⁴²

1.2.2.1 Intersectionality

As Coupe points out, nationalism and unionism share at least one distinct trait; the use of images of masculine stoicism.⁴³ Just as a community of friends is dependent on enemies so too lies a connectivity between men and women. It is recognised that men are never alone in their self-image; women are always present. Likewise, it is impossible to speak of women’s experience without due reflection on a mirrored male perspective. A less combative version of manhood— replacing the tough, militarised model of the Troubles— would be one easier to live with for both women and men. Relational dynamics challenged the now defunct ‘universal male dominance thesis’ originally advanced by some Western feminists. The later theoretical development of intersectionality is, as Rooney remarked, peculiarly pertinent in NI, where it is stunningly clear that gender cuts across class, sect, age and other dimensions

⁴¹ Ibid p. 748.

⁴² Ibid p. 749.

⁴³ Alexander Coupe, ‘Unionism’s obsession with masculinity hurts its cause’ *Irish Times* 3 April 2018 <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/unionism-s-obsession-with-masculinity-hurts-its-cause-1.3445769> accessed 25 August 2019.

of inequality.⁴⁴ It is instructional to record the interaction of genders and how they moulded contemporary understandings of masculinity. From the inception of stereotypes pervasive even today, the greatest threats were posed by the gendered other: languor, softness and sensuality were traits of a counter-masculinity.⁴⁵ Effeminacy and androgyny additionally were perceived to be conspiring nefariously to weaken the ideal. Several idealised characteristics can be maintained by female complicity. The idea that true masculinity engages in action, rather than exercising caution is found in Lillian Spender's chiding comment on Carson's participation in the Buckingham Palace conference of 1914: 'Oh, for a strong man to rally the forces of Unionism...one looks in vain for such a man. Nowadays men seem so terrified of responsibility and "consequences"'.⁴⁶ Though distanced in time and space, Theidon's research mentions young women who are attracted to the 'gran hombres' (big men), a desirability which underscores the role of women in 'making men'.⁴⁷ Relational networks help us wear down essentialist myths that support the belief that men are prone to inhumanity, a fallacy matched by the supposed innately peaceful or communicative aspect of women. In their illuminating study, Gray and Neill's female participants used phrases such as 'pushing it all to one side', 'getting on with things' and 'survivor mentality'.⁴⁸ They demonstrated a reticence induced by perceived vulnerability; a behaviour more usually attributed to men. It is obvious that, due to our sociological complexity, significant attention to possible effects on the entire matrix is required before any attempt to influence a constituent is made.

⁴⁴ Cockburn 'What became of 'frontline feminism'?' p. 113.

⁴⁵ Joanna Bourke, review of *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity* by George L. Mosse, review no. 23 <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/23> accessed 7 October 2018.

⁴⁶ McGaughey, *Ulster's Men*, p. 77.

⁴⁷ Theidon, 'Reconstructing Masculinities' p. 18.

⁴⁸ Ann Marie Gray and Gail Neil 'Creating a Shared Society in Northern Ireland: Why We Need to Focus on Gender Equality' *Youth & Society* Vol. 43, Issue 2 (2011), p. 480.

Fittingly some strategies for defusing testosterone-fuelled tension can be found in the vibrant history of NI's women centres organising outside formal political structures to provide support, training and a raft of services from child-care, education, and drug addiction. The extraordinary courage in disregarding the lines of cultural demarcation is epitomised in the transversalism of the Women's Support Network (WSN), merging centres across the Shankill/Falls divide in 1989.⁴⁹ This community activism is an example of politics situated—just like murals—in the everyday life. Exposure of this magnitude disrupts the segregation of public from private and resonates with a democratising of culture, as muralist Orozco said: '[the mural] cannot be made a matter of private gain; it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged few. It is for the people'.⁵⁰

While the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) could have heralded a progressive, gender equity-centred agenda from the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), the non-partisan project was short-lived. In serving the cause of smooth negotiations, the NIWC served as buffer between unionists and republicans, denying it the chance to tackle the highly patriarchal politics.⁵¹ Casting the net out to the wider world should not be seen as replacing local exemplars of inspiring, gender-aware work, but rather bringing in complimentary material. *'Men-As-Partners'* (MAP), undertaken by EngenderHealth, operates in more than 15 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It assists men to realise the extreme costs of the patriarchal privilege and how they may play a constructive role in their families and communities.⁵² Another initiative, *'One Man Can'* (OMC) implemented by Sonke Gender Justice, supports boys and men to take action to end domestic and sexual abuse while

⁴⁹ Gilmartin, 'Gendering the 'post-conflict' narrative' p. 93.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Jean Franco, *The modern culture of Latin America, society and the artist* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 157.

⁵¹ McEvoy 'Loyalist Women Paramilitaries', p. 282.

⁵² Porter, 'What is Constructed', p. 499.

promoting healthy, equitable relationships.⁵³ Of additional salience is how MAP disseminates this gender reconciliation, they employ a variety of methods in their public education campaigns: street theatres, rallies, and murals.

1.2.2.2 Defining core terminology I: Weaponisation

Since peace is far from synonymous with a post-violence status, it behoves this thesis to consider a wider definition of weaponisation. A helpful start in this endeavour is situating research within the continuum of violence. This states that rather than a more defined period of ‘war’, violence is not a solitary phenomenon but perseveres along several scales: force, from fist to bomb; time, peacetime, prewar, wartime, postwar; and place, bedroom, city, to continent.⁵⁴ In its entirety, however, the most consistent weapon is masculinity itself. The setting aside of literal weapons often triggers an emasculation whereby violence is domesticated— transferred from the public theatre of conflict to private daily life. The resilience of militarised masculinities is marked by a sharp spike in domestic abuse, a trend noted throughout several post-conflict settings.⁵⁵ Statistics from Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Women’s Aid Federation confirm this in the instance of NI: a 130% rise in reported incidents from 1996 to 2003⁵⁶ and 30,595 domestic abuse incidents from July 2017 to June 2018.⁵⁷ The hyperbole of ‘stranger danger’, though highlighting real threats in the public realm, can also conceal the private hell for many women. Without blithely

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Cockburn, ‘World disarmament?’

⁵⁵ Theidon ‘Reconstructing Masculinities’ p. 21.

⁵⁶ Police statistics cited in Margaret Ward, ‘Gender, citizenship and the future of the Northern Ireland peace process’ *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2006), pp. 262–283.

Ward 2006 from Cynthia Cockburn, ‘What became of ‘frontline feminism’? a retrospective on post-conflict Belfast’ *Feminist Review* Vol. 105, Issue 1 (November 2013), p. 112.

⁵⁷ In addition to these figures, Women’s Aid also reported 14,714 women and 14,356 young persons and children received refuge between 1999 and 2013 in Niall Gilmartin, ‘Gendering the ‘post-conflict’ narrative in Northern Ireland’s peace process’ *Capital & Class*, volume 43, issue 1 (2019), p. 96.

sweeping away the idiosyncratic circumstances of each society, some post-conflict norms of masculinity do appear in congruity. Porter succinctly describes some of the more extremely negative: highly rigid militaristic associations, toughness, objectification and instrumentalisation of women, and repression of all emotions other than anger.⁵⁸ This repression is regulated through social taboos against articulating difficulties and can consequently drive men into profound isolation and loneliness. Another feature linking post-conflict societies is the capricious nature of male-led violence. After decades of conditioning, both black and white men in South Africa had been bound by the militaristic standards of combatant brotherhood. Mired in the hopelessness of sustained socio-economic inequalities as well as lingering trauma, many found ostensible solace in what Thokozani Xaba calls ‘compensatory manhood.’⁵⁹ This reared its head in the form of gangs, a situation with similarities in NI. Fusion which complicates the delineated narratives of ‘war’ and ‘peace’ also apply to alternative male spaces. In his study of Brazilian shanty towns, Barker observed such spaces existing cheek by jowl with enduring patriarchal structures.⁶⁰ The entanglement of these juxtaposing details proves, optimistically, that such alternatives can surface in toxic atmospheres, but that their actuality does not necessarily remove or even challenge an overall male dominance.

1.2.2.3 Other ‘otherness’ (LGBT & BAME)

In a gendered hierarchical arrangement those relegated are typically of an oppositional identity to the few that reserve their space at the top. With this tier invariably being occupied,

⁵⁸ Antonia Porter, ‘What is Constructed can be Transformed’: Masculinities in Post-Conflict Societies in Africa,’ *International Peacekeeping* Vol. 20, Issue 4 (2013), p. 492.

⁵⁹ *Ibid* p. 497.

⁶⁰ Groes-Green, ‘Philogynous Masculinities...’ p. 94.

not just by men, but white, heterosexual men, women are in the company of LGBT and Black, Asian and minority ethnic men. NI has moved on from its ‘Save Ulster from Sodomy’⁶¹ days, though a historically staunch conservatism has delayed the legal fight against homophobia.⁶² In other arenas, the struggle for equality continues in gaining visibility in the public space or marriage rights, with the first ceremonies being held at the time of this writing. The objectives of women’s groups and LGBT activists encounter the same obstacle in being muted by an ‘either/or’ approach to social identity. In trying to clear the path of this dilemma, pluralism aims to make wider society appreciate difference rather than it be a stimulus for fear and anger. It is the cross-cleavage supportive tendency of pluralist politics that has elevated Belfast Pride from just over 50 participants singing gay rights anthems in 1991 to over 15,000 participants in 2010.⁶³ Though we should not detract from such success stories, we must be wary of growing complacent when the menace of hate crimes still blight the country.

The transition out of conflict is fraught with problems and some of these can have damaging repercussions. Some former prisoners and combatants suffer from a lack of paramilitary discipline that once moulded their routine; others may feel betrayed by co-fighters basking in the limelight of a prosperous post-conflict career (whether in grassroots reconciliation or power-sharing politics). Bereft of purpose and identity, their aggression can manifest as violence which locates new but all too familiar targets. In an increasingly diverse ethnic demography racist attacks are recorded, particular against the Chinese and Eastern European minorities in Belfast where an anti-Roma sentiment has also surfaced.⁶⁴ Admittedly

⁶¹ The DUP once campaigned under this slogan with one of its representatives stating that homosexuality ‘disgusting, loathsome, nauseating, shamefully wicked’ and ‘an abomination’ (Mail on Sunday, 2008) in Nagle, *Unity in Diversity* p. 85.

⁶² Homosexuality was decriminalized in England and Wales in 1967, it remained criminalized in Northern Ireland until LGBT mobilization won the case in the European Court of Human Rights in 1981, *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Cockburn, ‘What became of ‘frontline feminism’?’ p.114.

accounting for an extremist fringe, Harris detects some related values espoused by the UDA and the English Defence League. The theme of governmental failure to protect the state is reminiscent of an enlarged siege mentality.⁶⁵ In their contribution to this paranoia, the Northern Irish 'United Defence League' appears to have simply revised prejudice for the times, supplementing Islamophobia with the age-old loyalist demon of republicanism.

1.2.2.4 Further implications (mental health)

With certain properties throwing a shadow over the labelling of NI as a 'post-conflict' society, we might well ponder where trauma is in the bigger picture. The emotional scars of conflict are lengthened since some painful memories are legacy related. These include imprisonment or death of a family member, witnessing the 'punishment beating' of a friend, house raids and living in a residually militarised community. Though technical accounts classify the Troubles as a 'low-level war' the intensity looms large proportional to the population. A survey of 2,000 households in 2005 discovered one in ten people experiencing symptoms of PTSD.⁶⁶ With such high numbers at stake, some take measures to self-medicate through alcohol and drugs. This has been documented among Vietnam veterans where, as a psychic defence mechanism, substance abuse enabled dissociation from echoes of violent behaviour.⁶⁷ It is reasonable to suggest that instances of self-harm, alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide may be magnified through a post-conflict lens. It may be a tragic conclusion of an

⁶⁵ Lyndsey Harris, 'Addressing a 'New' Form of 'Loyalist' Extremism? Reflections on the Legacy of the Northern Ireland Conflict' *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 51, Issue 5 (2012), p. 526.

⁶⁶ Those experiencing symptoms were disproportionately of the lower socio-economic stratum. Orla Muldoon et al. *The Legacy of the Troubles: Experience of the Troubles, Mental Health and Social Attitudes* (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, School of Psychology, 2005).

⁶⁷ Malose Langa and Gillian Eagle, 'The Intractability of Militarised Masculinity: A Case Study of Former Self-Defence Unit Members in the Kathorus Area, South Africa', *South African Journal of Psychology* Vol. 38, Issue 1 (2008), p. 160.

emotionally repressive environment that men's own minds and bodies can become a weapon turned on themselves. As questions hang in the balance over the extent of the power of murals, we can appreciate efforts to pre-empt the answer. There have been efforts to eradicate the quotidian images of the nightmare of the past.⁶⁸ These may, at the very least, intervene such that the tradition of dead generations does not weigh quite so heavily on the hearts of the living.

1.2.3 Why murals?

Throughout the trajectory of the Troubles a parallel war of words and symbols was fought. The astounding progress made toward peace should never be forgotten but, as Foucault wrote in an inversion of Clausewitz's maxim: 'politics is the continuation of war by other means.'⁶⁹ The murals, as just one fragment of a politicised constellation, attest to a battlefield running through post-agreement NI. This front extends outside the urban hubs of Belfast and Derry, with an increasing number appearing in many towns and villages. As interventions in the socio-political environment, they are deserving of long-term study due to their permanence which exceeds the comparably transient parades.⁷⁰ However, some analysis treats them as little more than backdrop to social movements while others may run the risk of using them too mechanistically, as tools to simply categorise rather than critically understand.⁷¹ By their very nature they elude a straightforward classification because both product (art object) and production (cultural practice) are firmly enmeshed in the serpentine intersection between the

⁶⁸ Tony Crowley 'Hegemonic Shifts: The Latest from the Walls of Northern Ireland' *Estudios Irlandeses*, Issue 10, (March 2015), p. 71.

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France.*, edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (eds.), translated by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 47.

⁷⁰ Jonathan McCormick & Neil Jarman, 'Death of a Mural' *Journal of Material Culture* Vol. 10, Issue (2005), p. 69

⁷¹ Bill Rolston & Amaia Alvarez Berastegi, 'Taking Murals Seriously: Basque Murals and Mobilisation' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* Vol. 29, Issue 1 (March 2016), p. 34.

politics and poetics of national identity. Unsurprisingly these do not always sit comfortably together but can convey, as loaded signifiers, the collision between official and vernacular memories. Even though they are both located in the past, memory and history are clearly not interchangeable though they overlap as repositories requiring critical interpretation. The living archives of murals can be thought of as the conscious and purposeful staging of memory. This blends nicely with Goffman's notion of 'impression management'⁷² where the dramaturgical presentation of self takes a guise akin to role-playing. When positioned in a milieu of distrust, aggression and even bloody episodes of unrest this posturing is essential as bodily armour. Furthering a theatrical analogy is the fact that murals also serve as rallying points for ritualised events. The unveiling of a new mural— often in July, the loyalist 'marching season'— was usually performed by an MP, judge, an army officer or minister while the local crowd listened attentively to a quasi-religious address.⁷³ They are therefore not as static as the medium itself would suggest but rather, through engagement, are fluid with message projection. There is a loyalist proclivity for compressing timelines such that men of the past stand literally shoulder to shoulder with those of the present. This projecting an image of unfaltering strength and power, a kind of all at once mental, physical and even spiritual giantism is palpable in the larger-than-life men in murals. Sadly, symbols can be manipulated for the morbid advantage that they are 'perfect channels for deathly political ventriloquism'.⁷⁴

Yet (ab)uses of the past should not restrain those of the present or future if anything they may inspire as counterexample. After all, semiotics dictate that the artwork itself has little intrinsic meaning and is fashioned by the preconceptions and perceptions that we, the

⁷² Theidon, 'Reconstructing Masculinities', p. 24.

⁷³ Rolston, *Politics & Painting*, p. 24.

⁷⁴ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Post Socialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 29.

viewers, bring to it. When regarded in this light, the pre-mural wall is but a blank canvas onto which theoretically limitless forms and themes may take shape. It seems, therefore, that NI is at a crossroads. One road, extensively journeyed, only reinforces gender roles; the other, hardly ventured, leads toward a reconstructing of said roles. It is wise, however, not to bestow an excess of faith in murals, but be slightly dubious as to the extent to which they can be an accurate barometer for their surroundings. Viewed in all their layered intricacies, they resemble a cultural stratigraphy or, as signs to be read, a palimpsest. They may not furnish us with the precision that a 'barometer' evokes, nevertheless, they indicate shifting public opinions and significance and, as such, are ideal subjects for the study of Northern Irish society.⁷⁵

1.2.3.1 Advertising vs. Propaganda (Cultural to direct violence)

When exploring how people and paintings interact a useful comparison is that of advertising. In her reflection on the subject, Loftus sees a connection emanating from the declarative statements made by both advertising and wall paintings of identity.⁷⁶ Other terminology that supports this comparison posits that we are consumers of meaning that occurs in civic ideology. Holt and Cameron's work on cultural branding is discussed as a strategy of the 'myth markets'.⁷⁷ One method for evaluating the success of an ideological advertisement campaign is the extent to which it develops organically. Judging by their longevity and proliferation one gets a sense that the murals of NI resoundingly meet this criteria and that

⁷⁵ Laura McAtackney 'Peace maintenance and political messages: The significance of walls during and after the Northern Irish 'Troubles'' *Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2011), p. 87.

⁷⁶ Oona Woods, chapter from *Seeing is Believing: Murals in Derry* (Derry: Guildhall Press, 1995)

⁷⁷ Downey, Hilary & Sherry, John F., 'Modulating mythology in a post-traumatic era: Murals and re-imagining in Northern Ireland' in *Myth and the Market: Proceedings of an interdisciplinary conference held in Carlingford, Ireland 19–21 June 2014*. University College Dublin, Press, 2014. p. 282.

they are treated as a normative facet of urban reality. This is only emphasised by their frequent appearance in television programmes, documentaries, newspapers, and online sources.⁷⁸ The banality of these impressions should perhaps be handled with some suspicion when we ponder the subliminal impact. A worrying similarity is noted by Lisle in that, when most successful, advertising images circumvent rational thought and embed themselves in subconscious desires.⁷⁹ With all the debate around emotion and memory in a post-conflict society, this could call attention to some insidious ramifications. Thus, young men, historically the most susceptible to these immersed cravings, in NI are not only bombarded with the typical slew of cultural products with a militarised content (video games and films) but an extra layer in mural form. Much like the effect with social welfare reform, the Troubles again created something of a pocket or bubble around NI in which violence has been valorised to an even greater extent than most western societies.⁸⁰

Reminiscent of zero-sum politics, defeating the enemy (another man) simultaneously affirms the perpetrator's manhood while lowering the victim's status to non-man, commonly through feminised humiliation.⁸¹ This then sets off a chain reaction in that the victim feels the best way, or only option, for him to shake off this weak position and regain vigour is by affirming his manhood. This may entail participating in ultra-manly activities such as violence, emotional repression, and sexual conquest. Commenting on the ease with which this behavioural cycle begins to turn, a UNESCO report stated: 'humiliation might not happen so easily if it were not for exaggerated ideas of masculine honour.'⁸² This self-fulfilling prophecy also further shrinks the nurturing of non-violent forms of masculinity. Loyalism is

⁷⁸ McCormick & Jarman, 'Death of a Mural' p.50.

⁷⁹ Lisle, 'Local Symbols, Global Networks' p. 28.

⁸⁰ Bairner, 'Masculinity, Violence and the Irish Peace Process' p. 127.

⁸¹ Antony Whitehead, 'Man to Man Violence: How Masculinity May Work as a Dynamic Risk Factor', *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, Vol. 44, Issue 4 (September 2005), p. 416.

⁸² UNESCO Expert Group Meeting, 'Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace', (September 1997), available at www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/oslorapp.htm.

far from lacking these radically alternative messages, but when they did materialise their potential was denied, as in the case of the media's reluctance to publish the UVF's conciliatory statements of the mid-1970s.⁸³ Naturally this seriously hindered the UVF in getting this message heard, keeping such attitudes in the margins. Nor did they have the precedent of the republican effective mural campaign following the 1981 hunger strikes. The crux of the matter lies in the proximity between cultural and direct violence, described in Galtung's template of conflict. Cultural violence includes the glorification of martial culture, blood sacrifice or armed struggle as part of a community's foundation myth.⁸⁴ Clearly representations of this ilk abound in the mural tradition and persist long after direct violence, that is physical acts regularly associated with conflict, has been brought under control. Yet the argument exists that cultural violence can justify, reinforce, or even produce direct violence.

Of course, there is no all-encompassing simple equation between seeing violence and committing it. However, as documented in Colombia the army ran a 24-hour television station with non-stop advertising campaign featuring uniforms, guns and power. Radio stations also raised drug dealers and thugs to a quasi-mythical status.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, in NI, with proscribed organisations banned from appearing on television, murals stood in as a suitable proxy. This meant that the media almost exclusively presented the more intimidating and forceful images. With their masked off, obscured countenance, these faceless men of violence that were and are chosen for broadcast also offer up the plausible metaphor of 'talking to a brick wall'.⁸⁶

⁸³ Novosel, *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity*, p. 103.

⁸⁴ Neil Ferguson, Shaun McDaid and James W. McAuley 'Social Movements, Structural Violence, and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland: The Role of Loyalist Paramilitaries' *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2018), p. 20.

⁸⁵ Theidon, 'Reconstructing Masculinities' p. 34.

⁸⁶ Woods, *Seeing is Believing*

1.2.3.2 Defining core terminology II: Disarming

As strenuously as formal military institutions may distinguish themselves from paramilitary activities, they both put the same image of masculinity on a pedestal. For much of their histories, the perfect recruit displayed physical toughness, endurance of hardship, rugged heterosexuality, unemotional logic and refusal to complain.⁸⁷ Since rigorous training encourages soldiers to deny any feminine part of themselves, analysis should not outright blame men but instead level against a system that deforms men. The motive for disarming arises from the recognition by social science of the interdependence between masculinity and militarisation. A central contention is that while a phallogentric ideology is not necessarily the sole cause of war, it is often involved in socialising young men to war. In the process it shuts down options in constricting the definitions of what it is to be a man. All of this is of course no accident, rather it is essential and conscious maintenance; ‘militarism requires a sustaining gender ideology as much as it needs guns and bullets.’⁸⁸ Campbell condenses a key problem, that principal actors in conflict are often branded a hazard as ‘*armed men*’ and not ‘*armed men*’.⁸⁹ Though it may at first appear a subtle divergence, this amounts to peace-making defined as decommissioning arms, while the decommissioning of masculinity is neglected. Abstract theory is substantiated by an international committee that noted that ‘what is really needed is the decommissioning of mind-sets in NI’.⁹⁰ The same source was also sceptical that true resolution could be reached until parties no longer resorted to their

⁸⁷ Whitehead & Barrett (1994) cited in Langa & Eagle, ‘The intractability of militarised masculinity’ p. 153.

⁸⁸ Theidon ‘Reconstructing Masculinities’ p. 4. See also Joshua S Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁸⁹ Beatrix Campbell, *Agreement! The State, Conflict and Change in Northern Ireland*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2008), p. 206.

⁹⁰ George J. Mitchell, John de Chastelain, and Harri Holkeri, ‘Report of the International Body on Arms Decommissioning’, (Belfast, 1996), art. 15.

vast inventories of historical recrimination. If the streets themselves are a sprawling gallery, then recriminations are curated as a permanent exhibition of murals. As articulations of gender, they also play into the normalising and rationalising of a subordinated femininity. Scholarly research focused on a mutual transition of gender and conflict has repeatedly uncovered the ‘inextricable links between violent masculinity and the ending of armed action.’⁹¹ On the symbolic level NI, particularly the loyalist landscape, has yet to draw a phase of cultural conflict to an end. Official removal of guns is of course hugely beneficial but, visually, murals keep the gun on the streets —and in minds. In times where the gun is exalted to cult status the defence of its ownership is on par with defending a hegemonic position. Thus, both sides of the conflict may have physically surrendered their guns, they enjoy a different fate in defiant representations of masculinity. This is even before agents advocating for a more comprehensive disarming reckon with the fact that, for some people in some areas, it is precisely these images which get to the heart of their aspirations.⁹² This may only apply to a minority but what does relate to them and indeed most men globally, is that not meeting localised standards of manhood can induce shame, humiliation, feelings of inadequacy and a loss of dignity.⁹³

In the ‘frustration-aggression’ hypothesis, humiliation is identified as a key factor in prolonging cycles of violence. Fraser makes use of this when arguing that every culture needs an out-group, especially in a period of change. The outgroup functions as a scapegoat for the majority’s frustrations.⁹⁴ However, a consensus in psychological literature is that this theory is out-dated as subsequent studies have shown that causality does not necessarily follow in

⁹¹ Gilmartin, ‘Gendering the ‘post-conflict’ narrative’, p. 97.

⁹² Tony Crowley, ‘The Art of Memory: The Murals of Northern Ireland and the Management of History’ *Field Day Review*, Issue 7 (2011), p. 30.

⁹³ Porter, ‘What is Constructed can be Transformed’ p. 488.

⁹⁴ Morris Fraser, ‘*Children in Conflict*’ (1973) in Whyte *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, p. 94.

either direction. Regardless of this debunking, emotions are still highly gendered and the belief that an internalised demilitarisation lies partly in accessing a wider range of emotions still seems reasonable. Given their attributes of size, colour and location, murals operate not only at the intellectual level but stir up emotions, whether positive or negative. This potential for emotion to bypass rational thought could have significant implications for this research if Harold Jackson's assessment still retains some validity. In his pamphlet *'The Two Irelands'* (1971) NI is described as 'a society suffering from a deep psychosis...[and] emotional spasms the moment it comes under stress.'⁹⁵ One response to the stress of uncertainty seems to be reassurance in resilient performativity, i.e., the rituals and symbols of militarised masculinity. This performance is showcased in murals and through the carefully cultivated 'impenetrable bodies',⁹⁶ men may come to think of themselves as 'untouchable' both physically and emotionally. These highly charged figures are settled in, and contribute to, sites of social centrality. That is: places where hegemonic power is inscribed, often imbued with an almost sacred aura giving them the impression that they are timelessly beyond all scrutiny. By disputing this previously unchallenged identity, disarming through agency amounts to what Bhabha calls a 'decentring' of old paradigms.⁹⁷ The second part of this thesis, concerning disarmament, is not only interested in centring peripheral identities and surfacing submerged narratives, but also in arguing for an inverting of murals' function. Instead of war, they would 'sell' peace and related masculinities to young loyalist men. Antonio Gramsci's 'counter-hegemonic vision' avails us when clarifying this potential material, the search for which is situated internally and externally to loyalism.

⁹⁵ Harold Jackson, *The Two Irelands: A Dual Study of Inter-Group Tensions*, Minority Rights Group, Report no.2 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1971), p. 4.

⁹⁶ Theidon, 'Reconstructing Masculinities' p. 27.

⁹⁷ See also Stuart Hall (2000) in Omolola A. Ladele, 'Deconstructing Masculinities, Feminist Reconstructions' Interventions, Vol. 12 (2010) p. 462.

The task of decentring certainly has attractive outcomes, but we cannot lose sight of the resistance it would encounter. Ian McBride's comparison of loyalist and republican commemorations reveals more than differing accounts of the same events, but a rival cultural code used to structure the past itself.⁹⁸ On the rare occasion that women do appear in murals, it is in a manner which does not threaten or disturb the masculine codes; theirs is far from a destabilising presence to an embedded patriarchy.⁹⁹ What is needed in divided cities is the opening up of alternative spaces which close down the programmed uses of segregated space. The mocking of conventional hierarchy at Pride, with the crowning of the 'gay queen' and 'lesbian king'¹⁰⁰, demonstrates humour as resistance as well as fluidity of the gendered body. Related to this expression of personal identity are several other challenges that Mosse portrays as freeing men from restrictive norms: popular music and dance, and more controversially, drugs and sexual experimentation.¹⁰¹ While it was his hope that these experiences might soften the sharp contours of masculinity, he admits it is not so much whether youth culture will break the mould but rather how far it will make it bend.

1.2.3.3 Internationalism/cultural globalisation

Though predictably varied across global contexts, the view that manhood is not automatically 'given' but must be achieved is remarkably consistent. Moreover, should a man not acquiesce to what is specifically and socially expected of him, he is deemed to have failed in the perpetual testing of male legitimacy. Yet when access to the vast constructions of masculinity is made available, as it is in a globalising world, people have more choice in the meaning-

⁹⁸ Ian McBride, "Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland," in his *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 27.

⁹⁹ Debbie Lisle, 'Local Symbols, Global Networks: Rereading the Murals of Belfast' *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* Vol. 31, Issue1 (2006), p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ Nagle, 'Unity in Diversity' p. 89.

¹⁰¹ Bourke, review of *The Image of Man*

making of gender.¹⁰² This thesis will be open to globalising discourses, not simply for the variety it affords, but because, as a term, ‘globalisation’ is regularly considered in an economic sense. When this occurs it becomes the impetus for rampant deindustrialisation and the export of opportunity. Considered in its cultural form, however, it may yet yield some positive findings. Furthering the argument of its potential is that murals— as a delivery system of new ideas— may influentially transcend national boundaries. An inspirational image stands not just as a sensation but can represent more collective movements, such as Sudanese protestor Alaa Salah.¹⁰³ Other examples from the global south range from the organisational (Sonke Gender Justice, addressing male violence, and ‘Engaging Men’ information network)¹⁰⁴ to the conceptual (the Changana notion of ‘ndota’ refers to a man who is considerate toward women, showing restraint and control).¹⁰⁵ Technically ‘ndota’ implies seniority but it can still exist as an aspirational category for young men. The erosion of state power, often attributed to the forces of globalisation, can expedite a ‘cosmopolitan sensibility’¹⁰⁶ unfettered to nationalism. Whilst this places greater emphasis on global concerns e.g., climate change, nuclear weapons over parochial questions of self-determination, a countervailing dynamic can send us back into an assertive defence of inner

¹⁰² Beasley (2008) quoted in Jack S. Kahn, Jessica R. Holmes & Benjamin L. Brett, ‘Dialogical Masculinities: Diverse Youth Resisting Dominant Masculinity’, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* (2011), p. 32.

¹⁰³ In April 2019 the image of Salah leading a chant against President Omar Hassan al-Bashir went viral. Sudanese women were at the forefront of the pro-democracy movement by some estimates making up as many as two-thirds of protests Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, ‘In Sudan, Women Showed the World How It’s Done’ *New York Times* 15 October 2019 (15/10/19) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/opinion/sudan-women-government.html?fbclid=IwAR00FrRrUztu46RRP54a6uQf2Z2QmAU3fGBGuab4v4zmjcOpVFX4jAzuO9g> accessed 15 October 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Cynthia Cockburn, ‘World disarmament? Start by disarming masculinity’ *Open Democracy* (April 2015) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/cynthia-cockburn/world-disarmament-start-by-disarming-masculinity> accessed 16 July 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Christian Groes-Green, ‘Philogynous Masculinities: Contextualizing Alternative Manhood in Mozambique’, *Men & Masculinities*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (2012), p. 97. The same study also recorded informants referencing ‘bom pico’: a man who prioritises women’s sexual pleasure and who is caring and attentive to women.

¹⁰⁶ John Nagle ‘Unity in Diversity’: Non-sectarian Social Movement Challenges to the Politics of Ethnic Antagonism in Violently Divided Cities’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol. 37, Issue 1 (January 2013), p. 87.

differences. Indeed ethnic conflict can be worsened by the deleterious impact of global integration.¹⁰⁷

1.3 Main conclusions & recommendations

1.3.1 Main conclusions from part one

This section summarises the main findings from this research, firstly by outlining the conclusions from part one and then setting out key recommendations from part two. The most fundamental conclusion that we can reach throughout part one is that the contemporary loyalist landscape can be understood as an expression of cultural violence. This in turn being defined as the glorification of conflict and the masculinities integral to it. This conclusion is based on thorough assessment of relevant gender theory, visual analysis and significant critical literature. In addition to this theoretical input from scholars across a range of disciplines such as history, sociology and psychology, observations recorded from fieldwork provide further insight to substantiate the author's original hypothesis. Whilst we can and should recognise that the threat to a fragile peace posed by murals is relatively low, a priority to tackle such obstacles to reconciliation should not be overlooked as it can legitimise the use of violence in its more direct or structural forms. Broadly speaking this legitimatisation takes shape in two directions. Outwardly murals can attack the integrity of an outgroup (in this case those who identify as Catholic, Irish nationalist or republican) this involves a lowering of one groups' status. Often this constitutes a crude essentialism which contributes to an othering of those labelled as different, an enemy and a threat. Conversely murals can elevate the esteem

¹⁰⁷ Michael Ignatieff, *The warrior's honour: ethnic war and modern conscience* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), p. 58.

of an ingroup (here we mean those identifying as Protestant, British and loyalist). In these scenarios, imagery exalts aspects of this insider culture as the proud warriors, defenders of the realm and protectors of the true faith. All of this has a heavily gendered dimension, and all heroics are performed by honest, decent and honourable men. So, one process lowers/degenerates the image and idea of a people through misunderstanding and mythmaking, the other heightens/regenerates the ingroup image, collective pride and sense of worth. This also requires the mythmaking and space-claiming functions of murals to persuade an internal audience of a selective and specific narrative which advances their interests. A major conclusion of part one is that the practices and presentations of masculinity and history in murals can be summarised rather easily since they do not deviate from inveterate models. The landscape is a closed system of communication, its symbolic content amounts to a gallery with a very exclusion-based criteria. All three periods of production documented look through a tunnel vision which only allows a few accepted versions of loyalism and masculinity to be showcased.

Besides this general conclusion, the author would like to stress a few salient features from each chapter. In chapter three, the origins of weaponisation, the patriarch King William III is in a sense a founding father again in 1922 since partition marked the creation of a unionist state, the Stormont regime that the author refers to as a '2nd Protestant Ascendancy'. This encompasses the structural violence of the state, its discriminatory policies and practices around housing, education, political representation and criminal justice. The imbalance of power between the two dominant cultures in NI was writ large in the early landscape which was inhabited exclusively by subjects favoured by a loyalist perspective. Emblematic of sectarian interpretations, the use of Williamite memory is highly selective to a partisan agenda and erasures of complexity existed around the broader geopolitical context, the war itself and the man whose name is given to the campaign. In lieu of any nuanced portrait, he is

depicted as an infallible ruler whose theatrical and triumphal performance of masculinity towers over the new and flawed state. From chapter four we can conclude that, after an initial delay in production, loyalist murals during the Troubles followed a similar formula: a modern militarised template was established and then replicated with little alteration. In this case the template was the contemporary conflict and combatants elevating themselves, their organisations and actions to a pantheon of illustrious fighters. The number of archetypes discussed could give the impression of an assortment of subjects with modified purposes, but this is not so. Rather they are in accordance with exaggerated stereotypes and adhere to the emotional rudiments underpinning the siege mentality. Finally, chapter five contains the unavoidable conclusion we arrive at by the end of part one which is that, despite a quarter century of peace, the symbolic landscape does not reference the improvements made nor does it indicate the overwhelming desire of a majority not to return to violence. One major reason for this is that the majority do not possess the means to communicate collective intentions. We see at several junctures in the thesis that murals are under the influence of what the author terms a tyranny of the minority. This addresses the stranglehold that paramilitaries have over this vast communicative network. That virtually the same militarised and masculine messages continue to resound in the echo chamber should be more likely explicated as a pictorial summation of this power imbalance. There seems a fundamental disconnect between the will of the people and the way their interests and identities are supposedly represented. Another by-product of this tyranny is that the current state of young loyalist masculinities remains a thoroughly unexamined aspect of NI society. If searching questions are not posed then problematic expectations, routines and performed habits around loyalism, murals and masculinity will march on undeterred. Ultimately an absence of criticality on gender is subsumed into a broader culture of silence. This stunts not only the

growth of an evolved, mature style of muralism but more historically sensitive and emotionally sophisticated masculinities that the medium could promote.

1.3.2 Recommendations from part two

Since this project is intended to be a work of applied history, it is appropriate that this thesis offers up some practical points for future consideration. These should be understood not as any prescriptive dogma, a feature itself of weaponisation, but rather as a series of six suggestive and constructive comments. The first and simplest recommendation is that murals should stand as the declarative visual voice, loud and proud statements of purpose in stark contrast to imagery resulting from prior interventions into the symbolic landscape. Indeed, it is the author's view that weaknesses of previous attempts could serve as caution for future efforts. The overarching recommendation is that murals act as radical alternative media, by alternative the author means that murals should unveil a multitude of counter-hegemonic visions. These oppose the dominant material of part one: more women, non-violent masculinities, men of colour and queer men. After the narrowing of options, tightly restricted in part one's tunnel vision, it is integral that the visions of part two widen potentiality such as promoting a new emotional language, a more versatile vocabulary of expression; changing firstly what it means to be a warrior, hero, fighter and secondly how we define their virtues: courage, strength, honour, pride. When most successful and complete, these counter-hegemonic visions would render not only positive historical episodes but negative or painful scenes from which we can learn as well as a collectively imagined future we wish to see manifest. The author describes the gestalt of this landscape as an intense inversion of the normalised, weaponised patterns or an upside-down utopia.

For the true potential of these visions to be realised they must be more than simply statically and passively installed in communities with the expectation that, by their presence alone, desired change will emerge. Therefore, a third recommendation is that murals should emit a radical energy which the author outlines in two methods. Firstly, the verbing of the mural reveals opportunities for meaningful social engagement of (primarily) young men throughout the process of its making. Here again we see the need to differentiate radical murals from the recent trend in using new technologies which, whilst far quicker and perhaps cheaper, deny us these opportunities. The second radical use recommended is that murals should be repeatedly activated. This is the last stage in the author's proposed '3 Rs of Disarming', the first two being the more self-explanatory removal and replacement of subject matter. Activation simply means that public consciousness should be directed back to the mural as a locale for contemplation. The author expands on this by offering three variants: educational (public art as a learning tool), political (public art as a rallying point for social movements) and cultural (public art merged with other creative media to engage audiences in critical thinking). In all instances, both the physical condition and its conceptual content are not allowed to deteriorate. Instead, they are maintained in the minds of their host population and any outside visitors. For any of this to be possible it is recommended that multiple strategies that encourage an end to the tyranny of the minority should be pursued. The lingering legacy and continued influence of paramilitary organisations should be mitigated as much as possible. It is postulated that a change in public art may facilitate a change in the public's mindset, altering attitudes toward paramilitaries—challenging the supposed need or relevance for their existence. As a substitute for the current asymmetric power relations, the thesis recommends that the tyranny is replaced with a democratising of the medium so it is embedded as a people's art, serving the majority will with informed consent and consistent consultation. From this democratic platform, loyalist communities could exhibit whatever

they choose, including but not limited to the versions of masculinity they agree with and pictorially support behaviours, language and actions more appropriate for post-conflict realities.

The final two recommendations concern where loyalist communities may find the specific sources for disarming subject matter. To this end the author advocates for an internal and external exploration of possibilities. A host of counter-hegemonic narratives, organisations and individuals all found within loyalism and related identities are nominated as deserving candidates in chapter eight. These would essentially replace the monolithic monotony of part one with vitalising multiplicity. Likewise, the singularity of depiction and attitude that suffocated creative freedom would be undone by liberating pluralities. An internal journey into lesser-known facets of loyalism may engender a boost of confidence which could accompany the capacity building of community participatory mural-making. Lastly, it is strongly recommended in chapter six that loyalists simultaneously look elsewhere for disarming inspiration, examining practices that lie outside of the comfort zone of (over)familiarity. This recommendation is based on several reasons most basically in recognising the difficulties around racism in NI. Despite being a very monoracial society it still struggles with tensions along these lines and this thesis refers to both notable incidents and statistical trends. Art from elsewhere is suggested as an indirect version of contact hypothesis whereby negative perceptions are mitigated through sustained and sincere personal communication. In addition to disarming the weapon of xenophobia, importing inspiration from abroad would demonstrate lessons in the capabilities of public art, how murals have been used to pose inconvenient questions, signpost unacceptability and prompt corrective measures. Lessons could also be learnt about how other post-conflict societies have managed their own slow and painful processes of reconciliation. Within this, insights may be gleaned about how other communities disarmed their own culturally specific

weaponised masculinities. The author admits that some features of their problems and subsequent attempted solutions will be unique to another's context yet given the near universality of some weaponised masculine traits and archetypes it is likely there will be a degree of transferability. Crucially any importation of inspiration should be conducted in a culturally sensitive fashion and not in some extractive or exploitative appropriation. Indeed, it is not beyond the realms of imagination that an initial exchange of ideas and imagery between loyalists and other global communities might instigate a genuine knowledge exchange of mutual benefit and nourish the bonds of sustained friendship.

1.4 Structure of thesis

What follows is an overview of this thesis' structure which accounts for the remainder of this opening chapter. Before we get into the marrow of the research it is necessary for us to assess the conditions and functions of how it was conducted. This is covered in chapter two which provides insights into the chosen methodology. Here the main ideas that support both parts like a spine of research will be covered and how they relate to each other will be explained. After the theoretical framework has been set out, we will reflect on the practical details that helped inform other more conventional methods of historical research, namely an account of fieldwork undertaken will be provided. Part one maps the evolution of weaponised murals and masculinities across a swathe of time, organised into three stages of production. We begin with chapter three which locates the origins of this contested cultural practice in the cauldron of Home Rule resistance, the chaos of state partition and the upheavals of the Irish revolutionary period. We see how the early 20th century blueprint pre-dates NI itself with the establishment of the patriarch King William III. The theme of murals as response to threat is touched on with the crisis of possible Home Rule and we observe the generational

maintenance of triumphalist depictions as in the case of the Jackson family of The Fountain, Derry. A preference for continuity over change is also communicated in the lavish coronation scenes in the 1940s and 1950s. With the status, power and relative privileges of the unionist state coming under scrutiny during the civil rights movement, we follow a sharp decline in murals from the late 1960s to Direct Rule in 1972. Chapter four, a visual chronicle of the Troubles, opens with the slump period of mural production in the 1970s. This discrepancy of low conflict imagery during the most intense decade of the conflict is often ascribed to an identity crisis, a loss of loyalist confidence and a search for new symbolism. This was found in two key events of the 1980s: the 1981 hunger strike and the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA). The former was accompanied by republicans, for the first time, asserting their identity and claiming space with murals and we see the aggressive territoriality of loyalism as a response to this change. The perceived political betrayal of the latter event sparked the definitive escalation of weaponised imagery. The final decade of the conflict is divided into two, four-year periods which despite containing the gradual development of the peace process did not witness similar encouraging signs of adaptation in the loyalist landscape. Rather a romanticised binary of absolute victory vs. defeat carries over into chapter five which dissects the ‘post-conflict’ age to the present day. The only real difference to the violence is that, without a clear enemy, rivalry is turned inward as in the major loyalist feuding at the start of the millennium. The chapter dwells on a plethora of challenges to peace such as multiple segregation and political dysfunction, only temporarily reinstated by the St. Andrews Agreement of 2006. Another feature of NI society is an increased friction over issues of belonging and inclusion—the shift toward the ‘culture wars’. As with earlier examples in part one, we compare a timeline of significant incidents such as the flag protests/riots in 2012-13 to a timeline of notable murals. Part one ends with another important pairing of timelines, the depictions during the ‘decade of centenaries’ which leant heavily on

a very partisan reading and problematic interpretation of the First World War. The phenomenon of change as catalyst for crisis brings part one to an end with post-Brexit uncertainties having a potentially destabilising effect on the region.

Our move into part two is a dramatic departure from everything previously discussed, indeed its purpose is to offer a series of bold counterpoints to the weaponisation of both murals and masculinities. When going from a description of difficulties to proposing possibilities of positive adjustment, we will naturally encounter a different tone and content. The extent of these diverging methodologies will be expanded upon in the next chapter. Part two's intention of suggesting subject matter to disarm the symbolic landscape starts by bringing in perspectives outside of some loyalist comfort zones. This marks a conscious choice to internationalise a cultural practice often criticised for giving pictorial form to an ossification of mentalities. The argument here is that internationalising the landscape may encourage a more progressive understanding of different identities thus undoing some weaponisation which relies on the hatred, mistrust and ignorance of othering. Chapter six puts forward numerous case studies across three international contexts. In South Africa we contemplate the efforts of several disarming actors, these vary in scale of operation but share the common goal of ending gender-based violence. From the socially conscious practice of individual artists like eL Seed, artist collectives like the Sudanese Ana Taban, local NGO Sonke Gender Justice up to the multi-national Men Engage Network, we appreciate how transformative public art can be. This potential is further enriched with an appraisal of the South east Asian feminist group the 'Fearless Collective' which details both careful steps in their process and analyses specific artworks that demonstrate disarming. The final context is an itinerant investigation of several movements within the Americas. This begins with youth-led civil resistance in Pinochet's Chile and an illustrated history of war and peace in Guatemala. We then move north, across the Mexican border, to reflect on the remarkable

examples of San Francisco's Balmy Alley and the Great Wall of Los Angeles. We sojourn in Chicago when revisiting the lessons of the black liberation arts movement as depicted on the 'Wall of Respect'. Finally we arrive at Philadelphia which the author puts forward as the zenith of an open, active and disarming landscape.

Chapter seven distils the observations from the international case studies into the overarching proposition that murals could perform the role of radical alternative media. As the paradigm for the transformative ethos throughout part two, this phrase is broken down and the three words explained in detail and context. By 'radical' the author means finding and strengthening the visual voice, articulating peaceful masculinities more explicitly than previous interventions into the landscape. It also refers to the action of making the mural as being rife with opportunities for social connection, our emphasis shifts from mural merely as product to ongoing process. Radical murals would not have an end date or reach a point of completion, for as sites of repeated activation they continue to inspire, inform and positively influence mindsets. The 'alternative' that murals furnish is rather evident since part one was populated by such clear and repetitive tropes. Alternative then would fill in the many gaps of representation, en masse this would constitute a counter-hegemonic vision foregrounding demographics commonly falling prey to weaponised masculinity: women, people of colour, and the queer community. Lastly, 'media' specifically indicates those who are in control of the landscape and dictate the messages it conveys. We end by contrasting how loyalist murals are generally managed (by an extreme minority of anonymous agents) to how they could be managed (by the majority consent of the community). This moves us away from a veritable tyranny toward a just and fair democratic art that speaks not with one voice but many.

After careful review, both theoretical and practical aspects of RAM are consolidated in the final chapter which internally investigates loyalist-related disarming. The six sections

of chapter eight search inward for further inspirational material in loyalism and closely associated identities. We begin with the new loyalism that emerged enlightened after deep critical reflection on the self and society in the darkness of the 1970s prison experience. The pioneering ideas around integrated education, non-violence, dialogue, power-sharing and reconciliation clash loudly against the weaponised norms of part one. The groundbreaking of these men is matched by the inspirational transversalism of frontline feminism, that being the ability to literally cross the divide in the mutual interests of peace. Aside from ending violence, women's groups throughout the Troubles worked shoulder to shoulder at the grassroots level across a range of essential services like healthcare, childcare, education and training. It is suggested that queer subject matter could join these more representational depictions as allies against patriarchal authority. Both would disrupt the heteronormative male monopoly and with it the troubling connotations around power, acceptance and diversity. Told through the mostly unacknowledged story of Protestant workers who refused to partake in sectarian abuse during the shipyard expulsions of 1920, we see how vital social class solidarity is in defeating the narrow lines of tribally demarcated identity. As these circles of alliance, friendship and collectivity expand, the once thick and dark outlines of identity overlap and begin to dissolve. Just as a pattern of dissenting in Presbyterianism has disarming potential, the author also detects a usefully rebellious spirit in Ulster-Scots as a cultural thirdspace. By not conforming to the standard binary of belonging, notions of individualism and critical thinking cherished in some Ulster-Scots quarters could facilitate a similarly rigorous questioning of masculinity. The last internal source is found in young people, particularly those inhabiting forgotten corners of subcultures. As much as formal education can disarm, the author stresses the emancipatory capacity of the arts. Whether appearing in working class Protestant playwriting or non-sectarian music genres like punk,

rave and hip-hop, an openness of expression allows for meaningful connection, self-reflection and a challenge to be issued to discrimination.

Conclusion

The commanding presence of murals has incited an abundance of research attempting to explain the Troubles. Yet Vannais is of the opinion that few scholars have probed their deeper significance. The literature is led by Rolston and Jarman, who stress their role in political culture, while Sluka considers them as an expression of ethno-national identity.¹⁰⁸ Just as gender has been mostly elided from mural research it is deficient in the broader field of Northern Irish analysis. The chance to enshrine women's rights in the new post-conflict NI, following the Good Friday Agreement, was squandered. The primary architects centred 'guns and government' with gender taking a position at the periphery. Likewise, in academia, much research has dwelt on solving ethnonational antagonisms and political issues like decommissioning. A qualitative turn in defining 'disarmament' redistributes some attention toward so-called 'soft skills'. Conventional approaches to conflict tend to separate forms of conflict in hermetically-sealed categories.¹⁰⁹ However, reality is deprived of such clear start and end points and, as we have seen, post-conflict societies can become a hotbed for resilient violent practices. Inasmuch as conflict does not obey any compartmentalising, murals, in a radical act, also break loose from the cultural ghetto of 'high art'. This thesis will contribute to the debate on their representative nature, i.e., relationship to the communities they claim to represent, by contextualising an iconographic examination. In this way, the method of inquiry

¹⁰⁸ Goalwin, 'The Art of War', p. 189.

¹⁰⁹ Gilmartin, 'Gendering the 'post-conflict' p. 90.

reflects the subject matter: both are put back into the community to reconnect with the people.

This has some pronounced overtones regarding unconscious bias whether directed at the working class or loyalism more generally. For all the innovation that a project may boast, outside solutions cannot merely be invented and imposed from above.¹¹⁰ By respectful collaboration, ways to accommodate popular traditions of deep memory may be found. Not least because embedded myths show no sign of evaporating despite efforts of more iconoclastic historians.¹¹¹ In addition to the challenge of traversing problematic language and localised sensitivities, the key question remains: is it possible to interpret murals in subversive or radical ways when audiences are so ‘ideologically incarcerated’ by loyalist and republican agendas?¹¹²

Though masculinity does not in and of itself cause conflict, ‘interrogations of the interaction between particular constitutions of masculinities and conflict have not been sufficiently developed.’¹¹³ In lieu of thorough academic scrutiny, coverage is sometimes shot through the sensationalised lens of journalistic accounts of hyper-masculine, high profile figures such as Johnny Adair. This is emblematic of how paramilitary masculinities are often simply labelled by the media as ‘cowards’ or ‘sadistic’ and ‘psychopathic’.¹¹⁴ A final note on rationale would be to curb the subtractive portrayals of loyalism. The more erratic behaviour can comfort those who wish to condemn, ridicule and mock. Moreover, it can provide a fix for those addicted on the past, who seem to revel in violent machinations.¹¹⁵ But a sincerely

¹¹⁰ ‘Where next for Loyalist paramilitaries after the Panel report?’ *BBC The View*, Interview with Peter Sheridan and Sophie Long posted by Slugger O’Toole, available at YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbHNWm4q1qc> accessed 3 December 2019.

¹¹¹ Beiner, ‘Between Trauma and Triumphalism’, p. 389.

¹¹² Lisle, ‘Local Symbols, Global Networks’ p. 33.

¹¹³ Ashe & Harland, ‘Troubling Masculinities’ p. 749.

¹¹⁴ Ashe, ‘Gendering War and Peace’, p. 239.

¹¹⁵ Shirlow, ‘Loyalists stop riots, create jobs, challenge racism’.

empathetic engagement, however arduous or distressing, may prove to be vital in the pursuit of lasting peace. The next chapter explains how we might achieve that engagement by describing the methodologies used throughout this thesis. It will provide necessary details to identify and understand the precise methods that were applied during the project. These include what type of research was conducted, what data was collected and how it was analysed.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides details of the author's methodology over two sections. The first brings together a summary of the most significant theoretical inspirations and arranges them in a framework to describe how they related to each other. Logically, the sub-sections follow the two-part structure of the thesis. The main concepts that inform weaponisation include understanding murals as cultural violence and the psychological impact of long-term, publicly displayed gendered propaganda. An analogy to advertising explains the power of glorifying war imagery and this sensational spectacle dovetails with the dramaturgical dimension. The author combines the input of three key scholars to provide a nuanced interpretation that bridges the weaponisation of murals and masculinities. The concept of gender performativity is joined by Goffman's notions on the everyday presentation of the self, impression management and frame analysis. A further commensurate concept are the 'masks of masculinity' outlined by Lewis Howe which contextualise masculine performances in real world implications of stress, pressure, insecurity and over-compensating behaviour. All these masks are worn during the central drama which for militarised loyalism is a repeated staging of the siege mentality, a worldview shaped by extreme binaries. The author ends this sub-section by elaborating on the classification of specific weaponised archetypes. Radical alternative media is the transformative paradigm that frames part two. Adapting theories from social movement theory and rebellious communication studies, murals are explained as being 'radical' in three ways: as a declarative visual voice, contrasting to previous lacklustre interventions into the landscape, verbed as a socially constructive process rather than static, disconnected product. Finally, the completed mural is not quite 'finished'

as it remains a repeatedly activated site of learning, political engagement and cultural nourishment. Murals as 'alternative' explores how Gramsci's counter-hegemonic vision could take literal, visual form on the streets of NI. Not only is this a vehement rejection of the hegemonic masculinities of part one, but it proposes new and dynamic roles for men and calls for fluidity and ambiguity to be adopted in transitional mindsets. Lastly the author discusses how murals could serve populations of host communities as a free and open people's media. This democratic platform is a space for bold, experimental performances and where participatory strategies bring together diverse groups in active citizenry resulting in a swelling of non-militarised pride.

The second section captures the author's approach to the fieldwork, a key aspect to the applied historical nature of the study and its desire to connect with practical implications. Fieldwork consisted of interviews, site visits, and youth workshops and the author describes them along with the rationale. A criterion of inclusion is provided as are the particulars of sample size and recruitment methods. In addition to who was approached and participated, the limitations of research are also outlined, for example whose voices are missing from the study and what impact did COVID restrictions have on the original research design. The author refers to some further important studies that influenced the chosen methodology. The section concludes with a consideration of ethics and how sensitive obstacles were tackled through safeguarding measures, secure data storage and careful consultation with the supervisory team.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Weaponisation

Throughout this thesis a variety of theories will be employed when supplying a suitable analysis, indeed the interdisciplinary literature testifies to the multi-layered intricacies that lie at the heart of the problem and so must therefore be part of any solution. Of course, these will be referenced more fully as we encounter the need to apply a certain theory, however this section synthesizes the main ideas relied upon into a coherent framework. We begin by considering the ideas that act like rigid reinforcements, supporting and strengthening the notion of weaponisation. We should remind ourselves that by this term the author posits that many loyalist murals are a form of Galtung's cultural violence. Simply put this includes any aspect of culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. This was explained in chapter one's main conclusions, but the two sides of a possible cultural attack are either a demotion of an outgroup's esteem thereby dehumanizing and othering a people indelibly marked as enemy. Alternately one's ingroup (loyalism in this case) can be elevated through publicly contested art to reach levels of ethnonational supremacy with the result being very similar: a severely asymmetric relationship. A suitable theoretical background is that of social identity, pioneered by Professor Henri Tajfel. Groups striving to maintain or enhance their self-esteem will often do so via means of favourable divergence from a neighbouring group.¹ The result is a sense of superiority and follows an established trend, consequently the impulse to evaluate one's group positively is very firmly rooted. All three major forms of violence are present in part one of the thesis, whether that is the

¹ Evidence assembled from numerous studies by social psychologist Ed Cairns indicates that data from Northern Ireland fits this theory. Ed Cairns, 'Intergroup Conflict in Northern Ireland' in Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and *Caught in the Crossfire: Children and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Appletree, 1987), pp. 95-117.

structural violence in chapter three which contextualises the institutional discrimination Catholics faced during the half century of unionist majority rule. Direct violence, the most explicit form that comes to most minds, is most present during chapter four's recounting of the Troubles. Running parallel to all these notable and notorious incidents however is a glorification of conflict and the men who define their lives by it. Therefore, cultural violence accompanies the other strands as they intertwine across part one. A refined theorizing of violence is required for us to appreciate how, as a marginally evolved continuum, it spills over into the 'post-conflict' age of chapter five.

That many loyalist murals depict unequivocally militarised subject matter is a rather uncomplicated verdict at which to arrive. Yet when wondering how this visual environment might impact on young loyalist men, the author invokes the advertising analogy. This hypothesis, inspired by the psychology of marketing, suggests a relationship of influence between images and ideas. It is proposed that like advertisements, murals, when most successful can outmanoeuvre rational thinking and implant themselves in subconscious desire.² The analogy raises some fascinating possibilities regarding the long-term psychological reverberation that murals may stir but it also raises obstacles for research. The causal link between the weaponisation and murals and that of masculinities is far from direct but one of surreptitious encroachment into young minds. As this is not a singular phenomenon but a slow behavioural trajectory, it makes capturing and verifying the analogy very difficult. Yet even without large-scale, tangible evidence it is certainly not implausible that the decades-long 'broadcast' of some of these militarised advertisements contributed in some way at least to a negatively altered state of being. These murals do not sell commodities rather they trade in tropes of the hegemonic heroic mould. They also consistently manipulate

² Lisle, 'Local Symbols, Global Networks' p. 28

highly gendered emotions to evoke gendered expectations that weigh heavily on young shoulders. All of this leads us to a set of three closely related scholarly outputs on behaviour which the author groups together as the dramaturgical dimension. This dimension consists of Judith Butler's seminal theory on gender performativity which postulates that gender is not something we have inherently from birth rather we acquire it through a series of performative acts.³ Often these acts are attempts to assimilate into society such as how we walk, talk and dress. So, our performance might be calibrated to appease social expectation rather than being a genuine expression of our personality. Gender as something we do rather than something we always have contradicts earlier essentialist views on the nature of a universal masculinity as well as overturning a biological reductionism which left little room for emotional growth, sustained introspection and gradual development. Butler's performativity correlates with the work of the influential sociologist Erving Goffman. The use of theatrical imagery to understand human interaction began with 'Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life' (1956) which outlined how we attempt to control or guide the impression that others might make of us by changing our setting, appearance, and manner.⁴ Goffman argued that individuals present this managed impression of the self on our metaphorical front stage whilst a more discreet preparation of characters goes on behind the curtain in the backstage of our mind. With his popular 'frame analysis' understanding people's situations by looking at images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors, and messages, it seems highly appropriate method for loyalism and the murals it produces. What messages and meanings are front-staged, as well as those conspicuously cut from this publicly 'performed' script, can reveal the factors as to how and why some are chosen are others are not. For this thesis, the mural is the 'frame' and stage on which certain loyalist impressions are managed and where specific gender roles are

³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 192.

⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (London: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 210.

performed. The final aspect of the dramaturgical dimension corresponds perfectly with Butler and Goffman. This thesis asserts that some loyalist murals and men wear particular ‘masks of masculinity’ as detailed by Lewis Howe. It is argued that some men’s overconfident façade of invincibility and aggression is merely another managed impression projected to inspire terror whilst obscuring deeper insecurities.⁵ Anxieties commonly lurk backstage when men perceive themselves to be lacking in either financial status or sexual prowess, hence the material and sexual masks are worn to exhibit a compensatory appearance of wealth and competitive heterosexuality. Lastly the ‘stoic’ and ‘joker’ masks help men play the character who does not indulge in the unmanly sharing of emotions. Rather he is able to suppress unwanted feelings through enduring the pain or tragically laughing it off.

If NI is landscaped by this veritable street theatre, then historical adaptations of the siege mentality are the particular drama that is being played out repeatedly throughout the ages. It can be expounded as a worldview buttressed by binaries such as: insider/outsider, good/evil, right/wrong, and defender/attacker. These enable an essentialist thinking, a two-dimensional understanding populated by caricature heroes and villains doing battle across a crudely simplified terrain of time and space. This mentality forces us to consider ourselves, others, and the world in terms of an either-or false dilemma or ultimatum. One foundational consequence of the siege mentality is that history, loyalism and masculinity are much easier to weaponise when they undergo extensive reductionism. The glaring omissions in important concepts make them ammunition in the radicalising of young, suggestible faculties. With regards to categorising specific weaponised iterations, the author uses a typology of archetypes. These are the troupe of actors that are cast in the theatre of conflict. This study

⁵ Lewis Howes, *The Mask of Masculinity: How Men can Embrace Vulnerability, Create Strong Relationships and Live Their Fullest Lives* (Carlsbad: Hay House, 2017), p. 8.

identifies eight archetypes over the three periods of mural production, arranged into the three chapters of part one. These are sub-divided into major and minor, referring to how frequently they are cited in the landscape. To some extent this can be useful as a gauge of an archetype's relative importance. We must always remember though that the authority behind mural-making lies not with the people but with a select few who are more likely to subscribe to the siege mentality. Therefore, a proviso should be put in place against broad sweeping assumptions that murals speak on behalf of entire loyalist communities. The minor archetypes are as follows: mythological, the heroism of Cú Chulainn and giantism of Fionn mac Cumhaill; genocidal, a misremembering of the 1641 rebellion and Cromwellian reconquest; institutional, the codified behaviour of the B- Specials and Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR); and phantasmagorical, the ghoulish dramatis personae of Eddie the Trooper and the Grim Reaper. These are moderately atypical compared to the major archetypes: 'Besieged', the Williamite war of the late 17th century; 'Partitioned', aspects of the Home Rule crisis (1912-1914); 'Entrenched', the soldiery of the First World War; and 'Troubled', contemporary paramilitaries. The carefully chosen appellations of the major archetypes do not merely describe the historical context that they reference but also accentuate aspects of weaponised masculinities. These relate back to a psychologically extended version of the siege mentality with there being an internal struggle both between competing masculinities and within the conflicted self. Gender theory cited in this thesis underlines a common 'solution' to the detection of unwanted or 'lesser' forms of masculinity within the self. What amounts to an emotional compartmentalising could aptly be summarised as a metaphorical partition dividing the psyche into positive binary masculinities (good, true, strong, and right) and negative binaries (evil, false, weak and wrong). Once a partition is established early on it may be reinforced through repetitive, ritualised socialisation. This can lead to certain views, including those around what masculinity is, to become distinctly entrenched. From this

position, any other views are easier to dismiss and deflect away thus a stubborn mindset can dig in deep. Finally, all this resistance to and denial of any emotions and experiences that lie outside of the besieged partition of weaponised masculinity can result in a thoroughly troubled individual.

2.1.2 Disarming

A hugely significant pivot is reached when we conclude part one and it is the cognizance that if the symbolic landscape can contribute to negatively influencing boys and young men then it can operate with the opposing intention. By the start of part two we reach the breakthrough that there is nothing innately wrong with the medium of murals per se, in fact an abundance of international examples attests to their social and political worth. Therefore the delivery system, the mural as messenger is not to blame, it is with the specific messages that part one finds fault. This pivot point allows us to make the theoretical conversion to disarming. The framework for disarming is radical alternative media which borrows from a social movement leveraging of the arts. Informed by the work of communication scholars like John Downing, James C. Scott and Chris Atton, RAM describes what disarming murals might look like, why they should be assembled in the manner argued for and how they could perform a valuable service to the host community. There are three ideas behind the description of murals as radical: the declarative visual voice, verbing the mural, and repeated activation. The first contrasts radical with the tepid interventions of the past, instead of visually whispering the cause of peace radical murals would declare it with gusto. They need to be non-violent versions of the spectacular war imagery of part one. It seems self-evident that if the mission of disarming masculinities is to be accomplished then one strategy is that the views of former men of conflict should be taken into consideration. Tellingly the first theme to transpire from

discussions with former combatants and prisoners was 'demythologising the Troubles'.⁶ This involved challenging the glorification of the Troubles and the protraction of cultural violence after the peace process. The group agreed that the legacy of conflict sustained this violence which then facilitated the paramilitary recruitment, obstructed political accommodation and generally aggravated social transformation. Through their use of myths, certain actors have done their utmost to depoliticise their ideological messages, emptying them of their artificiality so their history is portrayed as natural, pure, and honest.⁷ Part of the author's methodology would act accordingly in putting some of this fabrication back, to show that these myths are anything but natural or pure but are, in fact, man-made and chaotic.

'Verbing' transforms the mural from stand-alone noun to a series of actions each capable of engendering meaningful social interaction, rare moments of connectivity in a divided society and opportunities for critical dialogue on topics like masculinity. By reframing the mural in terms of its process and not merely a product, disarming underscores the need for public agency and active participation. If this can be ensured through a policy of transparent consultation and sincere collaboration, then the local buy-in required for a mural's survival can be achieved. Michael Mosher's 'tennis game' supplies us with an appropriate model for verbing procedures. Like the game itself, decision-making is returned back and forth between artist(s) and the creative audience of the community.⁸ Over time the steps in production are completed whilst new or improved social relationships and communication skills are simultaneously developed. The objective of this 'game' is not only a transformed surface but a transformation occurring within the emotional depth of the people themselves. 'Repeated

⁶ The fifteen participants had all been former members of various loyalist paramilitary groups: one in the UDA, ten in the UVF and four in the RHC. A majority (12) had served time for politically motivated violence. Ferguson, McDaid and McAuley, 'Social Movements, Structural Violence', p. 22.

⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* A. Lavers, Trans., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 143-144.

⁸ Michael R. Mosher, 'The Community Mural and Democratic Art Processes' *Review of Radical Political Economics* Volume 36, No. 4 (2004), p. 530.

activation' is the last of the 3 Rs of disarming after the more pragmatic removal of weaponised imagery and its replacement with disarming content. The mural becomes an active site whenever collective consciousness gravitates toward it and it ceases to passively blend into the civic background. The author puts forward three variants of activation: an educational variant where murals are locations of learning, a political variant when they serve as a backdrop to an energised public sphere of either protest or celebration, and a cultural variant which unites with other creative media to capture the community's attention and stretch its imagination. If these engagements between civil society are to be more than tokenistic, one-off empty gestures then it is paramount that the activation of murals be repeated. It is through semi-ritualised repetition that any cultural practice becomes a tradition and makes it more likely that an idea around adaptive and non-violent masculinity is remembered and starts to percolate through the community's mentality.

The main theory that delineates disarming murals as 'alternative' is their ability to visualise Antonio Gramsci's counter-hegemony. It is abundantly clear to us from part one what a weaponised hegemony of loyalism is and, therefore, the oppositional forces and identities used to critique and dismantle it are easy to locate. As well as discrete demographics such as more women, men of colour and queer men (all of which seek to undo the flagrant representational imbalance), the C-HV also advances an ideological alternative to weaponisation. We can perceive it as the only helpful binary that lifts the siege mentality. The rigidity of part one would give way to flexibility and the supposed solidity of weaponised icons would metaphorically melt into a freeing fluidity. Much of the singularity and solidity of part one was intended to stabilise loyalism's place in a world whose sands were rapidly shifting. In that sense, it allowed certain groups in the community to indulge a fantasy of continuity and avoid the reality of change. Fluidity is essential if adaptive

resistance to hegemonic masculinity is to be achieved. In the C-HV change is not a stimulus for consternation but is accepted not only as inevitable but desirable to imperative progress. The absolute singularities which governed the behaviours, ideas, and images of both loyalism and masculinity in such a draconian manner would be replaced with hybridity and plurality. This perspective is more attainable when we imagine many of the disarming theories taking place within the ‘thirdspace’ that lies between dogmatic and diametric poles. Thirdspace drives a wedge between the binaries and breaks new ground. It is in this space where alternative knowledge and experience can coalesce, such as forgotten episodes of ecumenism which Guy Beiner believes are amongst historical tools that undo the perception of irreconcilable antagonisms.⁹ Attributed to the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, thirdspace is extremely useful for us when contextualising disarming in a wider discourse of dissent. It marks a space where the oppressed may plot their liberation, where the emancipatory potential of the symbolic landscape takes shape. This resistance to all forms of oppression should be embodied in the particularity of the context. Both the verbing of the mural and its repeated activation would allow for this to happen and would actualise a critical urban environment put forward by the post-modern, political geographer Edward Soja.¹⁰ Unlike the strict demarcation of micro-territories in NI or those of the partitioned mind, the boundaries of thirdspace are a deliberately fuzzy frontier. Here ambiguity would not induce anxiety but would be actively embraced for the unrestrained prospects it affords. Specifically, the roles that muralised men play: defender, warrior, fighter, and protector could be ambiguously redefined in less violent, more helpful ways. As could the values and virtues they uphold: courage, strength, honour, resilience, duty, and service become non-militarised and more morally valid. It is clear we should be wary of grandiose assumptions around the power of

⁹ Beiner, *Between Trauma and Triumphalism* p. 376.

¹⁰ Edward W. Soja, ‘Thirdspace: Toward a New Consciousness of Space and Spatiality’ in Ika, Karin Ika and Gerhard Wagner (eds.), *Communicating in the Third Space*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 50.

art, but a clear example of redefining emerges in the difference between ‘security’ and ‘safety’: while the former is ensured by widespread confidence in a society’s stability, the latter is a more localised, even personalised notion of protection.¹¹ On occasions when the peace agreement did not seem capable of guaranteeing safety, a meta-conflict ensued with public pressure on civilianised ex-combatants to (re)arm and assume control. In negotiating their way around this dilemma of local safety and national security being almost mutually exclusive, the UDA redefined the object of protection as the peace process itself (as have Sinn Féin). Another paramount reframing speaks to the heart of conflict—the terms of victory. In the case study of the Massereene Barracks shooting of 2009, the UDA leadership embarked on an outreach programme to remind loyalist communities of the destructiveness of tit-for-tat retaliation.¹² This allowed the UDA to continue exerting a regulatory presence but, in asserting a moral victory, also stood firm against violence. A final comment on murals as alternative reflects the collective impression, they might make on the loyalist population. When we accumulate all these individual disarming images, they represent a brave inversion of the status quo. Not only would they depict a politics done differently but they would grant a stage for different masculinities to be performed. The author references David Kunzle’s analysis of 16th century European ‘world upside-down’ prints as a similar function.¹³ Importantly this upside-down utopia that the author proposes is not an abstract one but intent on being a nation-wide gallery of clear and aspirational images. By serving as a daily reminder of the kind of society local populations want to get to, it also reminds viewers of where society currently is and encourages them to close the gap between here and there.

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman (2006) makes this distinction cited in Audra Mitchell and Sara Templer, ‘Paramilitaries, Peace Processes and the Dilemma of Protection: The Ulster Defence Association’s Role in ‘Keeping a Lid on Loyalism’” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* Vol. 15, Issue 3 (2013), p. 416.

¹² Members in a group interview claimed that ‘in the old days, this [the Massereene and Constable Carroll murders] would have opened the floodgates’ in Ibid p. 425.

¹³ David Kunzle, ‘Bruegel’s Proverb Painting and the World Upside Down’ *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (1977), p. 199.

Ultimately an alternative landscape would showcase a concrete utopia, one as tactile as the walls on which it is painted. This thesis tempers utopian visions with the realism that disarming, like any reconciliatory phenomenon, is often not straightforward, linear and certainly not inevitable. At various moments we are reminded that, despite initial progress, post-conflict societies can relapse into acute periods of weaponisation. This is exemplified by Fidelma Ashe's valid concerns of Community Based Restorative Justice (CBRJ). The gist of her assessment is that men's histories of violence can be viewed as assets: creative agency, critical thinking, radical pedagogy, negotiating and debating all honed during the prison experience.¹⁴ However, mainstream analysis— continuing its traditional ethno-nationalist framework— has erased the gendered dimension, namely women's significant role in CBRJ. This skewed narrative unintentionally re-privilege's men as natural leaders and even contributes to a post-agreement neo-patriarchy.¹⁵ Even when a strong common ideology enables porosity between gendered coded realms—detected by Ortega in several South American circumstances— it is not without its flaws. Firstly, the cohesion fomented took place within the confines of national liberation armies— hardly an appropriate model for disarmament. Secondly, once transitions out of armed conflict were underway, the exceptional transgression faded. Not only this but normative patriarchal mechanisms (discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion) were promptly revived.¹⁶

The final concept of RAM, the transformative paradigm that underpins disarming, is that murals could operate as media for loyalist communities. Murals as media does not only refer to a plural form of creative medium (as witnessed in cultural activation), but as a

¹⁴ Fidelma Ashe, 'From Paramilitaries to Peacemakers: The Gender Dynamics of Community-Based Restorative Justice in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 11, Issue 2 (2009), p.308.

¹⁵ Fidelma Ashe, 'Gendering Demilitarisation and Justice in Northern Ireland' *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 17, Issue 4 (November 2015), p. 670.

¹⁶ Luisa Maria Dietrich Ortega, 'Looking Beyond Violent Militarized Masculinities', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 14, Issue 4 (2012), p. 504.

method of mass communication. The first advantage to this argument is that loyalists can reclaim some agency in telling their story, no longer subject to the occasionally problematic coverage of mainstream media. At times a disconnected misunderstanding has resulted in the propagating of loyalism as entirely reactionary and regressive. Should conditions materialise that would reduce the presence and power of paramilitaries then their tight grip on murals would subsequently be relinquished. This would allow loyalists to seize the means of cultural production for themselves and begin to replace the monolithic renderings of loyalism and masculinity with more honest, corrective multiplicity. Murals as a people's art would speak with multiple voices rather than the loud, brash paramilitary monologue. The related concept of 'dialogical self' expounds that, unlike essentialist versions, it assumes that the self is under ongoing psychosocial construction. This is encapsulated by a type of inner speech, with the caveat that our dialogues may at times be asymmetrical or even come into conflict with one another.¹⁷ This democratic platform wilfully contradicts the long-held tyranny of the minority, it would give space to the many and not the gatekeeping few. The choice inherent to democracy is key to disarming the binaries of part one. No longer would loyalist men feel condemned and commanded to choose between either/or in the false dilemma. Rather a both/also possibility of thirdspace permits them to choose freely from available options of identity and expression. We see throughout part two how compensation may occur for the losses in value from part one. The current deficits in the landscape are the result of a subtractive affair, a conscious editing out of facets. Despite connotations of removal, disarming therefore actually comprises an additive quality in giving back much-needed nuance. It assists in the recognition of both knowledge gaps and literal gaps in spaces and surfaces of the landscape. Once these have been located, it furthermore encourages active citizens to

¹⁷ See also Hermans & Dimaggio (2007) cited in Jack S. Kahn, Jessica R. Holmes & Benjamin L. Brett 'Dialogical Masculinities', p. 34.

participate in filling them with the most appropriate content. Thus, the dangerously simplified renditions of loyalist identity, historical narratives and admittable masculinities would be disarmed by compelling complexity. The first two Rs of disarming, removal and replacement, should not spark panic among men but hopefully aid in the amendment of unacceptable masculinities. It is suggested that some of the raw anger and energy might well be kept as long as it is redirected toward discrimination and prejudice as opposed to a dehumanized 'other'. Through regular gender-sensitive educational activation, murals could help discipline protest masculinity. The seminal scholar R.W. Connell defines protest masculinity as 'making a claim to power where there are no real resources for power.'¹⁸ Walker, however, feels this interpretation is incomplete and introduces a corrective distinction between an anomic and disciplined varieties. The former is associated with unguided and even destructive behaviour. As a response to powerlessness, it is also marked by a bipolarity of overt narcissism and chronic anxiety and depression.¹⁹ On the other hand, the latter is the product of intensive social control, an interdependence with stabilising qualities. The participatory co-production from the verbed mural and its extended relevance through repeated activation would likely give loyalist communities greater sense of civic pride and ownership in their own C-HV. Chapters six and eight provide us with the raw materials of disarming inspiration, externally and internally sourced respectively. The international case studies in chapter six also demonstrate various overlapping templates for best practice when radically connecting an audience to its art. Despite most of these originating in the 'Global South', chapter eight pulls our focus back to loyalism in a search for similar liberating

¹⁸ Cited in Gregory Wayne Walker, 'Disciplining Protest Masculinity', *Men & Masculinities*, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (2006), p.7.

¹⁹ Ibid p. 8.

narratives. The critical observations from both combine in chapter seven which sets out the potential of RAM as a foundation for future planning and real action.

2.2 Description of fieldwork

2.2.1 Strands of fieldwork

The design of this project involved a mixed approach of more traditional methods of historical research such as ingesting literature, archival work and source materials.

Complimenting this theoretical side were more practical aspects to applied public history.

Fieldwork sought to close the gap in a majority of mural research which is rather distanced from the real-world implications. This fieldwork took place over three week-long trips to NI from September to November 2021. Each trip comprised of three strands of fieldwork: interviews, site visits, and youth workshops. The initial aim of the interviews was to meet with key actors involved in the ‘civilianising’ of loyalist paramilitaries. As the recruitment process developed however this grew to encompass individuals working in related fields of restorative justice, community development, social transformation, economic regeneration and localised peacebuilding. Week one, in September, featured eight interviews beginning with Darren Richardson, a primary contact for the logistics of the first week, and community development officer with the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association. Based in Magherafelt, this organisation works in outreach predominantly in Protestant areas with the aim of becoming more inclusive of other communities. Adrian Bird is the director of the Resurgam Trust in Lisburn. Resurgam’s holistic community development entails economic innovation through managing of social enterprises as well as health and wellbeing. The Trust also has a youth provision including a focus on education and employment and early intervention.

William Mitchell is the project director of ‘Action for Community Transformation’ on the Shankill. ACT is a community-based training and capacity building organisation specifically targeting those categorised as former-combatants. In Derry the author interviewed Brian Dougherty, James Kee and Derek Moore, representatives of the North West Cultural Partnership and the Londonderry Bands Forum. These organisations explore bold, fresh community development models through the prism of previously demonised forms of cultural expression. The Bands Forum engages in outreach and educational work throughout the Derry City and Strabane District Council area and are currently core-funded by the Community Relations Council. Kenny Blair helps working class loyalists in Ballymoney, including ex-combatants, ex-prisoners and young people to improve their lives and in turn their community through the Ulidia Training project. Ulidia deliver community transformation through sensitive interventions with those who may not have traditionally participated in peacebuilding or reconciliation activities. In addition to this, Kenny was a prolific muralist who, along with Stephen Hutchinson, represented a vital inclusion of artistic perspectives rarely recorded. A further four interviews were conducted during the second week of fieldwork. The two joint interviews started with Tom Winstone and Peter Wray both at Northern Ireland Alternatives, Tom being the co-director and Peter site manager of the Bangor branch. Alternatives are a government accredited restorative justice programme promoting non-violent community responses to the issues of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour with branches all over Northern Ireland. A second joint interview took place in east Belfast and captured the insights of Colin Halliday and Sam White of Resolve NI. Like various participants, both men had a violent past involved with paramilitary loyalism and had served time. Another similarity is their long-standing commitment to embedded restorative practices and a desire to help repair harm and improve community cohesion. The final week saw two interviews, Eileen Weir of the Shankill Women’s Centre and participant ‘CM’. This

week also included site visits to Larne, Coleraine, Carrickfergus and Ballymena. Additional site visits from the previous two weeks covered: Monkstown, Bangor, Portadown, Magharafelt, Randalstown, Lisburn, Derry, Antrim, and east and west Belfast. The purpose of these visits was to map any changes in the physical condition of murals and document any new entries. Overall, they were designed to more broadly distribute the examination of the symbolic landscape across Northern Ireland.

Interviewees were recruited in several ways, including word of mouth from experienced researchers, including my primary supervisor. Often initial contact was made via email, social media or calling an organisation and requesting a meeting. From this preliminary, informal meeting the parameters and intentions of research were clearly stated. Another beneficial byproduct was a certain snowball sampling when confident and positive responses led to further participants being brought into contribute. The content and structure of the interviews revolved around questions relating to the key themes of the research: gender, conflict and culture and how all three interact on the surfaces of murals. Questions shifted back in time to encourage comparative analysis on how imagery has or has not transitioned along with the changing circumstances. Interviews were semi-structured allowing for a freedom and flexibility of response and exchange of ideas. They generally, however, followed a similar trajectory of the thesis itself, discussing the possible negative impact of weaponised archetypes before then shifting toward a more speculative and aspirational portion of questions where participants were asked to imagine the future landscape they wished to see. Data collection was audio recorded with additional field notes, later transcribed carefully and all proper procedures followed. All participants were asked to give their informed consent and permission for recordings to go ahead. The analysis of data had a definite qualitative emphasis given the remit of the project, consisting of thematic text analysis identifying core patterns in responses to questions. The technique of photo-elicitation

was utilised to prompt groups and individuals in relating their responses to specific features of particular murals, this also allowed for previous shifts in the landscape to be compared and contrasted, ultimately leading to a richer and fuller analysis of murals as gendered signifiers. As with any research directly concerned with physical sites of culture, the incorporation of visual methodologies is crucial. Approaching the landscape as a ‘text’ to be read and interpreted calls for a systematic mapping, photographing and decoding the appropriately selected murals in study areas.²⁰ This study made use of comprehensive visual archives such as University of Ulster’s ‘CAIN’ and the Crowley collection at Claremont Colleges, California. Relying on complimentary resources can help minimise the bias of a singular recording and provides a more ‘stereoscopic rendering’.²¹ In the evolving political conditions of NI, the emergence of new masculine configurations expose a malleable capacity. A comparative use of archives can ascertain whether shifts toward a demilitarised masculinity during transformative periods are tangibly acknowledged. Given the restricted timeframe in which this research was designed and implemented, compounded by the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, longitudinal gender projects can yield more grounded discernment. Ken Harland’s adolescence study is indispensable to the study of Northern Irish masculinity. Over a five-year span expected perceptions of masculinity were initially high (e.g., a good fighter, competitive, heterosexual) but these views became progressively complex with one consistent identity aspect: a man should display ethical responsibility and provide for his family.²² This maturing process can be all too easily overlooked. Harland also documents an encouraging series of initiatives emphasising factors which have clear implications for disarming masculinity. In 1996 YouthAction received EU Peace and Reconciliation funding for their ‘Work with Young Men Unit’ in 2000 addressing mental and sexual health. The

²⁰ Such a detailed, visually based methodology is used in McDowell, ‘Commemorating dead ‘men’...’ p. 336.

²¹ Goalwin, ‘The Art of War’, p. 194.

²² Ashe & Harland, ‘Troubling Masculinities’ p. 757.

‘Centre for Young Men’s Studies’, launched in Autumn 2004 by Joseph Rowntree charity and residing within INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute) at Ulster University was another major development. While the cross-departmental working group ‘*Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland*’ (2006-2016) was further positive, it lacked the creative methods to engage young men which require courage and vision in research.²³ Lastly, Health Promotion Agency (2005) promoted positive emotional wellbeing in males aged 11-16 with themes covering the journey from boy to man, male risk-taking and reaching out for help. Notably the feedback from young men dictated decisions by the project’s steering group.

The final form of research activities were youth workshops initially designed with a walk-and-talk style intervention to discuss murals in situ with the young people of a host community. This sought to give prior sessions, located internally, a greater sense of tangible significance and hopefully develop an open and trusting rapport with participants. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the three-session workshop design was scaled back to a single interaction which still yielded very interesting results. The two workshops carried out involved a total of thirty participants, whilst this sample size is rather small the direct voice of young people on the symbolic landscape in which they inhabit is a missing element in historiography. The author drew support in attracting participants to the project by utilising strong community links and interpersonal connections, some of which are already established. Organisations with grassroots research experience, carrying out youth-centred workshops often involving creative elements were invaluable in this endeavour. Jonny Ashe of Youth Action facilitated the Monkstown workshop whilst a similar debt of gratitude is

²³ Ken Harland, *Acting Tough: Young Men, Masculinity and the Development of Practice in Northern Ireland* Nowhere Man Press (2009) pp. 3-6.

owed to Paddy Maguire of the YMCA for setting up the Tullyally workshop in Derry. The age demographic ranged from 16-24 with an emphasis toward male participants given the nature of my research. Workshops lasted approximately ninety minutes, comprising two forty-five-minute halves with a reasonable half-time break. They began with a thematic warm up with prompts to consider what it means to be a man and what thought and behaviour was not considered to be manly, group suggestions were visibly mind-mapped. The author went on to explain key components of part one such as why ‘weaponised’ was used and not simply ‘conflict masculinities’, this allowed us to discuss a wider continuum of violence stretching across time and mark the difference between military and a militarised society.

Weaponisation was explained in terms of exclusion: territorial, political, historical perspectives, and gender identity. This led to an introduction of relevant concepts of gender theory, how hegemonic, complicit, marginalised, and subordinate masculinities are often conceived as a hierarchy. Many of the participants grasped the notion of the masks of masculinity and the links between the theatrical (gender as performance), emotional masks and the literal masks (donned by paramilitaries either in real life or depicted in murals). After this theoretical background was provided, the workshop moved to considering specific examples of weaponised archetypes. These visual prompts guided our discussion and reactions to them were carefully noted. Common, open-ended questions that accompanied each archetype included: ‘how does this make you feel?’, ‘what do you like about it?’ and ‘what do you think it’s trying to communicate and how is it doing so?’ The author elicited responses from which we could interrogate the glorification of conflict, not only romanticised versions of the Troubles but also broaching the delicate subject of whether or not the Somme was remembered as a sacrifice or slaughter and what implications lie behind such use of memory. As we worked our way through the archetypes displayed during the presentation, the author drew participants’ attention to the advertising/propaganda value of emotionally

charged narratives and the gendered expectations that accompany them. Whilst this necessarily brought them in as potential targets for this kind of manipulation, the workshop ended with us thinking about how the landscape might change both in terms of depiction and wider social function. Some specifics of the counter-hegemonic vision were alluded to, but generally the workshop attempted to leave participants feeling optimistic that change is possible and that neither loyalism nor masculinity exist either as a monolith nor in a vacuum. The youth focus in this thesis is explained by the value of early education—by this the author refers to non-formal lessons, some of which may be taught via murals—on impressionable minds. Gray and Neil mention that the passing down of stories and memories equates to passing on fear, suspicion and even hatred of ‘the other’. In a reversal of the contact hypothesis, such a pattern can implant unquestioned ways of life. Yet they also stress that these attitudes need not pertain over time and young people can resist them.²⁴ Integral to this resistance is consciousness-raising whether in linking an individual’s experience to wider societal inequalities or thinking beyond the tribal politics played out daily on television screens. That other ‘screen’, however, the painted wall, may play its part too, and the mural is a ‘channel’ that cannot be so easily changed or even ‘switched off’. The rationale for this awareness in loyalism is enhanced by studies that have chronicled a working-class history of confusion around the issues for which they stand, setting aside the one certainty of refusing a united Ireland or maintaining the Union.²⁵ In a situation whose future at times seems rather bleak in prospect, the benefits in young people working intergenerationally to pass on stories to celebrate, commemorate and enjoy should not be dismissed.

²⁴ Gray and Neil, ‘Creating a Shared Society in Northern Ireland’, p. 475.

²⁵ Among other traits recorded, Nelson mentions a lack of working-class confidence in their effectiveness, a factor to which she attributes some of the appeal of Paisley’s dogmatic articulations Sarah Nelson, *Ulster’s Uncertain Defenders: Protestants Political, Paramilitary and Community Groups and the Northern Ireland Conflict*, (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1984), p. 44.

2.2.2 Limitations of research

As well as detailing who took part in the fieldwork it is important to account for those missing voices in this study. Often these are not entirely negative as limitations can serve as lessons throughout the research journey. For example, whilst the site visits were designed to geographically diversify the visual analysis, they largely confirmed that the symbolic landscape is more prevalent in the country's two largest cities of Belfast and Derry. However, regarding the aspirational nature of part two, the absence of murals does not preclude our speculation of how near-future developments might expand new visual clusters across a range of towns and villages. Indeed, site visits revealed an abundance of potential sites for such an expansion of cultural disarmament. Although the interviews amassed a significant assortment of loyalist perspectives some key voices were missing. Billy Hutchinson, the leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, was not an interviewee due to other commitments however his memoir written with the eminent Dr. Gareth Mulvenna was published in the early stages of the thesis and provided a very useful source. Certain organisations proved unresponsive despite several attempts to reach them such as the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre, the Ulster Political Research Group, the Orange Order, and the Ex-Prisoners Interpretive Centre. Some relationships were difficult to sustain and coordinate a formal interview. Such was the case with Aaron Stewart, an activist with the advocacy group 'Let's Talk Loyalism' established during the project. Despite this, Aaron very kindly offered logistical support during fieldwork such as transportation and guided tour of the west Belfast site visit which gave us the opportunity to informally discuss the themes of the project. Mitigating the necessary inconvenience of COVID restrictions, several interviews were conducted remotely via Teams or Skype. These included: Dee Stitt, prior experience with Charter NI's east Belfast

operations and a rather tangled relationship with the UDA; Kenny Donaldson, director of services at South East Fermanagh Foundation a victim/survivors organisation; Gareth Crozier of the Ulster-Scots ‘Schomberg Society; Rev. Gary Mason, a methodist minister heavily involved in peacebuilding not just based in the East Belfast Mission at the Skainos Centre but also internationally in the southern United States and Palestine and Israel; and Helen Crickard, event coordinator for ‘Reclaim the Agenda’ a coalition of feminist, youth, LGBTQ+ and community organisations. It must be noted that whilst the author is grateful to those interviewed, they are all individuals who were mostly convinced of the landscape’s need to change. As enriching as it was to the research to meet with loyalists who had gone through a personal and political transition, it would have been germane to meet with those unconvinced of disarming reform. Ultimately it is those weaponised mindsets that the research seeks to persuade yet aside from practically earning the required trust and contacts, there would have been understandable ethical concerns in meeting those still active in loyalist paramilitaries.

The input of muralists originally had a bigger role in the research design however this proved to be problematic. Simple scheduling difficulties account for some of these individuals like Mark Ervine, although his collaborative work is noted in part two, Karl Porter of UV Arts though informal meetings took place, and Darren Ferguson of ‘Beyond Skin’, an organisation primarily using music to break down barriers of racism. In addition to this and similar pressures like the precarity of arts funding, experienced by the queer arts centre ‘the 343’ in east Belfast which faced closure, a reticence by some may illuminate a possible fear or at least discomfort in speaking out about weaponised murals, of going against the grain. The mural organisation ‘BlazeFX’, established by well-known artists Ken Maze and Glen Black, wished not to disclose why they declined to participate. Another major muralist, Dee Craig, whose contribution is again acknowledged in part two, was not

interviewed despite initial enthusiasm. This may have been more to do with the scheduling issue. Interviews often ended with the author requesting recommendations for who may be approached next, in the context of muralists this usually produced the same few names. Generally, the missing muralists divulged a lack of professionalised conduct as interviewees gave anecdotes of how commissioning was often very ad hoc and off-the-books. Two final voices worth mentioning were both present in the research but not to the extent that the author had hoped. For confidential reasons, Eleanor Jordan, co-ordinator of Windsor Women's Centre in the loyalist Village area of south Belfast did not wish to participate. The final week of fieldwork clashed with a series of Stormont consultations which reduced the availability of Karen Sweeney, director of the Women's Support Network. The author's intention for both was to host focus groups in safe spaces where women could express their views on the gendered state of murals thus strengthening the thesis' relational dynamics of gender performativity. Secondly, the inclusion of young people was hampered by COVID-related scheduling. Two further workshops were planned but not implemented. These would have taken place in Lincoln Courts, Derry, and Orangefield in east Belfast. The author had made self-reflective notes and improvements based on previous interactions that went into the preparation for these further workshops. In particular, a shift away from gender theory toward local disarming case studies would likely have held participants' attention more successfully. Although the disarming potential of remembering the former secondary school in Orangefield is discussed in chapter eight, its incorporation into a workshop would have engaged young loyalist men directly about their attitudes and experiences of education. As with the Monkstown and Tullyally workshops, locations were chosen (a boxing club and community centre, respectively) not only for convenience but also as familiar spaces where young people would feel more confident and comfortable in speaking up as the target audience of these weaponised, ideological 'adverts'.

2.2.3 Ethics

This section will end with some details of the project's ethical approval. Given the nature of this research a number of sensitive topics were addressed not least the struggles of dealing with a painful past. Although the Troubles have formally ended, much has been written on the ongoing 'culture war's/'war by other means' and this intersects with related concerns around young people (especially men), mental health and intergenerational transmission of trauma in the 'ceasefire babies'. With all these layers of sensitivity, the author conducted research with due tact and vigilance and was responsive to the needs of participants. Prior experience not just with these discussions but this specific cultural context was very useful when considering ethical implications. The author also sought recommendations on handling topics from practical written guides as well as interlocutors, including the primary supervisor Dr. Connal Parr. Alongside university guidelines, the author availed himself of participating organisations' practice of handling sensitive data, acquiring permission and approaching participants. The aggregate of this expertise was a tremendous boon when designing and implementing ethically robust fieldwork. The utmost care was taken to ensure that all research activities took place in a safe space for everyone involved and where participants could express themselves freely and not feel self-conscious about their response. To that end and in the interests of transparency, the author supplied participants with the following paperwork: a participant information sheet, informed consent, and recording agreement. The information sheet provided some basic background about the project, what taking part in the research involved and what would happen to their contribution afterwards. The author made himself available to any participant that wished to raise concerns and, as such, contact details were given out. A major point stressed in the informed consent forms was participants' right

to appear anonymous. It confirmed that participants had read and understood the information sheet, that any queries had been answered satisfactorily, participation was voluntary and a part or all of a contribution could be withdrawn at any time for whatever reason. The wording of this paperwork benefited from the careful input from both Dr. Parr and the author's second supervisor, Dr. Linsey Robb who has advanced training in oral history techniques. The recording agreement ensured that high standards and safeguards on the secure storage of data were upheld. Data was stored securely on both personal, private sources with at least three copies (on a laptop hard-drive, 2nd external hard-drive and a third back up on a USB stick). As advised by Northumbria faculty, the university's OneDrive was also used for safe and secure storage. The agreement itself requested participants sign over copyright so that their contribution can be used and recorded in strict accordance with their wishes. All material was preserved in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (May 2018) as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures and broadcasting, and made available on an open access basis unless participants stated otherwise.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth description of the methodology used throughout this research. Firstly, it condensed the principal concepts of both weaponisation and disarming into a succinct theoretical framework. We saw how the cultural violence of part one is supported by the advertising analogy and dramaturgical dimension working in tandem. These in turn cultivate a siege mentality which manifests pictorially in a cast of recurring archetypes. Disarming is best encapsulated by the transformative paradigm of RAM. We saw how radical murals should learn from the mistakes of previous interventions in the landscape

to speak up louder for peace and change in visual declarations. We also appreciated the difference that could be made if the mural was verbed and opportunities during the process were utilised fully for meaningful contact and discussion around traditional masculinity and problems therein. Civic engagement continues long after a mural's completion under the umbrella term 'repeated activation' which advocates for persistently encouraging the public's eye and mind to return to murals to contemplate their disarming form and function. Murals as alternative means giving explicit expression to a C-HV agreed upon through majority will and enacted by collective participation. An art for the people tries to make the aspirational imagery closer to daily realities. This utopia is only possible if paramilitaries' tyranny of coercion and control is removed and replaced by a democratic media, communicating the diverse views and needs of loyalist communities.

After explicating the theoretical perspectives of the research, the next section delved into the practical considerations. The features of fieldwork were described across the three strands of interviews, site visits and youth workshops. The strengths and weaknesses were fairly assessed, and outcomes were balanced in accordance with realistic shifts in any original design especially one conducted during such uniquely disruptive context. The first two chapters of this thesis have set the scene and now we will begin a comprehensive scrutiny of the weaponised landscape and the extent to which it may be absorbed into a weaponisation of surrounding masculinities. Our analysis starts with the pre-partition origins of this contested cultural practice and how the first archetypes came to be.

PART ONE: THE WEAPONISATION

Chapter Three: Origins: From 'Misrule' to Direct Rule (1908-1972)

Introduction

The first part of this thesis is arranged chronologically according to mural production, over three distinct periods. This opening chapter spans the longest period, from the beginning of the 20th century (prior to the creation of NI) to the start of Direct Rule in 1972. The scant archives and severely limited subject matter renders this task feasible. The central argument is that murals were used to instil a false sense of stability during moments of profound change; these in turn were invariably interpreted as portents of chaos. By doing so, murals essentially served the needs and supported the narratives of the dominant social group (middle-class unionists) and fledgling state. The first enjoyed long-standing privileges, stemming from the Protestant Ascendancy, secured at the end of the 17th century. But, in a way, this asymmetric power relation was replicated following NI's very difficult birth; this transition could be considered a '2nd Protestant Ascendancy'. Intimately linked with these public expressions of control and authority are the masculine role-models they depict. The resounding character chosen was King William III who, although belonging to the first ascendancy, was used to represent the triumphalism of the second. He emerges as the primary patriarch, a founding father for the Stormont regime which governed as effectively a one-party state. Versions of history, simplified into myths that conformed to the wishes of the dominant order, also inculcate reductive thinking throughout a population. Even though those governing belonged to the first main hegemonic masculinity of this thesis—that of a middle-class unionism—they were initially embraced by working-class loyalists. Much later, and

after serious reflection, ‘new loyalists’ would refer to this period as the ‘fifty years of misrule.’¹ This refers to a multi-dimensional structural violence² which was supported by a cultural violence that was beginning to percolate through the civic landscape. These should not be understood in isolation, rather they operated in tandem.

This chapter starts by looking at how the first depictions of King William III established a norm, providing the template for a conservative landscape. It then considers the iconographic responses to the threat of Third Home Rule Crisis. At the heart of this lies the siege imagery of Derry and the local case study of the Jacksons of the Fountain provide a useful microcosm. Reinforcing the need for defensive depictions were the violent and seismic shifts that occurred during the partition of Ireland. After this, murals inscribed the supremacy of the new state throughout the 1930s. Further assertions of regal loyalty were painted in lavish coronation scenes in the 1940s. The chapter ends by charting a gradual decline of this earlier style, coinciding with the irreversible path of civil rights and a rapid escalation into the violence that led to the implementation of Direct Rule.

3.1 Establishing the norm

Our point of departure in this investigation is buried in the drama of the late 17th century. A loyalist interpretation of the Williamite War in Ireland (1688-91) splits all those involved into binary roles of either the victor or the vanquished. This early example of zero-sum logic was

¹ It was Gusty Spence who is credited with coining the phrase ‘fifty years of misrule’ to describe the Stormont regime. His significance will become more apparent in part two of the thesis.

² Both terms are derived from Galtung’s pioneering three-dimensional model for understanding violence. As the name suggests, ‘structural violence’ is that which is built into the structure and usually sanctioned through the legal and political apparatus. ‘Cultural violence’ on the other hand takes a wide range of cultural forms (in this case murals) that justify or legitimise structural and even direct/physical violence. Johan Galtung, ‘Cultural Violence lecture’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1990), p. 291.

deeply entrenched along sectarian lines, which can be traced back to prior periods of colonisation and rebellion. The defeat of the Catholic King James II and his Jacobite forces laid the foundations of a Protestant Ascendancy which endured for over a hundred years. Yet even when most confident, the Protestant elite still bore the invisible scars of battle. At its emotional core was a tension between ‘sensitivities of victimhood and triumphalist proclamations of victory.’³ One such proclamation of this in paint appears as the first documented unionist mural, dating to 1908, in Beersbridge Road in East Belfast. It was executed by John McLean, a shipyard worker whose subject was that first and foremost hero known colloquially as King Billy.⁴ It must be stressed that these stylised renderings of Billy were, in more sense than one, two-dimensional figures lacking evidence of any fully rounded complexities.⁵ Billy then was more a mould into which a simple key message could be cast: privileges were granted by the Protestant crown and salvation had been confirmed by military success.

Yet tensions, just a few years prior to the first mural, jeopardised and looked set to break this mould. What is more these tensions did not come from without but rather from within in the shape of denominational difference. Across a range of issues from education to public appointments, Presbyterians and smaller Protestant denominations did not enjoy the same degree of control as the Church of Ireland and began to challenge this dominance.

Furthermore, the land reform movement undermined the integrity of the unionist family by

³ Beiner, ‘Between Trauma and Triumphalism’ p. 368.

⁴ Rolston, ‘*Politics & Painting*’, p. 20.

⁵ William and his commanders did not share such virulent anti-Catholicism of their Irish Protestant allies, a point reflected in the perceived leniency included in the Treaty of Limerick which ended his campaign. The relatively generous terms granted were to be rolled back throughout the 1690s in the penal laws which safeguarded Protestant interests. John Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year: The 1641 Rebellion in Irish History and Memory*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), p. 43. Likewise, Stewart observes that the real James had his contradictions for one, as an English Catholic he had little empathy with the Irish Catholic and saw them merely as a means to the end of regaining his kingdom. A.T.Q Stewart, *The Narrow Ground: Aspects of Ulster 1609-1969* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1977), p. 64.

pitting tenant farmers against landlords with demands for ownership and input.⁶ Whenever faced with insider dissent and potential division, the political use of the great outsider becomes abundantly clear. So it was that the first Billys, by reminding Protestant communities both of their distinguished internal bonds and the religious menace that sought to sever them, offered a solution to social and denominational friction. Any top-down attempt to assert control over collective memory is tremendously assisted when wielding a hegemonic or 'official' canon of history. Held tightly therein are a national repertoire of images, plots and figures from a (generally) accepted past; Billy not only fits into this but he is at the vanguard. As much as it is a master-narrative it is also a masculine narrative, not only due to past commanders venerated but present-day wielders of memory.

Although Billy is first canonised in mural form in 1908, this is consistent with a longer tradition of commemoratively using his image. Advances in technology allowed for cheaper mass production and wider distribution of a range of cultural products which permeated social classes.⁷ From these popular media, larger-scale murals can be understood then as an extension of a particular and selective remembrance. It is pursued with such insistence that it is tantamount to a 'fetishising'⁸ of this figure and the strenuous partisanship that accompanies it. Inspiration, whilst drawn from material conventionally considered 'low culture', is really derived from the 'high culture' of history painting. The refined portraiture of Kneller and Wyck as well as Gibbons' equestrian statue, which stood in Dublin from 1701 until its destruction in 1929, were all highly influential. The singular blueprint however was

⁶ T. P. Daly, 'James Craig and Orangeism, 1903-10' *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 136 Cambridge University Press (Nov. 2005) p. 433.

⁷ Examples include postcards, prints, tea-towels, crockery, medals, coins, songbook lithographs, silk handkerchiefs and banners. Belinda Loftus, 'Loyalist Wall Paintings', *Circa Art magazine*, No. 8 (January 1983), p.10.

⁸ Jim Smyth (ed.), *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017) p. 5.

Benjamin West's 1778 painting of the Battle of the Boyne upon which the majority of murals take their cue.⁹



Fig.3.1

Of all the features in this iteration one that has consistently carried significance, though may seem prosaic, is the colour of Billy's charger—it can only ever be white.¹⁰ Such an attitude goes beyond mere pedantry, rather it is key in visually highlighting him as a stand-out character. Part of the easy recognition may be to designate the 'good guy in white' as opposed to darker forces which connote suspicion and mistrust. Substantiating this moral binary is a religious reading of the colour symbolism; Revelation 19:14 claims that when Jesus returns he will be followed by the armies of heaven riding white horses.¹¹ The Biblical clout of such references would certainly help convince Ulster Protestants they were a chosen people, delivered by God from Popery. In this regard, Billy leads the charge for others to

⁹ West served as court painter to King George III Belinda Loftus 'Loyalist Wall Paintings', p. 10.

¹⁰ In 1950 Belfast City Councillors vetoed the purchase of a painting by William by Jan Wyck because he was mounted on a brown horse (Jarman 1997, 176) cited in Robert Moore, 'Rebranding Belfast: Chromatopes of (Post-)Conflict', *Signs and Society*, vol. 4, No. 51 (2016), p. 153.

¹¹ Forker & McCormick 'Walls of history...' p. 433.

follow, sword raised to attack, the hero is elevated above eye level and still further, rearing up high on his horse. His presence was one of reassurance and comfort (from a Protestant perspective) as well as reminding the ‘other’ of their inherited vanquished status. A more exclusive application of his legacy occurred from 1795 with the Orange Order claiming him as their sectarian hero. He symbolically played a role in the fight against the United Irishmen and an allied Catholic rural movement, the ‘Defenders’ in 1798 and over the next century he would be called upon in the rise of democracy in Ireland. The Order spearheaded resistance to O’Connell’s Catholic emancipation and later opposed the secret ballot¹²; eventually Billy would be looked up to when confronting what they feared most: Home Rule.

3.2 Home Rule

The impetus to create these earliest murals was both practical and political. Commercially manufactured house paints had just become widely available, though others opted for stealing supplies from shipyards. Simultaneously an apprehension was simmering over the 3rd Home Rule Bill (introduced in April 1912) and its likelihood of passing at Westminster. The previous bills had been defeated thanks to the House of Lords; however, the Liberal government’s Parliament Act (1911) prevented the Lords from vetoing major House of Commons’ legislation.¹³ Previous dabbling with the idea of devolution had been a source of unionist chagrin, but now with a British administration seemingly committed to Home Rule — not least to maintain a majority with the assistance of the Irish Parliamentary Party—

¹² Principal concerns related to the aforementioned schism in Ulster Unionism, namely that the secret ballot affected the extent of control landlords could exercise over voters. Rex Cathcart ‘Ireland and “King Billy” usage and abuse. (William III’s intervention in Ireland)’, *History Today*, Vol. 38 (July 1988), p. 42.

¹³ Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford, 1992), p. 8.

anxieties were peaking. We get an insight into unionist discontent from Dowden who claims a policy of conciliation could only benefit the nationalist agenda. He goes on to draw parallels with the two previous bills: ‘the logic of the situation will not be altered; two ideas, essentially antagonistic, will confront each other...until one or the other has obtained the mastery.’¹⁴ Not only does this summarise contemporary concern but it displays a borderline prescience for upcoming unionist/loyalist thinking. Even at this nascent point in the century we have the main ideological foundations upon which generations of opinion would be constructed. A dread of conciliation informs a worldview clouded by an all-or-nothing absolutism. Implicitly at this stage—crystallised in later chapters—the inherent unwillingness to compromise is matched by a weakness in male constitution. ‘True men’ uphold principles, they remain true or else face accusations of treachery. A further equation and staple of unionist thinking is that safety is only guaranteed in the preservation of the status quo; any effort to disturb this balance must be regarded with grave conjecture. Several factors also contributed to a moral panic over an imminent and terrible change. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the expansion of the railways and communication both opened up the previously isolated north of Ireland. These factors are credited as enabling a more democratic electoral system which returned unprecedented advances for Home Rulers.¹⁵ Another outcome of this was Protestants’ growing awareness that, while they held a stronghold in Ulster, in the context of whole island they were clearly a minority.

With all this uneasiness hanging heavy over the province, we might expect the subject of Home Rule to feature prominently in murals but there are surprisingly few direct

¹⁴ From Professor Edward Dowden’s article in the ‘National Review’ (Oct 1904) the article was widely quoted in unionist newspapers cited in Francis S. L. Lyons ‘The Irish Unionist Party and the Devolution Crisis of 1904-5’ *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 21 (2016), p. 11.

¹⁵ In the 1885 general election, just one year after Third Reform Act, Home Rulers triumphed in all constituencies except Trinity College Dublin, nationalists in the north took seventeen seats. Ian McBride, *The Siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant Mythology* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 67.

references made during the crisis itself (1911-1914). This could be down to a dearth of extant sources or because those in opposition had other vehicles for expressing their discontent. As Jackson notes the debates over the two previous Home Rule bills were waged primarily within Westminster. In sharp contrast, the campaign of 1912-14 was the first ‘modern’ mobilisation of Ulster Unionism.¹⁶ The methods of mobilisation took politics out into the streets in the form of speeches and rallies, most notably the huge demonstration outside Belfast City Hall on ‘Ulster Day’, 28th September 1912. On the same day the most emotionally charged act of resistance coalesced in the Ulster Covenant, signed by nearly half a million people. Like Billy before it, the concise document outlining reasons and strength of feeling behind the mass opposition quickly became a focal point around which grand narratives could gather and group identity could be solidified. Having said that, the fact that men and women signed separate documents, with slightly different wording, contradicts this oneness and sent another statement, one that distinguished the respective stations of men and women in society and politics.¹⁷ The 1912 Covenant channels a similar harsh ‘if-then’ consequence found in the 17th century Scottish predecessor which was very consciously alluded to. The repercussions for the British government, should they not heed Ulster’s voice, were emphasised in the most quoted phrase: ‘by all means which may be found necessary...’. The implied martial element in these loaded words legitimised the establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force the following year. Indeed, the litmus test for recruits was whether they had signed the Covenant. The UVF then was not only the final, desperate card to play but likely a balm to soothe any anxiety that Ulster would succumb without a fight. The organisation may also have lessened the need to demonstrate a similar militancy in murals. We must also be

¹⁶ Alvin Jackson, ‘Unionist Myths’, p. 184.

¹⁷ Turner Stone Jacobs, ‘“To associate ourselves with the men of Ulster:” A Gendered History of Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant and the Ulster Women’s Declaration, 1910-1920’, *Voces Novae* Vol 3, No 1 (2012), p.145.

aware that the abject disapproval of Home Rule took the form of an outpouring of political cartoons, prints and widely circulated satirical imagery, it is from these sources that we find the pithy mantra: ‘Home Rule is Rome Rule!’. Through this medium, the unionist hegemony was able to keep a firm grasp on the ‘winning hand’.¹⁸

Even from the two recorded murals that relate to the crisis, we can glean numerous interesting facets. Most notably we have the first hybrid pictures—Billy is still with us but accompanied by contemporary figures, the past and present share the same surface. Hybridity renders an unmistakable equivalence between the masculine leadership that transcends the centuries. Just as his victorious forerunner had a worthy opponent in James II, Carson faced off against the other political giant of the age, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond, though their enmity appears overplayed.¹⁹ Edward Carson holds the esteemed title of the first living person honoured in a mural, along with Billy he is the other father figure: while the former signifies military and religious conquest, the latter looms large as a political patriarch.²⁰ The range of dates between these works denotes the enduring significance of Carson, while the first appears in 1912, topped with the emphatic text: ‘WE WON’T HAVE HOME RULE’, the second occurs in 1934, coincidentally just one year before Carson’s death.

¹⁸ To give just one clear example, this is the title of an anti-Home Rule postcard from 1912. It features the Red Hand of Ulster holding a ‘winning hand’ the cards show the men leading the resistance: Carson, James Craig, Col. Robert Wallace and Bonar Law, National Museums NI available at <https://www.nmni.com/collections/history/1900-1923-home-rule-to-partition/1912-1914-home-rule-crisis/belumw20112126> accessed 11 September 2021.

¹⁹ Despite their political differences, there was clearly a level of personal respect. Carson was observed weeping at Redmond’s funeral in 1918. Stephen Collins review of ‘*Judging Redmond and Carson*’ by Alvin Jackson *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* Vol. 107, No. 426 (Summer 2018) p. 231.

²⁰ The events of 1912-14 were essentially a creation myth for modern unionism, at its nucleus was Carson as Orange Daniel O’Connell, ‘the saviour of his tribe.’ Jackson, ‘Unionist Myths’, p. 164.



Fig.3.2

Even aspects which seem more banal like the presence of the British flag or the compositional arrangement (a central motif flanked with portraits) would become ubiquitous in later works. Also worth noting is the particular manner in which the 1934 piece is represented in the archival newspaper photograph. The caption lists the three men portrayed: Billy at the centre, Carson on the right and the Prince of Wales on the left. Helpfully it mentions both specific location and producer, in this case the full gable end is credited to a Mr. Frank Bucknell. The recognition of the artist contrasts markedly to the anonymity of muralists that would dominate in the next two chapters. The last nugget in the photograph is the large turnout (approximately forty people) posing in front of the mural. This is perhaps accounted for by the novelty of being photographed or reveals a connection between imagery

and ideology embraced by the local community. Either way it is a glimpse into the mural as a socially active site²¹, a notion that is integral to this thesis' second part.

We will return to Carson, as he features more prominently in the post-conflict period, but before moving on it is worth reflecting on some rudimentary traits that explain his legacy as one of the most divisive figures in modern Irish history. Ulster was an anomaly to the European experience of the last summer before the outbreak of the First World War. While most of the continent revelled in the calm before the storm, the summer in the North was gloomy being overshadowed by the prospect of violence. One of the biggest influences on the unionist mood was the fearmongering of Carson's speeches. For whatever else can be said about the Dublin-born lawyer, his professional demeanour, use of emotive language and provocative theatrics lent well to a career in politics. In one notable example, delivered on the annual 12th July celebrations of the Boyne, his oratory was not only militaristic by also sexually suggestive referring to the republican motive as one of penetration and possession.²² This graphic metaphor of the nation as vulnerable body in need of male protection anticipates the narrative of siege that would become the basis of an entire mentality.

3.3 Jacksons of the Fountain

As well as the few images that called more direct attention to Home Rule, the crisis itself also led to an increase in the employment of siege imagery in Protestant rhetoric that indirectly

²¹ The deployment of historical figures on gable ends transform urban space into an 'interactive landscape'. Maximilian Rapp & Markus Rhomberg, 'Seeking a Neutral Identity in Northern Ireland's Political Wall Paintings', *Peace Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 4 (2012), p. 471.

²² Carson claimed republicans wished to 'penetrate into Ulster...so they may in the immediate future take possession of the greatest part of Ulster' *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 July 1920 quoted in McGaughey *Ulster's Men*, p. 157.

addressed it via historical comparison. For all these verbal instances, only one case is recorded in murals and, like a relic, can still be found in the city in which the original siege took place. Although Belfast has always been the capital of Ulster Unionism, it was the province's second city, Derry, where Protestant sensitivities were more keenly registered. Much of this can be assigned to its location, precariously situated on the edge of the Ulster plantation.²³ Because of this, Derry was always susceptible to fluctuations and fears of any shift in demographics, be it Catholic migration in the first half of the 19th century or indeed the 'greening of the North' that persists today. The man responsible for these cherished scenes, Bobby Jackson, also executed an earlier work, from 1916, depicting William's landing at Carrickfergus with the same representative clarity.

The notion of siege is seared into the Protestant psyche; at the surface they are references to the crucial episode in James II's endeavour to regain his crown, after having been deposed in the 'Glorious Revolution' (1688). Yet, beneath the initial recall, lies something much deeper, a perceived historical repetition, wherein the unionist community is trapped in a never-ending pattern of alleged terror and salvation. Oliver MacDonagh described the one hundred- and five-day Siege of Derry as 'their original and most powerful myth'²⁴ and one suffused with an almost classical potency.²⁵ If we stick our heads above that most paramount of parapets, we look down into the estate that hosts the oldest embodiment of public siege imagery. Even this estate's name, The Fountain, intimates the presence of the past in the present as it was from this area that an actual spring sustained the people during the siege. The Bobby Jackson mural is comprised of two panels, on the left a King Billy (not

²³ McBride, *The Siege of Derry*, p. 14.

²⁴ Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780–1980*, (London: Harper Collins, 1983), p.13.

²⁵ 'The wall of Londonderry is to the Protestant people what the Trophy of Marathon was to the Athenians' Stewart, *The Narrow Ground*, p. 52.

crossing the Boyne in usual isolation, but amid the battle itself) and on the right the relief of the city.



Fig.3.3

As scenes of action, they are renowned not only for their technical execution but their emotional range including a variety of postures and facial expressions. Central in the foreground of the relief scene are indicators of hope, firstly the crimson flag, later adopted by the Apprentice Boys of Derry, and secondly the Reverend George Walker. Despite a more complex reality, historical and literary accounts of military engagements tend to unanimously extol one outstanding individual, and for many Walker takes on this role. By his own account, Walker presented himself less as peaceful shepherd to a starving flock and more a church militant or warrior priest.²⁶ As with any story, a hero is only as good as his villain and

²⁶ Walker portrayed himself as a man distinctly lacking in Christian humility. Karen A. Holland 'Disputed Heroes: Early Accounts of the Siege of Londonderry' *New Hibernia Review* Vol. 18, No. 2 (2014) University of St. Thomas (Centre for Irish Studies) p. 25. His statue had long been a focal point for siege celebrations until it was destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1973.

in Walker's case that is his predecessor, the reviled Governor Robert Lundy whose effigy is regularly torched as part of siege celebrations. By entertaining the possibility of capitulation, Lundy became the antithesis of an honourable, loyal man and his name ever since has been used as a slur to denounce traitors.

In actuality, the work consists of multiple versions and multiple generations involved in retelling the story.²⁷ The first instance of redevelopment led to a stand-off between Jackson and the Housing Executive, somewhat fittingly the artist refused to yield his ground.²⁸ It is here that physical production and emotional significance dovetail, for just as the Jackson mural is not really one artwork so too is the siege not a singular event in time but rather a feedback of vivid symbolism and courageous resistance, what Heslinga terms 'the Derry cycle'.²⁹ Throughout the centuries, what kept this cycle turning again and again was the fact that, for all the fanfare of triumphalism, the drum and flute bands could never drown out that sustained note of anxiety, Protestant memory never rid itself of its fundamental fear of atrocity redux. According to McBride it is this schizophrenia—the paranoia of betrayal mixed with the promise of liberation—that guarantees the siege's unique position in the loyalist mind.³⁰ Just like other political myths, the siege is frequently invoked to validate contemporary actions and attitudes, however the author would challenge McBride when he states, 'each generation has found fresh meanings...according to its ideological needs.'³¹ He concedes that the basic structure is retained; this author would go further and argue it is not

²⁷ The original dates from 1926 on a cul-de-sac wall in Clarence Place. It was relocated once in the 1970s, this second site decayed and was demolished but not until a memorial wall was created in 1995 with replica murals painted on boards. Extra Mural Activity visual archive, available at <https://extramuralactivity.com/the-jackson-murals/> accessed 13 May 2021.

²⁸ In the words of his son, Bobby Jr, who was trained in mural painting: '[my father] wouldn't move house until they moved the picture to beside where he was going to stay... it's the last of the old Fountain.' In another incident, Jackson Sr painted over a work before it was demolished so that he, not the redevelopment contractor, controlled its fate. Oona Woods chapter from *Seeing is Believing: Murals in Derry* (1995), Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/bibdbbs/murals/woods.htm> accessed 10 September 2019.

²⁹ Marcus Heslinga, *The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide*, (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 1971), p.61.

³⁰ McBride, *The Siege of Derry*, p. 13.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.11.

only retained but relied upon so heavily that these 'fresh' meanings come across as rather stale. Virtually regardless of circumstance, the themes of defiance and deliverance are as unchanging as the perceived threats.³² The specifics will obviously differ, but the essential mentality endures—echoing through the ages like the truculent motto: No surrender! This proposition is reinforced as we will later encounter other applications of the siege in later murals; the overall aim is once again to ‘mobilise images of the past as metaphor for present struggles.’³³ There is something in this historical relevance that can jeopardise current and upcoming prospects. It is surely of little pragmatic benefit that 17th century conflicts influence party politics, community relations and masculine ideals. The allegory of the siege may have fulfilled ‘a range ideological and even psychological needs,³⁴ but it also kept alive a polarising past one, in which caution of the ‘other’ was both dangerous and inevitable. Lord Macaulay likened the writing of Ireland to treading on a volcano whose lava was still glowing,³⁵ in the next section these subterranean agitations erupt.

3.4 Partition

When the guns fell silent in 1918, a false dawn of peace did not last long in Ireland with the onset of the Irish War of Independence the following January and civil war (1922-23). It began a tumultuous series of events in quick succession marked by profound instability and

³² It is not without cause that the siege feeds so profusely into unionist woes considering the desolate aftermath. The city’s peacetime population of around 2,000 swelled to an estimated 30,000 as families from surrounding countryside sought refuge from advancing armies of King James. It is believed that approximately 15,000 died through starvation, malnutrition and disease. Peter Taylor, *Loyalists War and Peace in Northern Ireland* (New York: TV Books, 1999), p. 18.

³³ Carol Gallaher & Peter Shirlow, ‘The geography of loyalist paramilitary feuding in Belfast’, *Space and Polity*, Vol. 10, No.2 (2006), p. 161.

³⁴ McGovern also highlights another problem with a grossly simplified siege narrative, namely that social, political and economic relations therein are ill-served by the imagery of predestined and all-consuming sectarian division. Mark McGovern ‘Myths and Marches: History, Class and the Siege of Derry 1689’ *History Ireland*, Vol. 5, No. 4 Worldwell Ltd. (Winter, 1997) p. 6.

³⁵ Cited in McBride, *The Siege of Derry*, p. 60.

confusion. In the midst of this upheaval the six-county state of NI took shape; set out in the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and implemented a year later. Away from the grand political set pieces, speech-making, the pomp and ceremony of the occasion, bitter street-fighting beset the infant state. With a resurgence of IRA activities and the UVF revived as a counterweight, these first ‘troubles’ set the dismal tone for what was to come. In particular revenge attacks and running gun battles blurred the boundaries between civilian and conflict zones. The border cracked open sectarian fault lines across the country with businesses and homes destroyed resulting in large-scale homelessness. But it was Belfast that experienced the worst of it, being what Eamon Phoenix calls ‘the fulcrum’ of the bloodshed.’³⁶ From 1922 violence settled into an uneasy peace but civil unrest would be a perennial aspect of NI for subsequent decades. It must be stated that the First World War did have a colossal impact on perceptions of masculinity, but these would not be seen in murals until much later. Their absence may be explained by the sheer devastation of the Great War. A loss of appetite for grandiose war imagery would only have been compounded by the post-war trauma of partitioned violence. In both cases, the memories were likely to be too raw and recent, however the passage of time, as we will see, cured public sensibilities of this.

In the wake of partition, the siege mentality was essentially institutionalised, enshrined not just in legislation and official practices but also asseverated through public, visual means. As we have seen, prior to partition, murals focused the cohesion of unionists in the north in divisive celebration. Their significance only magnified during the first few decades of the state, having been rocked by the recent turbulence, conformity to ritual should

³⁶ An estimated 450 people were killed in Belfast in the conflict between June 1920 and July 1922. Nearly 60% were Catholic, and the overwhelming majority were civilians. Catherine Morrison, ‘NI 100: How Northern Ireland’s birth was marked by violence’ *BBC News*, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56018758> accessed 14 February 2021.

not be underestimated. It has been postulated that the use of King Billy promoted an ethnic superiority (with parallels with the Battle of Kosovo),³⁷ for defending Ulster as a bastion of righteousness, God ordained the original ascendancy. The author would suggest that partition permitted a unionist hegemony to reassert a similar dynamic thereby being a 2nd Protestant Ascendancy. But Billy was not alone this time around; a 1920 mural issues a direct challenge to fight: 'IRA name your day. The B Men are ready'. This refers to perhaps the most controversial of the government's initiatives, the Ulster Special Constabulary, specifically the 'B Specials'. Since it drew directly from a time-honoured martial masculinity, post-war recruitment was swift and steady.³⁸ The duality of the reputation they earned highlights the division at play: among nationalists they were notorious as Protestant-majority, heavily armed gangs; the unionist community meanwhile lauded them as valiant heroes keeping the peace. In their pursuit of justice, the feared B Men had more than literal weapons at their disposal, they were also equipped with the law very much on their side. The Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act, introduced at the height of the rioting, was intended to be in effect for just one year. Like a great deal of dubious policies of this period however, it avoided serious review and systemic reform and would stay on the statute books for a further half-century.³⁹ Their infamy was warranted, not least due to the brutality of deterrence. Flogging was a

³⁷ Both cases (the Boyne and 'Field of Blackbirds') were 'a moment when a small people, in battle with mortal foes, defended Christendom for all of Europe' (Ignatieff 1994: Nordland 1999) cited in Máiréad Nic Craith, *Plural Identities, Singular Narratives: The Case of Northern Ireland* (Oxford & New York, Berghahn Books, 2002), p. 40.

³⁸ The USC was composed of roughly 32,000 men, split between the three branches. The 'A' Specials were full-time and worked in conjunction with the Royal Irish Constabulary, while the 'B' and 'C' Specials were part-time constables or reservists. PRONI, CAB/4/40, Cabinet Meeting 19 April 1922, 'Preliminary Report on the Steps Necessary for the Preservation of Law and Order Within the Six Counties and the City of Belfast.'

³⁹ In the opinion of the National Council for Civil Liberties the Special Powers Act operated a draconian system, designed to suppress dissent. *Report of a Commission of Inquiry*, p. 28.

significant punishment that the SPA used to humiliate and literally scar men imprisoned for arms and explosive offences.⁴⁰

From its inception, NI bore little resemblance to any Western European social democracy and fell short of meeting British standards of justice. Measures such as the Education Act (1923) which increased clerical influence in teachers' appointment sought to copper-fasten the interests of a slim majority in the north. Similarly, the 1929 abolition of proportional representation diverted a one-party Stormont away from factional inclinations and toward tribal antagonism.⁴¹ Despite this chapter predating the state's creation, it is nonetheless framed by the discrimination that characterises its existence from partition until prorogation as well as the male agents that enforced its authority.⁴² Dehra Chichester was plainly wrong in her December 1921 speech as she fawned over male members of Stormont as 'sculptors, from the pure, white block of marble with their chisels they are creating a figure of a new state, a figure which will embody all our ideals of the past, and which will represent all that we look forward to in the future, a figure of the new and greater Ulster.'⁴³ For all her conjuring Neo-Classical pretensions, worthy of Johann Winckelmann, the sculpted state cared little for the plight of its roughly one-third minority Catholics, not to mention the endemic inequalities of its own Protestant working class. The body-politic of Ulster was not some idealised, muscular figure nor was it the colour of marble but stained with blood and bruises. It would be decades before its wounds were even seriously inspected.

⁴⁰ According to McGaughey, these were often more vindictively carried out rather than any practical deterrent...the punishment designed to be public, humiliating and sensational. In one year alone (1922-23) forty-two men were sentenced to flogging. Ibid, p. 183.

⁴¹ Of particular concern were Independent Unionist and Labour candidates, removing the PR system facilitated a traditional unionist versus nationalist contest Daly, 'James Craig and Orangeism', p. 447.

⁴² Oliver Wright described this period as 'a minor form of tyranny' replete with repressive legislation and sporadic violence. Novosel, *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity*, p. 34.

⁴³ Dehra Chichester, *HC Debs. NI*, vol. 1, col. 356, 1st December 1921.

3.5 1930s & 1940s

The interwar period witnessed the first heyday of mural production with the fortunes of the Protestant community reversed; no more were they a minority in an ‘alien and hostile country’,⁴⁴ but represented a confident majority. Control over the land and an attachment to the culture that expressed this became paramount in a time of slender means. With the scourge of massive unemployment, this economic slump prompted a peak in cultural activity. In addition to the arches and bunting that festooned the streets in summer months, Loftus also lists a hitherto unseen level of variety of mural subjects. Unfortunately, no evidence survives of their exact semblance, but we can surmise their function. The Mountjoy, the ship which broke the boom that had blockaded the river Foyle cutting off supplies and support to the beleaguered Derry, heaves into view; the Prince of Wales, ahead of a visit is shown playing the lambeg, the drum synonymous with loud and proud OO parades, the decorated Lord Roberts —revered for involvement in colonial conflicts from the Indian Rebellion (1857) to the Expedition in Abyssinia (1868) as well as advising the formation of the UVF and role played in the Curragh mutiny (1914) —appears flanked by two Boer War soldiers; and the Angel of Mons, a supernatural entity that supposedly protected the British Army from defeat by the Germans in 1914, hovers over a battlefield.⁴⁵ Whilst they deviate from the normative King Billy they still operate within a masculine and militaristic trend.

The decade also saw some important developments of the Billy template. While strictly speaking not a hybrid image, the juxtaposition of the recent military past with the

⁴⁴ The victorious King William had a special place in Protestant folklore in demonstrating a destiny to rightfully claim this land. Joan Fowler, Review of *Mirrors: William III and Mother Ireland* by Belinda Loftus. *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1991), p. 105.

⁴⁵ Loftus, ‘Loyalist Wall Paintings’ p. 11.

distant gets across a similar equivalence. Interestingly, it is the larger wall, with its centrepiece of a cenotaph, flags, a poppy wreath and the line ‘lest we forget’, that is given over to depicting the modern conflict. This may symbolise the beginning of an eclipse: one memory taking on greater significance than the other. At the very least it presages many of the weaponised mnemonics that will take a crucial role in chapter four. Along with the slogan of ‘lest we forget’, another textual embellishment is seen: ‘In glorious memory’. The impact of the Prince of Orange on the Ulster Protestant imagination may seem remarkable given he only spent a fortnight in the province. Furthermore his ambition was far from completed after the engagement at the Boyne—often described more as a skirmish.⁴⁶ Truthfully it matters little whether most working-class Protestants could explain the complicated events around the campaign, as Smala affirms, the salient point is that ‘we won that one!’⁴⁷

That the admiring crowds only know the happy ending of the story and not the undulation of its build up is an expected element of selective remembrance and social forgetting working in tandem. What details are cropped out fits neatly into Goffman’s treatise on how societies make sense of events in the everyday life through framing.⁴⁸ We see the perfect pictorial accompaniment to this theory in the murals of the 1930s with ornate pillars and plush theatrical curtains being used as actual devices for framing either the action or portrait. In one unusual piece on Clarence Place, Derry, Billy wears a turban. The reason may not be known but it serves us well here in advancing the theatre metaphor to include costume and props. The masculine performance is not limited to the art but encompasses artist and audience. Often a new or repainted work would be unveiled by an esteemed member of the

⁴⁶ It would be another year before Ireland was finally conquered with James’ Irish/French army decisively defeated at Aughrim. Cathcart, ‘Ireland and ‘King Billy’’, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Simone Smala, ‘Globalised Symbols of War and Peace’ *Social Alternatives* Vol. 22 No.2 (2003), p. 40.

⁴⁸ In his classic text *Frame Analysis* (1974) Goffman calls frames a central part of culture, acknowledging their contestation and amendment over time cited in Marcelle C. Dawson ‘Protest, performance and politics: the use of ‘nanomedia’ in social movement activism in South Africa’ *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* Vol. 12, Issue 3 (2012), p. 322.

Protestant community (a minister, politician or businessman).⁴⁹ We have then a doubling of drama; the theatrics *in* the work and the presentation *of* the work. In general, a commonality cuts across all three periods considered: murals are *of* men, produced *by* men, and one could reasonably argue, *for* men. Goffman's views intersect smartly with Butler's seminal concept of gender performativity in which she posits that the constructed identity of gender is accomplished when the relevant actors and audiences are convinced of the beliefs being performed.⁵⁰ This is the beginning of a dramaturgical dimension which unites murals and masculinities and will be expanded upon throughout the thesis.

The only documented addition to the symbolic landscape during the 1940s partially modernises this theatrical presentation, inasmuch as the streets of working-class communities are still a staging ground for monarchs, but now they are contemporaries. A scene marks the coronation of King George VI and Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1937 but others in the new decade pay tribute to the royal family, one including the young princesses Elizabeth and Margaret (the only three female figures in this age). These works (at times based on contemporary photojournalism) are remarkable for their virtuosity, we see the picture plane open up beyond the family revealing, behind curtains, luxurious interiors. Fine details recede in sharp perspective to achieve trompe l'oeil. A final flourish is how the rippling train of their ceremonial robes cascades from the pictorial space almost into the space of lived reality—an apt metaphor for how enmeshed the medium is in social life. Loyalty to the monarch is often understood as more robust than the conditional loyalty to Westminster, yet the magnitude of Home Rule even cast doubt on this sanctified bond. The former king, George V, had convened the Buckingham Palace Conference in a last-ditch attempt to resolve the stalemate

⁴⁹ Rolston details a mural on Tierney Street that between 1936-39 was unveiled each July after annual repainting. The unveiling virtually became a state occasion as he says, 'performed by the pinnacles of the unionist alliance.' Rolston, *Politics & Painting*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 192.

and avoid calamity. In delivering an impassioned welcoming address, the imperial father-figure saw nationalists and unionists not as strangers and certainly not enemies but as brothers. A desire to bring them both back from the ‘brink of fratricidal strife’⁵¹ speaks volumes of pacifism that runs contrary to the bellicose atmosphere that gave rise to the UVF in January 1913. George’s mediation proved to be in vain and perhaps he shares the fate of that other kingly (though childless) father, William III. For all that William may have been personally disposed toward religious tolerance, he was essentially powerless in constitutional authority compared to the English and Irish aristocracies. Monarchy as an institution had considerable symbolic capital but the monarch as man was, in both cases, unable to broker relative harmony when encountering such entrenched views⁵²—they were both required to reign, not to rule.

As murals were emotionally momentous displays, they were also closely guarded, the best indication of this in the early period was the work at Rockland Street. Situated in the staunchly loyalist area of the Village, it was first painted in 1932 and from 1945 to 1979 it was preserved by a group of men. Ironically much of the repeated damage arose from a bonfire in the vicinity, lit on the night of the 11th of July before the climactic parades the following day. A photograph featuring the exuberant silhouette of a boy accentuates a physical and emotional proximity to these cultural expressions. Rockland raises two fundamental issues: intention and commitment. To the first point, the main options (which relate to many other loyalist murals) are whether they are pictures of heritage or hatred?

⁵¹ The conference ran from 21st-24th July 1914, in attendance were all major leaders Carson, Craig, Redmond, and Asquith. *‘Buckingham Palace Conference ends in failure’* RTE Boston College <<https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/buckingham-palace-conference-ends-in-failure>> [accessed 12/5/21].

⁵² Protestant street-preacher and political activist, Arthur Trew even made an open threat against George V arguing that should he sign the Home Rule bill Ulster Protestants ‘would be justified in doing what Cromwell did when he rose against King Charles and cut his head off’. Trew was subsequently arrested for promoting sedition McGaughey *Ulster’s Men*, p. 74.

Since they have traditionally been located well within Protestant territory, and not at an interface, this implies they were intended for internal consumption. However, the distinction between celebration and controversy is far from clear cut. A Radio Ulster programme from 1982 on wall-paintings featured a comment from one of the young men responsible for the upkeep of the Rockland site. Not only does it provide us with a rare insight from someone directly involved, but it also complicates our understanding of intention: ‘The people from the Village are loyalists and will never let themuns up the road forget about it cos [the mural is] facing themuns and they can see it and they won’t forget about it-now while we’re here anyway.’⁵³ The issue of commitment comes across more straightforwardly, after all the sheer longevity of Rockland surely testifies to widespread, public support. Yet the extent to which murals were accepted is again difficult to determine. In the same programme the custodians of Rockland were asked about graffiti and why they felt their site would be immune from such incidents: ‘The kids round here all know who had been painting it...and they know that if they do ruin it...that we all know who done it and it wouldn’t be advisable.’⁵⁴ Whether a mural’s pristine condition was a result of devotion or an aversion to trouble is unclear. What is clear is that this barely concealed insinuation would only become more pronounced in later periods.⁵⁵

By inscribing a group identity onto physical territory, murals are an example of ‘a spatialisation of public memory.’⁵⁶ Through an editing process, fluid histories are reduced into sanitised, concrete myths that, like an anchor, stabilise the identity in an inherently

⁵³ Loftus, ‘Loyalist Wall Paintings’ p. 12.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

⁵⁵ During fieldwork one participant non-verbally pledged respectful allegiance at the sight of various King Billy murals. Perhaps indicative of a wider culture of silence around contested issues, including sensitive imagery, the anonymous participant refused to go on the record and explain why he made the gesture (tapping his fist over his heart). Youth workshop, Monkstown, 25 October 2021.

⁵⁶ (Johnson, 1995) cited in Elisabetta Viggiani, *Talking Stones-The Politics of Memorialisation in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 48.

unstable world. Rockland, along with the Jacksons of the Fountain, represent the most convincing myths in this first period, they are ‘dropped’ as the heaviest cultural anchors to weather the crises of the age. A case in point to close this section would be how the crisis of the decade was handled. The summer of 1935 saw dreadful sectarian rioting hit the streets of Belfast again.⁵⁷ The angst of the Great Depression converged with Orange anger at government efforts to block their parades. The events are made even sadder as just three years earlier Catholic and Protestant workers had struck a major victory in the Outdoor Relief Strike.⁵⁸ Staving off the depths of poverty and the heartlessness of the Poor Law Guardians, this represented a remarkable moment of working-class solidarity. The fierce clashes that were to follow quickly destroyed any hope of a sustained bi-partisan alliance. The government engage in divide and conquer tactics to exacerbate difference and the Protestant working class, lacking self-confidence, acquiesced to unionism’s expectations and, for the most part, rarely questioned the unionist elites.⁵⁹ As if to visually confirm this tendency, the choice of whether to commemorate violent sectarianism or effective activism was answered in a mural at Maria Place in 1939 which honoured men killed in the riots, claiming (as several future murals would decry) that ‘their only crime was loyalty.’⁶⁰

3.6 Decline & Direct Rule

⁵⁷ The violence was on a scale not seen since 1922. Triggered on the 12th of July it lasted three weeks leading to a dozen deaths and around 2,500 people displaced, 85% of whom were Catholic. Ronald Munck, ‘Class and Religion in Belfast—A Historical Perspective’ *Journal of Contemporary History* SAGE, London, Beverly Hills and New Delhi, Vol. 20 (1985) p. 252.

⁵⁸ A 10% cut in unemployment benefits left Belfast with the lowest relief rates in the UK. Following the strike in October 1932, rates were brought in line with the rest of the UK. In addition, related issues such as the health and wellbeing of the city’s poor, especially children, was voiced. Thomas Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland 1920-1996* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997), p. 59.

⁵⁹ Novosel, *Northern Ireland’s Lost Opportunity*, p. 50.

⁶⁰ Rolston, *Politics & Painting*, p. 23.

From the mid-1960s there was a notable decline in both the number and range of loyalist murals. This was partly due to the impact of redevelopment schemes—the demolition of large areas of housing (particularly in East Belfast and northern district of Tiger’s Bay) removed many of the murals. The decline was twinned with a similar waning of labour and the transferable skills brought with it. The previous generations of muralists had typically been older men with a training in house, coach or sign-painting.⁶¹ Those who were to take up this mantle were generally untrained teenagers or young men who were simply unable to match the technicality of their forefathers. Works of the same subject (among the final King Billys of this first period) evince the polar opposites in execution. While the one on the outskirts of Ballymena or Coleraine is redolent of the elegance in 18th century portraiture, a work in Portadown looks much clumsier, even childish around the facial features. Then there is the Westmoreland St. effort whose risible proportions reduce the once tall, proud king to a diminutive shadow of his former glory. At the time, only one work in Larne exhibited the ‘set-pieces’⁶² of Orangeism, looking and feeling like an out-of-place antique.

There was a strange irony about loyalism, for a doctrine that had always strove for incorporation and attachment to a so-called ‘British way of life’ it was now drifting further away from the rest of the UK. The secularisation, immigration and multiculturalism of post-war Britain heralded a divergence within the Union. The fact that residents of Sandy Row (a loyalist area in South Belfast) spoke of their neighbourhood as the ‘heart of the empire’⁶³ as late as the early 1970s, indicated a futile battening down of loyalist hatches as the ‘winds of change’ approached. As well as the external evolution (the break-up of the empire), several

⁶¹ Loftus, ‘Loyalist Wall Paintings’ p. 12.

⁶² The long, horizontally arranged work features the Bible, the all-seeing see, the coffin, the Ark of the Covenant, Jacob’s Ladder, the Star of David, the rainbow and Noah’s ark. Ibid, p.12.

⁶³ In addition to decolonisation, the subject of Harold Macmillan’s 1960 speech, post-war Britain experienced rapid shift in secularisation, immigration and multiculturalism. David W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1978), p. 134.

key laissez faire legal and political acts further illustrated the mismatch.⁶⁴ Firstly, Stormont was fifteen years out of sync regarding the decriminalisation of homosexuality. There was an even greater delay in officially addressing racism, such was the conviction that it was not a problem.⁶⁵ We should not overly infer that the inactions of politicians mirrored the views of the electorate, but top-down initiatives can set a precedent for prejudice from which citizens may take their cue. Certainly, both demographics were and are consistently marginalised within a strict hierarchy of masculinities as non-white and non-heteronormative men contradict the hegemonic standard. The irrationality of conservative fears regarding homosexuality's detrimental effects on 'real masculinity' are exaggerated by speculations concerning King William's sexuality.⁶⁶ The intersections of race and sexuality will feature more prominently when we come to deconstruct post-conflict masculinities in part two. Structural violence also explains the near total absence of any nationalist murals throughout this entire period. The Flag and Emblems Act (1954) ostensibly curbed and regulated visual displays across NI; in practice however it was implemented almost exclusively against nationalist communities.⁶⁷ By ratifying the ghettoization of Irish culture, Stormont also validated the subjugation of one identity over another. These three parliamentary acts along with a general dragging of political heels and grudgingly accepting the formation of the welfare state after the Second World War all demonstrate the systemic flaws in this time of

⁶⁴ While homosexuality had been decriminalized in England and Wales in 1967, it remained criminalized in Northern Ireland. In this situation, mobilizing for equality was an inherently difficult practice for Northern Ireland's gay men, especially as they were subject to extreme police surveillance as well as intolerance from a strongly Christian society. Nagle, 'Unity in Diversity', p.?

⁶⁵ A legislative equivalent to the 1976 Race Relations Act in Britain would not be introduced in Northern Ireland until 1997. Colin Knox, 'Tackling Racism in Northern Ireland: "The Race Hate Capital of Europe"', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2010), p. 387.

⁶⁶ "Research has been building up over the centuries to suggest that King William III was bisexual - probably not gay, but he had bisexual relationships" Peter Tatchell, a leading gay rights campaigner. This suggestion was disputed by Orange Order historian Dr. Clifford Smyth. David Young, 'Orange Order historian disputes gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell's claim that King Billy was bisexual' *Belfast Telegraph* 21 August 2015 <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/orange-order-historian-disputes-gay-rights-campaigner-peter-tatchells-claim-that-king-billy-was-bisexual-31469236.htm> accessed 20 November 2021.

⁶⁷ (Jarman, 1997: 232) cited in Andrew Hill & Andrew White, 'Painting Peace? Murals and the Northern Ireland Peace Process' *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 27, Issue 1 (2012), p. 72.

‘misrule’. Before long progressive citizens, Catholic and Protestant, were arguing if principles of equality pertained to the policy area of social services then surely they should be applied throughout the whole system.⁶⁸ Not even the heaviest cultural anchor could secure the good ship Ulster as the tides began to turn in the movement for civil rights.

In his December 1968 plea to the public, Prime Minister Terence O’Neill presented the stark choice between unity and division as one to be made by the viewers. Yet it was not only Ulster at the ‘Crossroads’ but specifically those in power, i.e., unionism too had to make a choice. Those willing to walk the path of liberalisation acknowledged the demands for change while others clung onto the vestiges of the old ascendancy like the ‘wreckage’ of a ship foundering in history.⁶⁹ A sense of this indecision and confusion appears in a 1965 graffito. Although apart from murals it is worth us considering a similar palimpsest quality to both: one statement (textual or visual) can be overwritten by another group with conflicting attitudes, this builds up over time in layers of paint, of meaning and of competing masculinities. In this case we have three radically different perspectives clashing on one wall. They not only span the political spectrum but indicate the author’s opinions of them: a very faded message of support for the unsuccessful Communist candidate, Andy Barr, ‘Vote Barr for Bloomfield’; ‘O’Neill must go’⁷⁰ was a rejection of O’Neill’s centrist, tepid reforms, impossibly caught between those who felt they were excessive and those who believed them insufficient; and ‘Up Paisley’, support for the populist Reverend Ian Paisley. Despite the

⁶⁸ Nelson, *Ulster’s Uncertain Defenders*, p. 29.

⁶⁹ Unionist principles are compared to ‘flotsam and jetsam of political thought’ in Arthur Aughey, *Under Siege: Ulster Unionism and the Anglo-Irish Agreement* (C. Hurst & Co.: London, 1989), p. 13.

⁷⁰ O’Neill did indeed ‘go’, he resigned shortly after a series of bombings on key infrastructure including the Castlereagh electricity substation and a water installation at Dunadry, Co. Antrim. Initial blame was put on the IRA, but it emerged that the attacks were carried out by the UVF in an attempt to bring down the moderate O’Neill. Novosel, *Northern Ireland’s Lost Opportunity*, p.27.

latter's booming charisma, following in the footsteps of 'Roaring Hanna'⁷¹ from the previous century, he does not appear in murals. Nonetheless his influence in whipping up a frenzy of paranoia cannot be ignored especially since it was a factor that allowed demonstrations for civil rights to descend into riots resembling civil war.

While some date the start of the Troubles to 1966— notable for the emergence of a modern UVF (responsible for the first deaths) and a palpable unionist fear over IRA plots in the 50th year since the Easter Rising—many others consider the unrest from 1968 the ground zero. Of particular intensity was the three-day 'Battle of the Bogside'⁷² with the police unable to control the situation the British Army were called in marking the official beginning of 'Operation Banner' and their longest, continuous deployment. Initially warmly received by Catholics as protectors from further loyalist mob activity, relations quickly became strained. The Falls Curfew (3rd-5th July 1970) caused severe mistrust to swell, a week earlier had seen one of the first major gunfight exchanges between republicans and loyalists in the 'Battle of St. Matthews' at the Catholic Short Strand. The imposition of internment without trial (known as 'Operation Demetrius', 9th-10th August 1971) and simultaneous 'Ballymurphy Massacre' led to further deterioration and an upsurge in Catholic violence.⁷³ The point of no return was finally reached in January 1972 with the army killing fourteen unarmed civilians. Just two months after 'Bloody Sunday' Brian Faulkner, the 6th and final Prime Minister of

⁷¹ An uncompromising, anti-Catholic agitator, Hanna inflamed public opinion with his street preaching during the heated political atmosphere of the 1850s and 1860s, he fiercely opposed the Home Rule Bill of 1886. See <https://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article/544/roaring-hugh-hanna> accessed 11 April 2021.

⁷² Lasting from the 12th to the 14th August 1969, vicious rioting broke out between residents of the Bogside, a staunchly Catholic area, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, an overwhelmingly Protestant police force, along with local unionists. An initial trigger was the annual Apprentice Boys parade along the old city walls. The event sparked widespread violence across Northern Ireland. Russell Stetler, *The Battle of the Bogside: The Politics of Violence in Northern Ireland* (1970) CAIN <<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/battlebogside/stetler/stetler70.htm>> [accessed 2/3/21].

⁷³ This was directed toward security forces and Protestants in retaliation, major waves of inter-communal violence saw displacement of people and destruction reminiscent to the era of partition. In the space of just three weeks, over 2,000 families left their homes. One whole estate in the New Ardoyne was razed: 240 houses in Farrington Gardens, Velsheda Park and Cranbrook Park were burnt out. Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 43.

NI, resigned and Stormont was prorogued. The start of Direct rule may have marked the end of the fifty years of misrule, but it occurred at the beginning of a protracted conflict. This will be the next period we explore with regards to what masculinities appeared in murals and how they were weaponised during the thirty-year struggle known as the Troubles.

Conclusion

This chapter chronicled the first period of mural production in six stages. We began with the earliest depictions, influenced by low and high culture, that set the standard in the dominant figure of King William III. We saw how this basic form was adapted to reflect the charged atmosphere, fear and anger at proposed Home Rule. The use of the siege of Derry became part of the visual vocabulary in enunciating a perspective of Self distanced from the Other, a worldview laid out in defined binaries. Following partition, the authority and aggression of the state agents was stated in reference to the 'B Men'. The 1930s and 1940s saw further attempts to neutralise internal dissent, usually around sensitive topics of class consciousness. Finally, the consequences of five decades of systemic discrimination, cultural repression and rampant inequality boiled to the surface. The chief role of the heroic King Billy had been as a sign of eternal certainty in times of confusion. This explains the astonishing predictability of his image, this ritual lasted from the start of the century right up until the 1970s. The neglected portraits of Billy, by the end of this chapter, were not only an apt metaphor for the dramatic decline of unionism's political fortunes but for the institutionalised response, or lack thereof, to the intense flux of the times.

The masculinities featured in this chapter qualify as examples of cultural violence as they subtly condone belligerence. Whether this is through excavating deep layers of traumatic

memory in historical episodes, such as the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry; pictorially honouring the inflammatory rhetoric of a unionist elite, personified by Carson; or lending popular support to those who provided the muscle, carrying out the dirty work of the state, like the B Men. Aside from a few aberrations, they are grouped in a visual orthodoxy, one that accurately represents the political orthodoxy in a stiflingly conservative society.

Strident attempts to homogenise and suppress the society into an acceptable master-narrative ultimately brought tensions to a ferocious zenith and the facade of normality came crashing down. In the next chapter we will discover how the masculinities, propagated through murals, responded to the events of the Troubles.

Chapter Four: A Troubled Landscape (1972-1998)

Introduction

This chapter covers the second phase of mural production during the thirty-year conflict known by the colloquial understatement ‘the Troubles’. A direct outgrowth from this cataclysm was a form of Ulster loyalism abbreviated to heavily militarised notions of masculinity. Not only does contemporary paramilitarism become the most dominant of the four major archetypes explored in this thesis, but it could be argued that the recommencement of the other three (besieged, partitioned and entrenched) are used to accentuate this utmost expression. Throughout this chapter we will analyse loyalist murals in relation to timelines of accompanying violent episodes and political development. By referring to these milestones we can explore the way in which murals reflect these distinctly emotional events. Before outlining its structure, we should bear in mind two key concepts that are suffused throughout this chapter and indeed the next, namely the advertising analogy and the dramaturgical dimension. The first relates primarily to how murals might psychologically work and take a long-term effect on its intended audience. The analogy makes necessary similarities to military recruitment and propaganda in their utilising of gendered expectations and emotions and the targeting of a youth-based demographic. The second concept expounds that dramatic metaphors are the best way to understand the masculinities in murals. In doing so it unites Butler’s gender performativity, Erving Goffman’s theories on the presentation of the self and, finally, makes reference to several of the ‘masks of masculinity’ as discussed by Lewis Howes.

We begin after the introduction of direct rule and how a loss of political control and a general sense of waywardness contributed to a slump period in the 1970s. Ironically when the

conflict was at its horrifying pinnacle the dispersal of conflict imagery was at its lowest. With fewer works to discuss we take this opportunity to briefly but indispensably discuss the background motives to paramilitarism which, aside from the obvious escalation of violence, include the impact of deindustrialisation on class and community. Loyalism was rudely awoken by the sudden rupture and stunning gains made by republicanism claiming space in the wake of the 1981 hunger strike. An initial territorial response set the stage for one of the most dramatic turning points in the militarisation of the modern landscape: loyalism's reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) of 1985. The mural production in chapters four and five are an inverse of chapter three, whereas the latter contained a paucity of material relative to an extended duration the former witnesses an explosion of output. Thus, specific works cited in the next two chapters are far from a comprehensive cataloguing. However, given the exceeding homogeneity of the archetypes they nonetheless accurately document the evolution of imagery or lack thereof. The re-entry of historical tropes and heightening of tension takes us up to the peace process of the 1990s which is split into two four-year phases. The first charts the collective visual responses to a societal 'crisis of masculinity', aggravated further by fears of a British sell-out. Finally, we observe what changes occurred as the ceasefires of 1994 eventually gave way to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The chapter concludes with our tentative anticipation that as NI gingerly transitions into peace, so too will its symbolic landscape and the masculinities therein.

4.1 A Visual Calm before the Storm

4.1.1 The Lost Years

In his study of Ulster loyalism, Magee warns us of two dangers when writing about paramilitaries. The first is not to be swept up in the romantic ideas and narratives that surround such groups, overlooking the brutal inhumanity of their actions. Secondly is the opposing extreme, whereby acts of violence are the primary focus with members portrayed as little more than monsters.¹ Like Magee then, this project walks the critical line between glamorisation and demonisation. A more fruitful endeavour, and one that accurately reflects complex reality, is to discuss how easily ordinary citizens can be drawn into conflict due to certain motivations and their social environment. Many would prefer a simplified judgement which caters to an exceptionalism between ‘us’ (the morally sound) and ‘them’ (the heartless killers). But the truth is that for the tens of thousands who joined loyalist paramilitary groups many factors were at play. These included: the existential threat posed by Irish republicanism; a lack of formal political power and representation; the effects of socio-economic deprivation; an absence of reliable ‘normal’ policing; fear of the British State collapsing; and the status that appealed to their sense of masculinity. The lack of national state legitimacy, a consequence of Direct Rule, created a security vacuum that paramilitarism would soon fill with communal defence, violence and a more general social control. A similar void in memory and its interpretation also makes available space for non-state articulation of the past as witnessed in many murals.²

With law and order in NI in disrepute, the fears of working-class Protestants assembled into various vigilante groups which sought to establish their own protection. In September 1971 they coalesced to form the largest paramilitary organisation in Western

¹ Dave Magee, ‘The Deconstruction of Violent Masculinities Amongst Ulster Loyalists’ PhD diss., (University of Aberdeen, 2013), p. 87.

² Brown (2009) and Cavanaugh (1997) both suggest that loyalism’s four main paramilitary groups acted as agents in advancing unofficial memory, cited in Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p.19.

Europe-the Ulster Defence Association.³ What precisely ‘defence’ meant could vary from patrolling the streets to fighting in them or setting up barricades. In addition to some activities perceived as pragmatic, the UDA also allowed the Protestant population to express discontent at the political situation through marches and demonstrations. More specific to the demographic at the heart of this project, the emotional needs of young men were met. For those impatient to play some role in the emerging war, displays of strength gave them a sense of participation, there was excitement in parading and it was not uncommon for boys as young as four or five to be strutting proudly behind their elders, dressed in make-shift uniform.⁴ From learned behaviour and gendered tropes right down to gesture and costume then, paramilitarism from its inception had an evident performativity to it. Behind the pageantry however was a palpable unease at how rapidly tensions were escalating. A wave of post-internment violence swept the country amid large scale chaos, homes destroyed and the subsequently displaced population. A vulnerability was intensified among the working class given their restricted social mobility. Unlike their wealthier counterparts they lacked the means to relocate away from the anarchy.

The men who joined the reformed Ulster Volunteer Force (the second main loyalist paramilitary organisation) and declared war on the IRA did so because they believed the rhetoric from politicians and preachers about an imminent attack on the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising. This was only four years after ‘Operation Harvest’, the IRA’s short-lived border campaign that ended in defeat. Unlike 1966, which passed without republican incident, the threat in 1971 was very real as the Provisional IRA expanded their aim to

³ The most frequently self-claimed size of the UDA was 70-80,000. Jim Anderson, the first overall leader adopting the title of ‘Major General’ boasted he could summon up to 100,000 men. However, most sources put peak membership at around 40,000. Henry McDonald and Jim Cusack, *UDA: Inside the Heart of Loyalist Terror* (Dublin: Penguin Group Dublin, 2004), p. 25.

⁴ Nelson, *Ulster’s Uncertain Defenders*, p.105.

include economic targets such as shops and factories. These early atrocities unearthed a collective fury, and, when added to a volatile mix of helplessness and isolation, the desire for retaliation burned brighter. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than the aftermath of ‘Bloody Friday’—often cited by former loyalist combatants as the day they crossed the Rubicon.⁵ On the 21st July 1972 and in the space of seventy-five minutes, the IRA detonated twenty-two bombs throughout Belfast. Nine civilians were killed and more than 130 injured. Bloody Friday occurred at the height of summer in the deadliest year of the Troubles. 479 people were killed in 1972 with an extraordinary 2,778 shootings in July alone. The magnitude was mirrored in the state’s response as just ten days after Bloody Friday, the British army regained the ‘no-go areas’ during ‘Operation Motorman’.⁶

As the worst decade of the conflict continued, the use of force, for some, went from being a last resort to their first. This can be heard in John White’s view that there was only *one* answer to acts like these—to fight fire with fire. By June 1973 White was one of the founders of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, the new cutting edge of the UDA’s counter-terror wing.⁷ Labelled by some as ‘pro-state terrorism’, their links to the Union were often complex and even contradictory. The Ulster Workers’ Council (UWC) strike of 1974 is an example of polar opposite strategies simultaneously pursued leaving an ambiguous legacy. At once a remarkable victory for collective action—succeeding in bringing down the power-sharing Executive only established in January of the previous year—the fortnight also saw loyalist paramilitaries kill thirty-nine civilians. Thirty-three of these were claimed in the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, the deadliest co-ordinated attack in the Troubles. What appears as an

⁵ Billy Hutchinson with Gareth Mulvenna, *My Life in Loyalism* (Kildare: Merrion Press, 2020), p. 65.

⁶ The largest exercise mounted since the Suez invasion in 1956, involving almost 22,000 troops, heavily armoured demolition vehicles and bulldozers. Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland 3: Hot Spots in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 68.

⁷ Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 6.

erratic choice in tactics can partly be explained by a sudden switch in leadership. Strong and broad support for any leaders' ideas was never guaranteed and in April 1974 UVF senior chief of staff Jim Hanna was killed by one of its own with speculation over whether he was a British agent.⁸ A following coup by hardliners signalled an extreme return to sectarian violence in 1975 which brought disarray and disgrace even among some of its own supporters. By the mid-1970s the already established practice of tit-for-tat violence reached a climax. Firstly the UVF killed three members of the popular cabaret group 'The Miami Showband' leading to a gun and bomb attack on the Bayardo bar. A year later the co-ordinated shooting of the Catholic Reavey and O'Dowd families prompted the PIRA to retaliate by killing ten Protestant workmen in the Kingsmill massacre. These brutal acts of revenge shocked the public and further revulsion was induced with gruesome news of the 'Shankill Butchers'.⁹ Essentially the first decade of conflict reveals to us an important aspect of paramilitaries; that these organisations were very rarely held together or moving forward in the same direction under any unifying ideology. Naturally this internal fragmentation has consequences for the visual manifestation of masculinities.

4.1.2 The Slump period

With some historical parallels to partition, Direct Rule was initially seen as a temporary measure until a restructured government could return to power. Another similarity to partition was that the prolonged period of stagnation was the source of mutual animosity. From the

⁸ Novosel, *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity*, p. 120.

⁹ Representing possibly the most abhorrent example of loyalist violence, the gang's modus operandi involved kidnapping random Catholic civilians and torturing them with an assortment of knives. From 1975 they remained active for another seven years and were responsible for at least twenty-three deaths. Martin Dillon, *The Shankill Butchers: A Case Study of Mass Murder* (London: Arrow, 1990), pp. 66-69 see also foreword by Conor Cruise O'Brien.

early 1970s the crises in unionist identity and confidence was marked in a decline in the creation of murals or even the maintenance of existing ones.¹⁰ As the once-secure ascendancy came into question, so too did the ritualistic retouching of King Billy. In lieu of this traditional figure and patriarchal guardian, most representations concentrated on a variety of symbols, icons and slogans. If we appreciate symbolic landscapes as a people's understanding of their world and others in it then it is tempting to see the increasing use of crude, short-hand heraldry as a hardening and simplification of their political attitudes.¹¹ Even when more solid and competently executed depictions appeared there was something a little contrived about them. Perhaps due to the skill that went into the flags, shields, banners and other emblems, they all featured a conspicuous absence of role models—no one was nominated to step in and take the place of the long-dead king.

Endeavours to dismantle the 'machinery of discrimination'¹² came at the cost of Protestants losing their parliament and with it a sense of self-determination. Despite fewer inequalities enacted from above, which is to say the verticality of structural violence, communities living cheek to jowl bore the brunt of civil unrest—a direct and horizontal violence which spread far and wide. We must also appreciate the decimation of civic pride in the spatial context of community and class. These tight-knit networks that had long been at the heart of a shared belonging were now broken up by repeated attacks. This hugely effected both sides and tore asunder the social fabric of schooling, housing and socialising, particularly the role of churches in Protestant communities. The 1970s were notable not only for a decline in mural production but in production more generally. In the 1960s, NI had a

¹⁰ Hill & White, 'Painting Peace?' p. 72.

¹¹ Loftus, 'Loyalist Wall Paintings', p.12.

¹² McBride, *The Siege of Derry*, p. 73.

thriving manufacturing sector which employed over 30% of the workforce and returned the highest rates of productivity growth in the UK. A world-wide recession of the 1970s with multinational companies exiting hastily along with the demise of the shipbuilding industry brought this dynamic engineering hub grinding to a halt. However, men lost more than jobs. They also lost the proud, confident image that came with this hard, honest manual labour. Gone too was the cherished position of man as breadwinner, providing for hearth and home; what Howes refers to as wearing the ‘material mask’.¹³

Faced with such a bleak emotional and financial deficit, some men sought to recoup at least their sense of purpose and identity through paramilitary involvement. Throughout the world, socio-economic deprivation can be a hotbed for violent expressions of assertiveness. It is paramount we recognise how the economic slump distinguishes a second hegemonic masculinity. Most conceptions of the patriarchy include economic and political privilege; something which loyalism has traditionally lacked in relation to unionism. Hence the previous chapter described a first hegemonic masculinity emanating in a top-down fashion throughout the fifty years of ‘misrule’. The first hegemony can be seen in parallel with the aforementioned vertical violence whereas a second, working-class hegemony derived much of its control and power through horizontal (and direct) violence.¹⁴ The author would suggest the slump in mural production can be explained by the ferocious disruptions to civic life; aesthetic interests fall by the wayside when you are concerned with surviving one week to the next. Apart from one lonely example in 1979, where traditional heraldry is merged with contemporary concerns in this case a plea to ‘remember the loyalist prisoners’, murals of the

¹³ There first of several masks cited in this thesis, the material mask purports that there is no clearer sign of a man’s worth than the amount of money in his bank account. Lewis Howes, *The Mask of Masculinity*, p. 8.

¹⁴ Beasley (2008) devises similar terminology when discussing ‘supra and sub hegemonic forms’ cited in Brandon Hamber, ‘There Is a Crack in Everything: Problematising Masculinities, Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice’, *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 17, Issue 1 (2016), p. 26.

1970s were predictable and repetitive. However the next decade would begin with a seismic event that would capture the world's attention and ensure they would remember prisoners: just not those of loyalism.

4.2 The Streets are Armed

4.2.1 Broadening the Battlefield: Republicanism's Rise and Loyalism's Response

The first nationalist mural appeared in the Bogside, Derry, in 1969 after a band of RUC reservists stormed the district in an unauthorised, late-night incursion breaking windows, inflicting assault and battery on individuals and hurling sectarian abuse at startled onlookers. Residents responded by erecting barricades around the entrances to the Bogside, organising patrols and painting on a gable in St. Columb's Street arguably the most famous mural in NI: 'YOU ARE NOW ENTERING FREE DERRY'. This, however, remained an isolated example until the early 1980s. During this interim the streets were a dangerous place for republican political culture, as the death of sixteen-year Michael McCartan in 1980 sadly revealed. Shot by an RUC officer as he painted the word 'Provos' on a wall on the Ormeau Road, South Belfast, the officer charged was found not guilty.¹⁵

The next year would prove pivotal in the conflict as a hunger strike began over the central issue of 'special category status' recognising inmates as political prisoners rather than criminals. The resolve of the 'Iron Lady' was undeterred by the death of ten men, likely in

¹⁵ Part of the successful defence was that his paintbrush had been mistaken for a gun. An SDLP councillor at the time commented: 'of course he was armed...with a paint brush...that's not a capital offence, it's vandalism and hooliganism' David McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Co., 2004), p. 833.

part to how close the republican offensive had impacted her personally.¹⁶ The British establishment was rocked by the assassination of Lord Mountbatten (a radio-controlled bomb was detonated on his boat ‘Shadow V’ off the coast of Co. Sligo). On the same day the PIRA carried out the Warrenpoint ambush—eighteen soldiers were killed and twenty more seriously wounded at Narrow Water Castle, Co. Down, in the deadliest attack on the British army. Despite this build up, many global opinions viewed UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s intransigence as cold and insensitive. Furthermore, the huge attendance at the funerals for the hunger strikers were regarded by some unionists as mass demonstrations of support for a visibly united nationalism.¹⁷ As many as 100,000 paid their respects to Bobby Sands, the most famous hunger striker who won the seat of Fermanagh and South Tyrone a month before his death. The difference made by this propaganda victory cannot be understated. Support for Sinn Féin swelled and it went from the insignificant political wing of the IRA to one with serious ambitions. The IRA itself saw its biggest wave of recruits since Bloody Sunday nearly a decade earlier.¹⁸

Until now a considerable aspect of the British government’s attempt to win the propaganda war relied on depriving republicanism of publicity, hence the ban on press airing interviews. However, initial support for the hunger strike expressed as graffiti¹⁹ sky-rocketed after Bobby Sands succumbed to sixty-six days of starvation. Around 150 murals were

¹⁶ Just two years prior the Irish National Liberation Army had killed her friend and Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland, Airey Neave during an election campaign.

¹⁷ McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives*, p. 847. See also John Laird, *A Struggle To Be Heard*, (London: Global & Western, 2010).

¹⁸ Robert W. White and Tijen Demirel-Pegg, ‘Social Movements and Social Movement Organisations’ in Lorenzo Bosi and Gianluca De Fazio (eds.), *The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Theories of Social Movements*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), p. 138.

¹⁹ Whilst the archives do not show any full-scale mural that directly opposed the republican hunger strike, a graffiti makes its author’s personal and political views explicitly clear: ‘Support the UVF...Let Sands rot in hell’.

completed before the end of 1981.²⁰ Sands himself realised the subversive potential of murals as a form of communication, as imparted in his four-step plan:

1. Organise the people that we have already got.
2. Attack through mass media propaganda, through an army of propagandists, you out there and we in here.
3. Make our message simple: ‘Smash H-Block’, some details, a call for action, plenty of emotion.
4. Broaden our battlefield, locally, nationally and internationally; the field is limitless.²¹

These were the raw ingredients for a successful campaign and the turning point for republican visual culture. Of particular relevance to us is how the hunger strikes altered the landscape of masculine expression. Coomasaru’s observations are useful here as he contrasts the frailty of the weak, wounded representations with the far more standardised invulnerability.²² Although the twisting emaciated bodies illustrate the realities of conflict more than most murals, we should not necessarily interpret them as any challenge to patriarchal norms. They did after all play a major role in generating IRA propaganda and while not all are an explicit call to arms or advertisements for Sinn Féin, they do present deeply coded cultural symbols in a structured message.²³ Whilst they do not indulge in the

²⁰ Hill & White, ‘Painting Peace?’, p. 74.

²¹ Denis O’Hearn, ‘Movement Inside and Outside of Prison: The H-Block Protests’ in Bosi and De Fazio, *The Troubles in Northern Ireland*, p. 156.

²² The male being is no longer enclosed in ‘steely skin-armour’ but is of real, pure flesh and blood. Edwin Coomasaru, ‘Emaciating machismo: masculinity, murals and memorialising hunger strikes’ *Irish Times* 5 May 2016 <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/emaciating-machismo-masculinity-murals-and-memorialising-hunger-strikes-1.2636109> accessed 3 May 2019.

²³ Jack Santino, *Signs of War and Peace: Social Conflict and the Uses of Symbols in Public in Northern Ireland*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 44.

of Ireland' was bound to induce similar vitriol and stoke fears of reunification, epitomised in the famous election poster: 'Dublin is just a Sunningdale away'.

To some the slogan, and indeed the reaction at large, might qualify as hyperbole since the provisions in both Sunningdale and the AIA gave limited consultative input from the Republic. However, the perception of infringement was at the very least symbolic enough to generate an aggrieved focus within unionism. Days after Prime Minister Thatcher and Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald signed the agreement, the new NI secretary, Tom King, was assaulted by angry loyalists outside city hall and by mid-December all fifteen unionist MPs had resigned. The AIA rekindled a mixture of panic and determination not seen since the crisis period of 1912.³³ The fight to resist it took the form of a number of public demonstrations as well as on the walls of loyalist estates in a burst of mural production. Reinforcing the juxtaposition of historical episodes, some of the first depictions from 1912-14 appeared in 1987, incentivised by the 75th anniversary of the UVF's formation.

constitution still containing Articles two and three which claimed sovereign jurisdiction over the province, any role in Northern Irish affairs was an affront.

³³ Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 2012), p. 276.

forces seek to breach then is more than physical territory but a sanctuary of cherished beliefs. Forker and McCormick extend this metaphor by proposing that our internal sanctum is the brain containing private thoughts and intimate feelings.⁴⁵ This expansion has profound implications when we frame it in the context of gender. The proud warriors manning the walls are protecting the ‘real’ masculinities kept firmly contained within the locked sanctum. Looking down from the psychological battlements they can spy those emotional forces that would smash the defences and take over; namely ‘lesser’, feminised masculinities. Of the few emotions men are socially permitted to experience, pride and shame rule supreme as ‘master emotions’.⁴⁶ Public expression, emotions such as sadness, fear and vulnerability are misunderstood by a dominant male culture as impurities to reason, due to their proximity to their feminine or racialised association.⁴⁷ As such, when we discuss some loyalist men as having ‘closed minds’ it may not be limited to conflict resolution or political negotiation, but instead include fixed and fundamental ways of being; elements of his self that he must deny; thoughts and feelings he must expel from the small sanctuary and shut the gates behind them.

The ‘managed decline’ of the 1980s meant that factories and warehouses were also locking their gates. The heavy industries of a bygone era had demanded physical strength, stamina and toughness whereas the esteem of men was now atrophying. That social class and gender should so saliently intersect seems fitting given that Connell’s seminal theory adapted Gramsci’s original analysis on class relations.⁴⁸ The pluralising of socially constructed masculinities, with the hegemony assuming top tier in a hierarchical arrangement, replaced

⁴⁵ Forker & McCormick, ‘Walls of history’, p. 433.

⁴⁶ This conforms to a long-held fallacy in western thought of opposing gendered emotions, wherein women are excessively emotional, and men are supposedly rational. Thomas Scheff, ‘Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War’ (1994) cited in Jonathan S. Blake, *Contentious Rituals: Parading the Nation in Northern Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 104.

⁴⁷ Victor J. Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities: Men, culture, bodies, power, sex and love*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 16.

⁴⁸ Fidelma Ashe, *The New Politics of Masculinity: Men, power and resistance* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 143.

the out-dated sex-role theory. Based on a biological reductionism, sex-role posited men's bodies as the bearers of traits produced by evolutionary pressures, purportedly explaining a resultant inclination toward aggression, competitiveness, desiring territory, domination and 'Alpha' promiscuity.⁴⁹ Positioning masculinity as rooted in biology was problematic, not least because it distorted an inherently complex matter into a ludicrously simple, single source, but because of its ramifications on responsibility. If our gender identity has been determined for us then it suggests there is little we can do to amend it, thereby validating male aggression since it is beyond the blameless individual's regulation. The casual absolution of instinct over intention resounds in the cliché: '(Apprentice) Boys will be boys'. An avid dismissal of sex-role should not reject the argument that masculinity has no biological precedent. Such a position is untenable but the ability of will-power, emotional management, self-reflection and change should not be discarded.⁵⁰

A more consumerist lifestyle of the 1980s only exacerbated this expectation. Beyond financial independence one should strive to occupy a lavish station; the 'material mask' had become more ostentatious. When some men fall short of this expectation, they may seek increasingly desperate methods of reasserting their wounded pride. A solution for young Protestants was to dedicate themselves to local 'Blood and Thunder' bands (initially known as 'Kick the Pope' bands) or replicate the 'Tartan Gangs' of the previous decade. Both were expressions of belligerent masculinity and ethno-sectarian identity with the latter being a response to the notorious death of three off-duty Scottish soldiers, lured away from a pub as

⁴⁹ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p. 46.

⁵⁰ This position is a consistently unpopular one among men's studies scholars as exemplified by Whitehead and Barrett (2001): 'men are not puppets of their hormones' cited in Kevin Alexander Boon, 'Heroes, Metanarratives, and the Paradox of Masculinity in Contemporary Western Culture' *Journal of Men's Studies* Vol. 13 Issue 3 (2005), p. 307.

part of an IRA ‘honey-trap’ in 1971.⁵¹ So the major militarisation in loyalist paintings of the mid-1980s can be seen as manipulating the severe discontent of young working-class men. Under the watchful commission of local commanders, an otherwise rich and varied landscape became virtually monopolised by advertisements for paramilitary organisations with masked volunteers always looking for new recruits.

An analogy to advertising, advanced by many scholars including most recently and convincingly by Lisle, contends that the most successful adverts/murals work without us knowing it. This is achieved by circumventing rational thought and embedding themselves in our subconscious desires.⁵² A description of Northern Irish society as ‘suffering from a deep psychosis in which rational thought and action are invariably overtaken by emotional spasms the moment it comes under stress’⁵³, would make it the perfect audience for such ‘advertising’. The causal connection between conflict imagery and conflict is thus far from immediate and obvious, but if contentious, emotionally-laden, provocative paintings occupy the same ‘prime-time’ spatial slot for so long, the author argues, such consistent exposure would begin to take some subliminal effect. At times some murals appeared as if enlarged pages straight from a munitions dealer’s sales catalogue, selling not literal weapons but the masculine experience wielding them brought. Often this came about in numerous examples of euphemistic language or exaggerated prowess. One such case describes the operations of the ‘Protestant Action Force’: ‘[we] reserve the right to strike at republican targets where and when the opportunity arises’. Another similarity with advertising is the crafting of a lie as

⁵¹ Gareth Mulvenna discusses feelings of frustration, anger and fear over a perceived impotence of state security forces in the aftermath of such incidents. Gareth Mulvenna, *Tartan Gangs and Paramilitaries: The Loyalist Backlash*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 92-94.

⁵² Lisle, ‘Local Symbols, Global Networks’ p. 37.

⁵³ The description, from Harold Jackson’s ‘The Two Irelands’ (a pamphlet written in 1971 for Minority Rights Group) must be taken with a large pinch of salt given not only its scope but the context in which it was originally made at the beginning of the conflict. Harold Jackson, *The Two Irelands: A Dual Study of Inter-Group Tensions*, Minority Rights Group, Report no.2 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1971), p.4.

many killings did not contribute to any military campaign against the IRA or INLA. Due to pragmatic factors like poor planning or lack of intelligence, many victims were non-combatants simply in or near Catholic majority areas.⁵⁴

Other than random sectarian killings, a common strategy utilised by all paramilitaries during the Troubles was reciprocal revenge. Some atrocities inspired this impulse such as the IRA's Remembrance Sunday bombing at Enniskillen in 1987. The next day five Catholic teenagers were injured in an apparent retaliatory shooting in Belfast and later a Protestant teenager, mistaken for a Catholic, was killed by the UDA.⁵⁵ Cyclical revenge is facilitated by the reduction of any situation into dualistic polarities which compel men to either participate or risk being considered a 'weak' traitor (especially within Protestant circles). With the conflict approaching its third decade, some felt the intractability could only be overcome if the despicable 'other' truly tasted their own medicine. Such was the motive of Michael Stone who caused havoc at the Milltown Cemetery attack in 1988. Mourners had gathered to bury three IRA volunteers killed in Gibraltar by the SAS during 'Operation Flavius' when Stone open fired with handguns and tossed grenades killing three and injuring over sixty. Lone wolves and loose cannons could be a liability for paramilitary organisations, damaging their public image and jeopardising whatever dedicated political cause they claim to pursue. Stone, however, was lauded by some in the community as a modern-day folk-hero.⁵⁶ His deeds earned him such praise that he was compared to William III in a mural-coronation of 'King

⁵⁴ Out of the 544 deaths the UVF and the RHC were jointly responsible for between 1966 and 2002 a startling 84% were civilians, 10% were other loyalists and a mere 5% were republican paramilitaries McKittrick et al. cited in Aaron Edwards, 'Abandoning Armed Resistance? The Ulster Volunteer Force as a Case Study of Strategic Terrorism in Northern Ireland' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* vol. 32 issue 2 (2009), p. 152.

⁵⁵ Helen Robinson, 'Remembering War in the Midst of Conflict: First World War Commemorations in the Northern Irish Troubles' *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2010), p. 97.

⁵⁶ Tim Pat Coogan has described Gusto Spence in similar terms. Spence's involvement with the Malvern Street murder in 1966 had given him legendary status among many young loyalists and he was even claimed as an inspiration by the likes of Michael Stone. Martin Dillon, *Stone Cold* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), pp. 23-24.

Michael Stone'. In another he stands defiantly in Milltown, surrounded by a halo-like motif adorned with loyalist flags. The accompanying inscription 'His Only Crime was Loyalty' became a catchphrase proclaiming a subject's innocence.

Not all civilian deaths were purely sectarian in nature, and as the decade came to an end the UDA, restless for physical force, assassinated lawyer Pat Finucane. A specialist in criminal defence, Finucane came to prominence during several high-profile human rights cases brought against the British government and defending republican and (it was claimed) loyalist prisoners, as such was deemed a prestigious target. Seemingly unbounded male competition would pit rival organisations, particularly younger members hungry for honour, against each other to secure such 'military successes'. The IRA also struck selective victims and in December 1987 the Ulster Democratic Party lost its leader, John McMichael, to a booby-trap car bomb. The sudden loss of a leader, political or military, could not only bring to an abrupt halt their strategy, but make room for a less collaborative replacement. Indeed as Reed notes it is a painful myopic perspective that does not appreciate that the destruction of violence will outlive any sensational satisfaction delivered by a revenge killing.⁵⁷

McMichael's untimely passing was shortly followed by a substantial arms consignment shipped from Lebanon and South Africa.⁵⁸ The confidence that also arrived is attested in a 1989 work. Along with the habitual language parroting official military terminology, describing themselves as an 'active service unit', there did not seem to be anything 'new' about this era or the hypermasculine energy propelling it on.

⁵⁷ Richard Reed, *Paramilitary Loyalism: Identity and Change*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 6.

⁵⁸ The shipment included 200 Czech assault rifles, 90 Browning pistols, 10 RPG 7 rocket systems and 150 warheads, 450 fragmentation grenades and ammunition for rifles and handguns. Henry McDonald and Jim Cusack, *UDA*, p. 157.



Fig.4.3

4.3 Turning a Freedom Corner (1990-1994)

4.3.1 'For as long as One Hundred of Us Remain...'

In the immediate aftermath of the AIA it may have seemed as if a permafrost of relations had descended on both sides of the Irish Sea, but by 1990 communication had gradually thawed. Yet in such a sensitive climate the slightest error in judgement or inattention to detail can have destabilising reverberations. So it was when one sentence delivered by Secretary of State Peter Brooke attracted fervent scrutiny. During his Whitbread Speech of November of that year he claimed: 'the British government has no selfish, strategic or economic interest in: our role is to help, enable and encourage.'⁵⁹ Speculation fell hard on the first clause, as it implied that Britain had found itself lumbered with a province to which it was neither

⁵⁹ Timeline: Northern Ireland's road to peace, *BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4072261.stm> (27/1/06) [accessed 15/12/20].

sentimentally nor emotionally attached.⁶⁰ Ultimately the Brooke-Mayhew talks failed to produce any civil longevity despite loyalist paramilitaries calling a brief two-month ceasefire again in 1991 to complement this early stage of the peace process. In a terrible swing of the pendulum, the UVF and UDA returned to a ruthless campaign of terror, the former killing sixty-six people between 1991 and 1994, a higher tally than the previous ten years combined.⁶¹

A visual return to terror also swiftly took place at a site which remains today one of the most prominent assertions of loyalist identity. Over the next few years dozens of paintings would be clumped together along a 150-yard stretch known as ‘Freedom Corner’. The location of any mural is almost as important as its contents since this determines how often it is viewed and by how many viewers. In terms of maximising the influence of one’s message, busy arterial routes are obviously popular and highly sought after. By staking a claim to this portion of the Newtownards Road, the East Belfast UDA had acquired prime real estate for forcefully impressing their particular vision onto a large audience. The first work did not rely on the typical historical episodes but extended its reach back through time to lean on another source of legitimacy. In an audacious rewriting, the UFF appropriated the culminating lines of the ‘Declaration of Arbroath’ (1320). Perhaps a nod to their Scottish brethren, the magniloquence had a high value in terms of gendered propaganda, with its pledge to resist foreign domination even down to the last one hundred men.⁶² The pseudo-historical text sits opposite a large, vapid clenched red fist and contemporary masked

⁶⁰ The claim was to be repeated three years later in the ‘Downing Street Declaration’ see O’Brien, B *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein from Armed Struggle to Peace Talks* Dublin 1995, p. 211. Cited in Paul Bew, Henry Patterson and Paul Teague *Between War and Peace: The Political Future of Northern Ireland* (London: Lawrence & Wishart London, 1997), p. 13.

⁶¹ Edwards, ‘Abandoning Armed Resistance?’, p. 152.

⁶² The key phrase in the original closing passage reads: ‘never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule’ referring to the First War of Scottish Independence. <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/Declaration>. In the UFF version this was amended to read: ‘we shall never in anyway consent to submit to the Irish’. Despite the nearly seven centuries of separation in circumstance, the reworked text appears in several other murals.

volunteer flaunting his AK-47. Santino believes Freedom Corner's boldness in style and content reflect a festering impatience and militancy among a younger generation of Ulster Protestants.⁶³

4.3.2 Targeting the Demographic

A targeting of the youth demographic is as formulaic as the militarisation of masculinity in these ideological adverts. An important distinction to note is the lack of boundaries between the civilian and military spheres. While 'military' refers to a specific and strictly delineated institution, in a world apart complete with codes, customs and vocabulary, 'militarisation' is a far wider and nebulous phenomena where the two worlds bleed in together. Countless examples in murals illustrate this with non-official military combatants impersonating gestures, the most popular being variants on the three-volley salute or the British army's 'reverse arms', weapon resting, heads bowed, and eyes closed. Even the last work referenced shows a spatial uniformity. Rather than elevated above eye level, the figures meet us on street level with the flag-bearing volunteers crouching virtually on the pavement.

⁶³ Santino, *Signs of War and Peace*, p. 40.



Fig.4.4

While the UDA tug on the same heart strings, they also exploited other strategies for eliciting the youth support. In one 1992 work, cartoons and sports were synthesized when ‘Spike’ the bulldog, donning a loyalist bands uniform, grabs the cowardly cat ‘Jerry’ by the scruff of his Celtic football shirt (one half of the bitter, often sectarian Glasgow derby known as the Old Firm). As Mulvenna explains, had this ‘angry young man’ syndrome been located anywhere else in the UK it would have fed into relatively innocuous sub-cultures like the earlier Teddy Boys or Mods and Rockers. In NI, gangs like the Tartans and their successors saw their aggression utilised by older men to produce new recruits.⁶⁴ Rather than creative

⁶⁴ Gareth Mulvenna, ‘The Protestant working class in Belfast: education and civic erosion – an alternative analysis’, *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 20, Issue 4 (2012), p. 438.

pursuits (like music) providing an emotional shelter for young men to seek refuge from the conflict, they occasionally became annexed to the cause. Some murals bearing the name of flute bands, like the 'Cloughfern Young Conquerors' were visually conducted by masked gunmen. Such unrestrained militarisation leads to a higher exposure rate to violence and a number of psychological studies have suggested that such portrayals act as 'primers' for direct violence.⁶⁵ If anything there is evidence that the UDA's advertising was *too* good and with this apparent success came unintended failures. As with any organisation, the greater the number of members the more difficult it is to maintain consistent order and general accord.⁶⁶ For an organisation professing to personify duty and discipline, the most inevitable breakdown in communication and co-ordination was not simply embarrassing; it could result to further bloodshed. No longer content with rioting, some from large gangs hurriedly subsumed into the Ulster Young Militants would pose progressively deadlier threat as they rose rapidly through the ranks. A cycle of killing climaxed in January 1992 with the PIRA detonating a land mine at the Teebane crossroads, Co. Tyrone. The eight civilians on the bus had been working at a British army base, making them in the Provisional's eyes viable targets. The response from the UFF was a mass shooting at Sean Graham's Bookmakers on the Ormeau Road with the gunmen that killed five civilians shouting 'remember Teebane!'⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Bartholow, B et al (2005) 'Interactive effects of life experience and situational cues on aggression: the weapons priming effect in hunters and nonhunters' *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* vol. 41 p. 48-60/ Berkowitz, Leonard and Anthony LePage (1967) 'Weapons as Aggression-Eliciting Stimuli' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* vol.7 p. 202-07 all cited in Ella Page, 'Men, Masculinity and guns: can we break the link?' IANSA Women's Network http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/SALW_MenAndGuns_IANSA_2009.pdf accessed 22 July 2020, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Unlike the much smaller, more secretive and centralised UVF, the UDA's structure brought in a broad church from across the social spectrum. Reed '*Paramilitary Loyalty*, p. 44.

⁶⁷ Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, p. 159.

4.3.3 'Is he Catholic or Protestant?' Cu Chulainn, the Ultimate Poster Boy'

In the early 1990s a new masculine icon arrived at Freedom Corner and was one of the most unlikely candidates to fill this space.



Fig.4.5

The ancient warrior Cú Chulainn had for centuries represented the heroic ideal not of unionism but of Irish nationalism. Indeed his posture in the painting is copied from Oliver Sheppard's bronze statue in the General Post Office in Dublin—the site of Padraig Pearse's reading of the 'Proclamation of the Irish Republic' beginning the Easter Rising in 1916. More recently, Cú Chulainn was featured in a republican mural in Armagh amongst a host of nationalist symbols: a background map of Ireland, the four provincial shields, the wolfhound and the Celtic harp. Unsurprisingly his presence does not signify a mutual respect or similarity in narratives that transcends the divide but rather the latest in symbolic contestation,⁶⁸ encapsulated when a participant in a youth workshop only half-jokingly asked

⁶⁸ Another clear, and more frequently seen, example of this controversial construction of history is the Red Hand of Ulster. The traditional emblem for the main clan in the North, the O'Neills, it predates colonisation. For some

of the warrior: ‘is he Catholic or Protestant?’⁶⁹ He is, of course, paradoxically neither and both, but he most definitely does not straddle any common ground. The loyalist claim to Cú Chulainn is based on a revision of the ‘*Táin Bó Cúailnge*’ (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*), an epic of early Irish literature and the longest, most important tale within a series of legends and sagas known as ‘the Ulster Cycle’. The *Táin* chronicles a war waged by Queen Mehb of Connacht intent on stealing the stud Brown Bull of Cooley. With the King and all the warriors of Ulster under a debilitating curse, the vast armies are opposed only by Cú Chulainn, a teenage demigod imbued with supernatural strength. The twist in the tale, however, is when some loyalists believe he belonged to an entirely separate ethnic group, defending Ulster from Irish-Celtic invaders from the south, performing the same task of contemporary paramilitaries.

This interpretation is based on the writing of Dr. Ian Adamson who from 1974 elaborated an ethnogenesis that proposed the invaders, named Parthalons in the medieval ‘*Lebor Gabála Éirenn*’ (‘The Book of Conquests’), were in fact the Pretani or a tribe called the Cruthin. After a final defeat at the Battle of Moira in 637 A.D, they migrated to Lowland Scotland only to return a thousand years later during the Plantation of Ulster. Following this account of events, contemporary Ulster-Scots are living on tracts once possessed by their distant ancestors; they therefore cannot be regarded as ‘outsiders’ or colonisers.⁷⁰ Outwith a small circle of proponents of Adamson’s work, the theory has been excoriated by a range of

nationalists the loyalist use of the symbol may be viewed as cultural hijacking, the UVF offered the following rationale: ‘The Red Hand of the O’Neill’s has been adopted by the Ulster Loyalist population as a symbol of their separate identity with the rest of Ireland...we could do no better than adopt the war cry of the O’Neills- ‘‘Lamh dearg abu’ (the red hand to victory’’ from *Combat* magazine, no. 8 (May 1974). An offshoot of the UVF even took the name ‘Red Hand Commando’, the symbol found in many of their murals.

⁶⁹ Youth workshop, Monkstown, 25 October 2021.

⁷⁰ According to Nic Craith, ethnic myths like these are vital as ‘evidence’ for territorial title-deeds. Apparently said territory of the once substantial Cruthin tribe consisted of most of the counties of Antrim and Down whilst also extending from Loch Foyle to Dundalk Bay. Nic Craith, *Plural Identities, Singular Narratives*, p. 94.

scholars from archaeology to genetics.⁷¹ This consensus of academic rejection seems to be matched in the public given that the flimsy construct has not yet taken root amongst its intended audience. All this might doom Cú Chulainn, the ultimate poster-boy for the loyalist fight, to obscurity, for the efficacy of any myth depends upon the belief in it. Low levels of public support are less relevant however when we note that within that small circle were UDA leaders Andy Tyrrie and John McMichael, the latter displaying maps of the prehistoric Cruthin, a pre-plantation Ulster in his headquarters.⁷² The arrival of Cu Chulainn, ‘champion’ of Ulster, as he was named in a 1996 work allying him with loyalist prisoners of war, portends the UDA’s most drastic ‘solution’ to mounting fears of British withdrawal and Irish reunification. Suspicion over the Hume-Adams talks developed into apprehension over the ‘pan-nationalist front’, a perceived ideological inseparability between the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the Irish government. This led a minority to the distressing conclusion that the UDA’s objective would be to establish an ethnic Protestant Homeland, a state repartitioned and whose Catholic population would be ‘expelled, nullified or interned.’⁷³

⁷¹ Historian Peter Berresford Ellis likens the pseudo-history of Cruthin to Zionism, J.P Mallory and T. E. McNeil described the Cruthin as being ‘archaeologically invisible’ due to their being no evidence of either object or site that pertains to such a distinct group. See Carolyn Gallaher, ‘After the Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Post-Accord Northern Ireland’ Cornell University Press (2011) pp. 96-97. J. P. Mallory and T. E. McNeill both describe the Cruthin as ‘archaeologically invisible’ due to a lack of evidence in either site or object. A. J. Hughes, J. P. Mallory, and T. McNeill, ‘The Archaeology of Ulster’ *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* vol. 15 no. 1 (1992) p. 165. Research led by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Genealogical Society of Ireland revealed a fine-scale population structure of ten genetic clusters across Ireland, seven of those were of ‘Gaelic’ ancestry, the remaining three were of shared Irish-British ancestry and most probably reflected the Ulster Plantations. While there was evidence of continual, low-level migration between the north of Ireland and south-west Scotland, there is no mention of the Cruthin. ‘Unique study provides the first genetic map of the people of Ireland’ (8/12/17) <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/news-and-events/news/news-article/2017/12/unique-study-provides-the-first-genetic-map-of-the-people-of-ireland> accessed 3 November 2021.

⁷² Nic Craith, *Plural Identities, Singular Narratives*, p. 97.

⁷³ This phrase comes from a document made available to a Belfast newspaper discussing the likely situation after a British withdrawal. Wood is of the opinion that ‘nullification’ is merely a macabre euphemism for ethnic cleansing Wood *Crimes of Loyalty*, p. 183.

4.3.4 ‘Who Will Defend Ulster Now?’ Institutional Masculinities, Past and Present.

We must acknowledge that masculinities, and their proclivity for violent expression, are shaped by more than just a paramilitary presence. The impression on loyalist male identity made by state authorities is rendered for all to see in a second conflation of time and space. In this case the UDA adopting the mantle of ‘Ulster’s present-day defenders’ are matched in skill and determination by the ‘past defenders’ being the B-Specials and the UDR.



Fig.4.6

A rhetorical question designed to prompt community fears also thickens the connection between past and present: ‘who will defend Ulster now?’ The implied answer is that none but ourselves can be relied upon. We have met the ‘B-Men’ before in this thesis, but they were also embroiled in several of the tense exchanges at the beginning of the Troubles, one of these being the incident at Burntollet Bridge. On the 1st January 1969 a small ‘People’s Democracy’ (a political student organisation advocating for more radical reforms than

NICRA) march left Belfast for Derry. By the morning of the 4th they reached the final stage in the journey when they were ambushed at by around two hundred loyalists, including off-duty B Specials with stones, iron bars and cudgels.⁷⁴ While Burntollet signalled another escalating step in the rapid degradation into conflict, it should be seen in the historical context of an abysmal track record by the police and steadily deteriorating public relations.⁷⁵ There was only a month (September-October 1969) between the Cameron and Hunt Reports, the former determining that discrimination against Catholics was a major cause of civil disturbances, the latter recommending the disarming of the RUC and replacing the B Specials with the UDR.⁷⁶

For many Protestants the police were more just a public service; it was their primary defence against republican paramilitaries, a decrease in their security powers led to an exponential increase in paramilitaries. The creation of the UDR was met with mixed reactions, with many unionists suspicious of it as its creation was a consequence of criticism levelled at the B Specials. This mounted and increased when and because it came under Westminster control with senior officers selected from British army regiments. On the other hand, with the bulk of members being local, it was an opportunity to redress the long-standing imbalance in recruitment.⁷⁷ Some influential nationalists like Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann, however, had doubts from the start, considering the regiment to be little

⁷⁴ O'Neill, in his 'Crossroads' speech of December 1968 tried to dissuade such action, warnings were given to People's Democracy and the march did not have broad support among nationalists. Nevertheless, Burntollet would be seen by some loyalists as the Protestant fight back, while to many republicans it was confirmation that they could only rely on an IRA-led defence. Taylor, *Loyalists War and Peace*, p. 55.

⁷⁵ With depressing frequency, 19th century commissions into policing conduct laid the blame squarely on two main factors: the partiality and inefficiency of the police, and the provocative nature of the Orange celebrations. Additionally, the 1864 commissioners alleged discrimination by Protestants in recruitment to the police. Stewart *The Narrow Ground*, p. 150.

⁷⁶ Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland*, (Cambridge: Syndicate University Press, 1996), p. 129.

⁷⁷ Hume encouraged Catholics to join and in the first years recruitment was up to 18%, but by 1978 had fallen to a mere 3%. Flackes and Elliot, 'Northern Ireland: A Political Directory, 1968-88' cited in Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p.216.

more than the old USC under a new name. The perception that both the RUC and UDR were the armed wing of unionism was not entirely unfounded, as Britain's policy of 'Ulsterisation' had strengthened a connection between regiment and community. UUP security spokesman, Ken Maginnis, even referred to the UDR as a 'moderate Protestant army.'⁷⁸ A problematic relationship arises when we reflect on the manipulation of gendered emotions, a tactic employed by paramilitaries and the state —although there were female members in the UDR notably earlier than other regiments. A duplicity unfolds whenever the state legitimises even sanctifies violence whilst claiming to abhor it.⁷⁹ Many loyalists who joined either the UDR or the UVF/UDA often did so triggered by the impulse of patriotism. As Nagel observes, the culture of nationalism is constructed around masculine themes with terms like 'honour', 'patriotism', 'cowardice', 'bravery' and 'duty' being hard to distinguish as either nationalist or masculinist.⁸⁰ Whichever militarised path a loyalist man may choose to take could also seriously effect his chances of living a fulfilling, civilianised life, a point succinctly made by an interviewee.⁸¹ The clearest way these paths crossed, other than appearing shoulder to shoulder in mural form, was in incidents of collusion. From an organisational perspective, random sectarian murders, which characterised much of paramilitary activity, were 'easy'. Therefore a successful assassination of a specific target led to speculation of state interference. The planning of a murder usually required extensive knowledge of the victim's

⁷⁸ Beginning in 1975, 'Ulsterisation' was part of a three-pronged strategy (along with criminalisation and normalisation) that the British government pursued in an attempt to localise the conflict thus confining its impact Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 140.

⁷⁹ This confusion is summarised by a UVF man who did not understand why Unionist leaders sanctioned what he did as a B Special officer later to condemn his UVF activity. For him, what gave his deeds legitimacy was not an official uniform, rather it was his intentions as a loyal Protestant. Nelson, *Ulster's Uncertain Defenders*, p. 88.

⁸⁰ Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, issue 2 (1998), p. 251.

⁸¹ 'I know people don't like linking state forces and paramilitaries and I'm not trying to do that but we're thinking about recruiting our young people, specifically young men, into violent lives, we need to be looking at it from a class perspective too. If you compare Doug Beattie to Billy Hutchinson-they both joined violent organisations as teenagers-one was able to use this career in violence to launch a very successful political career, the other has his violent past constantly dragged up to him as a negative thing.' Interview with participant 'CM', Belfast, 25 November 2021.

routine, interior layout of their house, physical appearance, car registration and so on. The most common form of assistance from either the RUC, UDR or army to loyalist paramilitaries was the passing of said information about republicans.⁸² Once again it was a report that revealed the extent of the relationship and a much later investigation would shed light on the ‘Glenanne gang’, the most notorious and sustained case of collusion.⁸³

4.3.5 ‘Why Give Up Our Guns?’ At the Crossroads of Crises

The protracted nature of the Troubles meant that it overlapped with several momentous developments often happening on a global scale such as deindustrialisation. At various phases in modern societies attitudinal changes have been translated by some men as their world was/is gripped by crippling uncertainty. The specific, internal crisis experienced by some loyalist men was compounded by a simultaneous general and external ‘crisis of masculinity’ that took place throughout the 1990s and 2000s.⁸⁴ The consequence was just as consistent as the crises themselves; in its wake would be a straggling generation of men bereft of direction and purpose. For, if certain men defined their masculinities around privileges (rarely

⁸² One of the best-known cases, the murder of Pat Finucane, was subject to review in Sir Desmond de Silva’s report. Overall, de Silva was left in significant doubt as to whether Finucane would have been murdered by the UDA had it not been for the different strands of involvement by elements of the State. Furthermore, there was a series of positive actions by employees of the State that actively furthered and facilitated his murder and that, in the aftermath there was a relentless attempt to defeat the ends of justice. The Report of the Patrick Finucane Review HC 802, Session 2012-2013. The Stationery Office Limited, London (2012) p.23.

⁸³ The report of the Stevens enquiry, presented in May 1990 contained eighty-three recommendations about tightening up procedures for vetting UDR members and maintaining intelligence files. Ninety-four people were arrested with fifty-nine charged. Ibid p. 264 Evidence was later found linking British soldiers and RUC officers to seventy-four of the seventy-six deaths attributed to the Glenanne gang. Douglass Cassel et al. ‘Report of the Independent International Panel on alleged collusion in sectarian killings in Northern Ireland’ (Notre Dame: Centre for Civil and Human Rights Notre Dame Law School, 2006), p. 4.

⁸⁴ MacInnes claims that crises are often precipitated by a perception that ‘men’s material privileges in the law, economy and politics are under increasing scrutiny or even attack.’ John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p. 47. Seidler remarked that men are in ‘a period of uncertainty and change’ Victor Seidler, *Man Enough: Embodying Masculinities*, (London: Sage, 1997), p.1. Messner comments on how the ‘traditional conception of the macho man who is in control of his life and relationships helps to create false expectations and blinds men to the injuries they do to themselves in aspiring to live up to these ideals.’ Michael Messner, *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997), p. 49.

acknowledge as such), and those privileges should be chipped away at, then so too was the edifice that made them *real* men. Hence the crisis was an emasculating experience that demanded a swift and sweeping ‘remasculinisation’.⁸⁵ Invariably this involves some ‘corrective’ measures to overcome a vague existential threat. This means falling back on rigid codes of conduct that dictates a man’s behaviour as husband, father, provider and warrior. It is a restrictive set of roles taking its cue straight out of most military handbooks; the ideal image of man being physically tough, enduring hardship, aggressive, ruggedly heterosexual and unemotionally logical.⁸⁶ In his *‘Presentations of Gender’*, Stoller describes how many boys construct a defensive armour against femininity, easily paired with Howes’ ‘sexual mask’ of compulsory and competitive heterosexuality.⁸⁷ Whilst this element is not explicitly stated in murals, it lurks as an assumed coping mechanism, even a necessity of life. Masculinity tends to reach hyper proportions in conflict situations, taking on an enlarged and elevated role.

In loyalist NI a further reassertion of masculinity went hand in hand with the possession of firearms. For many this bond often forged at an early stage of childhood when boys mimic their role models: knights, soldiers, warriors, police, thieves or cowboys—almost inevitably with some toy weapon from simple sticks to convincing replicas. During the Troubles, however, guns became as important symbolically as practically in the defence of hegemonic status. In 1994 two examples of large-scale graffiti, one on a RHC mural, speaks to concerns over handing over power. They are both addressed to Rev. Paisley, the first reading back to him one of his catchphrases: ‘If Ulster is sold out...why give up our guns, Mr. Paisley?’. The second lampoons his efforts to stand tall as the latest incarnation of a

⁸⁵ Fintan Walsh, *Male Trouble: masculinity and the performance of crisis*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 9.

⁸⁶ Whitehead & Barrett, 1994 cited in Langa & Eagle ‘The intractability’, p. 153.

⁸⁷ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies and Realities*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 90.

Carson-like ‘big man’ defiance: ‘Clydevally [sic] Carson. Paisley “Surrender Guns” Some Carson’. The Clydevalley having been the vessel used to import a large cargo of arms and ammunition during the Home Rule crisis. In the same year the ‘Rocket Team’ went ‘on tour’ in an emulation of the ‘New Era’ mural. The author tentatively suggests that emasculation may have been a subtle factor; an added complication to the issue of decommissioning which proved one of the highest hurdles to vault in the peace process and more than once put progress in peril.

4.3.6 ‘Still Undefeated’

Protestant alienation was not soothed by references in both the Downing Street Declaration (1993) and Framework Documents (1995) to the people of Ireland, North and South, but far greater calamity than language would throw doubt over the notion of peace. On the 23rd October 1993 a PIRA bomb prematurely exploded on the Shankill Road killing ten and injuring fifty-seven others.⁸⁸ A spate of loyalist revenge attacks took place within a week, the worst being the Greysteel massacre at the Rising Sun bar, claiming a further eight civilian lives and injuring eighteen. Signifying to many a horrific slide back into old patterns, the month saw the highest death toll since October 1976.⁸⁹ Similar tragedy occurred in 1994 following the INLA assassination of popular and long-serving volunteers including Trevor King (remembered in more than one mural). A UVF unit hit back killing six innocent Catholic men in O’Toole’s bar in Loughinisland, Co. Down. These acts of spoiler violence sought to destabilise the process, whether they took the form of economic targets, like the IRA bombing Bishopsgate (1993) and the Docklands (1996), causing staggering amounts of

⁸⁸ ‘Sutton Index of Deaths: 23 October 1993’ Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN). Archived from the original (20/2/15) [accessed 22/5/20].

⁸⁹ Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland.*, p. 286.

infrastructural damage, or political targets like the IRA murder of Ray Smallwoods, a key figure in loyalist political thinking.⁹⁰ Despite such adverse conditions, the ceasefires of 1994 gave space for ground-breaking opportunities and meaningful dialogue and even more flexibility in previously intransigent mindsets since both sides were also exhausted. This optimism extended to potentially revised uses of that most traditional of media, the murals of NI.⁹¹ We do see evidence of evolution materialise; however it seems limited to republicanism, which had made a concerted effort to use their ceasefire murals as part of a broader and well-organised strategy, conducted in the manner of an advertising campaign. These ‘adverts’ were not selling a product or service but the idea of peace. Of course, hope for the future has to be tempered with realism but even when the peace process was on shaky ground, republican murals did not predict any sudden and radical breakthroughs. Rather it was the painstaking task of coming in from the political margins.⁹² By the time the IRA declared their ceasefire in August 1994, these displays had already been preparing people for this move, demonstrating public art’s capability of easing a community through the difficulties of adjustment and concession.

Those responsible for loyalist murals at this time seemed unwilling to engage in a similar transition. A comparison between murals and men exists since proscribed voices were banned from broadcast, murals were shown as a proxy so the public regularly ‘met’ with faceless men of violence. It is in the backbone of the paramilitary performance to come across as cold and rough as the wall’s concrete finish: hard architecture displaying hard men.

⁹⁰ Graham Spencer, *The State of Loyalism in Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 83.

⁹¹ The front page of the Daily Mirror (December 1993) carried the headline ‘The Writing’s on the Wall’ accompanied by a photo showing the word ‘Peace’ daubed on a wall. The photo’s caption read: ‘The walls that have carried messages of hate for 25 years were daubed with a new slogan-PEACE.’ from Woods, *Seeing is Believing*.

⁹² Rolston, ‘From King Billy to Cú Chulainn’, p. 19.

It was the architecture of inner-cities and housing estates that for so long had been a gallery to immortalise warriors, as one UDA ex-prisoner recalls: ‘gunmen in our estates were idolised, They were heroes, full stop.’⁹³ Whilst the majority of murals are on gable ends, the dimensions of other walls allow for a commanding presence. In one case in Whiteabbey, a small townland north of Belfast, a long UDA mural takes on an almost panoramic view, its raised position looming over the surrounding residential area.

According to loyalist walls it was not politics that enticed republicans to the negotiation table. Apparently, they were brought to their knees by the devastatingly effective loyalist paramilitaries who emerge as proud and undeniable victors. Claims of being an army abound in lurid murals with the UDA slogan ‘Simply the best’ being frequently used. Ironically with more legitimate, legal and well-paying means to fight back, many Protestants joined the RUC, army or UDR.⁹⁴ With the more proficient candidates siphoned off into these channels it left paramilitaries to recruit from whoever was left, invariably not the most competent. Statements derivative of British army recruitment such as those in a RHC mural in Rathcoole that ‘99.9% need not apply’ and ‘be the best’ were demonstrably false. Losing volunteers in bungled operations quickly knocked holes in the carefully crafted image of professionalism, even for the more selective recruitment of the UVF, which had set the precedent for fatal mistakes and targeted sectarian killings in some of the first deaths of the Troubles.⁹⁵ With ill-deserved confidence and in a tone unfitting the political climate, the UVF were as late as 1994 boasting they were ‘Still Undefeated’, the all black attire of volunteers

⁹³ Dave Magee, ‘*The Elephant in the Peace Process*’ (24/1/13) <https://eamonnmallie.com/2013/01/the-elephant-in-the-peace-process-by-dave-magee/> [accessed 6/12/19].

⁹⁴ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 271.

⁹⁵ One of the very first victims of the Troubles was Mrs. Gould an elderly Protestant woman whose house was mistakenly petrol-bombed by the UVF as she lived next to a Catholic-run off-licence. Likewise, the precedent for random ‘easy’ sectarian killings was established in 1966. When the UVF could not locate their selected target (republican Leo Martin, believed to be a leading member of the Belfast IRA) the men shot Catholic John Scullion who was drunk and allegedly singing republican songs. Taylor, *Loyalists War and Peace in Northern Ireland*, p. 41.

standing out against a vividly yellow background and exultant sunburst radiating from the organisation's emblem. The ceasefire clearly did not extend to these visually persuasive tactics and while any macro propaganda war is not won or lost in these micro 'battles', there can be no denying the role murals play as crucial weapons in that war. Their presence is prolonged and their effect insidious, just like the 'invincible mask'⁹⁶ that men in conflict unconsciously pull over their face. While the rest of the world spoke of NI in hushed tones of cautious optimism, some loyalist men showed no signs of putting down this 'weapon' or pulling off their invincible and invisible 'mask'.

4.4 'Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum'

4.4.1 The More Things Change...

The loyalist production of conflict imagery accelerated as the conflict itself was dwindling.⁹⁷ The murals seemed to calcify an element in loyalism out of touch with current developments and public appetite. More than mere representations of sectarian politics, they play an active, performative role in contributing to the persistence of divisions. They assert—in the everyday, public environment—the continued presence of politico-sectarian attitudes.⁹⁸ The most (in)famous assertion glares down from the slopes of Mount Vernon: the summit of the symbolic landscape. It was first painted immediately after the loyalist ceasefire in an area not known for murals. This visual takeover of fresh territory was directed by the UVF's 3rd

⁹⁶ Howes, *The Mask of Masculinity*, p. 8.

⁹⁷ 1995 saw the first single-figure fatalities since 1968: 9 deaths (8 were civilians and 1 loyalist. Republicans claimed 7 lives, 6 using the cover name 'Direct Action Against Drugs' to kill alleged drug dealers.) McKittrick et al. *Lost Lives*, p. 1381.

⁹⁸ Hill & White, 'Painting Peace?', p. 80.

Battalion. Two of its sinister hooded gunmen are shown, only from the waist up but still standing approximately twenty-two feet tall. Both men pose with Kalashnikov rifles with text: 'Prepared for peace, Ready for war'. The pronouncement of peace notwithstanding, the implication is clear given that the only minor difference between the two positions is that the figure next to peace angles his weapon away from us, the other's muzzle stares out at us.

Analysing Mt. Vernon in context of the advertising analogy we can appreciate Bourdieu's comment on our social world being a 'market in symbolic goods, dominated by the masculine vision.'⁹⁹ If so, then this work is an iconic brand which provides high value to sections of its community, not only in articulating collective anxieties, but also possessing the wherewithal to patch up the otherwise torn tapestry of comforting myths. Precisely what sections of the local population value such works and what proportion of the entire host community they make up are questions we will return to. Nonetheless tensions arose when the Housing Executive planned to redevelop the area in 2000. In an outcome reminiscent of Bobby Jackson's works in the Fountain, the local UVF permitted the flats to be demolished only after NIHE built a new wall overlooking the original site to house a new version of the mural.¹⁰⁰ And there the landmark remains to this day, as the first thing you see when you drive down the M2 motorway with its frequent cameo appearances in newspapers and films giving it wider circulation. For some, like the influential muralist, Kenny Blair, its message still rings true: 'when you've been here 300 years under siege, I think none of us can let our guard down. We've always been "prepared for peace" but you need to... "trust in God and keep your powder dry" as Oliver Cromwell said.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, (Cambridge : Polity Press, 2001), p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ McCormick & Jarman, 'Death of a Mural' p. 61.

¹⁰¹ From interview with Kenny Blair, Ballymoney, 14 September 2021. The author asked him why he liked the Mt. Vernon mural. The technique of photo-elicitation was used throughout interviews.

For a country already on a journey out of conflict, having just passed the exceptional milestone of joint ceasefires, any mentions of peace were disappointingly scarce. It crops up in 1996 attached to the condition of releasing prisoners which, after decommissioning, was the second most arduous tribulation of the peace process. Nonetheless, the bright blue sky, above a grey compound and ominous watchtower, in the crisp outline of NI was at least a different and more positive use of the map than had previously been enacted along with red fists, pulling asunder chains rather than gripping guns. Generally speaking, the possible end of the Troubles was met with less magnanimity and more of a gleeful celebration. In the same year, an anthropomorphic Red Hand sprouted little legs and either danced a jig of joy or stamped its boots on the Irish tricolour. That surface is shared with other images, most unusually one of the very rare depictions of a woman. Representations of women during conflict are often infantilised and relegated into discrete categories: the passive refugee, the waiting wife, the mourning mother or the younger but equally distraught maiden. The underlying trope is that victimhood lacks agency with passivity being the supposed essence of femininity. The emotionally influential image of the vulnerable female subject validates the male saviour. In this sense at least, the Ulsterwoman here subverts the stereotype; on the other hand her particular empowering stance (arms aloft brandishing rifle and flag) fall back in line with the nationalistic and militaristic mould. She also takes her commonplace among her male fighters insofar as this image is copied from the anti-Home Rule poster: 'Deserted! Well - I Can Stand Alone' (1914). That she should stand alone, in a gendered sense, isolated amidst wall-to-wall testosterone is all the more galling given that the republican movement were concomitantly normalising the presence of women and feminist ideas through greater visibility—though this could be superficially optical and not necessarily translate to decision-

making.¹⁰² In loyalism, women were not meant to be *in* murals but passively look *at* murals which raises the challenging but necessary link between physical and/or behavioural attraction and perpetuation of weaponised behaviours. A desirability for the big men¹⁰³ underscores the complicit role women can play in engaging cooperatively with a patriarchal system. This desire can be magnetic and transcends many environments, from Belfast's 'Holylands' to Hollywood's Mae West who once quipped: 'a hard man is good to find!'¹⁰⁴

4.4.2 No Ground Broken

After the ceasefires NI politically opened up more, allowing parties to access news coverage and generate a broader range of discourses which would, among other advantages, reveal the conflict in more complex reality than had been presented through simplified and dramatically violent imagery.¹⁰⁵ Although Spencer is referring to mainstream media, the author posits that a similar opportunity could have been found in murals—opening up an alternative discourse and countering the visual status quo. Loyalist muralists, and their commissioners, did not avail themselves of the ideology of the two political parties pushing for change—the PUP and the UDP, associated with the UVF and UDA respectively. The full impact made by these parties will be discussed in chapter eight but suffice to say this ‘new loyalism’ failed to break ground in the old, compacted landscape. This is not to imply there were no attempts. Rolston is technically incorrect when claiming ‘none of this ideology appeared on the walls’¹⁰⁶, but if

¹⁰² Theresa O’Keefe, ‘Mother Ireland, Get Off Our Backs: Republican Feminist Resistance in the North of Ireland’ in Bosi and De Fazio, *The Troubles in Northern Ireland*, p. 169.

¹⁰³ The young women in Theidon’s study sought out ‘gran hombres’ (big men) as desirable partners in an economy of war Kimberly Theidon ‘Reconstructing Masculinities’, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis*, p. 166.

¹⁰⁵ Graham Spencer, ‘Constructing loyalism: politics, communications and peace in Northern Ireland’, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 10, Issue 1 (2004), p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Judy Vannais, ‘Postcards from the edge: Reading political murals in the North of Ireland’ *Irish Political Studies* (2001) p.143.

we examine the progressive anomalies we must conclude that their aesthetic impression and therefore political impact would have been negligible. A first attempt to adopt a similar electoral strategy to Sinn Féin was made in 1996 which reads 'Vote Progressive Unionist Party' without giving us any additional information or some dynamic emblem to sway our decision. This piece is also topped—both physically and visually— by a lone piper at an unknown soldier's grave, backlit by a fiery sunset. Thus, the mundane monochrome is drowned out by the colourful sound of the piper (a common character) playing the same First World War lament, framed with heraldic shields bearing names of Troubles-era volunteers. The dimensional dynamics between two or more images is always worth considering, especially if they are pulling us in different ideological directions. A year later the PUP tried again but we inevitably notice the much larger section which ticks all the usual boxes: UVF crest over a map of NI; historical figures conflated and joined with arcing scrolls attesting to a commitment of armed resistance. It is only on further inspection we spot the small side wall informing us that: 'the PUP is about to bark', a laudable sentiment unfortunately coming across more of a whimper. The UDP did not fare any better. A 1997 piece mentions in honour their former leader, John McMichael, which we can barely read (not only due to the surface being 'paint-bombed') for the visually 'louder' features such as gunmen in profile, red fists, and flags. When arguing that Protestants were at least a decade behind republicans in political organisation, Baroness May Blood believed the PUP and UDP 'did not do enough work on the ground to let people know that they weren't just paramilitaries in another guise and they were actually going to represent them.'¹⁰⁷ Blood's comments are writ large in this unhelpfully ambiguous UDP effort from 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Kevin J. Cassidy, 'Organic Intellectuals and the New Loyalism: Re-Inventing Protestant Working-Class Politics in Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies* (2008), p. 425.



Fig.4.7

4.4.3 'Dramaturgical Loyalty'

Only one new mascot of terror joins the visual vanguard at this time: 'Eddie' (lifted straight off the front cover of heavy metal group Iron Maiden's single 'The Trooper').¹⁰⁸ The skeletal soldier, now drafted into the UFF and dressed in army fatigues, carries either an assault rifle or rattles a sabre while racing toward us. Behind him is either one of two backdrops: a bloody sunset with the Grim Reaper (the other half of the phantasmagorical archetype) wandering

¹⁰⁸ Additional inspiration may have come from the skeleton on the city of Derry's coat of Arms, clambering down the ancient walls to defend Protestants.

across an apocalyptically dark burial ground where, in one work for Carrickfergus B Company the message ‘show no mercy and expect none’ was featured along with grave markers named for ‘G. Adams’, ‘McGuinness’ and ‘A. Maskey’— three Sinn Féin leaders, each holding various elected offices at the time. In the other backdrop Eddie charges through the carnage of a battlefield while, in the distance we see two meta-murals by the republican ‘Bogside artists’ including a half-ruined ‘Free Derry’ suggesting it a casualty in impending cultural destruction.



Fig.4.8

That work from 1997 is particularly chilling as a plaque above it reads: “There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end. We determine the guilty, we decide the punishment.”¹⁰⁹ Given that

¹⁰⁹ In keeping with the derivative disposition of loyalist murals, this text takes its cue from Commander in Chief Sir Douglas Haig. On 11 April 1918, Haig issued a Special Order of the Day addressed to all ranks of the British Army in France and Flanders from ‘Untold Lives’ blog, the British Library, 11 April 2018, available at <https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2018/04/with-our-backs-to-the-wall-sir-douglas-haigs-special-order-1918-.html> accessed 11 February 2021.

this work was on Bonds Street in the Protestant-majority district of Waterside, it is plausible this macabre message was intimidating so-called ‘punishment attacks’, dispensed by paramilitaries to ‘wrongdoers’ in their own community. Additionally, it may suggest a desperation of being on the ‘back foot’, as so many loyalists/unionists felt/feel in Derry.

Eddie might have been a new character, but he was essentially conceived in the same template just with a grotesque makeover. In lieu of exploring the roads less travelled, loyalism opted instead for the well-trodden path. This visually captures aspects of Goffman’s theories on the presented self, sticking to the same gendered script and maintaining ‘dramaturgical discipline’.¹¹⁰ For the integrity of the organisation to be preserved, all members must exercise this loyalty. It also reminds us that gender is not something we are destined to develop but something that coalesces through socialisation of rules, habits and attitudes. If boys are rarely taught about masculinity, there exists an educational lacuna which will be filled in part with what surrounds them. With paramilitaries brazenly aggrandising themselves they could appear to young men, particularly from similar low-income urban areas as home-grown heroes. In Clark’s study, one participant linked public artwork with false advertising in terms of visual-behavioural triggers: ‘when growing up there were three murals on my street alone.’¹¹¹ By the mid-1990s the average citizen of Belfast had hundreds of murals to look at, repetitively passing by these depictions was a constant reminder of the innocent ‘us’ violated by the ever-present threat of ‘them’.

Aside from fostering a general enemy consciousness, murals seem to teach the lesson that the virtue of honour makes a man’s reputation while the vice of shame breaks it. Lest we

¹¹⁰ Goffman also discusses ‘dramaturgical loyalty’ as a related principle, one that very much chimes with particular expressions of loyalism, not just politically and culturally but also masculine tropes. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (London: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 210.

¹¹¹ Serena Clark, ‘Public Artwork in Post-Conflict Areas: A Thematic Analysis’ *International Journal on World Peace* Vol. 34, Issue 3 (2017), p. 98.

forget that once achieved through peers' recognition, one's position is far from guaranteed and is in fact in a perpetually in a precarious state. Hence the need for performative consistency. Should a man fail one of the numerous tests of manhood he faces relegation into a lower rank. History provides men against which one is measured, with the chance to earn a Victoria Cross extremely slim, a man can pursue what Kimmel and Kaufman call the 'badges of manhood'. These are earned in stereotypical style: participating in risk-taking behaviour, being emotionally distant, preoccupations with power and money and by accumulating sexual partners.¹¹² The procedure for making a hero is rather simple, indeed simplicity is a core component to its success. Just as national master-narratives often reduce history to a single plot, symbols have been noted for their compactness; condensing complicated, even contradictory, messages into a single unifying image or slogan. This invariably involves the selection of material which preserves the eminence of the ingroup and a synchronous suppression of that material which could vandalise their gestalt image. The most common feature edited out in memorial murals are details of the volunteer's life, particularly any violent acts or other criminality. The circumstances of death are also withheld from the public. All we receive then is another honourable man who fought bravely and died heroically. The simplification of morally ambiguous individuals into the socially accepted archetype keeps them at a narrative distance. This distance is defensive, for the more intimately a man is understood the less likely he is to be considered a *hero*.¹¹³ Among the volunteers remembered in this period: John Bingham, Thomas Stewart, Stevie McCrea and

¹¹² Cited in Ashe, *The New Politics of Masculinity*, p. 45. A contemporary mural compared modern loyalist William Miller to Private William F McFadzean, a Lurgan born recipient of the Victoria Cross. McFadzean was not killed in action but died after throwing himself onto a box of grenades that had been dropped causing some to lose their safety pin. At the time he and his bombing team were preparing to attack in the assembly trenches near Thievpal Wood. <<https://www.royal-irish.com/persons/william-mcfadzean-vc>> [accessed 13/4/21].

¹¹³ It seems a contradiction given the forceful presence muralised men hold in public view, but though they are near us they are not truly known by us. Boon, 'Heroes, Metanarratives', p. 306.

many more besides, none are multi-dimensional characters but revered in one-dimensional eulogies.¹¹⁴

4.4.4 'Thou Shalt Make No Covenant'

Of all the historical sources and conceptual comparisons to give validity to a contemporary cause, no other authoritative voice speaks louder than that of God. All the better when scripture and war join forces as in this work from 1996. The left-hand text describes militaristic patriotism while the right quotes from Deuteronomy 7:2: 'And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them'. The archaic lexicon lends it an air of gravitas even when it pledges divine annihilation. It is another all-or-nothing binary through which to view the world — 'No surrender' with Biblical amplification. Religion, like other psychocultural narratives, are commonly cryptic and our interpretation of them usually reveals more about ourselves than it does any intrinsic meaning therein. Ross believes such narratives can be applied as 'exacerbators or inhibitors'¹¹⁵ of conflict, emphasising either similarities or differences. As it transpired, certain actors would use certain segments of faith to confirm their own bias and on occasion these would join activities like flag-flying or parades as catalysts for further violence. The most notable case of this was the disputes over Orange Order marches through Drumcree, specifically the Catholic-majority Garvaghy area.

¹¹⁴ By various accounts Stewart was shot over an internal financial dispute, McCrea was killed by the small republican 'Irish People's Liberation Organisation' in 1989 after serving time for his part in the death of 17-year old Catholic James Kerr. At times those remembered in murals had a personal connection, for example Bingham's coffin was carried by George Seawright, a deeply controversial unionist figure expelled from the DUP for his extreme views, though remained on Belfast City Council. On two occasions he called for revenge, in the wake of Bingham's death and William 'Frenchie' Marchant's a year later. Like McCrea, Seawright was killed by the paramilitary splinter group Irish People's Liberation Organisation and his own mural had a side wall reading: 'Live free and die not like a Fenian slave'.

¹¹⁵ Marc Howard (ed.), *Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies: Contestation and Symbolic Landscapes*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 8.

Though an acutely local issue, the significance of Portadown, known as the ‘Orange Citadel’¹¹⁶ meant that civil disorder mushroomed across NI. With its fusion of politics and religion—a distinctive branch of evangelicalism promoting scriptural truth—it is hard to overestimate the influence of the male-only Orange Lodges in the formation and perpetuation of masculine norms. The perennial stand-off between loyalist protestors and the RUC, deciding to block the parade route, reached its nadir in 1997 but would only grind to a shuddering termination when the UVF petrol-bombed a Catholic home in Ballymoney’s Carnany estate, killing three young brothers inside. McKay’s account of visiting the site of the atrocity would corroborate what interviewee Eileen Weir calls murals’ ability to ‘re-traumatise’ a community.¹¹⁷

With Drumcree declared the ‘siege’ of the age, it emboldened anti-ceasefire elements to provocation and even spoiler violence. Attacks on police officer’s homes and Catholic churches were carried out by UDA ‘Super-Pros’ under a banner of defending the Protestant faith. Figures like John Gregg (1957-2003), a South East Antrim brigadier with a fearsome reputation, epitomised this backwardness but this would not prevent his canonisation in mural form. This schism produced another manifestation in 1996 when the Loyalist Volunteer Force split from the UVF’s Mid-Ulster Brigade, operating primarily in Portadown. Under the direction of their disaffected leader, Billy ‘King Rat’ Wright, the LVF undermined the political progression in a short but vigorous burst of sectarian murders. Wright was

¹¹⁶ (Bryan, 2000: 194) cited in Naomi McAreavey, ‘Building bridges? Remembering the 1641 rebellion in Northern Ireland’ *Memory Studies*, Vol.1, Issue 1 (January 2018), p. 103.

¹¹⁷ During the Summer of 1997 60 RUC officers and 56 civilians injured, 117 arrests, 2,500 plastic batons fired in response to 402 hijackings, 1,506 petrol bombs thrown and 815 other attacks. Ambulance responded to 500 emergency calls. James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question since 1945: 2 studies in contemporary history* (London: Red Globe Press, 2004), p. 178. McKay observes that ‘the estate is surrounded by UDA flags and there are paramilitary murals with heavy antique calligraphy boasting of loyalty and sacrifice for the British Empire. One gable wall has a verse in the rhyming style of a Hallmark card: ‘‘The blood our comrades shed/ shall not have been in vain/ We honour Ulster’s dead/ and staunch we will remain’’ McKay *Northern Protestants: On Shifting Ground*, p. 20. Interview with Eileen Weir, Network Coordinator of the Shankill Women’s Centre, Belfast, 25 November 2021.

considered a charismatic speaker whose fundamentalist logic drew from characteristics of an extreme Evangelical resistance.¹¹⁸ His brief reign was abruptly ended a year later when he was killed by INLA members inside the maximum-security Maze prison.¹¹⁹ In death however, Wright had secured a different kind of victory, being venerated as an icon which naturally included murals.¹²⁰

4.4.5 The Threat of Peace

Despite these spoiler agents and against all other odds two years of intensive talks culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) on the 10th April 1998. The two referendums in May returned an overwhelming vote of public acceptance (71.2% in NI and 94.39% in the Republic). It must be made clear that loyalists were not alone in fracturing on the issue of the agreement. One of the dissident republican groups to emerge at this period was the 'Real IRA' which just four months after the GFA claimed twenty-nine lives in the worst single bombing in the Troubles.¹²¹ Although dissidents on both sides had failed to derail the politicians, it begs the question as to why this was their intention. How could anyone possibly object to the end of conflict? And why was it that, as we reached the end of

¹¹⁸ Spencer, *The State of Loyalism*, p. 39.

¹¹⁹ Retired Supreme Court of Canada judge, Peter Cory, determined sufficient evidence of collusion in this case and recommended a public inquiry into its investigation. 'Cory Collusion Inquiry Report: Billy Wright' (London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2004), p. 91.

¹²⁰ Portadown's town centre was closed down for his funeral and murals depicting him went up within days of the burial. Some young loyalists even began to adopt cropped hair and closely trimmed beards in tribute. The first killing to avenge Wright came just hours after his death when LVF gunmen attacked a hotel outside Dungannon, killing a doorman who was a former IRA prisoner. Wood, *Crime of Loyalty*, p.213.

¹²¹ One report summarised: 'The Omagh fatality list reads like a microcosm of Troubles deaths and left no section of Irish life untouched. The town they attacked is roughly 60-40 Catholic-Protestant, and the dead consisted of Protestants, Catholics, a Mormon and two Spanish visitors. They killed young, old and middle-aged, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and grannies. They killed republicans and unionists, including a prominent local member of the Ulster Unionist Party. They killed people from the backbone of the GAA. They killed unborn twins, bright students, cheery shop assistants and many young people. They killed 3 children from the Irish Republic who were up north on a day. Everyone they killed was a civilian. The toll of death was thus both extraordinarily high and extraordinarily comprehensive' McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives*, p.1437.

the century, the Orange Standard harked back to its beginning in an almost unavoidable comparison to Home Rule?¹²² If, for a very distinct cohort within a society, armed violence had become a means of acquiring power, wealth, security and even respect that would otherwise have been intangible, peace assumes a more challenging prospect. A cessation of violence is concurrently a cessation of all the advantages it granted those willing to wield it. For paramilitaries, conflict had provided a hospitable environment to exist in as well as kudos and exciting rush of adrenaline, now peace not only imperilled said environment but also the identities that had been moulded in and by it. It seems as if desperate attempts were made to cling onto control by reminding communities of their relevance precisely when the country at large had decided to try and move on thus making them irrelevant. From 1996 a UDA crest and flag display bears the text: 'No more talk, time to walk'. In the same year an effort was made to highlight how supposedly indispensable paramilitaries were to an entire way of life: 'Nothing great and durable can be created without elite UDA-UYM-UFF'. Some have interpreted all these memorials to fallen volunteers as a promise that military protection will resume should they be called upon¹²³ a point stressed in the text panel of a UFF work which ends: 'if needed we shall rise again'. Whether the continued presence of masked, armed men was read as the intended message of reassurance, or as something more ominous, is open to speculation. At the very least the importance of creating a street spectacle had not diminished as this work shows.

¹²² In September, just four months after the historic referendums' results, the Orange Standard maintained that 'Ulster is in extreme peril with its existence under greater threat than at any time since the crisis of 1912-14. Enemies within and without threaten Unionism' cited in Neil Southern, 'Protestant Alienation in Northern Ireland: A Political, Cultural and Geographical Examination', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2007), p. 167.

¹²³ This opinion was offered by several interviewees in Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p. 53.



Fig.4.9

In isolation the text could be read as a sign of general commitment¹²⁴ of dedication to public service yet paired with the figurative addition it leaves us in no doubt where dedication lies and what form the commitment will take. A similar tactic took place in a UVF piece from 1998 which plagiarised the inaugural address of famously Catholic President John F. Kennedy. The otherwise admirable words on prioritising one's duty of a greater good above individual gain is rather discordant with the accompanying image of vigilante patriots. These works may speak of the difficulty in leaving behind previous roles or a broader institutionalisation of a society to the militarised, masculine archetypes to which they were so visually and psychologically inextricably linked. In the piece 'Compromise or Conflict' we only see one half of the story, the ultimatum appears a foregone conclusion that physical

¹²⁴ The line comes from British novelist and playwright James Elroy Flecker's *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1913). The same words were inscribed on the clock tower at Stirling Lines, the base of the British Army's 22 SAS regiment in Hereford. This coupling of state and pro-state forces falls apart when we recall that the Crown Forces had the major advantage of being legal, respectable and well-paid. Thus, despite recruiting from the same population paramilitaries were staffed with less proficient members.

action will be necessary as masked men prepare to smash down a door with a sledgehammer. Again, at this crucial juncture, the mural could be a medium that inhibits or exacerbates hostilities and it is indicative that we see no pictorial representation of compromise—just men preparing to follow the outmoded script.¹²⁵ Something we must bear in mind as we prepare to enter the ‘post-conflict’ age is that when narratives portray no possible common ground between opponents, it makes the search for alternatives to fighting all the more unlikely.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the how, why and when a very particular kind of manhood came to reign supreme across the symbolic landscape through conflict-era representations. So often this affirmation was reactionary to the latest crisis whether triggered by the rising stature of republican political culture, the betrayal of the AIA, fears over British dubious dealings with a ‘pan-nationalist front’, or the emasculation of decommissioning and eventual ‘threat’ posed by peace. Invariably the reaction itself took the form of brazen self-adulation and presented an ultra-manly version of either commemorated individuals or organisations. We should understand the extent to which one’s physical environment can contribute to the gendered perceptions of ourselves and relationally to others. The Troubles helped create a society in which violence was valorised, more so than most western societies. Along with a regular bombardment of cultural products, video games and films, boys and young men in NI received further indoctrination that the militarised man is the desirable man. This definitive

¹²⁵ In August 1999 the Clonard area marked the 30th anniversary of Catholic families being burned out of their homes on Bombay Street by loyalist mobs. Vannais posits that this mural was a reply to ‘Compromise or Conflict’ which was situated on the other side of the peace line in Dover Place. Vannais, ‘Postcards from the edge’, p. 148.

model was supplemented by minor archetypes that ranged from the mythological warrior of Cú Chulainn and the phantasy fighter 'Eddie', right down to the policing of the modern state. However these were merely the supporting cast, the main actor was and is contemporary paramilitarism and its historical avatars.

We have observed the reiteration of fundamental trends: ideological adverts selling the exciting drama of war as an immanently male experience and charming an impressionable youth with material suggestive of prized, gendered emotions such as honour, courage and respect. This latter marketing ploy also enhances an organisation's approval rating, but we have picked apart the central myths around this managed professionalised impression. Grand notions of defence or deterrence can be considered to be illusionary. Instead these men remembered with pride were riddled with inconsistencies; they succumbed to seemingly interminable cycles of revenge and exhibited lethal incompetence to themselves and a disturbingly high proportion of innocent civilians. Echoing the caution that was stated at the beginning of this chapter, a focus on paramilitaries makes the mistake of grouping all loyalist masculinities into an unyielding monolith. Neither loyalism, politically and culturally, or masculinity are monoliths despite depictions coagulating a fluid multitude into reductive singularities. Thus far, loyalist weaponised murals and masculinities have exhibited an unsettling habit of resisting change rather than reflecting it, most notably in the post-ceasefire period. But with the conflict formally at an end following GFA we now approach the momentous threshold and the 'post-conflict' age that awaits on the other side. Crossing into this uncertainty, we will see whether this proves to be the time and space that hardened forms start to soften, learning to wear new masks when facing the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Chapter Five: Pictures of Peace? Transitioning into the ‘Post-Conflict’ Age

Introduction

A fundamental notion in this chapter is that ‘war’ and ‘peace’ cannot be envisaged as clearly defined episodes, with distinct start and end points. The misnomer ‘post-conflict’ deserves closer scrutiny due to the ‘continuum of violence’. Enloe proffers this as a persistence along a scale of force (fist to bomb), of time (pre-war, wartime, post-war), and of place (bedroom, city, continent). Underpinning all these vicissitudes is gender, which runs through them in every direction.¹ Marginalised social cleavages that had taken a back seat during the Troubles were now beginning to make themselves felt in explicit ways. We notice disturbing upward trends against notable demographics; firstly toward women in the relocation of violence, crossing the domestic threshold from public to private. Secondly, rather than an amelioration of sectarianism, we see a transfer to other forms of prejudice particularly levelled at people of colour and the LGBT community. Loyalist feuding and increased punishment attacks are explained by paramilitaries retaining, consolidating and even extending their control over working class areas through coercion and criminality. Lastly is the damage wrought upon the conflicted self when we contemplate the unhealthy relationship between hegemonic masculinity and mental health. The emotional cost of sustaining a destructive performance presents a unique and underanalysed aspect of ‘post-conflict’ masculinities.²

This chapter is divided into three sub-periods, firstly we assess mural production from the turn of the 21st century which began with a vicious feud and was shaped by incidents of

¹ Cockburn ‘World disarmament?’

² Cahn and Ní Aoláin (2010) cited in Hamber, ‘There Is a Crack in Everything’, p. 10.

civil unrest: the dispute over the Holy Cross school route, clashes at the Short Strand interface, and contestation around the Whiterock parade. All of this occurs in the context of the first serious collapse of government which was temporarily resolved by the St. Andrew's Agreement of 2006. The second sub-period contains the reiteration of some minor archetypes, namely the mythological warrior Cú Chulainn. Generally, though, it is dominated by the constancy of the Partitioned archetype, around the 2012 centenary of the Ulster Crisis and the Troubled archetype with overt displays coinciding with the 'culture war' waged during the 'Flag Protests'. The final sub-period follows the Fresh Start Agreement of 2015 which witnesses an upsurge in the glorification of conflict, albeit shifted to the general period of the First World War from the 2016 Somme celebrations. The same year sees much of the identity politics of loyalism reacting to the tremulous results of the Brexit referendum. The aftermath of EU withdrawal—the creation of the Irish Sea Border under the NI Protocol—takes us up to the ongoing uncertainty which paramilitaries leverage to their advantage. Any assumption that they might have exited the stage by now is to underestimate how embedded a form of militarism is in many loyalist communities. An overarching concern in this chapter is how does a society truly move on when unfinished challenges insist on dragging it backward? Summarised alternatively in the opening stage direction of Stewart Parker's 'Northern Star' which characterises this chapter: 'Ireland, the continuous past.'³

5.1 Marring the Next Millennium (2000-2007)

5.1.1 Let slip the 'Mad Dog' of War

³ Connal Parr, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 121.

The GFA was signed on the eve of a new millennium, a noteworthy moment to earnestly contemplate normative values, not least the masculine identities that had left such a debilitating impression on preceding centuries. Unfortunately for loyalist NI, the year 2000 was also when internal divisions indurated into two broad camps—pro-conflict transformation forces for the most part agreeing with GFA, and those opposed to it, seeing any concession as capitulation. We have already met the vehement opponent Billy Wright, but he was not alone in his fight against mainstream loyalism advocating for peace. Like Wright, Johnny ‘Mad Dog’⁴ Adair occupied a strange position: at once a fringe figure, commanding the renegade ‘C Company’ of the West Belfast UDA, yet inspiring a personality cult of celebrity gangsterism. A fundamentalist identity politics championed by anti-agreement loyalism was supplemented by an essentialist understanding of Protestant cultural heritage. This was central to a spatial purging of internal opposition across loyalist territory. Whilst it was the issue of flags and parades—two routinely controversial cultural expressions—that proved to be the trigger for tensions⁵—murals also played a role in reaching this latest breaking point. C Company covered virtually every gable end of the Lower Shankill area, the base of their operation, in a fresh coat of ethno-sectarianism. The ‘day of loyalist culture’ planned and hosted by Adair’s men may have ended with the start of

⁴ Such sobriquets either given to or selected by paramilitary leaders would seem to be an attempt, however inadequately articulated, to present themselves as terrifying creatures. This was not an original performative practice and can be dated as far back as an Elizabethan swaggering masculinity. Clandestine gangs/armies were led by self-styled ‘captains’ who chose lurid names such as Lighfoot, Slasher, Fearnot, Dreadnought etc. The use of frightening pseudonyms to both preserve anonymity and intimidate potential victims was also followed in the Land War of the late 19th century, by the Troubles it was a well-established custom. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground*, p. 116.

⁵ Billed as a celebration of Protestant culture, the 19th August began in unremarkable fashion with speeches and a commemoration of the new murals. Afterwards however C Company marched down the Shankill Road along with LVF members. Outside the Rex Bar, a well-known UVF pub an LVF flag was unfurled. This provocation led to a series of brawls which escalated into the feud. Gallaher & Shirlow, ‘The geography of loyalist paramilitary feuding’, p.164.

another feud, but it began as a festival with the unveiling of thirteen UFF/UDA murals.

Among the usual suspects to make an appearance, two historically earlier episodes would be exhumed to reveal a problematic interpretation of ‘true’ loyalism.

It might seem odd for a mural to reach so far back in time as to conjure up the rebellion of 1641, yet its significance in Ireland is beyond doubt given its inauspicious title as the first explicitly sectarian conflict in the island’s history.⁶ The Nine Years’ War (1593-1603) ended in defeat for the Irish and their Spanish allies at the Siege of Kinsale (1601-02). The ‘Flight of the Earls’ five years later left an expansive power vacuum and an irresistible opportunity for the English government to enact a more drastic step in eradicating the Gaelic way of life. The proto-colonial endeavour to ‘civilise’ Ulster led to the biggest plantation in Ireland and was conducted at the expense of the native Catholic population whose lands were granted to Protestant ‘planters’ from England and Scotland. Those dispossessed and stripped of their status sought to undo the plantation and its legal effects by rebelling in 1641. Two details of this episode, misremembered for centuries, explain why it was selected as a mural scene and why it was depicted in such a manner. The first is the extent of losses, as with most accounts of atrocities a degree of exaggeration took place.⁷ Secondly were the descriptions of violence with an emphasis on disturbingly graphic and sexualised acts.⁸ Both details paint a crude picture of Catholic savagery and lead to a dehumanising conclusion whether it is read

⁶ The motives behind the rebellion take us back even further to the long-standing Tudor policy of ‘pacifying’ Ireland. The lawlessness of the ancient province of Ulster, being well beyond the English-controlled ‘Pale’ area around Dublin, had been diagnosed by officials under James I as a symptom of the old Irish social structure. Previous attempts to remove and replace this order had been rather piecemeal and indeed had caused considerable opposition.

⁷ Contemporary pamphlets provided wildly fluctuating estimates with victims ranging from 10,000 to 1,000,000 (a likely error in printing), the number generally hovered in the region of 100-300,000. Advances in printing technology of course allowed for greater dissemination, the most infamous case being Sir John Temple’s *The Irish Rebellion*. Originally published in 1646, subsequent editions renewed this notoriously biased account as the canonical ‘Protestant’ version of the past. Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year*, p. 21.

⁸ Aside from the immediate shock factor, details of women being raped, small children impaled on hooks through their throats, men castrated, and pregnant women disembowelled also sent a stark, symbolic message. Violence of this nature would have been understood as a root-and-branch assault on the Protestant planters with the ultimate aim of their total extermination. Ibid p. 26.

in a 17th century pamphlet or seen on a wall in the 21st century. C Company remembers 1641 as a genocidal archetype taking place in an apocalyptically desolate landscape. Two buildings, one a church, are ablaze while four hanged bodies sway in the background. The foreground features a dead man and another about to be impaled with a pike as a Christ-like figure, naked save for a loin cloth, is dragged by a horse. The carnage is erroneously dated to 1600, whether out of basic ignorance or an attempt to record the rebellion's quatercentenary. The latter seems likely given the mural states the ethnic cleansing 'still goes on today'; an absurd assertion, but one emotively maximised through inflammatory connections between the past and present.

A companion piece offers a counter-balance of redemption in the form of the Cromwellian reconquest (1649-1653). A hugely influential figure, Oliver Cromwell's legacy is divisive in Ireland even today. His reputation as a military commander is impaired by the ruthlessness of the campaign, particularly massacres at Drogheda and Wexford attributed to a combined desire to make an example and loss of control over his troops. Similarity to 1641 is not limited to contested facts and figures, but also in emotional gravity: the reconquest, perceived by some Irish Catholics as just as hellish as 1641, had been for Protestants.⁹ By framing the current situation as a continuation of a religious struggle, the mural capitalises on rudimentary value-based dichotomies of good and evil. Adair seems to insert himself as the West Belfast modern-day Cromwell, a new 'defender of the Protestant faith' zealously opposing the conciliatory politics of the GFA. Perspective and the gaze are used to close the chronological gulf and draw the historical drama into contemporary relevance.

⁹ During a workshop the coordinating youth worker, a Catholic man called Paddy Maguire, shared his views on the Cromwell mural with the participants. He told them that he interpreted the image as sending out the clear message: 'we've murdered you once, we'll murder you again.' Youth workshop, Tullyally, 27 October 2021.



Fig.5.1

Whilst the brutality of 1641 is distanced from us with victim and perpetrator unaware of our presence, Cromwell's soldiers look out from the surface, returning our gaze. In breaking the fourth wall a congruity of circumstance is fostered, the timelines are superimposed and the scorched earth from the previous scene is now verdant with 'righteous'¹⁰ subjugation.

5.1.2 Fallen Volunteers

The feud of 2000 brought an unquestionably deleterious result to bear on communities already reeling from conflict. Areas already synonymous with socio-economic deprivation and the epicentres of Troubles-era fighting, now had a fresh layer of trauma mapped onto

¹⁰ Cromwell's oft-quoted justification for the slaughter at Drogheda was as 'a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood' Cromwell to William Lenthall, 17th September 1649 in 'The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell' ed. W.C Abbot (4 vols, Oxford, 1988), cited in Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year*, p. 35

their sorrow-stricken streets. Over the four months approximately 500 were left homeless, seven people murdered and the Shankill—the heart of loyalism—carved into a microgeography of UDA and UVF territories. Some of the victims feature in prominent memorial murals, like UDA lieutenant Jackie Coulter who was killed alongside his friend Bobby Mahood by the UVF. His visage on Boundary Way sits near another fallen volunteer, ‘Bucky’ McCullough, whose untimely death came back in 1981. Yet, while the father is remembered, we hear nothing of the cautionary tale of his son. Alan McCullough was just three months old when his father was shot dead outside his home by INLA. He grew up idolising Adair, who proved to be a thoroughly unwise choice for a father-figure. Suspected of coordinating the assassination of Adair’s chief rival, John Gregg, Alan was forced into exile. A month after his return to NI, in April 2003, the 21-year-old was found in a shallow grave in Mallusk, Co. Antrim.¹¹ The story offers a condensed and poignant lesson into the socialisation of violence and the environmental temptation that can cause a son to follow in his father’s unpropitious footsteps.

As we have seen, conflation occurs within a mural’s pictorial space but can also occur between independent works where a link of equivalence is forged. When 22-year-old YCV volunteer Sam Rockett was shot while visiting his girlfriend and baby daughter by the UDA in revenge for Coulter’s death, he was lain alongside Brian Robinson¹² and Trevor King in a

¹¹ Wood suggests that Alan’s loyalty to Adair was tested by the harsh reality of exile and separation from his girlfriend and two-year old daughter. This led him to contact Mo Courtney, acting UDA brigadier in West Belfast, and offer up information about Gina Adair’s location as well as the location of a cache of drugs C Company had brought into Belfast in late 2002. In exchange for this intelligence, he was led to believe he could return unharmed. A week after disappearing from his mother’s house police found his body, shot several times. A UDA source would later tell one journalist that Alan’s fate was ‘written almost from the womb.’ Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, p. 302.

¹² Keeping up the practice from the Troubles, no real particulars about Robinson’s death are disclosed in his honorific mural. In 1989 Robinson killed Patrick McKenna, a Catholic civilian, in the Ardoyne area. Unbeknownst to the UVF man his crime was witnessed by a British army surveillance unit who pursued the motorcycle, ramming it off the road. Robinson was killed by an undercover female soldier as one of the few loyalists on the receiving end of the army and police’s alleged ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy in Northern Ireland. McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives*, p. 1177.

second, pictorial resting place. Disraeli Street, like Freedom Corner, had already burgeoned during the 1990s into a cluster of masculine and militarised energy. Rockett was simply the latest link in this illustrious chain of murals and memories that stretched along this gallery. A more accurate parallel between these volunteers is the carefully crafted rhetoric to dodge awkward facts. Robinson's death is explained with the platitude 'killed in action', while Rockett was 'murdered by cowards', an appellation traditionally reserved for republicans. Both examples prove Scott's point that 'whenever one encounters euphemism in language it is a nearly infallible sign that one has stumbled on a delicate subject'.¹³ Aside from evasive commemoration, the second most common form of text to appear in loyalist murals is poetry. This, of course, does not draw from a library of literary references but rather keeps quoting the familiar three or four well-known passages of First World War poetry. The abridging of text may be down to pragmatic space-saving or contributing to a consciously framed portrait.¹⁴

Though not claimed by the feud, Glen Branagh did succumb to another distressingly frequent form of violence: interface rioting. The most recurrent stimulus for 'recreational rioting' has been the loyalist marching season during the summer months, outwith this though the early post-conflict age saw other notable provocations. An outbreak occurred in North Belfast, in May 2002 following Rangers' victory over Celtic in the Scottish Cup Final. Worse was to follow later in the year with clashes at the small Catholic enclave of Short Strand in

¹³ Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p. 78.

¹⁴ Perhaps it is telling that the middle stanza from a Siegfried Sassoon poem, featured in Trevor King's mural, was cut. In a moment of clarity, we are informed of how a young soldier dies-not from the enemy's gun but his own: 'he put a bullet through his brain/No one spoke of him again'. Hardly a surprise to the reader, the work after all is titled 'Suicide in the Trenches' (1918), yet it offers the rarest of counterpoints to the bold deeds of the brave hero. Not only does the soldier kill himself but he is consigned to history's deafening silence. He is never remembered, let alone with pride. The whole text is very short but poses difficult questions around masculinity and conflict-related mental health.

East Belfast prompted by celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee.¹⁵ In the previous year, a Remembrance Sunday service brought tensions to boiling point. Loyalism gained a new martyr when a pipe-bomb exploded in the hand of 16-year-old Branagh. Depending on which side of the interface one was on, Branagh was either the culprit throwing the device into nationalist New Lodge, or he was returning its original trajectory thus risking his life to save others. The sacrificial version is retold annually when poppy wreaths are laid before a mural dedicated to Branagh and memorial bands parade with pomp and ceremony over this teenager's horrible death.



Fig.5.2

Through the alchemy of propaganda turns an otherwise dreadful event into recruitment gold. A UDA man, wishing to remain anonymous, recalled that Branagh was ‘a good fellow. He just hated Fenians. We could do with hundreds more of his kind around here.’¹⁶ Branagh was

¹⁵ A specific grievance seems to have been when some loyalists draped red, white and blue bunting on the railings of St. Matthew's church—the site of one of the earliest gun battles of the Troubles in 1970. In another concerning similarity to those dark days, soldiers from three British Army regiments were called in to support the PSNI during the Short Strand clashes (31st May-7th June).

¹⁶ Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, p. 274.

not an exception, for while the UDA did not kill anyone in the year after GFA it was not for lack of trying. 1999 saw 229 pipe bombs thrown in 123 separate incidents. The vast majority of these did not involve mature members, like the man reminiscing over Branagh. Rather, this hazardous duty was the remit of the UYM to which Branagh had been a member, as one of the 'Young Guns' of Tigers Bay.

5.1.3 Gun-running in another century

Such is the versatility of the Ulster crisis as an historic episode it recurs throughout all three periods of production we are considering. The frequency is an inverse to its actual chronological placement; we see fleeting references in chapter three which begin to more firmly take root in chapter four, but it is really in this final period that it reaches a crescendo of replication. Standing head and shoulders above all other motifs is Edward Carson, the post-conflict patriarch who takes his place as indirect heir to William III. Having said that, he does appear in a triple portrait alongside Sir James Craig and Major Frederick Crawford. Craig was the architect of Carson's personality cult, if Carson was 'king', then Craig was king-maker. He directed a virile campaign, winning a propaganda war over hearts and minds through the political performance of rallies that presented Carson as champion of the people's cause, a 'saviour of the tribe'.¹⁷ This imagery is rampant in 21st century mural-making with Carson strikes several poses: often in profile, a 2006 work has him sternly locking eyes with us from within an ornate frame bearing the same message of yore: 'we won't have home rule', most dramatically though is his defiant stance looking out from Stormont.¹⁸ This

¹⁷ Andrew Gailey, 'King Carson: An Essay on the Invention of Leadership' *Irish Historical Studies*, Cambridge University Press Vol. 30, No. 117 (May 1996), p. 74.

¹⁸ A mural in Monkstown from 2002 amalgamates the Stormont stance with a line of soldiers' silhouettes who march beneath him. The work actually replaced a paramilitary design yet retained the names of the modern-day UVF volunteers of 'Liverpool No. 4 Battalion'. A divisive interpretation of the original statue's message was so

gesture of the quintessence of the great leader, commanding from above with supreme authority and heroic virtue. Any suggestion of past political triumphs in Stormont were rather ironic given that these images were put up during the first major collapse in the Assembly from October 2002 following an investigation into an alleged IRA spy ring within Stormont. Despite the charges being dropped three years later the government would remain shut down until 2007. Rather than provide commentary on this scandal and its fallout, murals of unionist figureheads preserved a message of a solid, stable union in a manner which likely would have pleased Craig. His views regarding the masculinity of oppressive policing and the need to abolish the proportional system may strike many as unsavoury,¹⁹ but there is no trace of this aspect in his visual legacy.

Crawford's legendary status was secured when he solved the first UVF's lack of arms. He proposed a plan of purchasing weapons in Germany and on the 24th April 1914 returned in his steamship SS Clyde Valley (briefly renamed 'Mountjoy II') to Larne with a cargo of 35,000 rifles and two million rounds of ammunition. From the port town, five hundred UVF cars collected and distributed the haul to units across the province. Not only had Crawford given the UVF the means to be a real army²⁰ but he had accomplished this daring feat with a

enduring that in 1997 Secretary of State Mo Mowlam was chief instigator in attempting to re-brand the site which she described thusly: 'You can't miss [it] on the hill, looking down across the city. It is a very imposing building...the enormous statue of Carson, father of Ulster Unionism' Dominic Bryan and Gillian McIntosh, 'Symbols: Sites of Creation and Contest in Northern Ireland' *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*; Baltimore Vol. 25 Issue 2 (Summer 2005), p. 132.

¹⁹ Craig once described the deeply controversial 'Specials' as 'a finer body of men never lived...they will always deserve our thanks and blessing'. He also emphasised that those serving were the same men who enlisted in the 36th Division and that these able-bodied, fit and forceful men were the ones to be trusted with safeguarding Ulster against the ever-increasing social schism. Jane G. V. McGaughey 'The language of sacrifice: masculinities in Northern Ireland and the consequences of the Great War' *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 46, Issue 3-4 (2012), p. 303. Regarding the abolition of PR, Craig's motive was not to reduce Nationalist representation but rather to thwart the efforts of the Northern Ireland Labour Party and independents who might undermine the Union. Craig's dogma from this period would provide rhetorical ammunition for generations of loyalists, most notably 'not an inch' and the infamous slogan 'a Protestant state for a Protestant people.' Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland*, p. 44.

²⁰ The successful operation transformed the image of the UVF overnight. Prior to Larne the organisation had been lampooned by the English press for training with dummy wooden rifles; suffice to say they took them a lot more seriously once the risk to peace that they posed became as real as their rifles.

buccaneering masculinity that he came to embody. His fondness for grand, impressive theatrics even extended to his signing of the Covenant in his own blood—a claim later disproved. The confidence that gun-running brought was captured in several mural scenes that replay the militarised performance of Carson reviewing the West Belfast UVF (2002), addressing volunteers at Portadown (2006) and inspecting drills (2006). Along with the national press, Westminster too was alarmed by this drastic escalation in anti-Home Rule resistance. Both previous bills under Gladstone (1886 and 1893) had been met with threats. This time they were backed up with a significant import of weaponry. A seamless continuation of this threat is rendered in a 2004 work showing a UVF roadblock during a gun-running operation in Donaghadee, Co. Down. The text's tense shift: 'Preparing to bear arms, 1914/ Prepared to bear arms, 2004', shows a resolute commitment not peaceful negotiations as one might hope so soon after GFA, but to much earlier trigger-happy tactics. It must be acknowledged that whilst factions of loyalism were exchanging hostilities, dissident republicanism was also issuing similar statements. On the 10th May 2000 the CIRA called on the PIRA to hand over its weapons to those 'prepared to defend the Republic'. At least two gendered traits can be observed here that apply equally to Ulster loyalism. Like the UDA, to 'defend' has a very particular and narrow definition for CIRA and is synonymous with violence. Secondly, a transfer of weapons is intimately tied with a transfer of masculine power, from those in short supply to those amply equipped to do what is required of real men—to act militarily first and think later (if at all).

5.1.4 Going over the top

The chronological proximity of two episodes, one local (Home Rule) the other global (First World War) is matched by a proximity of values and characteristics. This ideological

tendency first manifesting in chapter four did not slow down or go through any revision but accelerated. The use of pictorial devices to both split and more importantly join two equal halves of a mural continues in the new century. Although the historical links between them are tenuous, the two counterpoised sets of volunteers are routinely enshrined in a timeless and aspatial battlefield.²¹ A work in 2001 shows them not in action but in mourning, sharing a plot here refers not just to the same physical burial ground but a similar sacrificial narrative. In 2005 volunteers in period costume lower regimental flags, drawing our eye to the piper who, though just off-centre, acts like a commemorative hinge in the symmetrical scene. The figures are not always posed as stiff sentries but animated, like a 2002 piece where volunteers traverse the same nondescript terrain, looking like a militarised version of *'The March of Progress'* charting the stages in the evolution of the (gun)man. The neo-classical pillar in a 2006 piece visually 'zips' together two double portraits; Major Crawford is paired with Robert 'Squeak' Seymour while Captain James Craig finds his equal in 'captain' Joe Long. Unusually the words accompanying this motley crew were not penned by a First World War poet but by Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881). The title is a plea for divine intervention, imploring that first patriarch to deliver real masculinity: 'God, give us men!'. We might initially wonder how to explicate the poem's opening criteria: 'strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands.' Yet, as with most weaponised displays, whether in use of image or text, they are not open-ended, welcoming invitations for contemplation; they are generally not subtle statements but definitive declarations. They do not (consciously) pose questions; they pose threats.

A distortedly simplified version of the past allows some loyalists to supersede the respective historical baggage of both UVFs: gun-running and the ultimatum of armed

²¹ Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p. 133.

uprising (in its 1913 incarnation) and sectarian murder and gangsterism (in its post-1966 guise).²² With all this unpleasantness out of the way, believers are free to tell their fantasy tales of a ‘noble war’ fought by local lads. They are part of a patriotic kinship composed of ageless virtues and take their place in an ‘ancestry of resistance’.²³ This is spelled out to us in the mise-en-page of a four-panelled mural ‘The People’s Army’ (2002) depicting military chapters in the UVF’s history. As repeated rites imply continuity with the past, so do the painted performatives, encoded in the gestures and movements. In 2016 the top right panel from ‘The People’s Army’ —showing men going over the top at the Somme — was given its own gable end. Echoing the grand portraiture of King Billy that was borrowed for street painting, this scene is another ‘high art’ reference that resides in Belfast City Hall.²⁴ With such interminable devotion to very particular themes and readings of the First World War it is not unreasonable to conclude that the mural practice and use of memory itself is going over the top.

²² Rebecca L.Graff-McRae, ‘Ghosts of Gender: Memory, Legacy and Spectrality in Northern Ireland’s Post-Conflict Commemorative Politics’ *Ethnopolitics* volume 16, Issue 5 (2017), p. 53.

²³ Brown, ‘Our father organization’, p. 714.

²⁴ ‘*Attack of the Ulster Division, 1 July 1916*’ by James Prinsep Beadle (1863-1947) is one of the most famous paintings in City Hall. Interestingly, the officer leading the advance was not Irish but English, 19-year-old Francis Bodenham Thornley who was wounded during the battle. Art UK available at <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/attack-of-the-ulster-division-1-july-1916-168112> accessed 16 May 2021.



Fig.5.3

5.1.5 The ‘Most Priceless Heritage’

The need to expand the definitions and optics of loyalism seemed to register with some and this included the literal expansion of Ulster-Scots migrating to the New World. In facing away from the more parochial themes perhaps loyalism could become more outward-looking. The transition to peace, could soften some of the edges of a frontier mentality fixated on displacement and resistance. George Washington, James Buchanan and Teddy Roosevelt were all featured in the series ‘From Pioneers to Presidents’. Clearly the technical detail and quality of finish is admirable, but these new surfaces are still in a way stained with the notion of blood sacrifice. Buchanan, the fifteenth US president (1857-61) is shown alongside the inscription: ‘My Ulster blood is my most priceless heritage’. Of all the possible contributions Ulster-Scots made in America, the most oft-quoted is their role in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Nowhere is this better illustrated than Washington’s pledge to make his last

stand, albeit conditionally ‘if defeated elsewhere’, with the ‘Scots-Irish’ (Ulster-Scots) of his native Virginia. As Wilson and McReynolds point out, this asserted interconnectedness presents something of a difficulty, even a paradox, since those fighting with the British would have been the defeated ‘loyalists’, whereas Washington and his men were in essence Republicans.²⁵ The radical vein running through the American Revolution that ousted the royal authority, jettisoning the status quo jars rather noticeably with the core beliefs of some loyalists.

Roosevelt is well known for having crafted a hardened rough riding masculinity and words attributed to him pay homage to his forefathers who ‘followed Cromwell and who shared in the defence of Derry, and in the victories of Aughrim and the Boyne.’ A fertile circulation of credentials is stirred up from the past, whether in famed individuals or broad stereotypes. This collapses together (in)famous last stands, the OO presided over the Drumcree stand-offs, imagined as its Alamo. The ‘King of the Wild Frontier’, Davy Crockett, appeared in a mural in Ballymoney (2003) in the attempt to improve the collective image of loyalism and reclaim their roots. This image was particularly damaged by incidents bearing a disconcerting likeness to Drumcree, such as the Whiterock riots following the re-routing of an OO parade in September 2005.²⁶ We can conceive of this rebranding doing little to expand loyalism, other than push the frontier mentality to further fields. They retain more than a trace

²⁵ John Wilson & Alister McReynolds, ‘Celebration and Controversy in America: At home with the Scots-Irish Diaspora’ in Thomas Burgess and Gareth Mulvenna (eds.), *The Contested Identities of Ulster Protestants* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 141.

²⁶ Arguably a lower point had previously been reached with the Holy Cross dispute of June 2001. This contestation also revolved around access and use of a particular road but, unlike Drumcree or Whiterock, the site of conflict was not a parade route but a way for parents to take their daughters to Holy Cross Catholic primary school. Attacks on the procession continued even with the protection of a police escort; abuse took the form of jeers and taunts being thrown along with water balloons filled with urine to even pipe bombs. The dispute intensified the usual 12th July riots, Ardoyne was a particular hotspot with blast and petrol bombs thrown, vehicles hijacked, plastic bullets fired, and water cannons used. Tensions eventually calmed down when First Minister Trimble and Deputy First Minister Mark Durkan met with residents of Upper Ardoyne. The next day protests were called off after fourteen weeks of unrest. See Colm Heatley, *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland*, (Belfast: Lagan Books, 2004).

of triumphalism and still merge masculinity with militarism even if it is waged on a different continent. This may prove the thin end of a wedge that drives greater distance between fact and fiction. US Senator Jim Webb's *'Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America'* (2004) was criticised for its romanticism, historical inaccuracies, and even racial undertones.²⁷ The murals alone cannot be said to uphold ethnic supremacy but when combined with similar or stronger myths they may encourage some to reach an unsettling verdict.

5.1.6 Thorndyke Gallery

Efforts like 'Pioneers to Presidents' would prove exceptions in this early phase of the post-conflict age. For most events, gatherings, displays and presentations, loyalism continued to draw from the well of central, collective memory. An encapsulation of this can be found in the twelve thirty-foot-high panels along one hundred and fifty feet of Thorndyke Street in East Belfast. This otherwise impressive undertaking reads like a gallery of most of the stock images and phrases in the loyalist lexicon.²⁸ One distinction from most weaponised displays is that Thorndyke had de-anonymised more legitimate patrons, the series was installed by the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society in September 2004.²⁹ The EBHCS stated their motive for the murals was to debunk the myth from republicans that the 'PUL community'

²⁷ Lee A. Smithey, *Unionists, Loyalists and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 166.

²⁸ They depict, in the following order: the Ulster Covenant, Ulster-Scots connection, Cromwell in Ireland, Siege of Derry, Orange Order, Home Rule Crisis, Battle of Somme, 36th Ulster Division, the 1970s on (sectarian Irish Republican campaign); a united community (1974 Ulster Worker's Council strike); the B Specials, Cluan Place and United Kingdom or loyalty to queen and country.

²⁹ Although relatively modest in budget, these organisations can wield potentially significant influence given that they also offer historical detail and interpretation through publishing pamphlets. Like the EBHCS, the West Belfast Athletic and Cultural Society sponsored ten new murals in June 2009 in the Lower Shankill. Both are substantial projects which take over a large space with their message and chosen meaning(s).

have neither culture nor history. Given how heavily the series leans on formulaic episodes, it is unlikely its presence did much to disprove the myth. The unveiling of Thorndyke was a consummate demonstration of re-enactment with community members dressed in period costume accompanied by music and speeches delivered on site. The main orator at the opening drew the crowd's attention to the Siege of Derry panel, claiming that 'republicans continue to attack our homes, our culture and all that we hold dear.' Further prompted by the image's caption ('the city is saved'), he went on: 'we ignore the plight of our fellow loyalists in Londonderry at our peril. [we] must support all isolated Protestant communities no matter where they are.'³⁰ With all the history and culture of Protestant Ireland at their disposal, the narrative the EBHCS chose to tell was one heard by everyone everywhere.

We should take little encouragement from the fact that the finale to this series includes two female figures given who they actually are. The chosen monarch is not even the present one but her father, King George VI with his wife meekly sat alongside him. Together with an enlarged Britannia behind her, this pair say less about post-conflict gender equality and more on a 'postcolonial melancholia' for an empire which factually no longer exists. The other details of the lion, flags, and World War Two era naval vessels only casts the scene in a more anachronistic light. Amongst other explanations for the continued under-representation of women is the common desire in post-conflict societies to re-establish 'normality'. The unease of transition means that this desire may be so strong that it revokes any genuine and systemic assessment on what normal was or should be. At the precise moment and rare occasion when central concepts are being interrogated, traditional cultural practices and structures can come sweeping back into fashion and sweep aside any chance of change. A neo-traditionalist return is often to a 'golden past' when men were men and knew what that

³⁰ Smyth, *Remembering the Trouble*, p. 102.

meant. In the paltry number of cases where women appear it is a selective inclusion which does not risk upsetting the regressive gendered order.³¹ The mural of a woman tending white crosses to the fallen (2007) plays on the ‘soft’ feelings of empathy, gentleness and nurture that provide the other, crude half of an essentialist binary. Symbols, particularly when situated in public, convey powerful messages of which citizens a society cherishes. Absences, too, speak volumes about relative importance and the maintenance of these asymmetrical relationships. Throughout this thesis we have been wondering what boys will think of the men presented as heroes to them in murals, but Rolston reminds us to remember girls too. What do they think and how do they feel when they do not see themselves reflected in these honoured representations?³² A finer margin must also be considered when assessing murals, it is not another binary of present or absent; a key theme is what physical condition the work is in. A pristine surface generally indicates that the subject matter still matters to the community whereas a weathered surface, like the one depicting women in the UWC strike (2004), testifies to the extent to which certain narratives are neglected. Perhaps this imbalance, along with a host of other encumbrances, could be put down to teething problems of peace. If this were so, one could expect that as time went on and these underlying issues underwent necessary reform, so too might the symbolic landscape evince a more just society.

5.2 From St. Andrews to Flagging up a Crisis

³¹ The same phenomena has been observed in other unionist-loyalist cultural practices. Whilst there may be a range of femininities on display at parades, it is a very narrow range (Racioppi & O’Sullivan See, 2000,p. 22). For example, the inclusion of Florence Nightingale-like nurses as beautiful souls does nothing to either contradict the female stereotype or challenge the dogma that war is the business of real men. Graff-McRae ‘Ghosts of Gender’, p. 513.

³² Bill Rolston, ‘Women on the walls: Representations of women in political murals in Northern Ireland’, *Crime Media Culture*, Vol 14, Issue 3 (2018), p. 5.

5.2.1 The Warrior Returns to the Walls

The multi-party talks held in St. Andrews from the 11th to the 13th October 2006 resulted in an agreement that brought to an end a four-year-long impasse. Talks had involved both British and Irish governments as well as representatives from all major parties in NI, and they focused on the devolution of power in the region. It restored the Assembly with elections held in March the following year and an Executive formed in May. Another major turning point was Sinn Féin's decision, at its Ardfeis in January 2007, to support the PSNI, courts and rule of law. The amendments to policing had been problematic for some unionists too with the Patten Report of November 2001 recommending not only the rebranding of the RUC but a 50/50 recruitment of Catholics and Protestants be implemented.³³ Instead of engaging with reality, be it celebrating this political breakthrough or focusing energy on the challenges of the present or opportunities of the future, the same fantasy is apparently played out.

Alongside the recurring characters, a second attempt to embed Cú Chulainn is made in vain. A process of identity revival, or creation, depending on one's view, was officially recognised in GFA which set up the Ulster-Scots Agency. It was within their purview to promote the Ulster-Scots language as well as generate wider interest in the history, heritage and culture. Others took a similar task upon themselves when posting the warrior to the Lower Shankill, bellowing and brandishing his sword.

³³ As we discovered in the previous chapter, the distinguished image of state authorities had its place within the masculine archetypes. The nostalgic attachment some had to the previous force was not easy to sever. Indeed, as if to make the acclimation more difficult, the Queen had presented the RUC with the George Cross only one year prior to the Patten Report. The axing of the RUC and removal of the crown and royal insignia from courthouse buildings was, for some, evidence of an onslaught on Britishness. Some even expressed the view that the Orange Order is at war: 'not a war of bombs and bullets but a subtle battle of words, of media manipulation and of skilful propaganda.' McAuley, Tonge & Mycock *Loyal to the Core?*, p. 85.



Fig.5.4

The accompanying text, curled up on a Disneyfied scroll, bears witness to the durability of a primordial foundation upon which ethnic solidarity is constructed. The opening line: ‘our God ordained place as indigenous³⁴ Ulster people’, asserts a ‘we were here first’ mentality. The passage ends with a mention of those who tried ‘to castrate our culture’³⁵, resuscitating the sexualised violence of 1641. If we recall this ideology sprang forth from Dr. Adamson’s theory which applied analytical reasoning to primitive and essentially ‘wild’ thinking. As Nic Craith reminds us, mythology (Irish or otherwise) did not aim to provide a detailed account of

³⁴ The oppositional categories of Celt and Saxon have their roots in the racialised discourse of the late 19th and early 20th century. Media representations of the Irish as a distinctly subordinate race have related to an imperialist doctrine of biological essentialism. Generally speaking, the Saxon is aligned with the honest labour and Protestant work ethic whilst stereotypes abound about the either slothful or anarchic Irish. In a letter, Carson stated that ‘the Celts have done nothing in Ireland but create trouble and disorder.’ Nic Craith *Plural Identities*, p. 80.

³⁵ Brewer observes that it is commonplace to argue that Ulster Protestantism is a monolith, made strong by its centrality to purpose and identity and striding through Irish history like a leviathan. The image of culture personified as a man who then suffers castration by his foe symbolically disfigures the once virile leviathan to a lowly eunuch. John D. Brewer, ‘Continuity and change in contemporary Ulster Protestantism’, *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 52, Issue 2 (2004), p. 265.

history. Its stories were never intended to verify fact. Adamson claimed he sought, through his work, to present an accommodating expression of native Ulster, one broader than Protestantism and Catholicism. Yet none of this conciliatory intention comes through from those who paint his version of the past onto gable ends. Indeed these words of his could be construed as antithetical to his aim, and even have a worrying implication on an impressionable youth:

‘You are the children of the Cruthin, the sons and daughters of the Picts. This is OUR land, YOUR culture, YOUR heritage—you are indeed the people. You are older than the Gaels, older than the Welsh, older even than the English.’³⁶

While the aforementioned work seems to go in a comic book direction, another mural-memorial from 2008 adopts a far more flamboyant style. Cú Chulainn is rendered with the line, tone and subtle colouration of an El Greco while the overall composition almost resembles a cathedral window. Unfortunately, the visual innovation is not matched in the use of memory or masculine verve. In fact, it adds only one extra detail to the first Cú Chulainn that turned up on Freedom Corner in the early 1990s. The left ‘pane’ of the mural shows past defenders—the Ulster and Irish towers at Thiepval and Messines, respectively, stand together in a reluctant nod to the actuality of shared military service. On the right ‘pane’ are the familiar masked faces of contemporary paramilitaries, the supposed present-day defenders. Lastly, but far from least, the central pane bringing them together with the dying Cú Chulainn

³⁶ Adamson has been credited as the ‘intellectual mentor of the UDA’ for his contributions to the loyalist paramilitary’s magazine *Ulster*, written under the pseudonym Sam Sloan. Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 514.

being Ulster's 'ancient defender'. For all its stunning use of formal elements, this work simply maintains the explicit and problematic interweaving links of past and present.³⁷

Joining Cú Chulainn in the recruitment mission of coaxing out Ulster's next 'defenders' is another mythological figure: Fionn mac Cumhaill. Although only making one recorded appearance for the UDA in 2006, his defiant, straddling stance amongst the fragmented pillars of the Giant's Causeway has been likened to a Jewish champion opposing the Romans at Masada or a latter-day Samson.³⁸ In a sense a legendary giant seems an apt choice as it is the most extreme version of the 'sizing up' which commonly takes place in many western countries. In social situations, fraught with provocation, the reaction of certain men is a performative exaggeration of their physical size, where masculinity is associated with perceptions of enlarged anatomy. This competitive comparison is even featured in the legend itself when Fionn flees from the prospect of facing off against his much larger Scottish rival, another giant called Benandonner. The theme of vaunted giantism takes on an additional modern, political significance when the UDA juxtaposed the perceived inadequacy of their contemporary party leaders to Crawford and the Unionist commanders of 1914: 'students of history will contrast the snivelling wrecks of manhood who masquerade as political leaders in the 1980s with the giants of Ulster.'³⁹ Fionn is also featured in the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Celtic sagas which repeatedly reference the interaction between the Irish and Highland Scots. Indeed, the unique basalt columns that outstretch from the coast of Antrim,

³⁷ Stapleton and Wilson's research revealed a discussion on Ulster-Scots that implicitly subscribes to a primordialist paradigm based on notions of cultural fixity, purity and hence, 'authenticity.' This was conveyed by respondents' repeated use of the word 'still' to establish continuity with the past, and an overt alignment of 'they' (the Planters) and 'we' (the present-day Ulster Scots). Thus, the template logical structure was as follows: 'They brought (X) and we still (maintain X).' Karyn Stapleton & John Wilson, 'Ulster Scots Identity and Culture: The Missing Voices, Identities' *Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 11, Issue 4 (2004), p. 577.

³⁸ According to the authors, he represents the Protestant atavistic notion of the archetypal Ulster warrior defending a sacred homeland against Irish republican philistines. Forker & McCormick, 'Walls of history', p. 437.

³⁹ *Ulster* (Feb. 1987), pp. 6-7.

disappear under the sea and surface at the mouth of Fingal's Cave (Staffa) are explained as a consequence of the giants' feud.⁴⁰ These two hyper-masculine legends are brought together in the UDA pamphlet *'Ulster-A Nation'* which slips into the kind of poetic language more often associated with nationalists: 'Let Ulster, the land of Ireland's foremost heroes, speak to the whole of Ireland again with the authority of a Chchuliann, *fortissimus heros Scottorum*, and like Fionn mac Cumhaill of old build a new Causeway to join all the people of these islands in a new community of spirit and endeavour.'⁴¹ Much like Adamson's rationale with the Cruthin, if there is any intention of unifying differing peoples then it falls short of the mark and much is lost in translation. As bewildering as this talk of giants, superhuman warriors and forgotten tribes may be to some, we should not underestimate how tenacious these stories can be. As recently as 2018 a mural of upgraded materials and process placed a reminder in Rathcoole of the 'Kingdom of the Pretani', complete with a hulking, heavily armoured warrior to watch over it. The emotionally weighty ideas this story conjures can be as immovable as the basalt columns, the giant standing on them or his mindset.⁴²

5.2.2 Normal Service Resumed

⁴⁰ Popular folklore tells us that Fionn built the causeway as stepping stones to Scotland. While doing so he is informed that Benandonner is coming to fight him. Knowing he cannot withstand such a colossal foe, Fionn retreats and asks his wife, Oona, to help him. She dresses him as a baby so that when Benandonner arrives and sees the size of Fionn's offspring he fears the prospect of meeting his father. Benandonner runs back to Scotland across the causeway smashing it up as he goes so as to prevent Fionn from pursuing him.

⁴¹ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 154.

⁴² When prompted to consider what murals he would like to see muralist Kenny Blair replied: 'What I would've liked to have seen is more of our ancient history...nationalists portray us as big, bad planters coming in and kicking them all off their land, taken over their country...but really, we've been going back and forth here for two, three thousand years before the plantation. Dalaradia was one of the Ulidian or Pretanic kingdoms...we outdate the Celts coming to Ireland.' This quote indicates how the Cruthin myth can facilitate an inability, or unwillingness, to distinguish between the plantation and the movement of peoples prior to it. As Ruane and Todd mention immigration of a more conventional kind might have left a legacy of ethnic difference and conflict, but it would not have generated the psychology of dispossession and reciprocal fear of expulsion which animated conflict in Ireland. Ruane and Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 25.

2012 marked the beginning of the ‘decade of centenaries’, more than any other commemorative episode, this prolonged series of events would prove to test even further public sensitivities and, at times, push the boundaries between celebration and controversy. Tangible remembrance of the state’s genesis was shaped and strengthened by the patriarch Carson, who Jackson identifies as the Orange Daniel O’Connell.⁴³ At times he puts in multiple appearances on one surface, attending a military drill whilst signing the Covenant. He is not only at the centre of attention compositionally but emotionally at the nucleus of many early memories of collective identity formation. Gusty Spence once remarked on the significance of both the first UVF, Home Rule, and the First World War stating these episodes were ‘imbibed with [my] mother’s milk.’⁴⁴ So it was that another generation, in another century, were receiving very little new material to ingest. When he is not at the heart of a mural he is at its head, towering over the other elements within as well as the street-level viewers.

⁴³ Jackson ‘Unionist Myths’, p. 164.

⁴⁴ Reed, *Paramilitary Loyalty*, p. 41.



Fig.5.5

This visual placement corresponds to a hierarchical male leader and the towering moral authority he represents. Gailey warns us of the reduction of popular debate to the reiteration of clear-cut emotional slogans and creation of a cult figure.⁴⁵ Simplicity ensures the widest possible audience picking up on these signifiers. Certainly, the young people in the author's workshops were able to read this body language with ease.⁴⁶ At times a work's location can further emphasise the locally condensed commitment to serving one's country which, for

⁴⁵ Political parallels to Carson's presentation and performance can be seen in his early hero Gladstone's 'Midlothian Campaign' (1878-80) or, in an Irish context, Charles Stewart Parnell. Gailey draws on Loughlin's 'Constructing the political spectacle' when pointing out that a textual (along with the visual) reduction of message was a technique that lasted well into the 20th century. Gailey 'King Carson', p. 86.

⁴⁶ When participants were promoted with images of state authorities including Carson, they connected the notion of physically looking up to a figure positioned high up in the design to 'looking up' as a form of admiration and respect. Most participants lived near murals and therefore saw them, on average, three to four times a day. They also expressed a fondness for the visual style, some were particularly taken with Carson's 'Stormont stance'. Whilst they did not always demonstrate that much knowledge of him, Craig or aspects of Home Rule, they certainly identified his stance with power and confidence. Youth workshop, Monkstown, 25 October 2021.

some loyalists, means signing both the Covenant and the declaration in army enlistment paper. In the case of Willowfield, memory is ascribed as a particularly bright nodal point in the history of organised militancy. Along with a mural informing us of the number of signatories from the area, a UVF memorial sits on the site of the old Unionist Hall which acted as a rifle range and drill hall for the fledgling volunteers.⁴⁷ As the lower left corner of the piece attests, whenever we find ourselves at Home Rule, a ‘road’ of symbolism leads us directly to the Somme. The extent how mutually supportive these narratives are is pictorially underscored when Carson has a face-to-face meeting with a Victoria Cross winner, beneath them, the body of the work is occupied by an eerie topography, muted in palette and populated not with soldiers but with regimental insignia. As an abstract rendering, it removes something of the humanity giving attention not to individual character but to an impersonal militarised code.

A similar terrain features in ‘Faugh A Ballach’ (2010) along with an encyclopaedic list of operations and campaigns involving Irish and Northern Irish service in the British military. The work’s title is an Irish war cry translating as ‘clear the way’⁴⁸, yet despite being a time of peace, the weaponised way was not being cleared to make room for other messages more appropriate for the circumstances. The only diversity we can speak of is in the number of conflicts glorified. In the work three young soldiers hover on the horizon like a militarised mirage. Left of the piper is a portrait of Lt. Col Robert Blair Mayne (an officer from Newtownards who would go on to become a founding member of the SAS and a highly

⁴⁷ Brown, ‘Our father organization’, p. 716.

⁴⁸ The war cry may also have been the original motto of the regiment the Prince of Wales Own Irish who are remembered in a mural depicting the Battle of Talavera (1809). It was a costly victory for an Anglo-Spanish army led by General Arthur Wellesley during the Peninsular War against the French Empire. The real reason for its inclusion in the landscape at all seems to be that when the regiment changed its name to the Royal Irish Fusiliers in 1827, they also changed their motto to ‘Quis Separabit’ which would much later be adopted by the UDA. Extramural Activity, 26 June 2009, available at <https://extramuralactivity.com/2009/06/26/talavera-1809/> accessed 18 June 2021.

decorated soldier). The work's other caption, 'from the Boyne to Afghanistan', merely offers us a revised version of the eminent continuity of a combative golden age. If keeping up to date with developments were a parade, loyalism's murals were patently out of step yet marching on regardless. Whilst heading down the same old route, muralists also ignored at least three encouraging signs of change. Firstly, was a general easing of Anglo-Irish relations, personified by the first royal visit of Ireland in more than a century, a month later Queen Elizabeth II shook hands with Martin McGuinness in a private meeting at Belfast's Lyric Theatre, also attendance was Irish President Michael D Higgins and First Minister Peter Robinson. Such historic moments helped build bridges and this literally took place in Derry with the opening of the 'Peace Bridge' across the river Foyle. Once the lawless garrison on the fractious frontier, Derry was awarded 'UK City of Culture' status in 2013. This economic boom coupled with a vastly improved image also reshaped Belfast with the opening of the £90 million Titanic visitor facility in 2012. Lastly and most crucially was the official announcement that 'Operation Banner', the British Army's campaign in NI, had now ceased.

We must not let surface optics, whether a handshake, bridge or building, fool us into embellishing the advances made during this period. For it was also marked by several punctures to the semblance of peace. Dissident republicans were responsible for various bomb scares, notable for their size and chosen targets of the British army and the police.⁴⁹ As concerning as these incidents were, they were unsuccessful. However, the Massereene Barracks attack (March 2009), in which the Real IRA shot and killed two off-duty British soldiers was also a serious setback. With the Continuity IRA shooting Stephen Carroll just

⁴⁹ In 2009 a 300lb car bomb was abandoned outside Castlewallan, Co. Down, it was intended for a British army base at Ballykinler. In November of the same year, a 400lb bomb was left outside the Policing Board headquarters in Belfast, only partially exploding. Two other security incidents occurred in February 2010, firstly a mortar bomb was left near a police station in Keady and just three days later a 250lb car bomb exploded outside Newry Courthouse with no casualties but several buildings damaged.

two days later this backslide continued—Carroll was the first police officer killed by paramilitaries since 1998 but would not be the last as the car bomb outside Constable Ronan Kerr’s house in 2011 proved. Perhaps because civilian fatalities were so few since GFA any incidents stood out so painfully and shocked the public. They could also reveal the extent of brutal sectarian attitudes. The PSNI believed the motive behind Kevin McDaid’s murder in 2008, by the UDA was due to he and his wife, Evelyn, being in a ‘mixed marriage’ where she was Protestant and he was Catholic. This lethal objection to those who transgressed outwith the bonds of conformity is, in a way, an extreme but emblematic indicator that despite progress elsewhere a tendency for endogamy persisted.⁵⁰

The symbolic landscape, meanwhile, was still littered with generic revered depictions. These included a huge portrait of First World War rifleman Robert King along with medals awarded for ‘gallantry in the field’ during the first day of the Somme. The surface and subject matter went through the most minor revisions earlier in 2022. A 2011 scene of the charge at Thiepval Wood is enacted with various dramatized elements that were becoming increasingly ordinary. The conflation ploy was still very much obtruding on the landscape too, as shown by a 2008 piece depicting modern and contemporary figures from the YCV facing each other and presenting arms across a compressed distance in time.⁵¹ For many young men the enticement of adventure, the promise of camaraderie and the opportunity to test and prove

⁵⁰ The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association estimates that just before the Troubles, one in ten marriages were mixed. These figures dropped substantially during the Troubles. They have since risen to around the pre-Troubles level, though in reality they’re probably much higher. What’s more there are plenty of people in mixed relationships who simply aren’t married (statistics from 2012 on marriage in Northern Ireland show a decrease of 17% from 1982 figures) Jemimah Steinfeld, ‘Northern Ireland quietly opens heart to mixed relationships’ *British Future*, 16 May 2014, available at <https://www.britishfuture.org/northern-ireland-quietly-opens-heart-mixed-relationships/> accessed 20/ May 2021.

⁵¹ Similar to contemporary paramilitaries who felt it their responsibility to fill a perceived security vacuum, the YCV was a response/reaction to the Haldane Reforms of 1908. The measures, attempting to implement lessons newly learnt in the Second Boer War, did not extend the territorial force of the British Army to Ireland. Launched in Belfast City Hall in September 1912 by Lord Mayor, Robert McMordie, it aimed to bridge the gap for 18–25-year-olds from membership of youth organisations, such as the Boys’ Brigade, to responsible adulthood. By the outbreak of the First World War the YCV, now a battalion of the UVF, was absorbed into the British Army as part of the Royal Irish Rifles.

oneself makes participating in a historic, larger-than-life, generation-defining event as irresistible as it is deadly. One might take hope from Harland's observation that post-ceasefire young men can be aware of this veneration and can see through the 'ruse' even if it is corroborated by their fathers, grandfathers, and other significant adults.⁵² Even if the psychological costs are articulated by male ex-combatants, they may not contradict valorisation. Such was the case when Noel Large went to work in a centre where many of the at-risk youths idolised him for his paramilitary exploits. Despite efforts to discourage them from following a similar path, Large recalls talking to one participant whose ultimate goal was to end up memorialised on one of Belfast's murals. When Large interjected with the challenging prompt: 'do you realise the only way you're gonna get that is by dying early?', the participant simply replied 'yeah'.⁵³ He was quite prepared to accept that fate if it meant immortality was guaranteed in paint.

5.2.3 From Flag Protests to Fresh Start

The decade of centenaries witnessed a major renewal of overt displays of paramilitarism. The painted men put their masks back on, though, in truth, those involved either with feuding or organised criminality had never removed them. A 2007 work sought to give the UDA what the UVF had found in the 36th Ulster Division: an honourable history of militarised action. The UDA drew a link of legitimacy between themselves and the Ulster Defence Union, a widely popular organisation established in 1893 to resist Gladstone's second Home Rule

⁵² Harland, 'Violent Youth Culture', p. 421.

⁵³ Corinne Purtill, 'This man used to hunt Belfast Catholics with a .357 Magnum. Here's his story' *Global Post*, 15 July 2015, available at <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-07-15/man-used-hunt-belfast-catholics-357-magnum-here-s-his-story> accessed 8 October 2019.

Bill.⁵⁴ Despite the mural being unveiled in a Remembrance Sunday service, where the UFF were officially disbanded, the work proudly displays a UFF member as the central character, breaking the fourth wall with his aim. The advertising analogy is even more blunt when works appear near, or in another case beneath, billboards. Although the image is crammed into an interstitial space it boldly regresses the skyline of Belfast; the background figure plants a flag that seems to flutter high enough to win the aerial battle between the right-hand elevation (possibly Cave Hill). Even ‘Samson and Goliath’, the gigantic cranes of the Harland & Wolff shipyard, are dwarfed through perspective. Elsewhere, the West Winds of East Belfast are not those of change but of superfluous performance with the trio of ‘defenders’/assailants elevated on a pedestal resembling a low ‘thrust stage’⁵⁵. An identical platforming occurs in a piece that informs that, despite being founded one hundred years ago, they are still, for some reason, ‘armed and ready’. It is as transparent as ever just what they are ready for, and it is not to yield any ground to anyone else.

Not only are any alternative expressions of masculinity denied entry to the landscape, but women also continued to be excluded, the exception being the monarchy with nine depictions of Queen Elizabeth II, most painted for the Golden Jubilee in 2002. The work is a series of portraits, all showing the same subject at different moments in her service. Collage is also used in the insultingly generic ‘Women through the ages’ which, for the most part, leans on royal characters as far back as Queen Victoria. Such depictions seem to present an

⁵⁴ An address by an unknown orator at the unveiling in 2007 made it explicit that the commitment, national allegiance and ‘true’ spirit of the modern UDA volunteer stretched back through centuries in an unbroken thread of ‘forefathers’: ‘our members have from 1893 went forward and paid the ultimate sacrifice...during the First World War, in Burma, Africa, Europe and the Middle East during the Second World War. We continue that struggle for freedom of small nations in the present theatres of war in Afghanistan and Iraq.’ Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p. 166.

⁵⁵ As the name suggests these stage areas project into the auditorium, they are often used to increase intimacy between actors and audience. Theatres Trust, ‘What are the types of theatre stages and auditoria?’, available at <http://www.theatrust.org.uk/discover-theatres/theatre-faqs/170-what-are-the-types-of-theatre-stages-and-auditoria> accessed 22 July 2021.

extraordinarily limited and privileged selection *of* women, but they do not come across as being *for* women. Rolston reminds us of the none-too-subtle male gaze with ‘On her, their lives depend’. Ostensibly honouring women’s contribution to the Home Front war effort, specifically working in munitions factories, the man seems to be only person busy with chores, while the woman appears more concerned with fixing her hair for the viewers; less a patriotic woman and more a pin-up girl.⁵⁶ The chronic under-representation of women in the public domain almost suggests their rightful place is behind the domestic doors, safely sheltered in the privacy of the home. This clear separation and an assumed protection that comes with it is violated by what many scholars refer to as the ‘returning warrior syndrome’. This hypothesizes that even though a combatant may be out of active circulation he can still pose a significant risk in the domestic sphere.⁵⁷ The probability of this danger accelerates if he has not striven to change his worldview once clouded by violence. Any person does not require a literal weapon to inflict harm if some essence of their mentality remains weaponised. Longitudinal statistics from Women’s Aid Federation reveals the extent to which women are very much swept up in the post-conflict continuum of violence.⁵⁸ The links between conflict and ‘ordinary’ violence can only better be understood through a closer examination of the multiple, integrated strands that persist to this day.

This acute remilitarisation—a painterly paradox to not just the supposed desire for peace but, specifically, to the historic steps and sincere statements of paramilitary

⁵⁶ Rolston, ‘Women on the walls’, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Fionnuala N’Aolín, Naomi R. Cahn, and Dina Francesca Haynes, *On the Frontlines Gender, War, and the Post-Conflict Process*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.71.

⁵⁸ Gilmartin stresses that men, of course, are also victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and he does not wish to trivialise their experiences. The statistics, however, reveal an overwhelming gender pattern to domestic violence, both globally and in Northern Ireland: the vast majority of victims are women. Gilmartin, ‘Gendering the ‘post-conflict’ narrative’, p. 96.

decommissioning⁵⁹—should be contextualised in the melee of the flag protests of 2012-13.

The unrest began shortly after Belfast city council decided, on 3rd December, to limit the days that the Union flag would fly from City Hall. On the night of the vote protestors tried to storm the building. The altercation was perceived by some loyalists as the most damning strike against them in the ongoing and wider ‘cultural war’ that had already dominated post-conflict life in NI. This attack on a shared sense of Britishness restricted the flying of the flag to eighteen designated days, aligning it with UK government policy for official buildings. It is not unreasonable then to suggest that the decision made NI more and not less British.

However, this point eluded those who believed their place in the Union was jeopardised. This belief resulted in a year of sporadic protests between loyalists and PSNI with some sparking riots.⁶⁰ The flag protests, in both duration and ferocity, no doubt shocked many outside onlookers to whom the reaction to the removal may have seemed startlingly disproportionate. As an exercise in empathy, however, any such outsider should insert into the equation the inescapable component of social class. Those from a unionist, middle-class background may have viewed the council’s decision with little more than indifference. Their muffled response or their finding some other expression of a banal nationalism may stem, partly, from the comfort and security of their socio-economic standing; they could afford to be indifferent. In an area scored with deprivation, concern over national identity and the tangible cultural indicators may take on a heightened significance. That the protests also occurred just four

⁵⁹ While the IRA eventually decommissioned in July 2005, loyalist paramilitary organisations took longer to reach this milestone. The Red Hand Commando declared an end to their armed campaign in 2007. By June 2009 the UVF had put their weapons beyond use, and a year later it was confirmed that the UDA had followed suit. ‘Irish Peace Process - Brief Note on Decommissioning’, CAIN available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/events/peace/decommission.htm> accessed 2 July 2021.

⁶⁰ Rioters attacked police officers with petrol bombs, bricks, stones and fireworks; police responded with plastic bullets and water cannons. Alliance Party offices and homes of members were also attacked, while some City Councillors were sent death threats. See ‘Loyalist paramilitaries 'behind some Northern Ireland trouble', *BBC News*, 8 December 2012, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20651159> accessed 13 January 2021.

years after the 2008 global recession, when parts of the world were still very much living under debilitating funding cuts and other austerity measures should also not be forgotten.⁶¹

It is not unreasonable to suppose that some of the frustration that flooded the streets was also due to what can be thought of as a ‘doubling up’ of dividends. Very few men rigorously pursue the hegemonic standards and those that do invariably fall exceptionally short. Despite this, a majority can still adhere to, be complicit in and ultimately gain from a wider hegemony through the patriarchal dividend: gendered advantages that usually take the form of honour, prestige, the right to command, as well as material benefits.⁶² However, even when obediently following the rules and playing the roles, this economic dividend is far from guaranteed. Unfortunately, for Loyalist men, this unrealistic expectation intersects with another, that of the much coveted ‘peace dividend’.⁶³ With nothing to be done about the denial of the latter dividend, a frantic grasp could still be made for the promised privileges of the former. This grasp for control, power or a worthy reputation might be made in the brash chaos of a riot or on an unassuming local wall. The final examples in this chapter’s section

⁶¹ The effects of the global recession hit hard. By mid-2011 ‘worklessness’, the proportion of people of working age not in paid work, stood at 34%, higher than all but the worst affected regions of the UK. Cockburn ‘What became of ‘frontline feminism’?, p. 110. This essentially brings us staring back at the ‘material mask’ when either a loss of employment or lack of opportunity severely impedes a young man from fulfilling the real role of masculinity assigned to him by society. 2008 can be seen within a series of similar detrimental events that we have touched upon, namely the Great Depression (chapter three) and the decline of major industries (chapter four). The sense of loss is not limited to financial independence but takes on an additional mental health aspect, a loss of identity, purpose and general worth. A contrast between the local, lived experience (of having little to your name) and the painterly spectacle of great men of the past (having acquired their venerated status) may aggravate the situation. Discussing the public display of violence as a behavioural prompt, Helen Crickard commented: ‘the areas that murals are in are of high deprivation, no hope for a job-nothing else around them. There just seems to be no hope out there for our youth...they don’t come out of the womb looking to go to an interface to fight! They’re getting that (urge to fight) from somewhere, I’m not saying murals do it all, but I think they play a role. Interview with Helen Crickard, via Zoom, 12 May 2021.

⁶² The term is first used by RW Connell (1995), but Anthony Chen (1999) uses the similar idea of striking a hegemonic bargain, getting something back for investing in an ideal. Connell *Masculinities*, p. 79. On a very capitalist peace, see also Conor McCabe, ‘Double Transition’, *Labour After Conflict & Irish Congress of Trade Unions* (2012).

⁶³ After the Troubles a common perception held that the withdrawal of troops would free up a huge reserve of money that could be transferred to other areas of the public sector. A major flaw in this logic was that the cost of maintaining the British army came from the centralised defence budget. Therefore, any savings recouped from the region simply went back into the Whitehall exchequer Paul Bew, Patterson and Teague *Between War and Peace...*, p. 98.

encapsulate the non-linearity of transformation. Like a visual pendulum they swung from militarised to (briefly and partially) disarmed and back again to militarised. In doing so they represent the contradictions within transformation; it is neither smooth nor inevitable; it is ambiguous, uneven and discontinuous.⁶⁴ Both works been reimaged to celebrate local footballing talent before being taken over to serve paramilitary purposes.⁶⁵ The first, a tribute to Glentoran FC by a Community Trust, became two massive, hooded gunmen skulking around the corner of Newtownards Road and Dee Street. The large black and white text read: ‘We seek nothing but the elementary right implanted in every man; the right if you are attacked, to defend yourself.’ The notion of any right, idea, or belief ‘implanted in every man’ returns us to previously discussed assumptions around biological essentialism; an accepting and/or excusing of masculine behaviour. As with all armed displays their function is not limited to reminding everyone of a violent past that no one could possibly forget, but rather to remind us of the possibility, even promise, that a violent future is never that far away. The second example, a portrait to George Best, received a bigger investment via the European Union’s ‘Peace III’ fund in a project that, ironically, sought to tackle the physical manifestations of sectarianism. The success was short-lived as in 2013 the display at Inverwood Court, again in east Belfast, was now dedicated to the UVF, the gunman accompanied by the surprisingly cogent lines: ‘freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.’ The takeover had already provoked the ire of several stakeholders from the media, politics and business, but plagiarising from Rev.

⁶⁴ David Magee, ‘The Experiences of Loyalist Ex-combatants on Their Journey from Conflict to Peace’ in John D. Brewer and Azrini Wahidin (eds.), *Ex-Combatants' Voices: Transitioning from War to Peace in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 83.

⁶⁵ We must remember that the phenomenon of remilitarising surfaces recently bestowed to community groups for more cultural or non-military historical subjects is far from exclusively practised by loyalists. Around this time a work in the Ardoyne depicting a significant moment in the history of Gaelic culture (the Flight of the Earls) was amended to commemorate Martin Meehan, a local IRA commander, complete with rifle and against a backdrop of the Republic’s 1916 Proclamation and a Tricolour. Crowley, ‘Hegemonic Shifts’, p. 74.

Martin Luther King Jr was deemed to be ‘perverse beyond belief.’⁶⁶ The painting reflected the protracted tensions as the six-month negotiations in an all-party Assembly group, led by US diplomat Dr. Richard Haass, broke up at end of 2013 without resolving the central issues of flags, parades and emblems and how to deal with the legacy of the Troubles.

Unfortunately, this kind of imagery was not simply the output from sycophantic copycats but rather externally projected what most had known internally for years: paramilitarism had not ended with the conflict. Their malignant presence was magnified by an enlarged involvement in organised criminality.⁶⁷ Loyalist decommissioning in 2009 had arrived after nearly a decade of feuding⁶⁸, but now the challenge was (and is) how to decommission militaristic notions of masculinity. One of the most frustrating barriers to accomplishing this is how successfully paramilitaries manipulate fear within their respective communities. This in turn leads some to demand protection from them. A tenet of advertising is not merely to inform us about what is on offer but to create a fundamental need in us as consumers for what is offered; to not only provide the supply but manufacture the demand. A common strategy is to exploit any evidence that the peace agreement/process is incapable of either providing local safety, guaranteeing civil liberties or maintaining the cultural status quo

⁶⁶ This was the view of East Belfast Alliance Assembly member Chris Lyttle. Use of Martin Luther King quote on UVF mural ‘perverse’ *Irish Times*, 23 September 2013, available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/use-of-martin-luther-king-quote-on-uvf-mural-perverse-1.1537304> accessed 14 October 2019.

⁶⁷ A report by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster claimed that paramilitaries were making up to £18 million per year through smuggling, extortion and armed robbery. Within this the report suggested that the UVF was making up to £2 million per year from suck rackets; the UVF £ 1.5 million and the UDA up to £1 million. James McAuley, ‘Just Fighting to Survive’: Loyalist Paramilitary Politics and the Progressive Unionist Party’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, Issue 3 (2004), p. 522-543.

⁶⁸ As part of research to mark the 20th anniversary of GFA, Paul Nolan discovered that 145 of the 158 ‘security-related’ deaths in NI since the end of the conflict were due to republican and loyalist paramilitaries (74 and 71 deaths respectively). Although sectarian murders had decreased there had been a pronounced turning inward as most cases were groups attacking members of their own communities. Nolan also highlights that the period from 2000-2005 actually saw an overlapping of several loyalist feuds which account for every one of the forty-one loyalist paramilitary deaths since GFA. ‘158 security-related deaths’ since Good Friday Agreement’ *BBC News*, 23 April 2018, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-43862294> accessed 25 April 2021.

of the Union. This partly explains why it took so long for actual decommissioning to be implemented: fears and disbelief over republican commitment and resumption of hostilities led some community members to demand that those organisations on their side keep some weapons right up until the end of the process in February 2010. The exploitation of emotions also helps us understand how paramilitaries are able find willing recruits. As discussed throughout chapters three and four, the recruitment of children and young people into ethno-sectarianism often took the guise of celebrating tradition or protecting cultural identity. It is as true now as it was then, and it poses a crucial inhibition to positive cross-community relations. We end this section by considering the government's response to this persistent danger. Ten weeks of intensive cross-party talks resulted in the 'Fresh Start Agreement' (November 2015) which had two key themes: fully implementing the 'Stormont House Agreement' (December 2014), which endeavoured to enact sufficient welfare reform so as to bring NI on a par with Britain. Secondly, to address the impact of paramilitary activity. Fresh Start stoutly reaffirmed support for the rule of law and made available additional UK Government support of around £500 million to assist the Executive in tackling issues unique to NI. Among these was the shared objective of ridding society of all forms of paramilitary groups and their activity. We will see in the final section of this chapter and of part one how successful this ambitious commitment was and whether Fresh Start could really finish off paramilitarism.

5.3 Looking Back to Move Forward

5.3.1 A Ghost Dance Around the 'Dreary Steeples'

When discussing categories of murals, it is not uncommon for a false partition to be erected between ‘militaristic’ (by which is meant modern paramilitarism) and ‘historical’ (invariably referring to the First World War).⁶⁹ Those making this distinction seem not to appreciate that the latter does not involve an extensive excavation of a multi-faceted vista with different forms, themes, events and characters, but rather distinctively falls into regimented line as *militarised* history. Even the descriptor of ‘history’ seems not entirely suitable given how often the discipline is used not exclusively, or even predominantly, to look back but instead looks forward. Evershed elaborates in his study of unionist and loyalist use of the Somme memory. It is the author’s view that murals epitomize what Evershed calls the ‘ghost dance’, performed to recover ‘a deferred eschatological promise, in the face of deep ontological uncertainty.’⁷⁰ So, a simplified past is a remedy meant to assuage a present, anxious about what change will mean. Hence murals reverting to the romanticism of young sweethearts embraced in farewell or trench combat staged as a boy’s own adventure complete with action figure men performing daring feats of bravery.

⁶⁹ Such was the case when conducting a joint interview with muralist Stephen Hutchinson and Darren Richardson of the Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association. Richardson, when describing those who commission Stephen’s artistic skills, put the work into those main categories. Interviews conducted by the author, 13 September 2021.

⁷⁰ Evershed, ‘Ghosts of the Somme’, p. 244.



Fig.5.6

Use of this memory typifies another aspect of the disjointed relationship between NI and Britain, captured in Churchill's exasperation at 'the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone.' The future Prime Minister was of the opinion that the steeples, emerging from the deluge of war represented 'the integrity of [the Irish] quarrel...one of the few institutions...left unaltered in the cataclysm which has swept the world.'⁷¹ Churchill was referencing the pre-war politico-religious division, but the passage could equally speak now to the endurance of a hallowed war memory and masculinity, still in view and just as unshakeable as the metaphorical and monolithic steeples around which wall paintings reinforce images and ideas. The decimation and disillusionment of a generation did not pollute the potency of a bygone age, rather this unionist myth only coagulated like the sacrificial blood that was shed. For all that the endless commemoration rhapsodises about

⁷¹ Aughey, *Under Siege*, p. 35.

soldiers laid to rest, and their memory resting in peace, they are denied this due to their ghosts being incessantly recalled for duty.

Unionism's veto on relinquishing a warrior idealism meant that a particular masculine agency more closely resembled Victorian and Edwardian notions of gallantry than they did the realities of modern society.⁷² Boon informs us, the lure of the hero status is two-fold; firstly, as a value-judgement, it allows one to ascend to greatness, departing from the mundane. Secondly, it promises immortality, for if man can rise to the realm of demi-gods, then death is avoidable.⁷³ We see this bestowed on many surfaces adorned Lawrence Binyon's epitaph, 'For the Fallen': 'They shall not grow 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.' This elevation of the ordinary soldier into a pantheon of manliness occurred on both sides of No Man's Land—Ernst Junger's war diary *The Storm of Steel* (1920) fawns over the 'princes of the trenches' who never retreated and knew no mercy.⁷⁴ When these princes do kill for king (or Kaiser) and country, they can take solace in the ordeal being a 'clean' kill. They can also look forward to a similarly quick demise should they meet their end in the line of duty. For all the praising of blood sacrifice (a rhetoric unionism shared with Irish nationalism), popular art seemed to almost mock young heroes with the naivety of a bloodless death. This work in Carrickfergus assures us the deceased soldier has been granted a seat in heaven since he has 'served his time in hell'.

⁷² McGaughey, 'The language of sacrifice', p. 302.

⁷³ Boon, 'Heroes', p. 301

⁷⁴ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 110.



Fig.5.7

The last line of this caption (paraphrased from a 1917 ballad by American poet Frank Bernard Camp) is dissonant to the accompanying image. On the muddied field of battle, there is nothing of hell, only a beautiful young maiden, or perhaps angel, keeping him company in his final moments. The advert of war deceives us with a sanitised, audience-friendly rendition.⁷⁵ The quick and painless death which leaves behind a clean wound on a heroic corpse is the final act fabricated in a predictable narrative arc. McDonald's discussion of war-image as spectacle takes place in film, yet we can straightforwardly transfer this trait to

⁷⁵ The bitterness at this deception can be read in the words of Geoffrey Gordon (1917), which conform to how death is presented or performed before us in the mural: 'You remember the picture of the Great Sacrifice, which at one time was to be seen in every shop window. A young lad lies on the ground. A tiny bullet hole shows in his temple, and from it flows the faintest streak of blood. Over him hangs the shadowy figure of the Crucified...like the young lad in the picture, the man I saw die had a bullet wound in the temple, but there the likeness ceased...a ghastly mess of blood and brains and mud, on his face and in the surrounding trench; and in the stark horror of the moment, I could not see the Crucified at all.' Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 212.

painting. Rather than challenge violent masculinities it simply allows us to marvel at the action; at what our heroes are capable of before their short story gets the ending it deserves.⁷⁶

5.3.2 Male Victims of Manhood

Amid the ranks of murals produced around the Somme centenary only one work hints of the woeful reality of the lived experience behind romanticism's theatrical veil.



Fig.5.8

It speaks a very different body language, not confident, upright standing to attention or ready to guard his position. The posture instead crumples up into an exhausted heap; his head is

⁷⁶ Terrance H. McDonald, 'War-image as affect, war-image as spectacle in turn-of-the-millennium Hollywood: how are violent masculinities expressed?', *Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 3-4 (2015), p. 244.

school including murals as well as their suggestion that their purpose was to ‘show their past and whatever way their religion has taken form.’⁸⁶ This was echoed during youth workshops the author held where participants could not follow up the prompt of ‘*why* this particular history/culture?’ They did not seem fazed that so few subjects should dominate their landscape. If there is little objection to war imagery generally then it is unlikely that the specifics of its placement will cause much consternation. A long-standing case would be the Cathedral Youth Club, in the heart of the Fountain estate and a proverbial stone’s throw away from the Bobby Jackson memorial wall. Aside from the over-reliance on First World War material itself, we should note the medium-sized tribute off on the left-hand side to Sergeant Lindsey Mooney. Mooney died, not in the green fields of France in 1916, but outside Kirk’s Lounge Bar in Cloughfinn, Co. Donegal in 1973 when a bomb prematurely exploded. He enlisted, not in the 36th Ulster Division, but in the modern UDA by whose own device his life was ended at nineteen years of age. Clearly the Somme is the greatest propaganda exercise in loyalist paramilitary, its legitimacy a smokescreen behind which otherwise unacceptable actions can be performed. It is incumbent that when we scrutinise assertions that ‘Culture Threatens No One’⁸⁷, peel away the colourful costume, lively music, boisterous crowds and ostentatious spectacle to interpret how they may be viewed more as bellicose performances driving wedges between groups, fanning the flames of suspicion, and occasionally sparking open hostility.⁸⁸ The entanglement of militarised, hyper-masculine culture and youth identity should be pulled apart to understand how it contributes to the passing down of violence,

⁸⁶ This was the view of Dale while Stan—the other student jointly interviewed as part of their study—noted their additional function of ‘annoying people’ by demonstrating past Protestant victories. Here there is at least a hint at how problematic the narrowing of perspectives is and why accounts of the past should be so heavily edited. Keith C. Barton & Alan W. McCully ‘Trying to “See Things Differently”’: Northern Ireland Students’ Struggle to Understand Alternative Historical Perspectives’, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, Vol. 40, Issue 4 (2012), p. 380.

⁸⁷ This messaged accompanies three bandsmen – the first two of which, at least, are members of the UVF Regimental Flute Band, wearing modern and vintage uniforms uniform – parade together in a 2016 mural in Pitt Park in east Belfast.

⁸⁸ Blake, *Contentious Rituals*, p. 6.

inclined to deviate outside of the normative environment. Just as chapter eight will elaborate on Shirlow and McGovern's comment on the necessity to 'promote an understanding of the Protestant community and its diversity'¹²¹, the next chapter calls for a similar process projected outwardly.

¹²¹ Southern, 'Protestant Alienation in Northern Ireland', p. 160.

PART TWO: THE DISARMING

Chapter Six: Beyond the Sanctuary: External Sources of Disarming

Introduction

This chapter marks a major turn in this thesis as we leave the past-focused weaponisation behind and move into the future-focused 'disarming'. Part two attempts to not only visually disarm the weaponised murals of part one but, ultimately, argues that positive, progressive art when used regularly in the interests of public history, community education and gender reconciliation could encourage a disarming of weaponised masculinities. It is the lack of change that we witnessed across all three chapters of part one that provide a clear rationale for the aspirational character of part two. Weaponisation seemed locked into static patterns of repeated visual tropes and suggestive of traditional gender norms. Since weaponisation is so reliant on a conformity to certain accounts of history, certain uses of public art and certain heroic masculine ideals, part two seeks to undo much of this. From the last chapter we appreciate how the suppressive consequences around this culture of silence still very much persist and, therefore, part two meets it early on with a clear and decisive call for direct action against this. Whereas part one followed a more traditional, historical approach to murals, part two aspires to aesthetically revolutionary ideas which, in time and through repeated use, may become embedded as the new norm. This counterbalance to the hegemony of part one would, in both form *and* function, operate in an oppositional dynamic. A radical change of direction is needed then if we are to explore what narratives and perspectives may disarm the landscape and how these utopian visions might affect wider social circles of loyalist thinking around masculinity and violence. Chapters six and eight traverse a multitude of sources, external and internal to loyalism, to find out where those narratives might be, what exact

perspectives constitute as disarming material? Whilst chapter seven more fully explains how the bridge between art and audience can be built to allow a successful and necessary transmission of peace-oriented messages which advocate for gender equality, non-violence, and an ambitious social transformation.

This chapter widens the discursive and performative frames of meanings in the context of both murals and masculinities. While it is important to recognise the permanence of some interpretative frames, we should remain open to the possibility that others can be reinvented; others still discovered. This will of course take us beyond the limits of loyalist NI. Yet, every element explored always returns us back to our primary focus. Due to the intersection of race and perceived lesser or lower masculinities, we are compelled to search elsewhere for articulations of multiculturalism. To combat the continuum of violence, we must be aware of the implications of hegemonic masculinity to ethnic minorities in NI.¹ Diversifying the landscape and its uses is key if we are to inculcate the kind of free thinking so central to disarming. For many, the post-conflict environment is one still defined by a lack of positive exposure to difference, with society continuing to be segregated along lines of education, housing, and socialising. This is especially relevant for Ulster loyalism which still carries an image of a conservative, pro-state ideology with little space or use for an international rhetoric and representations of resistance and liberation. Crucially this chapter steers these terms away from the ‘national question’ instead framing them in our gendered priority. The author posits that culturally globalised² murals constitute a form of indirect

¹ Helena McCormac of the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities highlighted the significant challenges still facing migrants often settled in poorer communities which are amongst the most contested in terms of territory and culture. Consequently, they are more likely to fall victim to racism and sectarianism (even facing expulsion). She stressed the urgent need for a new Northern Irish radical equality strategy. Shaun McDaid et al, ‘The Northern Ireland “Culture Wars” Symposium Report’ (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, Nov 2013), p. 8.

² Cultural globalisation should be differentiated from its economic version. The former implies a shared and sustained consciousness, facilitated by a compression of the world through the media revolution from the early

travel, essentially an extension of contact hypothesis. As we ‘travel’ further afield, we will notice the need for gender transformation to be as multidimensional as large-scale conflicts themselves. Gilmore’s study of cross-cultural conceptions of masculinity concluded that though we may not be able to capture any universal male, a ubiquitous male did crystallise. Based on a criterion of performance, this quasi-global personage is labelled ‘Man-the-Impregnator-Protector-Provider’.³ In lieu of this ultimate archetype, this chapter enhances the view that identity is interactional. Men do not develop in isolation but are shaped by a world of people around us. By accessing external examples, we can appreciate how identities are always changing, possibly slowly, or with great effort. They nevertheless are not fixed and indeed the ‘liquid nature of relationships’⁴ in the postmodern age means we are more fluid than at any time in human history.

This chapter is structured into three international contexts of disarming, removing us from the introversion of men’s studies (still largely Western-centric in its mainstream, academic literature) and the Northern Irish mural tradition. We begin in Southern Africa and consider the philosophies of the Men Engage Network, guided by the principle of overriding relational humanity and compassion known as ‘ubuntu’. We also briefly assess the tactics of two partners in the network, implementing a disarming of similarly weaponised masculinities. Both Promundo’s ‘Program H’ and Sonke Gender Justices’ ‘One Man Can’ campaign deploy some rudiments of RAM from chapter seven, namely devising public art

1960s onwards. The latter, however, is commonly associated with a neo-liberalism that accompanied the steep decline of traditional industries and, with them, the loyalist working class.

³ David Gilmore, ‘Manhood in the Making’ (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 223.

⁴ Reed, *Paramilitary Loyalty*, p. 19. On the matter of choosing from extended options made more available to us, Dave Hill commented in ‘The Future of Men’ that ‘never again will masculinity be as containable or easy to describe in false terms as it had been during the last 150 years. Tomorrow’s materially comfortable young men will have more freedom of identity on their hands than their grandfathers and even their fathers could have imagined.’ Cited in Buchbinder, *Studying Men & Masculinities*, p. 3.

based on prolonged workshop sessions that challenge the hegemonic standard of their context. This may involve redefining vernacular terms, manipulating effective marketing strategies for progressive ends, or confronting some distasteful aspects of one's social identity. The second section profiles the work of the Southeast Asian 'Fearless Collective'—a women-led group of artists and activists taking feminism out into the harsh realities of the frontline. Our analysis will intersperse the collective's methodology — a staged process akin to chapter seven's verbing the mural —with specific works so that we can understand exactly how they reclaim spaces of patriarchal conformity with radical statements of inclusive beauty. Substantiating the C-HV, Fearless' aesthetic revolution is based on love as the fundamental alternative to hate which fuels conventional conflict and the continuum of violence. The final section takes us on a journey through some of the most prominent cases of disarming muralism in the Americas. Initially set in South America, we meet the Ramona Parra Brigades, a demilitarised version of the paramilitary brigades of NI that sought to draw young people into their reductive and restrictive ways of being. Aside from being a useful structure for the politicising and organising of a disaffected youth during Chile's military regime, the content produced by the brigades amalgamates into an alternative landscape across post-conflict Santiago. This is scripted by histories 'from below' that centre the perspectives of workers, women, and masculine champions of political intelligence and creative resistance.

In the central highland town of San Juan Comalapa we witness a radically different use of the time surface of a mural. Rather than expressing militarised continuity, the work represents the change caused by the peace process spanning a scene of brutality to one emphasising youthful hope for the present and imagined near future. The next sub-section moves us up to American west coast cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the former we discover the legacies of Balmy Alley, a congregation of both mural activity and peoples

brought together in continued, repeated and diverse activation. The latter, meanwhile, exhibits a supreme example of the mural as a democratic platform, giving voice to those silenced in society. Again, we notice how the epic storytelling throughout the Great Wall of L.A. is employed as a site of critical learning, necessary introspection, and open engagement. En route to the East coast, we briefly stopover in Chicago to consider the historic case, the Wall of Respect. Here the importance of a citizens' media is stressed in the black liberation movement. When creative control is in the hands of the people, murals are an expression of civic pride and the heroes assembled in paint prove an organic backdrop for mobilising against inequality and injustice. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of Mural Arts Philadelphia (MAP)—the most comprehensive of all disarming case studies, the pinnacle of RAM, and we end by comparing Philadelphia, a model city and transformative paragon to Belfast, laden with untapped potential and promise.

6.1 From Northern Ireland to Southern Africa: An Alliance of Engagement

6.1.1 'I Am Tired'

The first case study we will examine connects many conflict-affected regions and relates to a heavy demoralisation or war-weariness. This may concern populations who feel the weight of this contemporaneously or those societies, like NI, from which conflict is a recent memory and whose people still feel the numerous legacy issues they struggle with now. As with all the examples cited in this chapter, inaction—even in the most horrendous circumstances—is not an option. Action without ongoing, critical reflection may also be counter-productive. In September 2016, three years after the start of the South Sudanese Civil War, a collective of artists, musicians, actors, poets and fashion designers came together to create a platform for

the ordinary South Sudanese citizen to speak out and have their voice heard. They called themselves ‘Ana Taban’— ‘I am tired’ in the Juba dialect of Arabic —and used street theatre, murals, sculpture and poetry to foster public discussion about issues such as social injustice, government accountability, and transparency. One of the most powerful works is usually interpreted as the tragedy and futility of war; a self-destructive hacking away at the roots of one’s society.



Fig.6.1

In the context of gender transformation however, the author would offer a secondary reading, in that the people are cutting off the root problems of conflict—toxic masculinity being one of the thickest. Indeed, this is true seemingly regardless of context. As Sjoberg observes, no two images of the ‘just warrior’ are exactly the same, yet no conflict lacks a notion of what it means to be a man, and a hero, in that conflict.⁵

⁵ Sjoberg, *Gender, War, and Conflict*, p. 67.

For NI, the onset of the Troubles reinforced traditional forms of masculinities, commencing conditions that preserved men's power in both public and private arenas.⁶ We encountered this fortification during the 'post-conflict' age in chapter five. If we were to analyse fig. 6.1 in this gendered manner then the people, as stationary as tree trunks of tradition, wield the axes not as weapons but tools of liberation. Once severed, the people are free to move independently, no longer rooted to the spot by that which seemed interminable.⁷ For NI, of course any polyphonic reading of the work gladly permits both interpretations as being conceptually valid. Remembering the crux of part two— that radical imagery alone is not enough; it must *continue* to be radically used too—we have to admire the collective's methods of utilising old and new technologies of social movement communication. Their strong social media presence had meant that #Anataban has become a popular phrase used by South Sudanese youth to express their frustration with the ongoing conflict. To further the dissemination of their ideas, the collective also produces short films and releases songs via local radio stations and YouTube to reach wider audiences. This determination for public engagement takes several forms, whether smaller scale events like the unveiling of a work opposing forced marriages in April 2022 or celebrating 'International Day of the African Child' in July 2021. In May 2022, Ana Taban partnered with the Narfa Soutna⁸ to run a series of activities (attended by hundreds) in the cities of Yei and Rumbek, which included

⁶ Ashe & Harland, 'Troubling Masculinities', p. 748.

⁷ A freedom of movement could extend to the constructed status of gender which, when theorised as radically independent of sex, becomes a free-floating artifice with the consequence that 'man' and 'masculine' might just as easily signify a female body as a male one and vice versa. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 9.

⁸ Arabic for 'let's raise our voices' sought to centre the perspective of children to the witnesses and signatories of the revitalised agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The ARCSS was signed in 2015 having been brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. It led to a temporary pause in the fighting, but conflict was reignited within a few months. New efforts at peace negotiations followed, eventually resulting the Revitalised version of the original agreement finalised in September 2018. The ongoing campaign however stressed the need for the full and timely implementation of the R-ARCSS. Elis Stannes & Cedric de Coning *The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)*, Relief Web, 6 May 2022 available at [The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan \(R-ARCSS\) - South Sudan | ReliefWeb](https://reliefweb.int/report-south-sudan/the-revitalised-agreement-on-the-resolution-of-the-conflict-in-the-republic-of-south-sudan-r-arcss) accessed 17 August 2022.

workshops, youth dialogues, concerts and mural paintings. The main theme of these activities was to promote an active citizenship amongst the youth, while the murals focused on site-specific problems, namely early child marriage in Yei and ending revenge killings in Rumbek.⁹ Ana Taban's versatile use of media, extending their progressive and transformative agenda, only goes to prove Freire's point that the pursuit of full humanity cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity.¹⁰

6.1.2 'I Am Because You Are'

The main theme for this section is derived from the 3rd Men Engage symposium, a seven-month programme starting in November 2020. What unified all these sessions, and indeed unifies a great deal of our disarming material was its title: 'Ubuntu'. Originating from humanist Southern African philosophy, it can be a somewhat nebulous concept of oneness, being part of the Zulu phrase 'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'. Literally meaning a person is a person through other people,¹¹ it is more commonly translated as simply humanity toward others, or 'I am because you are'. It evokes a universal connection between all people, a shared sense of compassion, responsibility and humanity for all. This is hugely relevant to our consideration of gender as a relationally constructed identity. The radical inclusion is at the core of the C-HV and in opposition to the weaponised archetypes which are often based on exclusion and even the dehumanising of the other. So whilst the concept is grounded in African thought and identity, it clearly has an important and positive implication for the

⁹ Lauren Spink, 'Protection Through Dialogue: How UNMISS is Linking Local Engagement with a National Peace Process in South Sudan', *Centre for Civilians in Conflict* (June 2020), p. 9 available at <https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UNMISS-Peace-Brief-Single-Page.pdf> accessed 22 April 2021.

¹⁰ Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 30th anniversary edition (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 85.

¹¹ Nkem Ifejika, 'What does ubuntu really mean?', *The Guardian*, 29 September 2006 available at <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2006/sep/29/features11.g2> accessed 12 December 2021.

whole world. That Engage exports this philosophy to 600 organisations in 30 countries is representative of those progressive voices that are globally making themselves heard and demanding recognition and realisation of their rights. An alliance of youth movements, feminists of colour and LGBT+ communities are ‘illuminating the full complexity of the human experience and refusing to accept reductive versions of how to think about society.’¹² Again, we met reductive presentations throughout part one, including fallacies about interpreting the past or the nature of loyalism, masculinity, and even the practice of mural-making. Engage seeks to end unequal power relations and dismantle patriarchal systems by transforming rigid and harmful norms about ‘being a man’ and building inclusive collaborations from local to regional then global levels. As Duriesmith elaborates, this dismantling of rigidity begins with the vital practice of questioning men’s and women’s attitudes and expectations about gender roles, followed by promoting positive alternative models of manhood.¹³ This broadly follows the path we have taken in this thesis with part one questioning and problematising weaponised attitudes and expectations while part two endeavours to provide disarming alternatives. Particular alternatives may initially present an obstacle to applicability, but if foreign terminology is limited to one word, then the language barrier is extremely low and thus easy to get the important meanings across. Whether recognising problems with traditional roles or locating solutions in alternatives, it is neither quick nor simple to arrive at either position. Therefore, Engage’s approach cannot be superficial but instead entails workshops lasting up to five days to begin the raising of

¹² Humberto Carolo & Joni van de Sand, introduction to ‘Transforming Masculinities: Towards a Shared Vision’, Men Engage Alliance available at <https://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Transforming-Masculinities-Towards-a-Shared-Vision-MenEngage-Alliance.pdf> accessed 1 November 2021.

¹³ David Duriesmith ‘Engaging men and boys in the Women, Peace and Security agenda: Beyond the ‘good men’ industry’ *London School of Economics* blog, 15 December 2017, available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/12/15/engaging-men-and-boys-in-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-beyond-the-good-men-industry-david-duriesmith-112017/> accessed 3 November 2019.

awareness in men and women of their relational dynamics. There is a transformative methodology ultimately taking shape and taking hold over longer-term interaction. This approach, known as ‘gender reconciliation’, is versatile in its multimedia formats¹⁴ and corresponds to the verbing of the mural detailed in the next chapter; real transformation is not simply emitted from a freshly painted surface but is gradually revealed in the people during the process. An ambitious partner in the Engage Alliance is Instituto Promundo whose ‘Program H’ is also designed to elicit critical reflection on the gender norms that drive violence and other unhealthy behaviours.¹⁵ The Brazilian NGO take an innovative approach to tackling the culture of violence, but it also begins with a series of educational workshops and peer group support. After this initial phase, Program H takes to the streets in public campaigns that appropriate the visual force and feeling of media, advertising, and youth culture to promote gender equality among young men as being ‘cool’ or ‘hip’.¹⁶ These two parts are inextricably linked as the former provided the direct inspiration for the latter. A campaign emerged among male participants when they heard their peers in group sessions admit: ‘everybody knows you shouldn’t hit your girlfriend, but in the heat of the moment you lose control.’. Thus, from these comments slogans for billboards arose, such as: ‘in the heat of the moment, a real man...cares/listens/accepts etc.’¹⁷ To supplement these alternative advertisements, young men also designed graffiti-style logo for the campaign that adorned t-

¹⁴ Examples of the media employed to further dissemination and connectivity include ‘Now and Men’ a monthly podcast launched in July 2021 by the European branch of Engage. Instigated by members at the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse at Durham University, in-depth episodes highlight and explore why feminist issues are relevant to the lives of men and boys. Another example is ‘Power on Patrol’, a one one-hour documentary revealing the true human cost of militarised masculinities in several conflict societies. It also spotlights the unmaking of these masculinities by intertwining powerful, personal testimony with leading male and female expert perspectives in the field. These compliment more regular projects that use campaigning, political advocacy, grassroots activism, public education, art and performance to communicate their ideas.

¹⁵ Sophie Namy, Brian Heilman, Shawna Stich & Jeffrey Edmeades ‘Be a Man, Change the Rules! Findings and Lessons from Seven Years of CARE International Balkans’ Young Men Initiative’ *CARE Young Men Initiative & International Center for Research on Women* (2014), p. 4.

¹⁶ Gary Barker, *Dying to the Men: Youth, Masculinity, and Social Exclusion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 151.

¹⁷ Ella Page ‘Men, Masculinity and guns, p. 6.

shirts and hats, becoming a well-known symbol of equality in their communities. This opens further possibilities in NI regarding the maximising of visual impact. The notion of selling t-shirts along with badges/pins and stickers bearing the image of a community-designed, appreciated mural raises funds for local causes whilst also allowing young people to wear their politics with pride.

6.1.3 'One Man Can'

The pioneering South African NGO, Sonke Gender Justice, (another Engage partner) shares the principles of advocating, researching and implementing transformative approaches to appeal to boys and men to participate in the struggles for equality. In particular they fight the perception that men are always perpetrators and potentially capable of violence or are inconsiderate and self-focused. They believe this to be too often and too easily adopted and paints an inaccurate picture of naturalised assumptions. Importantly, none of this should be understood as an attempt to push away the explicit links between masculinity and violence, thus creating an illusion of distance through excuses or exceptions. In lieu of a fatalistic vision, Sonke supports manifestations of non-violent, equitable and inclusive attitudes and behaviours. The 'One Man Can' (OMC) campaign encouraged boys and men to take action to end domestic and sexual violence and promote healthy relationships that both men and women can enjoy— passionately, respectfully, and fully. Again, a range of tactics and media were employed to promote progressive resistance including a community radio project developing weekly episodes brought more male involvement and discussion on these and other related issues. Murals are also very much within Sonke's arsenal as evidenced in a large-scale 2015 project which advertised many aspects of their philosophy. There are several noteworthy features of this series. Firstly the photographic gallery documenting stages of

6.1.4 ‘Anyone Who Wants to See the Sunlight...’

Some may be sceptical as to how any of the material in this chapter can be explicitly linked to loyalism. It is a valid concern. After all, local ‘buy in’ is key to the survival of a mural’s physical condition, as well as the extent to which its contents are conceptually embraced by the host population. The author would respond to this with a further note of scepticism. Given the safe and predictable nature of previous interventions, it seems exceedingly unlikely that any facilitator presented external, disarming options to participatory groups. Moreover, the author would call into question the relevance for such an explicit link to always predate the suggestion. It is the essence of RAM to occasionally break with protocol; to visually materialise boldly inventive free thinking that we meet again in chapter eight. The quantity of murals is again a redeeming feature. Loyalist communities need not be pulled in opposing directions, as perhaps the majority of subject matter would resonate with some close connection. Now and then, though, some surfaces might deviate dramatically from the conventional course. This could consist of reframing ubuntu in a more culturally relative focus, importing the profile of some disarming figure or making a strong statement of solidarity with a foreign movement or organisation. The move from a biculture to multiculture landscape is commendable, but if it is to be done—let it be done with conviction. The recent association made by the OO to Togo and Ghana is arguably a rather disappointing attempt to draw attention to the multi-racial composition of the Order. It is reminiscent of the lukewarm internationalising of loyalism we saw in chapter five. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this cultural rebranding is less an authentic engagement of new ideas but instead a token gesture and ‘essential weaponry in securing victory in the culture war.’²³

²³ McAuley, Tonge & Mycock, *Loyal to the Core?*, p. 112.

script a different, better ending. For Fearless, the visibility that storytelling affords is never only about reportage but alchemy. ‘I Am as You Are’ is the first transgender public representation on Bogor, Indonesia. In an alley across from a mosque, a transwoman embodies both masculine and feminine, ‘simultaneously strong and sensual with shoulders wide, rough stubbled chin and tattooed chest.’ Her reclining posture retells a story of classical art where for centuries the commanding male gaze had rested. Now her gaze is casually and confidently averted while still holding the audience’s attention. Just as we live amongst an enormity of information, we are also inundated with images. As such the sourcing of symbols that can cut through the daily white noise is a challenge. Fearless use symbols in a variety of ways, to represent healing, some emerging power, or paths toward the future. These are typically found gradually in the collaborative and supportive environment of the workshoping process. However, the next example was produced as a rapid response. ‘Gotagogama’ was the protest camp set up during the 2022 Sri Lankan movement demanding President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resign due to a host of problems, mainly the mismanagement which triggered the 2019 economic crisis. The camp became the movement’s epicentre, providing necessities of food, water, toilets and medical services to the network of activists, citizens, artists and youth groups that had coalesced.³² More than a functional site of political activation, it had become a symbol, a ‘utopian village where the people of Sri Lanka had established a battleground and a dream.’³³ That this utopia had taken over Galle Face Green, a luxurious ocean-side urban park in the heart of the capital, Colombo, signified a microcosm of possibility as the people fought for accountability from a government tarnished by corruption, nepotism and authoritarianism which had led to great instability. Remarkably a

³² Zulfick Farzan, ‘‘GotaGoGama’ protest village pops up as protestors occupy Galle Face’ *News First* 11 April 2022 available at <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/04/11/gotagogama-protest-village-pops-up-as-protestors-occupy-galle-face/> accessed 2 September 2022.

³³ ‘Gotagogama: Rapid Response Mural’ Fearless Collective online archive, available at <https://fearlesscollective.org/project/gotagogama-rapid-response-mural/> accessed 2 September 2022.

coalitions.⁵⁵ Under Pinochet's regime, members of brigades were often tortured or driven into exile as the military government painted over their murals. However, they continued in an underground capacity, and when democracy returned in 1990—the brigades re-emerged to work not just across South America but internationally including a 2009 project with loyalist and republican muralists. The large work at the southern entrance of Ormeau Park in south Belfast is certainly faithful to the revolutionary aesthetic of the brigades, though it shows signs of physical deterioration and, as with most murals, there is no evidence of the activation to be expanded upon in chapter seven.⁵⁶ Today their bold and bright designs are strewn across Santiago often featuring the Chilean working class. Some record the demands of past demonstrations like free and inclusive education, while others honour opponents of the regime like Jecar Neghme (killed in 1989 and one of the regime's last victims).⁵⁷ However they present their perspective, the scope of the murals was never limited to beautifying the city's drab walls: they additionally sought to foment radical social change.

6.3.2 'Culture Contains the Seeds of Resistance...'

Any study of political murals cannot avoid the colossal influence of the movement in Mexico beginning in the 1920s and spearheaded by 'Los Tres Grandes': David Alfaro Siqueiros, Jose Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. The early Chicano works that we find when we cross the border into the south-western states were heavily inspired not only by their figurative style and mystical introspection but their revolutionary fervour. This stance also affected a

⁵⁵ In contrast to more municipally backed programmes to 'cool out' an inner-city youth during any 'long hot summer' of tension or civil unrest, such artist collectives developed mutual support and joint funding groups based on the Latin American 'brigades' model. Eva Cockcroft, John Weber and Jim Cockcroft, *Toward a People's Art*, (New York: E.P Dutton & Co. Inc, 1977), p. 29.

⁵⁶ Extra Mural Activity, Brigada Ramona Parra, 20 July 2013, available at <https://extramuralactivity.com/2013/07/20/brigada-ramona-parra/> accessed 2 November 2020.

⁵⁷ Gideon Long, 'The Chilean muralists who defied Pinochet', *BBC News*, 6 September 2013, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-23970034> accessed 1 November 2020.

common-sense philosophy on accessibility that informs the ‘people’s art’ of chapter seven. Orozco claimed the mural ‘cannot be made a matter of private gain; it cannot be hidden away for the benefit of a certain privileged.’⁵⁸ The spirit of the three Mexican giants is evident all the way along Balmy Alley, located in San Francisco’s Mission District. This concentration of imagery began in the mid-1980s and is in a state of constant flux, frequently appearing in local press, tourism guides and video tours on YouTube. The most distinctive work is the 200 ft² piece whose title summarises much of part two’s core arguments: ‘Culture Contains the Seed of Resistance, Which Blossoms into the Flower of Liberation’. Like the Guatemalan peace process, the design utilises time surface (rendered on a sliding two-car garage door) to juxtapose a sweeping collage of symbols depicting life during and after war.



Fig.6.8

⁵⁸ Rolston and Berastegi, 'Taking Murals Seriously', p. 35.

On the left, young soldiers carry machine guns while mothers of the ‘disappeared’ carry pictures of loved ones, and above them both in the dark cloud features the stern countenance of President Reagan. A huge soaring dove and sprouting flower of liberation act as the visual hinge on which the work swings. Right of this we see a land of plenty; joyful farmers harvesting a colourful bounty of fruit and corn while a mother sends her daughter to school. As the last intact mural of ‘Placa’—a 1980s project funded by the Zellerbach Family Foundation in which thirty artists covered the entire alley in radiant protest at U.S foreign policy in Central America—it had naturally suffered water damage and light exposure and been painted over with new works.⁵⁹ In 2014, O’Brien Thiele and Miranda Bergman, the two Bay Area artists responsible for the work, decided to restore it to its former glory. They had briefly contemplated choosing a new theme but, as Bergman stated: ‘the things we were hoping for then: peace, sovereignty and prosperity in Central America, haven’t happened yet.’⁶⁰ The author views this as a form of renewed positive staying power which keeps in the public’s eyes and minds issues still unresolved. We should note too how its verbing over most of a year allowed a large public audience to stop and enquire about the piece. An information board coaxed further curiosity in their plans, and on several occasions visitors participated in painting.⁶¹ A final note must dwell on the impressive range of activation that occurred in Balmy Alley. Firstly, an unveiling ceremony and indigenous blessing ritual was well attended by people of all ages and backgrounds. Secondly a bloc party continued into the evening, including a public screening⁶² of a feature-length documentary film. ‘These Walls

⁵⁹ Carolyn Jones, ‘Mission District mural fades after 30 years, but message doesn’t’, *SF Gate*, 8 September 2014, available at <https://www.sfgate.com/art/article/Historical-Mission-mural-s-message-still-vivid-5742769.php> accessed 3 November 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Regarding documentaries, William Mitchell mentioned during his interview with the author that ACT had produced five short films exploring the legacy of the Troubles through different perspectives. This series, ‘Socratics’, is intended to serve as a framework for further dialogue in the method of its namesake. It seemed the intention was to distribute the films with discussion booklets to civil societies and not necessarily stage a public screening of them. Interview with author, Belfast, 16 September 2021.

Given that the wall spans from prehistory to the 1950s, the process also prioritised interviewing those who had lived through the later episodes.⁶⁵ Crucial to our discussion on facing up to thoroughly unpleasant aspects of our past which impression management tendencies may suppress, much of the Great Wall's subject matter takes an unabashed examination of several such episodes such as: colonialism, Dust Bowl refugees, the Great Depression, Japanese-American internment and the race-related violence of the Zoot Suit riots. The Wall does not intend to shame white America. Rather, it initiates dialogue to remedy an absence which is a detriment to any society striving for positive peace. Throughout the sprawling tableau, a balance of tone is arrived at. For example, a profile of Biddy Mason begins in enslavement but charts her freedom and astonishing career as mid-wife, real estate entrepreneur, nurse and philanthropist. Likewise, the terror of Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust concludes with details of their contribution to American society. Importance of location and educational activation intersect perfectly, since much of the Wall passes the Grant High School and Valley College; its historical depictions have been consolidated into their curricula.⁶⁶ One would hope this means regular visits to the physical site itself for, if so, students could truly appreciate some of the technical craft that went into its production. Most notably, Baca spent the summer of 1977 studying mural techniques, employing Siqueiros' 'polyangular theory' to great effect. This innovative use of composition results in art that responds to the movements of the active viewer as they take in an evolving plethora of potential viewpoints.⁶⁷ Not only can we see a disarming version to all those eyes in part one, coldly following us (whether from behind a balaclava or under Lord Kitchener's

⁶⁵ Judith Baca, 'The Human Story at the Intersection of Ethics, Aesthetics and Social Justice', *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 2005), p. 159.

⁶⁶ Emina Bajra, 'L.A. River's 'Great Wall' Redefines American History' *Studio City Patch*, 12 September 2011, available at <https://patch.com/california/studiocity/the-great-wall-along-the-la-river-reflects-american-history> accessed 14 January 2021.

⁶⁷ Jon Mann and Amy Raffel, 'Mexican Muralism', *Art History Teaching Resources* <<https://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/mexican-muralism/>> accessed 22 May 2021.

Field Marshall cap) but, like eL Seed's masterpiece, literal perspective makes profound comments on where we see the world and others from and how that determines our emotional views. Such is the success, popularity, and general positivity of the Wall that recent proposals to continue the history beyond the 1950s are under way. The National Endowment for the Arts has provided funding for initial designs covering panels from the 1960s to the 1980s. Additional features to improve access and engagement are also planned.⁶⁸

6.3.3 'Restore an image of full humanity'

We see in all the case studies of this chapter how murals surface as powerful tools by which movements can express their ideologies and goals during periods of turmoil. This was as true for the Chicano neighbourhoods of the South-West as it was for an African American urban canvas onto which challenges against injustice could be made. When Goalwin talks of murals allowing activists to construct an image of the world as they see it, he brings us back to the emancipatory promise of RAM and its utopian configurations.⁶⁹ Those first to make their mark on the canvas of Chicago were members of the Organisation for Black American Culture (OBAC, pronounced 'obasi', the Yoruba word for chieftain). In earlier sections we considered murals as a medium that looks both inside and outside with its two faces, so we may build on this using the following OBAC's statement:

⁶⁸ These include a pedestrian bridge, extra historical information panels, picnic tables, benches and public bathrooms along the Walls's extensive route. Julia Wasson and Cathy Weiss, 'Learning Los Angeles: Debra Padilla, Arts and Activism', *Huffington Post*, 28 July 2014, available at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/post_b_5619289 accessed 22 May 2021.

⁶⁹ Goalwin, 'The Art of War', p. 192.

Our murals will speak of the liberation struggles of the Black and Third World; they will record history, speak of today, and project toward the future. They will speak of an end to war, racism, and repression; [they will speak] of love, of beauty, of life. We want to restore an image of full humanity to the people, [and] place art into its true context—into life.⁷⁰

In this passage the mural's two faces are Janus-like, with eyes cautiously on the past/present, while another pair stare confidently ahead. Furthermore, the statement confirms that radical art is a multivocal entity whose voices utter several tones. Some rightfully deplore inequality and disorder; others affirm our desire and intention for their cessation. Lastly is the value of the mission of disarming weaponised masculinities; to restore the humanity not just of its victims but also its perpetrators that wish to rid themselves of self-destructive patterns. In 1967 Chicago witnessed some of this mission being sketched out by William Walker and sixteen other African American artists when they portrayed black culture, large-scale and in public. Largely regarded as the first community-based mural, the original portion would grow and become known simply as the 'Wall of Respect'. Even before we consider the subject matter, we have to acknowledge the bravery of seizing the means of cultural production. The work was not commissioned, receiving neither government support nor wholesale grants. Rather it was the result of a self-determined effort by the community conscious. In some instances, walls had been condemned for 'urban renewal'.⁷¹ Thus, the people took them over in proclaiming their right to define their culture and history and name, for themselves, their heroes. In a context saturated with white mainstream media, there was tremendous worth in

⁷⁰ Cockcroft, Weber and Cockcroft, 'Toward a People's Art', p.13.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 28.

issues like racial injustice or militarised policing (both foreign and domestic)...protests and marches to actuate critical dialogue, understanding and empathy.’⁸³ Finally, there is the realisation that whilst all of this would be a difficult process, its rewards would have no formal ending, analogous with the repetition and embeddedness of activation. Its energy goes far beyond the painted wall and into the workplace, it goes into the home and deep into the heart.⁸⁴

6.3.4 The City of Brotherly Love and Murals

The final case study, Mural Arts Philadelphia (MAP) began as an anti-graffiti programme founded in 1986 under the direction of local artist Jane Golden whose career in transformative arts, whilst offering opportunities to young people affected by incarceration, mirrors the west coast efforts of Judith Baca. For over thirty-five years, MAP has united artists with active audiences in a rigorously collaborative process. On average they are involved in fifty to hundred public art projects per year, overseeing the creation of more than 3,800 pieces of art—2,000 of which are still visible today. In terms of viewership, approximately 15,000 residents and visitors tour this vast outdoor gallery which has become integrated into the civic landscape as a source of pride and inspiration, earning Philadelphia international recognition as the ‘Mural Capital of the World’.⁸⁵ Throughout this section, we will see some similarities between MAP’s philosophy and the previous cases; namely in the belief that the motives of public art is to provide transformative experiences, progressive discourse, and economic stimulus. In a mode similar to the ‘serve’ of the tennis game—a

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Mural Arts Philadelphia, ‘We believe that art ignites change’ available at <https://www.muralarts.org/about/> accessed 22 May 2020.

procedural model for mural-making which will be explained further in chapter seven—MAP’s methodology begins with evaluative looking.⁸⁶ Resident/participants are urged to consider the big picture and look beyond the surface to detect the issues that the city’s population grapple with on a daily basis. After this inspection, it is clear that history is written across the landscape, but not all history is as visible as it should be. In taking measures against this knowledge gap, we are introduced to the first of four profiles of alternative masculinity. In 2018, artists Willis ‘Nomo’ Humphrey and Keir Johnston collaborated with the Universal Charter School to produce the first mural to record the life of Octavius Catto, an educator, athlete and early civil rights activist.⁸⁷ Catto was assassinated at the age of 32 on South Street in 1871 after pushing for enfranchisement for black citizens, the work’s title. ‘Remembering a Forgotten Hero’ is highly relevant to part two of this study not only in elevating sunken stories but in redefining the qualifications of heroism. Like all other projects, the work is ‘finished’ with a dedication ceremony, a trait observed throughout this chapter. Once again, the art itself is just the most visible part; the product of a long and complicated process. Often the work provides an opportunity for communal reflection and celebration, generating optimism about a different future. The entry for this work in MAP’s digital archive features an image slider so that we can compare the scene before and after its completion and notice the high attendance and mood of the dedication.

⁸⁶ ‘We do not have to live the same mistakes over again if we can look at them, learn from them, and build upon them.’ Audre Lorde, ‘Learning from the 60s’ from *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 2019), p. 64. Lorde’s ‘look’ transcends the idea of observation or examination; it feels engaged, agentic, and confrontational.

⁸⁷ Mural Arts Philadelphia, ‘Remembering a Forgotten Hero’ available at <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/catto/> accessed 23 May 2020.



Fig.6.11

The sacrifice of contemporary heroes are also recorded in the tributes to Lt. Robert Neary and FF. Daniel Sweeney, of the city's fire department, who lost their lives in the line of duty in 2012. Despite the sombre subject matter, both men are pictured smiling and the colours and design are lively. The surface is elaborately decorated with trompe l'oeil columns and niches, a neoclassical motif we recollect for many depictions in part one. Here, though, the architectural elements signify the heritage of the Kensington housing while the columns stand for the vital support provided by the department in protecting the buildings and the lives inside. In place of the paramilitary crests and emblems, the imitation friezes are inset with details of service and symbols of the fire department.⁸⁸ The work's dedication had an element

⁸⁸ Kimberly Paynter, 'Mural honouring Philly firefighters killed in 2012 Kensington blaze to be dedicated Thursday', WHYY, 9 July 2014, available at <https://whyy.org/articles/mural-honoring-philly-firefighters-killed-in-2012-kensington-blaze-to-be-dedicated-thursday/> accessed 2 April 2021.

of cultural activation in that it featured a flag-bearing procession accompanied by the departmental pipe band.⁸⁹



Fig.6.12

A figure whose career has plenty of relevance in ‘post-conflict’ NI is Herman Wrice (1939-2000). A native of West Philadelphia, he was intimately aware of the gang violence and drug culture that had infiltrated the lives of many youths. He became heavily involved in this cause and, as a renowned community organiser, developed the ‘Wrice Process’—a

⁸⁹ Mural pays tribute to fallen firefighters, *Northeast Times*, 17 April 2014, available at <https://northeasttimes.com/2014/07/17/mural-pays-tribute-to-fallen-firefighters/> accessed 11 February 2021.

method of direct action whereby neighbours confront street-level drug dealers.⁹⁰ Crucially this never resorted to the kind of recriminatory harm inflicted by paramilitary ‘policing’. Rather, it was a mature, rational, non-violent response designed to shame dealers into leaving or changing their ways. Armed with his slogan ‘up with hope, down with dope’ which became a popular rallying cry, public pressure and strength in numbers proved an effective tool against the bane of addiction dependency and criminality.⁹¹ We will see in chapter eight a disconnect between the presence of organic intellectuals in loyalism and their absence in the symbolic landscape. Here, Wrice’s enduring commitment to social activism and belief in the transformative power of a united community is a remarkable homage.



Fig.6.13

⁹⁰ Nadera Rahman, ‘Up With Hope, Down with Dope: The Legacy of Herman Wrice’, available at <https://www.muralarts.org/blog/up-with-hope-down-with-dope-the-legacy-of-herman-wrice/> accessed 13 April 2021.

⁹¹ Ibid.

In 2021 another disarming force took to the streets when artists Felix St. Fort and Gabe Tiberino partnered with students from three schools to create the ‘Cecil B. Moore Freedom Fighters’. Rather than focusing solely on its namesake (a Philadelphia lawyer, politician and civil rights activist), the mural highlighted the unseen women and young people behind this indomitable group which successfully desegregated Girard College (one of the project partners) in 1965.⁹²



Fig.6.14

This subject is extremely sensitive and timely in the context of NI, with debates on the need for integrated education rumbling on. The work is a skilful and stylish mixture of portraiture and graphic design, the main motif being Adinkra: traditional Ghanaian symbols that denote specific concepts. Participants selected those that reflected the lessons and values of the Freedom Fighters such as knowledge, perseverance and the power of love. To encourage

⁹² ‘Mural honours Philadelphia's Freedom Fighters under leadership of Cecil B. Moore in the 1960s’, *ABC 6 Action News*, 27 February 2021, available at <https://6abc.com/mural-arts-philadelphia-freedom-fighters-girard-college-cecil-b-moore/10373233/> accessed 24 March 2021.

community participation during social distancing, MAP distributed learning kits to local schools, with each kit containing a small Adinkra on a material called ‘parachute cloth’, along with brushes and paints.⁹³ The parachute cloth is commonly employed on the Philadelphia scene and is a technique that prolific Northern Irish muralist Dee Craig learnt whilst on the Mellon Creative Residency in 2014.⁹⁴ Craig brought the skill back with him and put it to use in several works, the first being with the youth from Ballymac Friendship Centre. While the themes are certainly disarming (girls feature prominently along with racial and ethnic diversity, education and dance) the author would suggest it is perhaps too busy and any one of the themes might have benefitted from its own space. Likewise, his piece on Donegall Pass encourages reading and emphasizes the importance of education for the local youth. However it is side-lined to a smaller low wall opposite a popular bonfire site. Craig is commissioned for numerous projects from the militarised (the First or Second World War, the latter depicting the Polish Airborne Forces) to more Reimaging-oriented works like ‘Luminaries and Legends’, unveiled on the gable wall of the EastSide Visitor Centre. The latter constitutes a collage of local talent such as Van Morrison, C.S Lewis, George Best and Gary Moore.⁹⁵

MAP also produces people-centric works like ‘We Did That’ by Tisha Golafaie and Symone Salib. Painted partly in thanks to those who helped elect President Joe Biden, it is more generally a memorial to the resilient organisers of Philadelphia and their consistent dedication to public service. It speaks of standing up for community interests: rallying

⁹³ Mural Arts Philadelphia, ‘Cecil B. Moore Freedom Fighters’, available at <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/cecil-b-moore/> accessed 21 April 2021.

⁹⁴ Lee Smithey, ‘Dee Craig installs first cloth murals in Europe’, Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Swarthmore College, 11 July 2016, available at <https://blogs.swarthmore.edu/academics/pcs/2016/07/11/craig-cloth-murals/> accessed 18 March 2021.

⁹⁵ ‘Artwork parachutes in to celebrate EastSide’s Famous Faces’, *EastSide Partnership*, 22 March 2017, available at <https://www.eastsidepartnership.com/news/artwork-parachutes-eastside> accessed 11 April 2021.

together, raising funds for mutual aid efforts, and delivering community care. Therefore it testifies to the capacity for change when a community is united, stays informed, and exercises its right to vote. By a note of comparison to loyalist mural practices, the palette of pastel colours was inspired by the album covers of local renowned poet and activist Ursula Rucker⁹⁶—quite the contrast to the UFF’s appropriation of Eddie the Trooper. The work is painted on hardboard and fixed to a fence since Salib intended to donate it after it had been exhibited for a year. This temporality is a global pattern, the medium visualises the rate of change; every work is not meant to be kept doggedly in place, refusing to give up its space to another, more relevant message.⁹⁷ MAP’s impact is truly astounding, an average year will see them collaborate with approximately 25,000 individuals to create between 60 and 100 projects. Particular to our concerned demographic, some 2,000 young people enrol in their education programme.⁹⁸ In terms of feasibility and financing such a comprehensive plan, according to MAP’s budget a typical mural requires around 30 gallons of paint at an average cost of £61 per gallon (a total of £1,823). In this regard, comparisons can be misleading since many of MAP’s surfaces are considerably larger than their Northern Irish equivalents. Whether weaponised or disarming, a mural’s size and location can be vital in furthering the exposure of this ideological ‘advert’, but smaller spaces naturally lead to less expenditure thereby making the loyalist landscape more cost effective. In addition to examples executed in more

⁹⁶ Layla A. Jones, ‘New Philly mural shouts out Black and queer organisers’ role in getting Biden elected’, Billy Penn, 15 January 2021, available at <https://billypenn.com/2021/01/15/philadelphia-mural-gotv-biden-black-queer-symone-salib-tisha-golafaie-ballot-counting-election/> accessed 4 April 2021.

⁹⁷ Although the work does technically depict specific individuals who were involved in voting-related campaigns, they are not named as such in the piece. Speaking about both the work’s temporality and its subject matter, the agents of change, Golafaie said: ‘it’s not somebody perched up on a pedestal that’s making all these magical things happen. It’s us. We did that.’, Ibid.

⁹⁸ Carise Mitch, Director of Communications & Brand Management, Mural Arts Philadelphia press kit (January 2019), available at https://www.muralarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MA_Press-Kit_FINAL_January2019.pdf accessed 1 May 2020.

traditional materials and techniques, MAP occasionally experiments with innovative strategies for engaging audiences.⁹⁹

Whether relying on old or new technologies or a hybrid, MAP's aim is often to amplify voices which both were and are marginalised. 'Pride and Progress' (2003) occupies the entire west wall of the William Way Centre, a non-profit LGBT organisation. Exemplifying the transference from a transitory medium like marching into a more lasting format, the work portrays a gay Pride festival amid nearby landmarks. It is not, however, a one-dimensional celebration, as the far-left side shows a man pasting up a poster for a civil rights march held in 1966, giving the scene historical and political context. On one surface, residents turn one way then the other, back and forth revealing who they are, who they have been and where they are going.¹⁰⁰ Another voice frequently amplified are those of the city's various migrant identities. 'Gateway to Chinatown: Colours of Light' (1999) by Josh Sarantitis uses a scroll motif as an allegory for the neighbourhood's movement in time, unrolling from past to future. Sarantitis gathered informal oral histories and incorporated these with text from local poet and educator, Jeffrey Loo. In usual verbing fashion, the work progressed with community groups being consulted at each stage of the decision-making.¹⁰¹

The dragon running along the work's top edge is not a fearsome creature to ward off the

⁹⁹ This might involve kinetic designs like Candy Chang's 'Atlas of Tomorrow: A Device for Philosophical Reflection' whose spinning numerical dial let viewers read and reflect up to 64 different stories. In 2018 artist Joshua Mays and DJ King Britt developed 'Dreams, Diaspora and Destiny', an augmented reality mural that utilised both music and a mobile app. Then there was 'The Evolving Face of Nursing' by Meg Saliman (2010), whose incorporation of LED lights meant viewers saw one depiction by day and another in the evening glow. Saligman researched and interviewed practicing nurses to represent a range of roles from students to directors. Placed at a busy intersection, the 6,500ft² piece paid homage to the invaluable service of nurses, a similar sentiment appearing in the loyalist landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰⁰ Created with the help of fifteen assistants, the chief muralist Ann Northup hopes the mural serves as a catalyst for increased tolerance of real diversity among people. 'Pride and Progress' entry from Mural Arts Philadelphia online archive, available at <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/pride-progress-2/> 24 May 2020.

¹⁰¹ 'Gateway to Chinatown: Colours of Light' from Mural Arts Philadelphia online archive available at <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/gateway-to-chinatown-colors-of-light/#:~:text=Located%20on%20the%20edge%20of,movement%20from%20past%20to%20future> accessed 12 June 2021.

trespassing other. Rather the mural located on the edge of Chinatown is a welcoming sign; an invitation for interaction. At the time of writing the author is not aware of a similar statement either in Belfast's unofficial Chinatown (in the Donegall Pass area), nor in its Indian community to the north of the city. Central to these case studies' methodologies is active listening —the key to learning and understanding of another's perspective. This is especially true when murals are responding to a rapid shift in circumstances. A year after the 2010 Haitian earthquake that left millions homeless and many in desperate need of medical care, MAP began working with eighteen survivors who had been temporarily rehoused in Germantown. What arose from those healing conversations was the need for a mural to build connections within the Haitian community. Over ten weeks, artists taught new skills to the survivors and brainstormed visions for the finished product. 'Voa Nu, Pwisans Nu (Our Voice, Our Strength)' is a vibrant homage weaving together icons and facets of Haitian culture. Standing proudly above the assorted images is a reproduction of a statue honouring 'Le Negre Marron', an unknown freedom fighter symbolising the thousands of enslaved Haitians who rebelled against French imperial rule. Much like the blessing ritual in Balmy Alley, Marron blows a conch shell like a trumpet of emancipation.

The final three brief examples from MAP indicate how more abstract, concept-based disarmament might manifest. 'A Love Letter For You' (2009) is a series of more than 50 rooftop murals by Steve Powers lining the Market Street corridor in West Philadelphia. In keeping both with the principles of effective design, many of these paintings look like enlarged street signs or billboard texts. A minimalism, akin to street signage or billboards, ensures the text can be read at either speed or distance. These fragments directly deliver personal messages of self-care and positive mental health. One couplet is redolent of eL Seed's 'Perception' as it reverberates with the understated musing of St. Athanasius: 'Open your eyes/I see the sunrise.' Whenever children feature in Reimagined work they are invariably

portrayed as carefree in a somewhat emotionally simplified environment. However, Sidney Goodman's 'Boy with Raised Arm' (1990) is more enigmatic, isolated in an Autumnal and ambiguous setting. His nearly inscrutable facial expression is well suited to the notion of the mural as entry point for examination and enquiry. As for the raised arm, at least possibilities come to mind: the outstretched limb of a boy anxious to answer his teacher's question or otherwise contribute to the class. Alternatively, as the boy is African American it could signal a precocious radicalisation —the raised fist associated not just the black power movement but a global symbol of solidarity against oppression, used by socialists, anti-fascists and feminists. The only words keeping the unnamed child company were cited earlier when we discussed the dialogical self. The boy speaks the words of Whitman: 'I am large. I contain multitudes.' That the work was faithfully recreated twelve years later in a prominent location seems a metaphor for MAP's persisting loyalty to those most vulnerable. This is spearheaded by the 'Porch Light' programme; an alliance between the city's Department of Behavioural Health and Intellectual disAbility Services.¹⁰² The main purpose of Porch Light is to uplift public art as an expression of community resilience and a vehicle of personal and group healing, in particular for those struggling with mental illness, addiction and trauma.¹⁰³ It is self-evident how all of NI would gain from such a programme being implemented, not only as a post-conflict society layered with complex symptoms of trauma, but also in the hegemonic performance further mutes men in seeking help, leading many to chemically 'self-

¹⁰² Other collaborators include SCI Phoenix prison, the Philadelphia Prison System and Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership. On our core demographic, 'youth' is mentioned thirteen times in Porch Light's replication manual. Furthermore, through this network, MAP has been able to engage approximately 1,000 vulnerable adults in a variety of [programmes](#). Mitch, 'Mural Arts Philadelphia press kit'.

¹⁰³ The mural-making process is embedded within rigorous, multi-year evaluative research designed and conducted by their academic partners at Yale University. The results of which continually hone the methods by which public art can be a tool for public health practice. Sara Ansell et al., 'Painting a Healthy City: The Porch Light Program Replication Manual', City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, (2013), p.4, available at https://www.muralarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MAP_Porchlight_5.pdf accessed 13 May 2021.

medicate' their damaged psyche.¹⁰⁴ The final ideas-based example is 'Peace Wall' by Jane Golden and Peter Pagast which sought to reconcile some of the racial violence that had flared up in the Grays Ferry neighbourhood which, like loyalist riots, made national headlines. The visual outcome, converging hands, symbolised the community's commitment to ending racial division. The image helped residents find common ground through art and became a symbol of hope and unity.



Fig.6.15

Like many strong designs, the visual and textual work hand in hand and the chosen quote ('Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called children of God', Matthew 5:9) is not only a tonic against toxic theology but is an explicitly pro-peace statement something still discouragingly rare in NI. We close this section with some remarks that further assist the relationship between Philadelphia and Belfast, for perhaps through favourable comparison

¹⁰⁴ It is stated early on in their replication manual that the process is intended to be a model for other cities to consider—one adapted to local needs. Ibid.

and adoption of best practices, the epicentre of the problem (being the greatest concentration of weaponised imagery) can become the epicentre of a solution. Surely one of the most significant divergences between MAP's interventions and those in NI is the extent to which it has been accepted by the host communities. Lohman's survey of the then 2,000 murals of Philadelphia reported less than six cases of tagging (or general defacement by graffiti), which he attributes to MAP's aesthetic not being viewed as a threat to their own but rather a welcomed addition to it.¹⁰⁵ For all the cultural differences between the two cities, which cannot nor should be ignored for comparison's sake, one major similarity connects them: they are both divided places often witnessing considerable violence yet also possess a rich history of non-sectarian social movements mobilising to forge real political action and attitudinal reform that supersedes their respective ethnic encapsulation.¹⁰⁶ Much of the task ahead of us then is the excavating for these signs of historical change and radical politics that connect Belfast to other global, urban spaces of conflict. By way of exposing some of this potential, Lisle cites Allen and Kelly's collection 'Cities of Belfast' in which a variety of scholars, writers and poets resist the stereotype of Belfast as exceptional and illuminate other Belfasts that have so far been unmapped and unclaimed.¹⁰⁷ This pluralising of a seemingly singular city mimics the useful and disarming pluralities of loyalism and masculinity which, again, the author would propose are situated in these hitherto uncharted territories.

Conclusion

¹⁰⁵ Greaney, 'The Power of the Urban Canvas', p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Nagle, 'Unity in Diversity', p. 79.

¹⁰⁷ Lisle 'Local Symbols, Global Networks', p. 30.

The purpose of this chapter was threefold: firstly, to commence the search for disarming material. Secondly, to mitigate the cultural insularity of the current loyalist landscape by locating this material internationally—and thirdly, to give some real-world indication of the core theories of chapter seven. By doing so, part two does not begin with some abstract utopia but strives to establish a more concrete form. The first context explored the transitional masculinities of South Sudan and South Africa. The former having only just started the journey with its multi-sided civil war ending in 2020. The artist collective Ana Taban initially articulated the desperation of civilians before working constructively to give shape to the kind of society they wished to see emerge. The Men Engage Network demonstrated the truly global scope required to tackling weaponised masculinities (whether reinforced by formal conflict or not). Much of the Network and part two's ideological backbone is evident in manifestations of ubuntu, or humanity to others. For many cases, including Instituto Promundo, accessing this shared sense of compassion involved first facilitating a rejection of problematic masculine identities and then finding more suitable replacements. Promundo's 'Program H' enacted a gender reconciliation when appropriating the language, both textually and visually, of youth street culture to craft targeted advertising that advance a masculinity disciplined by restraint, reason and respect. Likewise, Sonke Gender Justice used murals and other media to urge men to not only resist the violent essentialism of male dogma but join campaigns that strive for accountability, fairness, and equality. We saw emotional appeals made both to a bright joyful progressive propaganda but also the memory of xenophobic violence used as a danger sign to warn the present of the past. The final work in the first section profiled an ambitious and adventurous project which reminded us of the need to continually question our perceptions and value judgements.

This chapter witnessed numerous examples of key terms from the weaponised lexicon being drastically redefined, such as 'Fearless', in the attitude and approach of the so-named

feminist collective documented in the second section. Beginning as a response to the savagery of sexual and gender-based violence, Fearless deployed their aesthetic revolution to reclaim perilous streets. Whereas emotions in part one were often denied or destroyed within the conflicted self, this revolution seeks to harmonise, accept and express a diverse range of emotions. Their murals emanate a sanctuary-like quality of protection, care and understanding but also stand guard as huge displays protecting human rights and dignity.

The final section took us through a proud history of radical art and activism, starting with the transformative peace process in Guatemala and the rebellious determination of the young Ramona Parra Brigades during Pinochet's Chile. From here we saw how the spirit of Mexican muralism migrated to San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the former, intense and independent mural production gathered along Balmy Alley, transforming it into a lieu de mémoire. This, along with the Great Wall of L.A., represent enduring and inspiring evidence of free-flowing experimentation in style, content, meaning and application. Another significant wall was examined in Chicago, where the people appointed their own heroes to adorn a surface reserved for a demilitarised, non-weaponised notion of 'Respect'. Finally, we arrived at Philadelphia whose citizens are the architects of their symbolic landscape thanks to the relentless planning of MAP. After analysing their methodology and its materialisation, we ended with a comparison to Belfast and an attempt to bridge the divide between these two cities and the masculinities exhibited in their respective open-air galleries. It is now felicitous for us to amalgamate the lessons from these international case studies into a methodical paradigm. Some of the fundamentals of disarming have most definitely emerged throughout this chapter but it is in the next where they will be further delineated.

Chapter Seven: Radical Alternative Media: A Transformative Paradigm

Introduction

This chapter explains the fundamentals of disarming by situating loyalist muralism in the context of ‘radical alternative media’ (RAM), the central paradigm throughout part two. It does this by breaking down that crucial phrase into its three elemental words and exploring the guiding principles therein across distinct sections. When considering the meaning of ‘radical’, it is instructive for us to review earlier attempts to improve the visual environment. A balanced critique will be offered, but ultimately we will see where and how top-down initiatives have failed to represent an art that connects to the communities in which it is located. A preference for relatively vague and banal aesthetics cannot compete with the dynamism and drama of conflict. Therefore prior interventions offer a caution; a pattern to be avoided. The author argues for the verbing of the mural whereby emphasis is shifted from the static thingness (a remote, isolated noun) to a more adaptable and fluid process. The benefits of the latter will be expanded upon by utilising insight from creative practitioners, specifically Mosher’s ‘tennis game model’: a procedure for sharing responsibility between community participants and project facilitators. A final radical notion questions the fate of many murals and rescues them from obscurity. Instead of fading from public consciousness, they (both physical sites and spectators) must be repeatedly activated. This could be achieved via means of other cultural activities, political event planning or educational visits—in all cases the mural is not passively experienced, but a locale of learning and sharing, thinking and feeling.

‘Alternative’ in this milieu is best summarised by the setting up of a counter-hegemonic vision (C-HV), an equal and opposite response to the aspects and archetypes we regularly encountered in part one. Simply put, disarming subject matter would surface and centre those hidden histories and neglected narratives, particularly those representing non-violent masculinities, feminism, LGBT themes and pro-multiculturalism. Closely linked to the C-HV is a necessary redefining of key terminology, firstly in the roles performed by men such as ‘protector’, ‘defender’, ‘hero’ and ‘warrior’. Secondly, the cardinal values and virtues these characters supposedly typify need substantial revision; terms like ‘honour’, ‘pride’, ‘duty’ and ‘courage’ require a more accurate and appropriate widening from the narrowed norms. A supreme yet speculative manifestation of the C-HV is an inverted utopia. This upside-down worldview does not presage chaos and confusion. Rather, it seeks to dislocate and revolve both the imagery and ideology publicly presented in murals in the long-term ambition of bettering society.

Finally, we will scrutinise murals not only as a creative medium but as media: a main means of mass communication. After outlining a basic rationale for loyalists to control their own message and tell their own story, we compare the editorial ownership of this network. The first state of affairs is the prevailing one in which public artwork is not operated fairly by the public but rather is overseen by an extreme minority whose interests are served by their puissant hold on this monopoly. A second state of affairs stands defiantly in opposition to this, and advocates that murals be an inclusive platform for the many not the few, in accordance with democratic standards of equality, freedom of speech and consent. Collectively these ideas will aim to show how mere art projects can accomplish serious sociological objectives such as removing not only its imagery but attempting to disarm the underlying weaponised masculinities. This requires a more holistic approach than ‘solving’ ethnonationalist antagonisms and decommissioning literal weapons. This dominant view

continues to pull focus both as a political issue and subject of research. For now, we begin by looking back to move forward, comparing the insufficient antecedents of change (with a small ‘c’) and how RAM might prompt a more confident stride in the right direction rather than a timid tiptoeing.

7.1 What is ‘radical’?

7.1.1 Declarative Visual Voices

The three major interventions began with the ‘Operation Spruce Up’ in 1976 overseen by the NI minister in the Callaghan government, Don Concannon. It seems the main objective was less about improving living conditions through beautification and instead concerned with creating a more lucrative first impression on investors. Earlier in the decade a substantial programme of redevelopment had caused large areas of urban blight. The widespread demolition of housing was not deemed an appropriate welcome for visiting industrialists.¹ Despite a lack of evidence of any positive effect, this restrained landscaping project was expanded a year later with an assortment of departments being brought in (Community Services, Environment and Education) along with the Arts Council to create forty-two new murals. A prohibition on overtly political messages ensured that, for the most part, the outcomes of the scheme were extremely anodyne.² Given this was taking place during a conflict, perhaps we can appreciate and excuse this eschewal; some may hold the view that, amidst the quagmire of the Troubles, the last thing communities needed were controversies that could further infuriate actors in an exceptionally delicate context. On the other hand, the

¹ Sailortown, for example, was at the end of the M2 motorway which linked Belfast to its airport and main shipping port of Larne. Rolston, *Politics & Painting*, p. 55.

² Hill & White, ‘Painting Peace?’, p. 78.

preferred depictions such as a rural idyll no doubt clashed almost abrasively with the physical environment in which they prepared. Furthermore, this visual abstention could be read as a refusal to reflect on the lived experiences of the audience, precisely in the moments when such hard-hitting matters were crucial to afflicted communities. The appropriateness of this strategy became moot as the decade wore on, by the summer of 1981 no applications were received. This may have, in part, been due to a lack of resources (under Tory government cuts) or perhaps local groups were not interested in any more circuses, fairy tales and jungle scenes.³ ‘Spruce Up’ was not the final effort as the remainder of the 1980s saw an attempt to ‘Brighten Up Belfast’. Organised by Bryson House—a large voluntary work agency paid for by Belfast Action Team—it led to a dozen or so murals from 1987-88. Unfortunately, these additions were not only poorly executed but they returned to the familiar themes of children, nursery rhymes, pastoral bliss, or cartoon characters.⁴

After the shortcomings of these two previous projects that half-heartedly pursued an anti-violent urban landscape, the ‘Re-imagining’ programme really should have had a greater impact on cross-communication. This third intervention not only benefited from lessons of past attempts but from greater support in funding.⁵ For all the high-principled intentions and considerable funding, the most recent effort could not shake off a reluctance to engage with the big spatial practices at the symbolic core of a cultural conflict. This led, once again, to a

³ Watson described the later murals as having a predictable atmosphere about them which ‘reeked of the factory line’. Julian Watson, ‘Brightening the Place up?’ *Circa*, Vol. 8 (Jan-Feb 1983), p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid* p. 67.

⁵ The attention accorded to the visual environment was a prominent feature in ‘A Shared Future’ —the overarching strategic policy framework launched in 2005 to promote the development of ‘good relations’. As part of this, ‘Re-imagining Communities’ was launched in July 2006 as a multi-agency initiative with £3.3 million in funding for an initial 3-year period. Its aims were to ‘replace divisive imagery with that which reflects communities in a more positive manner’ (Independent Research Solutions, 2009: vii), while seeking to garner socio-economic benefits of art-related projects. The programme funded 108 projects up to the summer of 2008. Re-imagining came back, under the scheme ‘Building Peace through the Arts’ (2013-15) financially supported by the PEACE III Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). Hill & White, ‘Painting Peace?’ p. 75.

retreat to a narrower and cautious space, filled with feel-good, tedious replacements which, according to Neill, were an ‘endorsement of the surface neutrality of neo-liberal market values.’⁶ A restrictive criterion on subject matter was bound to result in creatively limited outcomes as well as a repetition of ‘safe’ themes.⁷ It would be unfair of us to be overly cynical about Re-imaging; after all the task it was set up for was a monumental one. Total projects over the two funding periods may well have passed the threshold into the hundreds, but this was still only a small proportion of the estimated two thousand murals extant in NI (a figure constantly in flux given the dynamism of the medium). And some of the images removed would certainly not have been an easy exercise. The Lower Shankill had seen six paramilitary displays replaced and four new murals added. This indeed was a considerable achievement if we remember that this had been the domain of Adair’s C Company. On closer inspection though, we might be less impressed with what the author would classify as inadequate visual replacements.⁸ If we are concerned with how art can influence its audiences’ thinking, we must admit that it is unlikely that the mood of citizens will be adjusted by paintings of children or flowers. An indicator, not just of indifference, but in some cases actual disapproval can be seen in all the interventions thus mentioned. Rapp and

⁶ William J.V. Neill, ‘Don’t mention the culture war: Beyond creative ambiguity and professional “quietism” in Northern Ireland/North of Ireland spatial planning?’ *Planning Theory & Practice*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (2014), p. 270.

⁷ This pattern was commented on by an anonymous interviewee who has connections with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the branch of government that owns many of the properties that are canvases for murals. The interviewee claimed that these themes were where institutions of the state felt most comfortable and where external funding bodies were happy to support a kind of ‘syrupy images’ of George Best or the Titanic...how many times can you paint the Titanic?!’ Interview with participant ‘AX’, a source associated with NIHE, Belfast, 19 September 2021.

⁸ The huge mural of Cromwell, a bitter image of historical antagonism, was removed but not replaced with an equally stunning image for peace or progress. Rather its replacement was an underwhelming three pillar sculpture with the words: Respect/Remember/Resolution. In the same estate, a mural of support during the Drumcree disputes showing Orangemen marching down the Garvarghy Road was substituted for ‘the A-Z of the Shankill’. The work is large-scale yet as an over-crowded collage each representation is miniscule. The numerous captions may encourage viewers to approach and read, but its verbosity might also have the opposite effect. Not unlike other Reimagined works, it also reduces a diversity of different and interesting narratives, figures, and events into one piece rather than giving some subjects a fuller space that they deserve.

Rhomberg hypothesize that the consistent assault (over-painting or graffiti) against murals is verification of insufficient local support.⁹ It seems much of these initiatives tried to depoliticize the medium with the distraction of entertainment, superficiality or a kind of visual white noise. As we will see in chapter seven, community art inculcates notions of ‘shared space’ but this, as interviewees put it, need not be ‘sterile space’.¹⁰ Any suggestion that murals are not ‘proper’ art is itself depoliticising, sequestering ‘real’ or ‘fine’ art in the white cube of the gallery. Within that space, it is easier not to engage with or take responsibility for everyday political concerns. But murals are of course not tamed and caged in that chic box, rather they are wild and roaming amongst the daily entanglement, and they remind us that art is never only about aesthetics; it is also about power.¹¹ All three interventions were top-down approaches exuding a rather conformist and subduing supervision. A summation of this, which leads on to the next section, is found in Marie Mulholland’s observation that too often projects were about ‘doing something *to*, not *with*, those whom policy targets.’¹² With this in mind, there is also the question of impact: to what extent will these interventions really alter the state of play, or is their alteration confined to the visual environment? The author is inclined to agree with this limitation of impact and would go further and suggest that Reimaging can be understood as a visualisation of ‘negative peace’ whereas radical murals should be a declarative visual voice aiding in positive peace. This comparison is vindicated by an insight from Pete Wray of Bangor Alternatives who was jaded from his experiences with Reimaging. According to Pete: ‘art on

⁹ It is of course possible to interpret these acts differently, from mistrust of the local council, disapproval over removal rather than specifically the replacement or simply boredom. Rapp & Rhomberg, ‘Seeking a Neutral Identity’, p. 474.

¹⁰ Group interview with Brian Dougherty & James Kee of the North-West Cultural Partnership and Derek Moore, Londonderry Bands Forum, Derry, 17 September 2021.

¹¹ Lisle, ‘Local Symbols, Global Networks’, p. 32.

¹² Marie Mulholland was the coordinator of the Women’s Support Network from its foundation in 1990 until 1999. Her comment was not specifically directed at Reimaging per se but as a general criticism of ‘community development’ it still holds as a valid view in this context. Cynthia Cockburn ‘What became of ‘frontline feminism’?’, p. 107.

walls was always a way of stopping something negative (i.e., a paramilitary display) as opposed to doing something to just use art as a positive thing.’¹³ This can be readily transferred to Galtung’s negative/positive model of peace whereby the latter actively and preventatively tackles the causations of conflict; the former is satisfied merely with an absence of conflict.¹⁴

7.1.2 Verbing the Mural

The remainder of this chapter will suggest how we can convert creative practices from negative to positive peace. The first vital concept that helps us make this move is verbing the mural, radically reorienting the medium away from being exclusively and conventionally thought of as a noun toward a verb. In its noun form, a mural is merely an outcome, a final product, whereas verbing liberates it from this limitation by accentuating the rudimentary process and furthering the social impact by utilising a project’s duration to its fullest potential. Now, proponents of Reimaging will hasten to remind us that evaluation reports evince that the programme embraced these approaches of collective action and indeed much of this is rightly acclaimed.¹⁵ However, a necessary technological distinction is needed here as Reimaging projects often favoured newer methods of production, e.g., digital designs and large-scale printing on laminated boards. For sure these techniques will have their practical advantages—most notably they will allow for a speedier turnaround, from image assembly to

¹³ Interview with Peter Wray, Belfast, 25 October 2021.

¹⁴ Johan Galtung, Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), p. 183.

¹⁵ Accomplishments of the second phase of Reimaging (‘Building Peace through the Arts’) included: 54 community-led consultations, almost 1,000 artist led workshops, 120 professional artists facilitating engagement and over 10,000 individuals contributing to consultations and arts-based activities. Building Peace through the Arts: Re-Imaging Communities Programme Executive Summary (June 2016) <https://niopa.qub.ac.uk/bitstream/NIOPA/6055/1/ReImaging_Final_Executive_Summary_June_2016.pdf> [accessed 22/5/21].

installation—but with all this time saved, we should consider what is lost. The speed and efficiency of new technologies overshadows lengthier considerations around complex issues, politics of representation and dynamics of the medium. Ergo, as the process is shortened human agency is rendered invisible.¹⁶ Like much art, murals can be capricious and thus difficult to define but this thesis would, overall, subscribe to a more original making, i.e., paint directly applied to walls. Of course, other materials and methods are available such as the dedication to the Chartist rebellion in Newport in Wales (1978), which employed mosaic. This does not belie the author’s argument for verbing the mural, however, as this technique shares the same asset of painting—as time-consuming crafts they prolong the project’s duration thereby allowing for moments of social connectivity. The nature of the work also permits a wide-reaching, inclusive participation by the public that is not possible when creation is in the hands of ‘some guy [who’s] bagged himself five grand for ten fucking minutes on the computer!’¹⁷ as one muralist phrased it. But even this technical description of murals is nothing new in NI, as Greaney mentions paint and politics have been splashed upon city walls for decades now, so why should verbing make that much difference? The difference starts to be made when we appreciate the true transformation runs a lot deeper than the surface artistry, indeed the real works of art are the changes these collaborative projects can inspire within communities.¹⁸

For a project’s duration to have greater value, blank gaps in time should be filled with occasions for critical conversation, for within the main activity are several tasks all with moments between to be used for an exchange of ideas and insights. The morning sees colour

¹⁶ Clemencia Rodriguez, Benjamin Ferron & Kristin Shamas, ‘Four challenges in the field of alternative, radical and citizens’ media research’, *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 36, issue 2 (2014), p. 153.

¹⁷ Interview with Kenny Blair, Ballymoney, 14 September 2021.

¹⁸ Maura E. Greaney, ‘The Power of the Urban Canvas: Paint, Politics, and Mural Art Policy’ *New England Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 18, Issue. 1 (2002), p. 7.

mixing and rearranging assembled scaffolding, informal tea breaks and lunch, to the end of the day cleaning of brushes. They all require concentration but not to the extent that they prevent near-simultaneous discussion. The author would cite Mosher's 'tennis game' as a procedural model which sees the leadership role in each step bounce back and forth between artist(s) and community. It begins with a consensus in a neighbourhood expressing a desire for a mural and searching, possibly with the artist, for a potential site. Once a location has been carefully selected, workshops can introduce the artist's work or detail a global catalogue of art historical examples. Through evaluating these achievements, groups are encouraged to consider the scope of capability. A third step addresses the subject matter as groups examine its reason for painting a mural which can induce self-reflexive thinking. Mosher elaborates that the question: 'what do you want to see?' will often end up with suggestions of second-hand imagery (the latest television craze, a pop celebrity, or a local sports hero), essentially Reimagined material. Whereas, if the question is phrased: 'what is important to you?', it will likely result in a discussion on the neighbourhood examining its strengths and motives.¹⁹ Supplementary creative tools (e.g., storytelling, life maps and photographs) can advance this enquiry and generate an intergenerational dialogue.²⁰ The passing on of more positive, progressive stories not only offers more options for subject matter but subverts hereditary hatred; the transmission of sectarian or the multiple prejudices we encountered in part one. Step four has the artist compose the chosen imagery into a coherent design. A deft touch is required in finely balancing their input—not too laid back, but not overstepping their responsibility.²¹ The 'rally' continues when these design suggestions go back to the group for

¹⁹ Mosher, 'The Community Mural and Democratic Art', p. 530.

²⁰ Gray and Neil, 'Creating a Shared Society', p. 485.

²¹ Yvonne McCullough, an art student involved in 'Operation Spruce Up', recalled difficulties in approachability and communication: 'when you've been through an arts college training and you suddenly find yourself in a community area, you want to talk about your ideas, which are far away from the ideas of the community.' Rolston, *Politics & Painting*, p. 56.

their critique, based on their improvements a more concrete visualisation appears. It is essential that those involved see the work as their own, particularly since, according to some interviewees, loyalists are not always secure in identifying with the arts as neither audience nor creators.²² Next the artist will quickly outline the work on the wall in chalk, graphite or China markers. This stage can be the most frustrating for non-professionals. The work really comes to life with the seventh, and most time-consuming step—the painting itself, which is literally in the hands of participants. Should the project have a cross-community facet to it, then this step more than others gives young loyalist and republican men a rare chance to interact. It can help close the psychological interval of residential segregation which maintains ethnic tensions and the propensity to dehumanize the enemy.²³ While life in a single community may be less challenging and popular due to perceptions of safety, it also solidifies social relations when collectives not only do not mix but do not ‘see’ each other or represent them in narratives of a recent past with no incentive to do so in the future. If a degree of empathy can emerge from these interactions, then it might go some way to break the cycle of mutual antagonism. Halpern stresses that her model of ‘empathetic engagement’ is not a matter of naively imagining one can simply take on another’s emotions. Rather it is an ‘affective *process*...grounded in reasoning...it is a deeply interpersonal undertaking.’²⁴ Social bonding may continue when assisting the artist with the penultimate step of putting in finishing touches, lettering, shadowing and highlighting. The project concludes with the group varnishing the work if necessary and joining the rest of the neighbourhood in celebration of their accomplishment which may coincide with an historical event. But if the

²² During a group interview, one respondent commented: ‘That’s another thing too with Northern Ireland’s society-people don’t fit into the art crowd. They feel that that’s above themselves-if it’s expansive or creative it’s almost like ‘who do you think you are?!’ So, art in NI has always been quiet narrow in its focus...Art itself is seen as middle class, you’re above your station if you’re creative. Group interview with Brian Dougherty, James Kee, and Derek Moore, Derry, 17 September 2021.

²³ Edwards, ‘Abandoning Armed Resistance?’, p. 150.

²⁴ Emphasis added. Barton & McCully ‘Trying to “See Things Differently’’, p. 396.

process has been successful in raising political consciousness through the accomplishment of synergic action, then a burning question remains and lights a way forward: ‘what else can we accomplish together?’ The next sub-section explains how the verbed mural continues long after the local politician’s photo opportunity and why the very notion of the process ending is rather erroneous.

7.1.3 The 3 Rs of Disarming: Removal, Replacement & Repeated Activation

An outline for much of the argument for disarming can be distilled into the 3 Rs. Of these the first two seem self-explanatory, although, as we will discover later in this chapter, theirs is a deceptive simplicity in the labyrinthine context of NI. For now, it is that last R that we must explicate not only because its definition is less obvious, but it is also essential to the disarming argument. By ‘activation’ the author refers to any occasion when the presence and contents of a mural firmly holds the attention of a group. A site is thus ‘activated’ once the collective consciousness is raised and channelled toward that specific locale. Expressed in antithetical terms, whenever a mural is brought forward in our minds from an otherwise disregarded background it ceases to be passive. For as long as we think and feel more intently about it, it is active. In a basic form, murals are ‘activated’ when they undergo maintenance, since surface damage to the elements tends to appear after roughly six months without care. However, this is often more a utilitarian routine, whereas activation, in a radical form, is about maintaining more than the physical presence—it prompts the messages and meanings therein. This does of course have the potential to polarise further a divided society and we have seen examples of this throughout part one. The stately iconography of chapter three was regularly and ritualistically activated in preparation for the marching season’s climax. The dramatic unveiling of murals has always presented an active remembrance, a performative

memory embodied in respectable fanfare. We see this from post-partition street parties attended by Protestant clerics and unionist dignitaries, right up to the searing oratory at the Thorndyke gallery's ceremony. A more problematic example is the commemoration of stark weaponised subjects. Memorial bands will occasionally incorporate murals to Troubles-era volunteers in their parade route. The site then becomes active as a memory node for wreath-lying, music, war poetry, or speechifying. Weaponisation frequently takes place in literal shows of 'strength' such as when masked men draw their guns in a three-volley salute such as in front of the Disraeli depiction of Trevor King.



Fig.7.1

We must acknowledge that 'active' is not always positive, forward-thinking, or socially constructive. The author would challenge Young and Dolan's review of this function of murals as a 'safe space' (surely a relative term) for 'contemplation and reflection.'²⁵ Their assessment of murals as a location to remember the 'created history and tragedy of the "us"'

²⁵ Rachael Young, 'Not Just Painted Walls: Northern Irish Murals as Social Tools' diss. Paper, (Trinity College Dublin, 2015), p. 8.

seems more appropriate considering the emotionally powerful yet suspiciously simplified narratives exhibited. Once again, loyalists are not alone in this contentious practice. However, whereas republican marches are funereal, they do also feature women and children as participants in a generally relaxed and cohesive atmosphere. Loyalist events are chiefly much more militarised and macho in nature, with a rigid separation between mainly male bandmen and spectators.²⁶ As with many facets of this thesis, a murky grey area can exist between states of being and the denotations ‘passive’ and ‘active’ are no different; some argue that our spatial engagement to murals makes it impossible not to respond to their materiality. In this case even a community ignoring a design until it decays and fades can be read as a meaningful rejection of either aesthetics and/or concept(s) through ‘non-activity.’²⁷

Activation can be sub-divided into three variants: political, cultural, and educational. The first is commonly deployed by many movements in the interests of mobilisation and claim-making. These smaller scale, independent means of publicising one's struggle, cause, or aim, are what Pajnik and Downing call ‘nano-media’.²⁸ The principles remain similar to previous ritual displays and parades: influencing identity, social coherence, political transformation, and message projection. The means of communication may be alike, but the substance has radically departed. One's identity is being influenced away from weaponised traits, the issues which provide cohesion are different, a sense of transformation moves us beyond ingrained positions, and the message being projected is one scarcely seen or felt on loyalist streets. Despite these differences, activation should nourish Durkheim's ‘effervescence’²⁹, being a communal intensity of shared emotions which reaffirms solidarity. Politics needs to be much more than raw emotion. Passion is to be expected, but it must have

²⁶ Viggiani, *Talking Stones*, p. 142.

²⁷ Stefan Solleder, ‘Unfinished Artefacts: The Case of Northern Irish Murals’ *Continent* vol. 5 (2016), p. 63.

²⁸ Dawson, ‘Protest, performance and politics’, p. 321.

²⁹ Reed ‘*Paramilitary Loyalism*, p. 28.

a solid basis of knowledge. Activation seeks to widen the dissemination of political ideas and create a citizenry aware of pressing issues both locally and globally. Several interviewees lamented a lack of understanding around the Protocol and, on one occasion, drew a historical parallel to Drumcree. The same interviewee expressed the challenges as coalescing some of the mixed messaging within the unionist community, putting across valid voices of discontent, but also feeding back with relevant information that may placate the situation.³⁰ Hence, in most mural practices, works are destroyed by the muralists themselves. Once a political point has been made and showcased for a suitable period, it may no longer seem relevant. Alternatively, as current affairs develop, a more pressing issue may need to be highlighted. Thus far this habit has been observed more often in republican areas and we certainly saw numerous works in part one which had been preserved for too long and outstayed their welcome. This trait allows murals to not only be beacons of unity around which the converted can gather, but a potential site of political conversion for others. Whatever the success rate in this task, artists working shoulder to shoulder with participants can prompt and probe new lines of enquiry rather than endlessly reciting the same stump speeches or secularly worshipping the same recurring characters.

That murals operate at the intellectual level and, due to their size, colour and prominence in public space, stir emotions (positive and negative), make them well equipped for cultural activation. From Rancière, we realise how even viewing is an action that can creatively include the spectator as she observes, selects, compares and interprets.³¹ This disintegration of barriers between actors and spectators so that the ‘show’ is not passively observed is a cornerstone of Brazilian activist- theatre director Augusto Boal’s influential

³⁰ Interview with Adrian Bird, Director of the Resurgam Trust, Lisburn, 16 September 2021.

³¹ Jacques Rancière *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso Press, 2009), p. 12.

work.³² Cultural activation simply expands the possibilities of public engagement by integrating mural painting with other media. Now more than ever the orthodox compartmentalising of the arts is redundant. The rules and regulations that once governed a medium's properties are being abandoned for openness and flexibility.³³ These amalgams account for the fact that people learn in intrinsically difference ways, hence the advantage of accessing a host of modes and methods through multiple cultural means. They also provide further opportunity for social connectivity. However favourable the publicity of some cross-community cultural event may be, it serves little use if members fall back into original patterns of thinking and values once they leave each other. If we are to endorse contact hypothesis as a transformative approach, then we must take with it the provisos that contact should be meaningful and regular. The first in this criterion is met by the series of candid topics (including ideas of masculinity) discussed throughout the verbing process. The second caveat explains why activation, in whatever form, must not be a one-off gesture, and should be repeated. It is only through diligent practice that alternative perspectives on masculinity, loyalism and history will be honed and start to be absorbed into an emotional and cultural vernacular. The author would stand by his defence of older methods of mural production, but this should not give any impression of Luddite tendencies. Indeed, an extension of cultural activation advocates for the assimilation of media in an exciting mixture of old and new technologies. It is common for movements to fuse traditional practices with the communication and interactivity of the internet, mobile phones, blogging, and social media.³⁴ Embracing developments allows community groups to crowdfund for a mural project and

³² Dawson, 'Protest, performance and politics', p.334.

³³ By way of demonstrating this, Rancière gives a few examples from many: theatre without speech, installations, dances and performances by way of plastic works, video projections as a series of frescoes, photographs treated as history paintings, sculptures metamorphosed into multimedia shows, and other cross-fertilisations. Ranciere *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 17.

³⁴ Dawson, 'Protest, performance and politics...' p. 336.

live-stream its progress thus optimising the dissemination of the image's construction and debates on its meaning.

Just as old *and* new technologies working together is an example of the 'both/also' possibility, so too should these variants of activation not be understood in either/or terms, but rather be viewed as compatible. We see this in another dimension of the final and supreme variant: education. So vital is it to a post-conflict society, that the author clarifies it in accordance with David Ervine's view; that it cannot be exclusively a literal, formal education but rather a comprehensive experiential web—it is an everyday process.³⁵ Under this umbrella term then are a multitude of instrumental functions beginning with addressing a perceived deficit in visual literacy. This pre-emptively shuts down objections to radical designs based on citizens' inability to decipher the artwork; with activation any audience is not stranded with a product to which they have little attachment. Instead, greater attachment is fostered through a carefully curated educational programme. With the help of additional, archival photographic aids at the site of learning, spectators/students can examine how dichotomous representations have developed over time, what perpetuates them, and whose purposes they serve. This would allow a reasoned understanding of the past to thrive, multi-perspectivity edging out an apparent unthinking adherence to tradition. Educational activation would, naturally, not be an effortless enterprise but rather one that encouraged us to grapple with tensions around the affective component of contentious history. Yet, by doing so, it is plausible that audiences would comprehend the diversity within superficially monolithic categories, relating to politics, religion, or gender. Sceptics may insist that these themes are far too complex for a brief site visit to a mural and, to this point, the author would concur whilst proposing a refinement. The argument is not that a site visit is a self-contained

³⁵ Connal Parr, 'Ending the siege? David Ervine and the struggle for progressive Loyalism', *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 33, Issue 2 (2018), p. 218.

communication network makes a positive and sustained impression on populations. We will now look at more particular ways at correcting the fact that peaceful masculinities have not received as much attention as their weaponised equivalents. The question of whether we can find these peaceful, counter-hegemonic masculinities embodied in civilians will be answered in the final chapter of the thesis by studying options internal to loyalism.

impact LGBT citizens. Some might believe giving over a gable end in dedication to a court verdict is strange as such remembrance is not the typical order in NI. To this view one can only agree but swiftly follow up with the inevitable riposte of ‘why not?’ Why not celebrate a legal battle whose victory meant greater freedom and equality? Additionally, it certainly takes several words from the weaponised vocabulary in a boldly inventive direction. Such use of the past would not belong to any typical order but begin a new order one which emphasises a virile anti-sectarianism of the queer community.⁷⁵ It is telling that the noteworthiness of the campaign was largely overlooked by contemporary, mainstream society. Like much disarming, the surfacing of scarcely seen-or-heard histories seeks to rectify an original disregard. McDonagh intimates the extent that cross-border conferences sprung up given a mutual beleaguerment for conservative society (principally in terms of police surveillance and repressive forms of Christianity).⁷⁶ From Coleraine in 1973, Trinity College, Dublin, a year later or down to Cork in 1982, a raft of talks, demonstrations and parties constitute an archive of events for painterly re-enactment. Organisations swiftly mobilised, capitalising on the movement’s vivacity, and striving to build onto the foundations. One of the most dedicated of these is ‘Cara’, a charity supporting and empowering the queer community in NI since 1974. Remembering that RAM is opposed to the mild neutrality and bland tokenism of ‘Reimaging’, a Cara-inspired design would not simply represent the organisation in basic minimalist fashion, but rather foreground specific services they provide. To this end we are met with an impressive portfolio: an inclusive business and school charter, youth services (e.g., domestic abuse project aimed at women and

⁷⁵ As Dudgeon himself stated: ‘the gay social scene has never been sectarian. The labels ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ do not apply: people develop relationships and friendships with each other as individuals and not as representatives of either community.’ Cited in Duggan, ‘Lost in transition?’, p. 165.

⁷⁶ Patrick James McDonagh, ‘Queering Northern Ireland during the Troubles’, *Writing the Troubles* blog series available at <https://writingthetroublesweb.wordpress.com/2019/02/18/queering-the-troubles/> accessed 23 May 2021.

girls aged 12 years and above), advocacy, campaigning, policy and volunteering, family support project, awareness training, switchboard/helpline, and mental health/mindfulness programmes.⁷⁷ Queer inclusivity we cannot side-line the equal importance of the continued and enhanced political agency of lesbian, bisexual and transgender advocates who demonstrate harmony in an otherwise segregated society. Julie-Ann Corr-Johnston made history as the first women to represent her area and the first openly lesbian unionist councillor when elected to Belfast council for the PUP in 2014.⁷⁸ An articulate and outspoken young loyalist feminist who has now joined the UUP under a liberal leader, this was not always the case, and she has divulged with candour her battle against self-harm and suicidal thoughts and, arguably, against a more straitjacket loyalist identity. It was the Shankill Women's Centre that helped her find her inner strength and, though losing her seat in 2019, she still fiercely fights on as a community activist. She shares a class-conscious analysis of new loyalism, describing poverty as a greater threat to the union than republicanism.⁷⁹ Politically activated murals would serve as policy platforms from which the PUP could launch into the public sphere their liberal perspectives on social issues. They remain anomalous within unionism for openly supporting women's and LGBT rights. They are (candidly) pro-choice on the abortion issue and, broader than the constitutional concern, they promote policies for urban regeneration, the environment, and energy.⁸⁰ As sterling as this work is, Corr-Johnston reminds us there is a lot left to be done, not least in the implementation of the GFA. She has also publicly lamented the lack of the Civic Forum and Bill of Rights. Equality, gender or otherwise, has not progressed at the pace many desired.

⁷⁷ Cara charity website profile available at <https://cara-friend.org.uk/>, accessed 22 January 2022.

⁷⁸ McKay, *Northern Protestants: On Shifting Ground*, p. 119.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 119.

⁸⁰ James McAuley, 'Just Fighting to Survive', p. 530.

The positive staying power of disarmed murals tries to lodge itself in the public sphere so that we do not lose sight of earlier promises and how close or far we are from keeping them.

8.3.2 Life's a DRAG

Masculinity as performance—a central theme from part one—returns when we see how regularly it is explored in gay drag communities whose work defies expectations. Humour, which is at the core of much drag, can have subversive intentions as an incentive for critical thinking. A clip from the BBC mockumentary sitcom *Soft Border Patrol* (2020) features two officers apprehensively pulling over a limousine with 'UDA' on its bonnet only to discover that the passengers are representatives of the 'Ulster Drag Association'.⁸¹ In a place of much contestation, the queens in the car offer a competitive alternative to the weaponised language of paramilitary acronyms and its menacing reputation. Another common use of humour is as a form of defence against dehumanisation. Several infamous, disparaging views made by high-profile political elites have gained significant media coverage. The most notable occurred in 2008 when DUP MP Iris Robinson (the then wife of First Minister Peter Robinson) was asked to comment on the brutal assault of a young gay man near Belfast. While doing so, she publicly stated that homosexuality was an 'abomination' which 'nauseated' her as something worse than paedophilia, and finally that homosexuals could be 'cured'.⁸² In true absorptive style of satire, this hatred was turned into *Abomination: A DUP Opera* by Conor Mitchell in 2019.⁸³ Based entirely on actual events and statements, the DUP

⁸¹ The clip ends with 'Penny', a more senior passer-by, defending the queens' drive down to Dublin. She misinterprets the officers' actions as oppression and proudly walks away declaring: 'Up equality-and up the UDA!' 'Soft Border Patrol' BBC Northern Ireland, clip available on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BBCnireland/status/1236275409060278279> accessed 12 March 2020.

⁸² Duggan, 'Lost in transition?', p. 167.

⁸³ The production enjoyed a successful run in the Spring of 2022 at the renowned Abbey Theatre in Dublin.

was 'gloriously damned by its own words and hypocrisy'.⁸⁴ The most extravagant scene is saved for a depiction of Iris's undoing as she commits the biblical sin of adultery with a teenager. A review acclaiming the opera begins by stating it deserves to be seen far and wide⁸⁵, something which the transference of cultural activation would achieve. Just like a march or exhibition, muralising a character(s), a scene or lines of dialogue from 'Abomination' would grant it a secondary, longer-term 'viewing' for public audiences. Niall Rea's *DRAG (Divided, Radical and Gorgeous)*, first performed in 2011 during the 'OUTBURST' queer arts festival, explores personal experience through testimonial monologue recounting her relationship with a closeted 'freedom fighter' (another phrase overdue a redefinition). In both productions the queer lens deconstructs and disrupts sectarian divisions of difference, providing an alternative, transformative realm 'in which it is possible to rethink the conditions of the present through uncovering silenced voices and experiences of the past.'⁸⁶ These performances disarm through content, style and delivery whilst equipping us with simple yet visually successful features that, like counter-hegemonic 'adverts', could catch the eye and provoke thought. A promotion poster for the video art installation *Trouble* used a pink triangle for its 'o', suggestive of the rewind button and the originally intended badge of shame of the Nazi regime, later reclaimed as a symbol of self-identity and love. The poster for *DRAG* is a close-up of the bejewelled balaclava, a different 'mask' which is ripped off as the show reaches its crescendo.⁸⁷ Drissel contrasts the public performativity of loyalist marches (hyper-masculine, highly militarised with regimental uniformity) to Pride parades with a more democratic participation, individualism and

⁸⁴ McKay, *Northern Protestants: On Shifting Ground*, p. 53.

⁸⁵ Fiona Maddocks, 'Abomination: A DUP Opera review – an outstanding new work' *The Guardian*, 16 November 2019, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/nov/16/abomination-a-dup-opera-lyric-belfast-conor-mitchell-review-leonardo-opera-v-and-a-london> accessed 5 January 2021.

⁸⁶ Stefanie Lehner, 'Parallel Games' and Queer Memories: Performing LGBT Testimonies in Northern Ireland', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 47, Issue 1 (2017), p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 16.

elaborate mix of tones. Progress made is celebrated atop floats, while banners and placards call out for progress still to be made in a slow and steady march toward equality. We also witness an alternative use of flags—so often a source of ethnonational grievance—with Gilbert Baker's 1978 rainbow design being flown in solidarity and inclusion that transcends ethnicity, nationality and religion. Lastly is the fundamental use of space too. Hundreds of sectarian parades (sponsored by either Protestant or Catholic associations) frequently involve marching into residential spaces of the other sect which often sparks violent altercations. The author shares Drissel's view that Pride is a strategic contest; a subaltern spatial performance whose discursive frames and symbols non-violently confront a universalised set of heteronormative discourses.⁸⁸

Disarming can cite large-scale, social phenomena of the past, recalled in the constructive service of a present. But it can also assume the profile of an individual who represents desirable attributes or who contributed to a worthwhile cause. Even a tragically short life, such as that of Mark Ashton, can be bring together several causes in positive intersection. In Ashton's case, his activism merged gay and lesbian rights with labour history-in-the-making as the contemporary miners' strike (1983-84) gripped the nation. Media coverage of his story includes the hugely popular film 'Pride' (2014) and a more recent decision to erect either a memorial or blue plaque to Ashton in his native Portrush.⁸⁹ If an addition's physical presence exceeds a blue plaque⁹⁰, it is more likely to become a site for

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 240.

⁸⁹ The proposal generated controversy when a Causeway Coast and Glens DUP Council Group opposed it ostensibly due to his links to the Communist Party and support for the IRA (with no evidence for either claim). Plans were finally approved in June 2021, though again with DUP opposition. Gillian Anderson, 'DUP concern at Mark Ashton petition' *Causeway Coast News*, 19 February 2021, available at <https://archive.causewaycoastcommunity.co.uk/local-news/dup-councillors-have-said-they-are-horrified-and-disturbed-by-calls-for-a-memorial-to-gay-activist-mark-ashton/> accessed 23 April 2021.

⁹⁰ One such example is the five-storey mural by street artist Joe Caslin painted on a city centre building in Belfast as part of the same-sex marriage campaign. The work depicts a married lesbian couple and is similar in style to another huge design in Dublin showing two young men embracing. 'Same-sex marriage: Joe Caslin brings mural campaign to Belfast' *BBC News*, 31 June 2016 available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-36933363> accessed 13 October 2019.

socialising, learning of the mindsets of others, and even adjusting one's beliefs. In loyalism, the need for LGBT acceptance has wider implications than those immediately afflicted with prejudice and abuse. Firstly, there is the view that learning is not for real men; that 'education is for girls and gays'.⁹¹ Furthermore, there is the saddening quote from playwright Gary Mitchell concerning Protestants not seeing the arts as belonging to them: 'when I was growing up the over-riding feeling was the everyone involved in the arts is gay or Catholic. There was no room for a heterosexual Protestant.'⁹² Although these key factors will be explored in more detail in later sections, it is worth us appreciating here how weaponised misconceptions of masculinity are interlinked with sexuality, religion, and the enjoyment of art and education. It is even more reason that murals try to carve out some room for those who feel they have none. This is the emancipatory potential of a 'queer counterpublic'⁹³ which refuses to be reduced into the 'two communities' rhetoric. By way of introducing the next section, the author suggests that phrase 'Rotten Prod' would benefit from a similar rebranding as the derogatory epithet 'queer' has undergone.

8.4 From Super Prods to Rotten Prods

8.4.1 Dissenters of 1920 and 1798

The term 'Super Prods' could be applied to several of the weaponised archetypes and generally describes those who would adopt a severely hard-line position; be that a fundamentalist worldview of unionist politics, or a cultural supremacy of loyalism. At the

⁹¹ Dave Magee 'The Deconstruction', p. 27.

⁹² Parr, *Inventing the Myth*, p. 186.

⁹³ This phrase is not so much a general orientation against the state per se. Rather it opposes regressive values and discourses that structure what passes for a dominant public. Kathryn Conrad, 'Queering Community: Reimagining the Public Sphere in Northern Ireland', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 9, Issue 4 (2006), p. 597.

PUP's annual conference in February 1995, Gusty Spence expressed his long-running contempt for such views describing them as 'tribal ritualistic incantations and shibboleths of the past.'⁹⁴ In lieu of these 'Super Prods', the author suggests the symbolic landscape would be better suited to showcasing the spirit of another category: 'Rotten Prods'. In addition to aiding the conceptual disarmament of contemporary paramilitaries, this group's origin story also disarms some of the Home Rule schism given that it dates to the communal trauma of partition. Post-war pressures of unemployment and economic depression were prevalent across the UK, but in Belfast agitation was febrile given its coinciding with the ongoing atrocities of the Irish War of Independence. In July 1920, following an incendiary speech by Carson, a mob armed with hammers, wooden staves, iron bars went on the rampage. The violent shipyard expulsions saw many workers stripped to their undergarments in the search for Catholic emblems like rosary beads. The assaults were tactile and dire with one man thrown into the dock, swimming the Musgrave Channel whilst being pelted with rivets.⁹⁵ A vital erasure to this harrowing episode is that the estimated 7,500 workers physically driven out from Harland and Wolff, Workman Clark's (another shipyard), engineering works like Sirocco's and textile mills, was also made up of around 1,850 Protestants. Their 'rotteness' then was a form of behavioural dissent, an abnegation of sectarianism; to actively support those being victimised and for it they suffered a similarly violent fate. This poignant empathy was emotionally informed by a political leaning very much positioned further left than the stereotypical loyalist. Wilson remarks on a key difference between earlier expulsions and those of 1920, with there being an absence in the unionist press of any criticism of the perpetrators. This omission could suggest their condoning such actions, a stance more

⁹⁴ Parr, 'Gusty Spence: Agent of Conflict, Creativity, and Change', p. 138.

⁹⁵ Connal Parr, 'Expelled from Yard and Tribe: The 'Rotten Prods' of 1920 and Their Political Legacies', *Studi Irlandesi*, Vol. 11, No. 11 (2021), p. 306. Against this historiographic trend, Emmet O'Connor recently published *Rotten Prod: The Unlikely Career of Dongaree Baird* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2022).

explicitly taken by political leaders like Craig and Carson, both of whom offered belated endorsement of the shipyard expulsions.⁹⁶ By doing so a ‘mob mentality’ was gifted legitimacy. It is perhaps admissible that validating riots helped create the expectation that in subsequent times of perceived crisis vigilantism was acceptable response. As we have seen with a brutal and consistent pattern of punishment attacks, this vigilante force is not limited to fending off the external other but projected internally to ensure elements within observe the boundaries created and maintained by self-appointed ‘soldiers’. These boundaries were never only literal (concerning spatial territory) but marked the limits of permitted behaviour, speech and thought. The emotional boundaries around the sanctuary were constantly under threat and therefore constantly needing defending. Just like the versatility of the Lundy label, a ‘Prod’ could conceivably be ‘rotten’ (connotating deplorable impurity or succumbing to a moral decay) due to his mixed marriage, anti-royalist sentiment, or fondness for Irish music, sport or language. Part two argues the opposite of this is needed: not a further condensing and reduction, but an expansion of socially acceptable forms of loyalism and masculinity. A reversal in paintings of the past is required to correct flawed historiographies (both academic/official and public/vernacular). Parr states that the Rotten Prods were not simply expelled from the shipyards but from history itself⁹⁷, a misfortune shared by many maligned groups in part two. Reclaiming rottenness as a badge of honour, a symptom of independent thought and action would help bring their memory back in from the cold.

It could fairly be argued that the original designation of ‘Rotten Prods’ belongs to the United Irishmen, drawing from a long and proud tradition of Presbyterian dissent. Among their number were leading figures such as Henry Joy McCracken, James Hope and (one of

⁹⁶ Tim Wilson, *In Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 92.

⁹⁷ Parr, ‘Expelled from Yard’, p. 301.

the insurrection's primary instigators) Wolfe Tone, all of whom were Protestants.⁹⁸ Naturally any mention of these names may provoke the ire of some loyalists but setting aside any grand design for a (re)united Ireland, we can still glean disarming potential from the fundamentally anti-sectarian beliefs of the United Irishmen.⁹⁹ It is possible for this philosophy to be applied to 21st century localised peacebuilding but, constitutional concerns notwithstanding, this inclination of being fervently disputatious also has use when thinking far outside the insular sanctuary of masculinity. The United Irishmen do not stand alone. Novosel lists others in a lineage of non-conformity: Grattan's parliament of 1782; the Volunteer movement; Ulster Tenant's Right movement; the Linen Hall Library and the 'Athens of the North'; 'Young Ireland' in the 1840s and similar roots of historic Republicanism; and the Irish language itself along with music and design all kept alive by Protestant poets, musicians and artists.¹⁰⁰

Whilst William 'Plum' Smith, former RHC prisoner, was able to accept the tradition of Protestantism in labour activism and trade unionism¹⁰¹, even if not every loyalist will be comforted by this historical pattern and the proximity of their faith to radical ideas they do not hold. So, there is clearly a well-stocked repository of bold, dramatic, progressive ideas, figures, groups and episodes, yet virtually none have been explored and utilised for the purposes of public art and education—at least not within loyalism. This is further reason to retrieve some of this material; not just to correct inaccuracies, but to channel some of that radical dissent into the construction of contemporary loyalist masculinity. The enlightened 18th century tradition may have been concerned with civic republicanism, influenced heavily

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 301.

⁹⁹ Wolfe Tone called for the 'odious distinction of Protestant, Presbyterian and Catholic' to be abolished. He believed historical resentment between the denominations could be dissolved and replaced with a harmonious sense of Irish identity. Máiréad Nic Craith, *Plural Identities--singular Narratives*, p. 59. See also the recent publication by Claire Mitchell, *The Ghost Limb: Alternative Protestants and the Spirit of 1798* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Books, 2022).

¹⁰⁰ Novosel, *Northern Ireland's Lost Opportunity*, p. 46.

¹⁰¹ William 'Plum' Smith, *Inside Man: Loyalists of Long Kesh-the Untold Story* (Newtownards: Colourpoint Books, 2014), p. 169.

by the revolutions of America and France, but at its heart was an emphasis on individualism, egalitarianism and relations of fairness and equality.¹⁰² Frequently this progressive force will intersect with other forms of disarming. For an example, consider the quiet yet broad revolution conducted by Edwardian unionist women. Within the confines of a deeply engrained patriarchy, women fought for their significant voice to be heard and shape discourse in this crucial period of modern unionism. A discernible exasperation underlines Burgess and Mulvenna’s question why this remarkable history of women’s social activism is not more prominent in the Ulster Protestant story.¹⁰³ Why is the celebration of pioneering suffragist Isabella Todd reduced, like Ashton (potentially), to just a blue heritage plaque?

8.4.2 Antidotes to ‘Toxic Theology’

Far from an either/or, disarming imagery can draw selectively from episodes ranging in time and space. More recent examples may seem more germane, and one option might be to survey the feasibility of visualising a Protestant version of ‘liberation theology’. Best known in the context of Latin American Catholicism of the 1960s, its guiding principle was liberating the oppressed, in whatever form inequality may take e.g., socio-economic disadvantage, race or caste. One motive for surfacing such iterations in Protestantism would be to dispute the contemporary rise in conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism in some sections of NI. As Brady expands, this trend is concerning since extreme views that exacerbate the sectarian divide have been adopted among some younger Protestants.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ruane and Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict*, p. 86.

¹⁰³ James Greer, ‘Typical Unionists? The Politicians and their People, Past and Present’ in Burgess, and Mulvenna (eds.), *The Contested Identities*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ Sean Brady, ‘Why Examine Men, Masculinities and Religion in Northern Ireland?’ in Lucy Delap & Sue Morgan (eds.) *Men, Masculinities and Religious Change in Twentieth Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 223.

Furthermore, it is exceptionally difficult to uncouple many of these views from a hegemonic masculinity which is disposed to meting out violent punishment. Irreconcilable antagonisms, sustained by certain religious histories, may be overcome by calling attention to forgotten episodes that provide an alternative ‘history of ecumenism’.¹⁰⁵ Given its awkward placement, wedged between two colossal power-blocs, this history resembles a ‘thirdspace’ into which can be placed several useful foundations for the building of peace: dialogue, mediation and conciliation. As we have seen successful design (weaponised or disarming) requires strength in simplicity for ease of comprehension and to imprint upon us. Radical imagery needs to conjure something of a Biblical performative drama, through language or symbolism, metaphor and might need to plead the case for peace. Rapp and Rhomberg suggest the former ‘sword’ of militaristic propaganda should be transformed into the ‘feather’ of cross-communication.¹⁰⁶ This recalls the beating of swords into ploughshare, spears to pruning hooks as promoted in Isaiah 2:4 and, like the rainbow flag or fist raised through the Venus sign (uniting feminism and leftist solidarity), provides us with persuasive symbolism. A vivid vocabulary is of course not enough, and risks coming across too abstract; disarming is grounded in reality through profiling noteworthy organisations and individuals. Rev. Karen Sethuraman is such a person, interested in alternative theologies that offer healing —those keen to find an antidote to what Rev. Gary Mason called ‘toxic theology’, very often twinned with ‘toxic masculinity’ in a cocktail of hate. Sethuraman considers herself continuing the tradition of the Anabaptists who ‘had the courage to step out of the institutional church to create community and do life.’¹⁰⁷ This faith operates like much of RAM, at the grassroots as

¹⁰⁵ Beiner, ‘Between Trauma and Triumphalism’, p. 388.

¹⁰⁶ Rapp & Rhomberg, ‘Seeking a Neutral Identity’, p. 473.

¹⁰⁷ McKay, *Northern Protestants: On Shifting Ground*, p. 124.

the spiritual companion to organic intellectuals.¹⁰⁸ The mantra she preaches is of loving God and your neighbour and reaches out to those who never fitted into the church of 'For God and Ulster'. The South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) has attempted to remind us that true faith resides in a rejection of violence, moral courage and self-sacrifice.¹⁰⁹ They have similarly tried to disarm the scriptural reference 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' so often put forward as entitlement to seek retribution.¹¹⁰ The simplistic reductive appeals to emotion found in weaponisation can often be disarmed through nuance and logic. In this case, the phrase is a figurative command never intended to be taken literally. Crucial in undermining the arbitrary vendetta of paramilitary 'policing', the phrase always related to a civil situation being judged before a duly constituted authority (such as a judge or magistrate). While many former paramilitary members cloaked their actions in legitimacy, Noel Large does not for he knows his deeds are indefensible. It was in Maze that Large became a born-again Christian; his faith being as all-encompassing now as his commitment to violence had been. Yet such transformed figure may induce an apprehension as to whether they should be held up as evidence of transition and agents of change or resigned to the miseries of their former life.¹¹¹ Such questions on the finer margins of representation are for loyalist communities to answer (as detailed in sections on a people's media and the verbing process in chapter seven). Should they wish to veer away from controversy, they would still have profuse options. Rev. John

¹⁰⁸ The value of local knowledge and genuine concern is mirrored in the location of Sethuraman's work: Forthspring, an interfaith centre based in an old Methodist church right up against the peace wall running along the Springfield and Woodvale roads in west Belfast.

¹⁰⁹ South East Fermanagh Foundation, *For God and Ulster: The Vow of those who Reject Violence* (Lisnaskea: SEFF, 2020).

¹¹⁰ According to Wood, justifying Greysteel was not a problem for some loyalists. Considered the UDA/UFF's Alamo, they felt they had nothing left to lose. Stephen Irwin, one of the gunmen responsible, had no regrets when interviewed in 1995: 'I don't know what I'll feel in ten years' time but I've never felt remorse about what I did. We were using IRA tactics against the IRA and the republican community. It was Old Testament justice, an eye for an eye.' In Wood, *Crimes of Loyalty*, p. 172.

¹¹¹ Large does not sugar-coat his actions; he murdered innocent people because they were Catholic. He shot an innocent elderly woman in her bed as her daughter watched. In prison for four life sentences, he served 16 years before being released under the terms of GFA—a perfect example as to why prisoner release was for so long such a contentious issue in the early 'post-conflict' era. Purtill, 'This man'.

Stewart has multi-layered interests which make him a hugely suitable candidate for muralisation. A former shipyard worker turned minister at Woodvale Church just off the Shankill, he was also a member of the NILP serving as community leader in working class areas.¹¹² As an alternative masculine role-model he is of religious, political and labour significance. In Stewart we see how compatible the pastoral duty of religion is with social development work. A similar observation has been made in relation to those ministering care to soldiers of the First World War—tellingly amongst the numerous, untold perspectives of that conflict. By talking with and listening to soldiers’ thoughts and concerns, extending empathy to them, taking the time to form bonds of trust and confidence, military chaplains not only demonstrated key skills in community leadership but also prefigure psychoanalytical techniques.¹¹³ As explained in chapter five, a thorough self-awareness of one’s mental health and hegemonic masculinity rarely meet. Therefore, any sympathetic portrayals of such professional characters would elevate the need for such conversations. The scope of this ecumenical ethos is outlined in Ian Ellis’ directory of ‘Peace and Reconciliation Projects in Ireland’ (1984) in which, of the 84 listed, 36 have an explicit religious basis.¹¹⁴ Perhaps the best known, the Corrymeela Community founded in 1965, is still active today. Although its centre, which hosts conferences, workshops and retreats for all kinds of groups often from across the divide, is based on the north Antrim coast. A mural in the heart of a loyalist district could raise awareness of this atmosphere and bring a fresh perspective to a new audience. In truth, after the early 1970s the clergy seemed less likely to use their sermons to call for peace and reconciliation. A sermon-like atmosphere is congruent to repeated activation, though without any heavy-handed didactics, it would aim to be a source of intellectual nourishment and provocation (without causing offense). This section ends with a brief mention as to what

¹¹² Novosel, *Northern Ireland’s Lost Opportunity.*, p. 92.

¹¹³ Moss and Prince, *Weary Warriors*, p. 153.

¹¹⁴ Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, p. 28.

some of these painterly ‘sermons’ might cover. SEFF, formed just a year after GFA, supports individuals making the personal transition from ‘victim’ to ‘survivor’ as part of a process of healing and confidence building.¹¹⁵ This raises a valid theme that civilians (52% of all victims of the Troubles) are rarely seen in murals with the revered walls invariably being reserved for those culpable for the violence. Rectifying this, like many changes one may wish for, is far easier from an outside vantage. There would still be a plethora of ethical issues to navigate through when attempting to resist a hierarchy of suffering, which could be read as equating all victims as one—a decision which might generate backlash. It is one thing for SEFF to feature inspiring biograph snippets in a book; quite another to commission a large-scale, public painting representing this. Even with strenuous efforts of democratic consultation ensuring citizen groups were composed of a diversity of views, their consenting approval may not extrapolate to the entire community. The words of Gordon Wilson just hours after the Enniskillen bombing killed his daughter: ‘I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge’, might sound like the astonishing moral courage needed, yet others may not be ready to see these words on a mural (perhaps insulted that it pressures them to forgive completely). Importantly, Wilson’s calls for forgiveness (based in part on a strong Methodist upbringing) would materialise in 1989 with the ‘Spirit of Enniskillen Trust’¹¹⁶. At the time, however, his interview was seen more of a call not for revenge to be taken in Marie’s name. Given how routinely this motive featured throughout the Troubles, Wilson’s words come from a

¹¹⁵ SEFF is an integral part of the Innocent Victims United umbrella organisation which supports 21 victim/survivor groups with a combined membership of over 11,000. It provides a lobbying and representational function and presents itself as non-political, non-sectarian and a family focused organisation. ‘For God and Ulster: The Vow’.

¹¹⁶ After the devastating personal loss at Enniskillen, Wilson became a committed peace campaigner. The Trust was a community outreach programme helping young people in Northern Ireland participate in international undertakings. It also awarded bursaries for projects promoting reconciliation but unfortunately the Trust closed in 2013 due to financial difficulties. ‘Gordon Wilson, 67, Campaigner for Peace in Northern Ireland’ *New York Times* 28 June 1995, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/28/obituaries/gordon-wilson-67-campaigner-for-peace-in-northern-ireland.html> accessed 22 April 2021.

radically disarming language, which has been credited with saving lives.¹¹⁷ In the aftermath of other horrific events, religious figures would often speak up as the voice of reason. Following the death of the three Quinn brothers, firebombed at home by the UVF, Rev. William Bingham, an Orange Order chaplain in Co. Armagh, bravely attacked the violence declaring with great emotion: ‘no road is worth a life.’¹¹⁸ This clarity and dedication to resolution was evident during the peace process where the Protestant clergy played an important role in debating with the CLMC—Rev. Roy Magee and Archbishop Robin Eames were particularly instrumental in attending a series of meetings in the run-up to the ceasefires.¹¹⁹ In closing we must concede that religion as a force for change and reconciliation is a disputed claim, as suggested by the mural ‘Son of Protagoras’ (2014). Considered the father of agnosticism, the young figure in the work is dressed in a toga and holds the dove of peace, struck dead by two arrows: one for each church. Diverging interpretations perhaps make finding that hallowed thirdspace harder, but the next section attempts to locate another space within the cultural identity of the Ulster-Scots.

8.5 Between the Binary: Ulster-Scots as Thirdspace

8.5.1 Over the Bridge

Ulster-Scots identity category straddles the North Channel and the usually rigid Irish/English dichotomy. It can be understood to be occupying a ‘thirdspace’, referred to by Bhabha and

¹¹⁷ ‘I think they must represent some of the most important and moving words that were ever spoken in the history of our Troubles.’ David Bolton, trauma counsellor. ‘I was told later there were people ready to take up arms for Enniskillen and when Gordon said that, they couldn’t do it.’ Noreen Hill, wife of Ronnie Hill, another victim of the Enniskillen bombing. ‘Remembering Enniskillen: The Poppy Day Massacre’ documentary remastered by ‘A Troubled Land’ available at YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qOnMJ1t3j0> accessed 1 March 2022.

¹¹⁸ Taylor, *Loyalists*, p. 255.

¹¹⁹ Hutchinson with Mulvenna, *My Life in Loyalism*, p. 155.

Soja as that which lies beyond forms of knowledge and divides the world into crude binary oppositions. According to Bhabha, cultures that are situated in interstitial passages can navigate around—or through—more fixed identities and inherent hierarchies of comparison and competition. By focusing on the ambiguity and uncertainty of hybrid identities as positive attributes, their culture can prove to be a very productive location for articulating changed meanings.¹²⁰ In Scott's estimation many, including Gramsci, overlook 'the massive middle ground, in which conformity is often a self-conscious strategy and resistance is a carefully balanced affair that avoids all-or-nothing confrontations.'¹²¹ In that middle ground, we meet a constant testing of the limits of acceptability. This is suggestive of the skilfully elastic leadership of organic intellectuals and is also matched in the exploratory nature of research-led, critically engaging participatory arts. The two-community thesis often appears so historically embedded, and such a compelling framework, that it is very difficult to reveal how murals may function within wider networks that exceed division. Lisle provides an intriguing response to Gerry McCarthy's adverse assessment that 'there is no third force on the gables of NI'.¹²² Whilst she does not reject this claim, she submits that one is developing in urban graffiti. The author would take this further by suggesting this could lay the steppingstones toward bigger and more permanent transgressive and transformative impressions being made upon the landscape.

The arts are the first of two locations we consider as spaces for sustained, meaningful enquiry (including gendered practices, relationships, and power). This is easier to detect in a liberal civic unionism whose middle class accommodationist ethos downplays sectarianism by searching for a middle ground in common heritage.¹²³ An enduring stereotype is that

¹²⁰ Ikas and Wagner, *Communicating in the Third Space*, p. 38.

¹²¹ Downing, *Radical media*, p. 17.

¹²² Debbie Lisle 'Local Symbols, Global Networks', p. 46.

¹²³ Graham, 'The Past in the Present', p. 492.

should one attempt to find any fertile interest in creativity and culture in loyalism then their search would surely be in vain. Parr's chronicling the life and works of several eminent Protestant working class writers (mainly playwrights) goes some way to dispelling this trivialising deceit. Beginning with Thomas Carnduff, the 'shipyard poet', whose own output displays evidence of cultural maturity and respect for the other, earlier writings offer a jingoistic chauvinism, but his style developed to include quotes from the Qur'an and translations of Indian, Persian and Greek writers he admired.¹²⁴ This harks back to the cultural globalisation of chapter six and, being born in 1886, Carnduff's story is a fascinating one which encompasses a wild array of historic episodes throughout the domestic disturbance. Like other figures we have met in part two, his narrative contains a multitude of placements and experiences which radically altered his outlook and subsequent work. Like most men from his background, he signed the Ulster Covenant but additionally was a member of the YCV, partook in gun-running, and served in the First World War. After demobilising he spent four years in the Special Constabulary before returning to the shipyards during the economic downturn of the mid-1920s. Carnduff's observations were fixed on working class concerns, a perspective as rarely written then as it is painted now. St. John Ervine also served in the war but brought back with him none of the heroic, self-sustaining myths hitherto suffused into a general Ulster unionist mentality. Referred to as the 'war which did no good to anyone' in his novels, the carnage is culturally debilitating and inflicted on the young by older men.¹²⁵ We saw in part one how endogamy has survived during the 'post-conflict' age, and this divisive social issue is tackled in the play *Mixed Marriage* (1911) which reads like a tragedy for the Irish Labour movement, torn asunder by competing nationalisms. A shared feature of these writers is their unflinching self-reflection

¹²⁴ Parr, *Inventing the Myth...*, p. 66.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

of their community. Due to the vehemence of social identity and the will to preserve and propagate the best managed impression, necessarily scathing portrayals are themselves a radical act in the crossover of politics and art. Sam Thompson places this at the heart of his work, particularly *'Over the Bridge'* (1960). Scenes of blunt sectarianism jarred with those who would deflect such bigotry as excusable exceptions. The political consciousness of Thompson and the poet John Hewitt were both amplified by foreign policy, namely Italy's 1935 invasion of Abyssinia, with Hewitt campaigning for sanctions against Italy as a moral response.¹²⁶ Longley's paean to Thompson's tolerant philosophy rings true and loud with disarming potential. For Longley, Thompson opened 'a way over the bridge/For Jews and Gypsies, all refugees/Persons displayed by our bigoted/Hometown'¹²⁷—a radical inclusion when areas of a society are still drawn up by prohibitive borders. The most recent writer discussed by Parr is Gary Mitchell, who continues the admirable, yet unappreciated tradition of grappling with the strains of working-class Protestant communities. For his evaluation of issues such as policing tensions, questions around identity and a growing underclass, Mitchell and his family were forced to leave their home in Rathcoole in 2005. In an act of bravery (one diverging from the wonted definition), Mitchell refused to allow abject intimidation to deter his creativity. In responding to an artistic fight back he remarked: 'my weapons are not baseball bats and petrol bombs, they are words, and I have an abundance of them.'¹²⁸

8.5.2 Visualising 'Free Thinking'

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 96.

¹²⁷ Michael Longley, 'The Poker', in *A Hundred Doors* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p. 31.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 185.

Through the ingenuity of media transference, carefully selected lines of dialogue could become text within a design, relevant and charged scenes from a play could be brought to life in public paintings. Thus limited exposure and impact is maximised. Audiences need not have attended a showing at a specific time and place, as the power of the arts is not contained by theatres, galleries or libraries, but merges seamlessly with the daily realities of everyday life. However, placement alone, even at the civic crossroads, is no guarantee of an enthusiastic public sphere. William Conor may well be a historical example of a beloved working-class painter, but the physical condition of ‘Conor’s Corner’ on the Shankill would suggest otherwise. Far smaller than a mural, thereby less visually influential, the display shows clear signs of degradation which require routine maintenance. The suggestion of muralising Conor’s sympathetic portraits of working-class life, from shipyard men to ‘shawlies’ (or mill girls of Belfast) is nothing new. Gusto Spence introduced many in Compound 21 to his art when murals were painted on cubicle walls inside the UVF/RHC huts.¹²⁹ The only amendment the author would make is to transfer the drawings from the cramped compound to wide open walls for greater contemplation. Conor’s Corner was even activated upon its completion, with several speakers including renowned local journalist Eamonn Maille speaking at the unveiling in September 2015 on Conor’s lasting tribute to the people of the Shankill. As encouraging as such an event is, we cannot reasonably expect any attitudinal change or emotional impression if activation is not sustainably carried out. Many grassroots case studies for arts-based practices are to be found throughout NI. Ballymacarett Arts and Cultural Society (BACS), for example, was founded during the peace process and resides in the heart of loyalist east Belfast—often considered one of the most entrenched locations for paramilitary activity. Theirs is an approach which emphasises the arts when

¹²⁹ Hutchinson with Mulvenna, *My Life in Loyalism*, p. 13.

making explicit connections with young people. Among their projects, BACS has tackled an enterprising range including alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour, educational underachievement, unemployment and disempowerment.¹³⁰ These latter issues represent some underlying factors that can foment serious unrest or open conflict for extremism prospers in the gap between rising expectations and declining opportunities. Then there is the case of a quite remarkable collaboration between Danny Devenny and Mark Ervine, muralists from a republican and loyalist background, respectively. 15-year-old Devenny volunteered for the IRA in 1970 and three years later was imprisoned for a bank robbery. Mark is the son of David Ervine and an accomplished artist, but this unlikely pairing speaks louder than either of their creative practices. For sure their work is, in some sense, disarming— given that it involves cross-community interaction, it is largely free from institutional pressure and protocol and addresses broader themes (e.g., workers’ exploitation in globalised labour markets and the climate crisis) than the typical repertoire.¹³¹ Their friendship, honesty and reciprocal learning indicate how synergistic male muralists can be once they renounce the bitter rivalry of competing tribal claims. In a sense we can understand the struggle to disarm hegemonic masculinities in a similar manner to how peace was achieved. For any proposed solution to survive and succeed, the deadbolt across mindsets needs to be unlocked. Such revelations were stated in ‘Common Sense’ wherein Ulster loyalism was described as living in a state of eternal siege; a people instinctively driven by an overpowering need to defend against the enemy without and suppress the enemy within.¹³² The key document (muralised on one occasion alongside a portrait and brief description of John McMichael, see fig 8.2)

¹³⁰ Smithey, *Unionists*, p. 157.

¹³¹ Rapp & Markus Rhomberg (2012) Seeking a Neutral Identity...’, p. 476.

¹³² Ulster Political Research Group ‘*Common Sense*’ CAIN (1987) available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/commonsense.htm> accessed 13 November 2019.

was less dour in its prognosis, claiming that success partially lay in attempts to persuade Ulster 'Protestants' that there was no longer a need to defend the frontier.



Fig.8.2

This was true in the late 1990s during the search for a political situation, just as it is now in considering the social transformation of gender. Helpfully there exists several interlinked traits attributed to an Ulster-Scots identity which assist in relieving the siege. Historical strife over civil and religious freedom has resulted in Presbyterianism priding itself on the idea of a radical nature, including ones' individual conscience.¹³³ This is in accordance with another core characteristic: a healthy respect for education and learning. It was, after all Francis Hutcheson—an Ulster Protestant from Drumalig, Co. Down—who, as professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University, is described by some as the 'father of the Scottish

¹³³ Spencer, *The State of Loyalism in Northern Ireland*, p. 15.

Enlightenment'.¹³⁴ Bruce believes that intellectual contentions demonstrate an importance of 'free thinking', which is by its nature both highly democratic and fissionary.¹³⁵ We should differentiate between benign and malignant schism, the former allowing for heterogeneous expression and eloquence of difference. The latter is often self-destructive and violent, disturbing relations long after an initial disintegration of understanding and respect.

Channelling energies toward benign schism would facilitate the developing of an ethics of remembrance with principles of narrative flexibility or plurality. Just as history is a fluid discipline with multiple perspectives, so too is both loyalism and masculinity. What all require to thrive is a vibrant and democratic discussion which can, over time, reshape previously moulded frames into wider configurations so that they may accommodate a bigger picture.

8.5.3 Orangefield: A Case Study of Emancipatory Education

This section ends by considering the capacity for education to be an incubator for this free thinking. The implications of its deficit are wide-sweeping and conceivably devastating.

Obviously educational underachievement can diminish employment opportunities, itself a major problem. However, the critical skills and balanced judgement of young men is also diminished. Without some of the tools of understanding, patience, respect and empathy, boys

¹³⁴ Aside from the Enlightenment, both the American War of Independence and French Revolution bear traces of the wider ideological implications. With the spread of this thinking across the Atlantic, it could be suggested that this offers a differing model of Scots-Irish to the rugged wildmen of the frontier imagery. It adds greater depth to the trope of conquering the lands and peoples as pioneers or ruling over them as presidents. Of course, none of this can be understood in isolation to Scots-Irish participation in the violent colonisation of the 'New World'. Wilson & McReynolds, 'Celebration and Controversy' in Burgess & Mulvanna, *The Contested Identities*, p. 143.

¹³⁵ Steve Bruce, 'Authority and Fission: The Protestants' Divisions' *The British Journal of Sociology* vol. 36, no.4 (1985), p. 601.

are susceptible to emotional manipulation that feeds off a narrowing of worldviews. This in turn may leave them vulnerable to believing in a number of prejudices and convinced into taking drastic and damaging action in their name. Educational underachievement—which for McAdam represents ‘the biggest threat to the current political stability’¹³⁶ in NI—has long been a particular issue for Protestant boys.¹³⁷ This phenomenon can be partly traced back to two key disruptive developments which we met throughout part one. First was the gradual decline, from the late 1950s onward, of traditional industries and with them the secure employment availed by generations of Protestant, working-class men. Second was the urban break-up due to the civil unrest of the Troubles, with the result that loyalist paramilitaries are often charged with contributing to the creation of ‘sink estates’, blighted by unemployment, poverty, lack of aspiration, and breakdown of the family unit.¹³⁸ Further distance is put between young men and realising their educational goals by the additional stigma we have met; the feminisation of activities like reading, perceived as ‘uncool’ relative to participating in high-risk, high-thrill reward events such as anti-social behaviour. In recollecting his own learning experiences, Hutchinson finds it peculiar that the state system only provided a history of Britain (specifically its monarchs), excluding any social, economic, cultural, or political aspect of Ireland.¹³⁹ One possible explanation for the reluctance of unionist leaders to tackle these educational problems stems from a fear that improvement would lead to a challenge of the political and social ascendancy that has characterised unionism. Any mural

¹³⁶ Noel McAdam “We Have to Deal with the Root Causes of the Problems.” *Belfast Telegraph*. July 25, 12, 2011 cited in McManus, “Bound in darkness and idolatry”? p. 48.

¹³⁷ The Peace Monitoring Report of 2014 report found that only Roma and Traveller children are getting poorer results than Protestant boys. The study compared all ethnic groups across the UK using five good GCSE grades as the measure of success; just over half of Protestant boys who do not get free school meals were meeting this level. Dr. Paul Nolan, who led the research, commented that this generated inequalities which later show themselves in incidents of public disorder when it seems there is no route out of poverty and inequality turns to anger. ‘Peace Monitoring Report’ Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, *Hansard*. 9th April 2014, pp. 3-6.

¹³⁸ Mulvenna ‘The Protestant working class, p. 428.

¹³⁹ Hutchinson with Mulvenna ‘*My Life in Loyalism*’, p. 131.

that proudly proclaimed the worth of learning would be welcomed (by some) as going against the grain. In the interests of salvaging these values in a non-generic fashion, but one implanted in actual Protestant recent memory, the author suggests the exemplary pedagogy of the boys' secondary school Orangefield. With John Malone, a member of the NILP, as head teacher, Orangefield was an oasis for working-class aspirations¹⁴⁰ and his regime ushered in a positive era for education in NI that has often been overlooked or ignored completely. One of the most popular and significant aspects of Malone's alternative curriculum was broadening the worldview of students by immersing the boys in a different environment, away from the urban insularity of Belfast. Within the school itself, impressionable minds benefited from the influential role of teachers: Henry Sinnerton taught French, English, civics and sport, but also promoted social justice driven by a passionate belief in democratic, liberal Protestantism. Douglas Carson taught history, with his pioneering educational initiatives finding wider audiences during an illustrious career in BBC programming; Jonathan Bardon's magisterial writings sought to reclaim Ulster history and Sam MacCready, alongside his life partner, Joan, tirelessly promoted Northern Irish theatre.¹⁴¹ The playwright Stewart Parker paid tribute to Malone, his former teacher, in a 1986 memorial lecture : 'He was a true zealot for the emancipation of the mind...it was a zeal which drew its force from such diverse traditions as Northern Irish Protestant radicalism, a particular brand of Christian socialism, and a Cambridge Leavisite aesthetic.'¹⁴² Dawe believes the school, without broadcasting it, was following a progressive agenda, and it is hard to disagree with this except to say the time is long overdue that this agenda was broadcasted. That the school no longer physically exists

¹⁴⁰ Like the aforementioned findings into systemic under-achievement, the MacBeath report (1955) delivered the verdict that 'a great majority of pupils are probably not intellectually equipped to pass any worthwhile examination.' Mulvenna, 'The Protestant working class in Belfast', p. 431.

¹⁴¹ Gerald Dawe, 'Orangefield, and an unexamined aspect of Northern resistance to sectarianism and political bigotry', Slugger O'Toole, 1 May 2020, available at <https://sluggerotoole.com/2020/05/01/orangefield-and-a-quiet-aspect-of-resistance-to-sectarianism-and-political-bigotry/> accessed 5 May 2020.

¹⁴² Mulvenna, 'The Protestant working class', p. 432.

(closing in 2014 before its demolition three years later), is further justification for preserving and promulgating the spirit of the school. When politically activated, murals can exert pressure for or against change. Perhaps the mission for a more integrated education system (proposed by the RHC as early as 1974) would be more successful if the case for it was made boldly in paint, as well as other persuasive means. The RHC recognised the calamitous nature of segregation in general, believing it to be a root cause of sectarianism. For their prospective worth to be realised murals need not be limited to portraiture of disarming individuals—the ideas themselves can take centre stage to reclaim the powers of reason and challenge anti-intellectualism.¹⁴³ Loyalist activist Sophie Long discusses anti-intellectualism in the context of Brexit-related populism, but the point is valid and reminiscent of Bell’s earlier comment that young loyalists are not moved by ideas but by the beat of the drum.¹⁴⁴

8.6 Subcultural Identities and an Anti-war Cry

8.6.1 The Sins My Father Bore

Though adolescence is often when we might start to question certain environmental factors, many believe that the construction of masculine identities starts in childhood. Tolson contended that in this early process, fathers are our first male role model.¹⁴⁵ This view is corroborated by the family links within Orangeism being a ‘remarkable bridging of

¹⁴³ Under the Education Reform Order (1989) a new curriculum was set up promoting ‘education for mutual understanding’. Any or all of its objectives: fostering respect for self and others, understanding conflict, appreciating interdependence, and understanding cultural traditions fall within a disarming category. Similar examples of more abstract, nonetheless historical subjects would include watershed legislation on gender justice e.g., the rights advanced in the Beijing Declaration (1995) and the importance of women’s full and equal participation in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and building, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction put forward in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

¹⁴⁴ Desmond Bell, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 163.

¹⁴⁵ Md. Mozammel Haque, ‘Hope for Gender Equality? A Pattern of Postconflict Transition in Masculinity’ *Gender, Technology and Development*, Vol. 17. Issue 1 (2013), p. 62.

generations’¹⁴⁶, for which tremendous pride is taken in ensuring tradition survives through patrilineal succession. Such is the vigour of this bond that we cannot, Seidler argues, speak about ‘new masculinities’ until we have engaged with the complex histories which mark relations with our fathers and grandfathers.¹⁴⁷ Not only is this task cognitively difficult, it carries with it the emotional strain of being caught between old masculinities of a previous generation and a new context with a vocabulary of masculinity one cannot fully make sense of. With all the pressure to conform to the past and not disappoint the parental pattern, it takes real courage to speak out against the ways of old. Hutchinson exemplifies this when conceding that the ‘state of affairs which may have been accepted by my mother and father are no longer acceptable to me or those of my generation.’¹⁴⁸ Whilst the affairs referenced here are primarily political (such as systemic anti-Catholic discrimination, gerrymandering, and police brutality), we can apply the same logic to gendered expectations of speech and thought, action and behaviour. David Ervine’s domestic environment was positively shaped by his father who assembled a vast collection of books in the house and would play Devil’s Advocate in family debates, deliberately taking the other side to test out David’s arguments.¹⁴⁹ As an autodidact, his father no doubt cherished the resilient, fiercely independent free-thinking we have seen across this chapter. It also gave his father the courage and will to break with the contemporary majority in his community and support the civil rights movement in the late-1960s. Baroness May Blood—another prominent and consistent community worker, thereby a disarming role-model in her own right—shares the good fortune of having a father who advocated education, languages in particular, as a means of progression.¹⁵⁰ This had a practical benefit of allowing his daughter not to be limited in

¹⁴⁶ McAuley, Tonge & Mycock, *Loyal to the Core?*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁷ Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ Finlayson, ‘Loyalist Political Identity’, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹ Parr, ‘Ending the siege?’, p. 204.

¹⁵⁰ Mulvenna, ‘The Protestant working class’, p. 434.

employment options, but also compelled her to develop a broader worldview, one that would take her beyond the traditional boundaries of thinking and feeling. Parenting, as a prolonged experience and set of skills, walks a fine line of influence and may falter onto a problematic side. For this reason, we should remember the positives that lie on the other side. A crucial role of the father for the son is rescuing him from ‘archaic visions of a reactive, primitive masculinity’¹⁵¹; one that sees threat in all manner of change and difference and sees extreme resistance as the only solution to a perceived problem.

One of the most important generational transmissions takes place in the tradition of the bands scene. The coverage this practice receives often dwells on its divisive elements—whether in the performativity itself, or the violence that can occur subsequently. We should not demur about scrutinising the tradition’s relationship with paramilitaries or its use of weaponising tropes that assign to masculinity the hegemonic standard of part one. Yet, as this chapter has shown, many aspects within the loyalist spectrum are rarely afforded the same attention. Aside from the socialisation and group bonding of the bands, we should briefly consider the significance of the mobile art of the banners. Several interviewees fondly remembered them not as violent portrayals but displays of loyalist culture. Watching the procession was also not as passive an experience as some may think, as an interviewee explained: ‘there wasn’t a banner that went by that my mum or dad explained what it was about. You weren’t just there to listen to the bands; you were there to get educated.’¹⁵² This bears an uncanny resemblance to educational activation whereby neither banner nor mural is a static, remote product but repeatedly made active as a site of inquiry and intrigue. Muralising the radical imagery of banners would not only maximise its impact (both in terms of bigger size and longer permanence) it would gain local support since it marks a

¹⁵¹ Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis*, p. 80.

¹⁵² Interview with Brian Dougherty, James Kee and Derek Moore, Derry, 17 September 2021.

transference from a form already routinely accepted by the community. Banners, like murals, are a living history and, through disarming, they could remove imagery which seeks to alienate, replacing it with that which feels more authentic to the needs and wants, particularly of the young. Young people should not feel they are resisting alone, and any support in dissenting against hegemonic and patriarchal power is surely to be encouraged. After the riots of April 2021, Carl Frampton (two-time world super-featherweight champion boxer from Tiger’s Bay) participated in an online anti-sectarianism rally. In his candid address he admitted that growing up at an interface had made him and his peers excited by the riots and had indulged in this recreation in his youth. With age and experience, he was left ‘overwhelmingly sad’ to see that ‘people have been stirring the pot again, and young people are being manipulated.’ Frampton’s credentials are beyond doubt, with the several murals to him testifying to his popularity. Therefore, a new or amended surface incorporating his views on the riots would mark him as an alternative yet acceptable masculine role model. Young people should be reminded that they are not simply passive vessels into which ideas (political or otherwise) are poured; they should not be kept in the. Rather, they should be motivated to seek out understanding of their world in the light of lived experience.¹⁵³

8.6.2 Surfacing sub-cultures

In 2015 the Shankill Road Defenders redefined a central masculine archetype when they waged a metaphorical, musical attack on both racism against ethnic communities in NI and against stereotypes of their own culture. Under a project spearheaded by ‘Beyond Skin’ (an anti-racist organisation itself deserving to be muralised) thirty-five musicians played for eight

¹⁵³ Tony Gallagher, ‘After the War Comes Peace? An Examination of the Impact of the Northern Ireland Conflict on Young People’ *QUB Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 60, No. 3, (2004), p. 634.

months alongside guest musicians from a wide range of creeds, colours and countries including Jamaica, India, Slovakia, Ghana and Kurdistan. Karwan Shareef, a Muslim human rights lawyer and musician, had moved to Belfast three years prior and, after being intrigued by the exuberance of the loyalist band scene at an Ulster Covenant Centenary celebration, believed the project could be a force for good, for everyone.¹⁵⁴ This brave initiative took a major and bold step when performing a public concert at ‘Culture Night’ in the heart of the city. Even if such an affirming project ceased to exist the next day, a mural capturing the atmosphere of that evening would be a proud attestation of the cross-community desire to rid Belfast of the scourge of division and cast off a tired and unfair image of loyalist bands.

While the Defenders represent a disarming amendment within a traditional framework, several other examples from (un)popular culture offer greater non-conforming aptitude. Punk, both as a historical movement and current practice, moves with a similar tempo and temperament to Protestant radicalism. Indeed, for McVeigh, it is vital when reclaiming the right to be both Protestant and ‘progressive, emancipatory, revolutionary—to be a dissenter.’¹⁵⁵ Over in Britain, punk challenged many cultural and social assumptions, shocking public opinion and leaving a moral panic breaking out in its wake. But in NI; it created a rare refuge, a non-sectarian common ground for young people to articulate a collective rejection of violence and repression. Like the social realist lyrics of Stiff Little Fingers, this might mean leaning in to examine the disorder, or turn away from it in necessary detachment (as opted for by the Undertones). In either strategy, believers in the movement could revel in the company of like-minded ‘Outcasts’. The aggressive, fast and minimalist

¹⁵⁴ Karwan has also reached out to nationalist communities in Belfast working with a youth group in the Ardoyne area of the city who have been engaging with Protestant youngsters in Bushmills. Beyond Skin, who have been trying to develop diversity through music, arts and dance for 11 years, have worked with a staggering 80 musicians from 50 different nationalities based here. ‘The loyalist band that's marching to a different drum’ *Belfast Telegraph*, 24 September 2015, available at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/the-loyalist-band-thats-marching-to-a-different-drum-31555806.html> accessed 30 November 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Robbie McVeigh, ‘No one likes us, we don’t care: what is to be (Un)Done about Ulster Protestant Identity?’ in. Burgess & Mulvenna, *The Contested Identities*, p. 116.

music also provided a less harmful outlet for male frustration. The brief and bloodless ‘battle of Ulster Hall’ (1980) saw National Front skinheads clash with an assortment of anti-fascist (mostly Catholic) Skins, Rude Boys, Mods and Punks queuing outside the venue that was hosting a gig by The Specials and The Beat. Despite the provocation and intended disturbance, £4000 from the concert proceeds went to Corrymeela reconciliation and Crescent Youth Centre.¹⁵⁶ Location is as important a factor when disarming as it is for weaponisation, and the Ulster Hall has an iconic status. It was there that Carson rallied men in 1912 and Paisley rallied his followers in 1986 in opposition of Home Rule and the Anglo-Irish Agreement respectively. It also hosted a debate, another ‘battle’ of sorts between UUP leader David Trimble and Jeffrey Donaldson and other internal opponents of GFA, before Donaldson, Arlene Foster and others defected to the DUP.¹⁵⁷ A final advantage of punk is not only its promotion of a (generally) left-leaning, anti-racist, pro-feminist and pro-queer ideology, but it provides future muralists with a distinct aesthetic language.¹⁵⁸ Though often associated with disillusionment and cynicism, the movement stresses the value of autonomy and creativity, this ‘DIY ethic’ is shared with a RAM approach to community art being among the tactics of the powerless.¹⁵⁹

This rebellious mentality continued with other genres and generations finding an anti-heroic response to their malaise with mainstream culture. By the late 1980s, David Holmes and Iain McCready (DJs, producers and composers) graduated from booking bands and

¹⁵⁶ McDonald and Cusack, *UDA*, p. 168.

¹⁵⁷ McKay, *Northern Protestants: On Shifting Ground*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁸ Dick Hebdige argued that the radical bricolage that characterised the visual vocabulary of fanzines could be seen as homologous with punk’s subterranean and anarchic style (Hebdige 1979:112) cited in Atton, *Alternative Media*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁹ Like other subversive sub-cultures, punk is known for de-articulating and re-accenting signs and symbols in novel and ambiguous ways, inserting them into new contexts. This has obvious implications in Northern Ireland with its complicated and ubiquitous display of signs as markers of territory and identity, including of course murals. Punk’s playful deconstruction interrupts this coding process and blurs the boundaries between the two blocs. Timothy Heron, ‘Alternative Ulster: how punk took on the Troubles’ *Irish Times*, 2 December 2016, available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/alternative-ulster-how-punk-took-on-the-troubles-1.2890644> accessed 3 December 2019.

running underground hip-hop nights to launch the club night 'Sugar Sweet' which opened up acid house for Catholics, Protestants and anyone else. These developments were a haven for a self-proclaimed 'committed community of 'freaks' and staged experiences that induced literal tears of happiness.¹⁶⁰ In the words of Holmes and McCready, who were both raised in the wreckage of the conflict's early days: 'the Troubles manifests itself in your psyche in ways you cannot even understand, so when you're on the dancefloor religion isn't a barrier anymore—the atmosphere was just beautiful...these communities fucking hated each other but among them were groups of people whose religion was music.'¹⁶¹ The final subculture we will consider was partially explored through the lens of cross-community relations in Chris Eva's 2014 documentary *Bombin', Beats and B-Boys*, although Northern Irish hip-hop remained largely uncharted territory.¹⁶² Rap has often been a tool to inspect and rebel against the social, economic and political situations that marginalised people find themselves in. Given its turbulent history, artists and musicians of NI would indeed have plenty to be angry about. The challenge is akin to disciplining anomic protest masculinity: refining (but not diluting) the intensity into more productive avenues. A perfect example of an alternative, hip-hop based role model would be 'Jun Tzu' (AKA Jonathan Hamilton). His debut album, *The Troubles* (2014), was a cutting narrative on the spectre of sectarianism, violence and enduring instability all told with a blend of traditional folk music, personal poetry and cynical

¹⁶⁰ Daniel Dylan Wray, 'Sugar Sweet: the pill-up rave that united Belfast during the Troubles' *The Guardian*, 1 January 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/jan/01/sugar-sweet-rave-united-belfast-david-holmes-iain-mccready> accessed 16 January 2020.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, On the delicate subject of drug-taking associated with the rave scene, there is clearly an argument for better information available to young people alongside strategies of decriminalising of illegal substances. Such measures have been proposed in lieu of the futile 'war on drugs', and there is an explicit link between controlling an illegal trade and the power of paramilitaries over their communities. Indeed, the Green Party of NI proposes decriminalisation, borrowing from the Portuguese model, which treats drug addiction as a health and education issue rather than a criminal justice one. McCready describes those dealing as 'people flying to London and buying a few pills to bring back. There was nothing dark or sinister in the background— it wasn't like paramilitaries were running drugs in the place.'

¹⁶² Kristen Sinclair, *Beats and Bombs: The Story of Belfast Rap*, *Medium*, 14 March 2018, available at <https://kristenesinclair.medium.com/beats-and-bombs-the-story-of-belfast-rap-c5355ec19ba9> accessed 12 March 2021.

humour.¹⁶³ Just one example offers plenty of muralising options, whether it borrows from the dramatic album cover of his debut, portrait of the man himself, who casts a formidable presence, or quoting the often-dismissed wisdom of rap lyrics.



Fig.8.3

Since Jun Tzu is also the son of a loyalist ex-prisoner who ruminates on the meanings of the masculine, this last option would be particularly potent. Among the various aspects shared by virtually all disarming material is that they bestow to us places to truly protect and honour the emotional lives of boys and young men. This is done, in hooks' view, by laying down a serious challenge to patriarchal culture. In her observation, she remakes the sanctuary of part one when she tells us that until this overall, over-bearing culture has been changed,

¹⁶³ Ibid.

subcultures are the sanctuaries where boys can learn to be who they are uniquely, without being forced to conform to patriarchal masculine visions.¹⁶⁴

8.6.3 Lest We Forget

8.6.3.1 Sacrifice or Slaughter?

It seems quite clear that the romanticism of the First World War accounts for the largest (quantitatively) and most emotionally embraced (qualitatively significant) weaponised archetype. It is therefore imperative that the glorified features of this foundational memory be rectified. There are several strategies we will consider in this chapter's final sub-section, beginning with a deceptively simple remedy for mythologised interpretations of the past: facts. A logical starting point would be the overall legacy of this conflict, namely that it represents a tremendous 'blood sacrifice'. Yet when discussing the localised poignancy of this imagery with Darren Richardson, Development Officer at Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association, he described the 1st of July as being 'the key date when thousands were slaughtered...the mural in Magherafelt is about...raising awareness and educating young people.' Slaughter, a hugely sensitive word, resides at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum from 'sacrifice'. It never appears in any of the many murals that remember 'the glorious dead' and will likely be expunged from any youth education. It would seem almost human nature to do so, to manage a more favourable impression of horror. This is a major difficulty with disarming; it contains numerous discussions that need to be had but carries with it an understanding why nobody wants to have them. The inconvenient truths paint a very different picture, especially of the Somme—the most sacred of battles in the loyalist

¹⁶⁴ bell hooks, *The Will to Change*, p. 49.

canon. It was, as Beiner signalizes, a far cry from the self-evident military triumph that wartime propaganda and partisan historiography have presented. Despite these efforts, the colossal figures of mortality could not counter the unabated sense of catastrophe to this ‘victory’.¹⁶⁵ The Ulster Division endured the fourth highest number with 5,100 casualties including 210 officers and some 2,500 dead, yet for all this McGaughey assesses that their contribution was negligible in terms of winning the war. By the end, the Battle of the Somme had cost Britain and the Empire more than 400,000 casualties; the territory gained from this was little more than six miles¹⁶⁶ (the equivalent distance from the Shankill Graveyard to the Ulster Hospital in the east of the city, just past Stormont). The macro scale of the trauma can be gleaned through these statistics, but they can also be reframed according to microgeographies. For example, of the 700 ‘Shankill Boys’ in the West Belfast Battalion, only 70 survived.¹⁶⁷ At times, disarming does not necessarily involve a wholesale removal of a narrative. Rather, it contends that amendments might better suit the aforementioned objective of educating a community’s youth. There are plenty of statements one could put into a mural about the First World War that would not dignify the disasters of war. Such ennobling mostly serves to function as incitement for further participation (whether intended or not). It is a compromise of sorts before gradually introducing more radical subject matter, which might adapt First World War memory (clearly a publicly supported subject), so it no longer acts as a recruitment tool. An example of a counter-memory was provided by an interviewee who even included specific text for the hypothetical design:

¹⁶⁵ Beiner also notes an embittered undercurrent of local narratives of betrayal accused an incompetent command of failing to send reinforcement to support the undaunted Ulster soldiers. Beiner, ‘Between Trauma and Triumphalism’, p. 380.

¹⁶⁶ McGaughey, *Ulster’s Men*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁷ Taylor, *Loyalists War and Peace*, p. 24.

I always remember what the King said at the time, ‘what I like about the men of Ulster is how well they fight and die’—I would like a mural that says that! I’m for the Union, I’m a staunch loyalist but we need to remember that the English powers have always and continue to use us as their cannon fodder...you see it through empire building, we were its shock troops...right up to now. It was an Irish regiment in the British army that was one of the first into Iraq and one of the last out, same with Afghanistan. If we’re talking about not having our youth recruited into paramilitaries, let’s also talk about not having them recruited into the state’s paramilitary.¹⁶⁸

When prompted with similar questions of what one might wish to see from murals of the near future, another interviewee responded with ‘something that deals with the impact of violence on our community...what it cost them, spending the best years of their life behind bars because I think that would act as a deterrent.’¹⁶⁹ While this example references the negativity of incarceration, we could expand this motive to demonstrate the harsh reality of the mental health consequences when performing one’s duty.¹⁷⁰

8.6.3.2 Examining the Male Hero

Yet another elided episode from First World War history is the major crisis provoked when many men’s bodies (particularly from urban areas) were found to be notoriously inadequate.¹⁷¹ State intervention aimed to mould men into more appropriate shape. This

¹⁶⁸ Interview with ‘CM’, Belfast, 25 November 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Eileen Weir, Belfast, 25 November 2021.

¹⁷⁰ ‘We’re no longer young men. We’ve lost any desire to conquer the world. We are refugees. We are fleeing from ourselves. From our lives...the first shell to land went straight for our hearts’ from Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (London: Vintage, 1996 [1929]), p. 61.

¹⁷¹ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 13.

historical deconstruction of gender norms is in the undermining of the essentialism and ‘naturalisation’ of the weaponised body. A final flaw, again disclosed in a private context, reveals a distasteful detail behind the image and idolatry of the well-intending saviour-gentleman. After surviving Passchendaele, Captain William Montgomery of the 9th Royal Irish Rifles (36th Division), wrote to his parents of his revelation that violence was in his natural state as an Ulsterman:

[war] the oldest man’s profession is to me the absolute acme of joy and excitement...which of my ancestors had it? Pure naked primitive raw red lust to kill with the naked hand, tear his throat out with long fingernails.’¹⁷⁵

Here we have left the fantasies of Edwardian adventurers, Victorian nobility, or medieval chivalry far behind. In their place looms a warrior masculinity resembling the Celtic berserker—a subset whose extreme violence, according to Brandy, appalled even their own men.¹⁷⁶ This also plays into regressive stereotypes around the Irishman’s nature; an innate bellicosity that was often used to explain the existence of pre-war paramilitary organisations and violent incidents across the country. The berserker disarms the excusably honourable fighting, for he does not measure up to those muralised men, the likes of Robert Quigg and William McFadzean (both Victoria Cross winners).

¹⁷⁵ Timothy Bowman, *Carson’s Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 59.

¹⁷⁶ Magee, ‘The Deconstruction’, p. 132.

8.6.3.3 Brothers in Harm

The legacy of the Somme created a Unionist-centric model of martial masculinities; one that was so powerful, it overwhelmed the actual experience, particularly the shared experiences, of Irish Catholics and Protestants. Richard Grayson's meticulous work, however, indicates that significant numbers of both denominations served side by side in regular units of the British army.¹⁷⁷ The 16th (Irish) Division was notably engaged at the Messines Ridge in Autumn 1916 and the Third Ypres campaign in 1917, with prolonged time in the trenches facilitating a cross-denominational communality. It has been suggested that a motive for these battles receiving less commemorative space than the Somme is to maintain an exclusionary revisionism which favours a distinctly Orange-tinted lens when viewing the Great War. Increased public awareness of this would go some way to reinterpret the master narratives of what Alice Jardine calls the 'paternal fiction'.¹⁷⁸ If we recall the conscription crisis from chapter three, it split the island into the binary of the good son (obedient and Protestant) and the bad son (lazy, over-sensitive and Catholic). Although both sons believed that their sacrifice would produce drastically different outcomes—securing and denying Home Rule, respectively—the estranged brothers nonetheless came together in the service of their 'father' the monarch. Muralist Kenny Blair spoke highly of the programmes run by Glen Barr to enlighten loyalist and republican groups of these fraternal bonds during fieldtrips to Messines. Personal relationships help emotionally contour this theme of reconciliation, through figures like John Meeke and Willie Redmond: the former an Orangeman and Ulster volunteer turned stretch-bearer; the latter a nationalist lawyer and politician, brother to John,

¹⁷⁷ 'Rival paramilitary groups serving side by side in World War I' *Goldsmiths University*, London available at <https://www.gold.ac.uk/research/discover/impact/reshaping-history-in-ni/> accessed 16 March 2021.

¹⁷⁸ Rutherford, *Men's Silences*, p. 77.

space and queering of the street-level ‘stage’ allows for a dramatic exploration of identity and a pluralising of maleness outwith the brutally-patrolled and policed bounds of acceptability. Sections 8.4 and 8.5 emphasize the extent to which progressive dissidence is far from some alien territory populated by foreign ideas, but something of a (dis)comfort zone for both Presbyterian and Ulster-Scots ingroups. In particular we appreciate how both the arts and education are twin pillars supporting the critical thinking, transversal tendencies, and political imagination of both new loyalism and feminism. The final section stressed the need for uncomfortable honesty when young men come to question the values, views and indeed visions before them. Whether—without fear of castigation or disappointed judgement—they freely choose to accept and continue or reject and reform the norms bestowed upon them by generational mandate is still open to question. The emotional legacy of the First World War arguably presents one of the greatest tasks of re-evaluation. In that quest for a more nuanced understanding, subcultures (whether musical or political)¹⁸⁶ act as safe spaces, utopian sanctuaries that not only tolerate difference but actively encourage it. Throughout the chapter we can observe a main trend of radical non-conformity, a (dis)loyalty to follow tradition for its own sake. In their own way, each section exemplifies some subversive experimentation and the donning of alternative and ambiguous masks of masculine identity. Once worn, one discovers another landscape where difference is not dangerous and where autonomy and authenticity permit the widening of one’s worldview.

¹⁸⁶ In Spencer’s view those from a Protestant working class unafraid to promote left-wing ideas which have historically been associated with nationalism, offer critical resistance to the homogenized thinking which has pervaded unionism by voicing change and representing communities largely ignored. Spencer, ‘Constructing loyalism’, p. 42.

Thesis conclusion

This thesis was divided into two parts. The first diagnosed the weaponisation of murals and masculinities in loyalist NI while the second proposed a series of possible solutions. By ‘weaponised’, the author posited that murals are a manifestation of Galtung’s cultural violence which justifies the use of direct and/or structural violence. In this circumstance this is principally expressed in the glorification of three distinct conflicts. The accumulation of these depictions creates an intricate and densely layered symbolic landscape: a significant narration of meaning across a physical environment and a reflection of power and identity. How weaponised murals contribute to the weaponising of masculinities is explained by Lisle’s analogy to advertising. This propounds a similarity in the psychological effect of successful advertisements and murals in that both are capable of circumventing rational thought and embedding desires in the subconscious. This is advanced when we consider the long-term exposure to these ideological ‘adverts’; a negative staying power likely to have some impact on burgeoning masculinities during formative years. The parallel between image and action is not therefore an instant behavioural trigger. Rather, an insidious consequence results, with developments that may be difficult to detect. Part one charted the emergence of eight archetypes over the course of three periods of mural production, structured into three chapters. Chapter three began with the first appearance of loyalist/unionist murals which predated the existence of the modern state of NI and ended with the introduction of Direct Rule. Examination of this most chronologically ambitious period was possible due to scant archival evidence and a fundamental lack of diversity in subject matter. The overwhelmingly dominant theme established in this visual orthodoxy was the ‘besieged’ archetype including the siege and battle imagery faithfully reproduced through the patriline of the Jackson family

in Derry's Fountain estate. This, along with reference to the contemporary Home Rule crisis were, however, only minor details in a landscape very much under the command of the traditional patriarch of King Billy. He reigned supreme as the embodiment of a triumphalist cultural and political reading of the Protestant Ascendancy whilst a second, post-partition ascendancy began to take shape. King Billy is also the main character in the 'siege mentality'—a worldview fashioned from several closely related binary oppositions: insider vs. outsider, good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, victor vs. vanquished. This thesis gendered Forker and McCormick's expanded version of the siege and sanctuary metaphor. Now, not only could the mind be considered a psychological sanctuary containing cherished ideas and images, but specifically it held the true or real masculinities threatened from all sides by every other lower, lesser masculinities arranged in a hierarchy broadly correlating to Connell's ordering: hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalised. The sections of chapter four traced the fluctuating production of murals which witnessed a steady decline in the 1970s, generally interpreted as a loss of unionist confidence following Direct Rule. A resurgence followed the hunger strikes of 1981 with republicanism asserting its own agenda into a landscape that had for so long been the domain of a singular vision. This foreshadowed the steep escalation in reaction to the perceived 'betrayal' of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985. A trend favouring hyper-masculine, militarised content was not deterred by the optimism of the peace process. Indeed, during the 1990s we see minor archetypes reinforce the Troubled imagery of contemporary paramilitaries. Based on the dubious revisionism of Adamson's Cruthin theory, the UDA enlisted the aid of mythological heroism of Fionn mac Cumhaill and Cú Chulainn. The former representing a common theme of giantism; men taking up as much space as possible either physically as 'big men', on individual gable ends, or those littered through estates, demarcated as defended territory. The latter's death meanwhile makes him the ideal warrior for propaganda; the seventeen-year-old

demigod with superhuman abilities facing off single-handedly against entire armies and even dying on his feet. Supplementing these figures was a brief but notable reference to the institutional masculinities of the B-Specials and UDR. The conflation both celebrated the proud service of security forces—a highly contested assessment—and lamented their demise; a result of legal reform, which opened a vacuum of uncertainty as to who would ‘protect’ the loyalist people. A partial evolution throughout chapter four amounts to the same essential message communicated through different tropes and underpinned by the dramaturgical dimension. This brought together several interconnected ideas. Firstly, Butler’s seminal theory that gender is not something we innately have, rather something we do through repetitive gendered acts enters into this reckoning. Much of Goffman’s work proved valuable, particularly his frame analysis which sits within the framing of murals in how they edit and organise experiences from uses of the past to understandings of gender. The presentation of the self in everyday life again aptly describes how murals, unlike most art, are not behind museum walls but *are* the walls, facing out and projecting a carefully managed impression of loyalist masculinity.

The archetypes featured in part one all play a particular role in this conscious staging of selective memory. The final dramaturgical aspect pertains to the masks men are obligated to wear to put on a convincing performance. Aside from the painted masks worn by armed volunteers, men can encounter pressures to financially provide (material mask), participate in a competitive and compulsory heteronormativity (sexual), adopt a dead-eyed war face (aggressive), exude an aura of dauntlessness (invincible), and deny or deflect any ‘unmanly’ emotions such as fear or vulnerability (stoic). Chapter five problematised the negative peace of the ‘post-conflict’ age by reflecting on a host of legacy issues: prolonged episodes of political dysfunction, security concerns and bouts of civil unrest, poor community and policing relations, and stratified segregation. We also observed how the continuum of

violence runs through this febrile mix. This explored how unresolved weaponised masculinities harm other victimised demographics—namely women, queer people and people of colour. Rather than adapt murals as a means of mass communication, networked throughout the country, to tackle some of these urgent societal ills, the landscape still plays host to the same masculine, militarised templates. If anything, due to the decade of centenaries, the partitioned and entrenched archetypes became far more pronounced. The former drew on the Home Rule crisis, the first UVF, and a cult of personalities involving Frederick Crawford, James Craig, and most significantly Edward Carson—the modern patriarch, succeeding the title from King Billy. Additionally, the entrenched masculinities dug in deep as a romanticised account of the First World War was continually replayed. These representations, now out in force, were also joined by recurrences of the phantasmagorical spectres of Eddie the Trooper and the Grim Reaper, as well as the genocidal archetype: a distorted reading of the 1641 rebellion and Cromwellian reprisals. Whether valorising the soldiery and sacrifice of the Somme or evoking distant trauma of ethnic cleansing, part one was replete with demonstrations of how weaponised imagery made an ardent appeal to gendered emotions, either in stoking up animosities or selling the drama and excitement of war as spectacle. This led us to wonder what a disarming response could be; where might we locate some answers to the question of how to break the cycle of indoctrination and recruitment?

Part two opened with chapter six which started the search for external disarming material by locating several inspiring case studies in three main international contexts. The first of these was based in Africa with the anti-war artist group Ana Taban in South Sudan, the Men Engage Network and their South African partner organisation, Sonke Gender Justice. Brief consideration was also paid to Instituto Promundo, a Brazilian-based partner, when assessing how the theories of RAM could be tenably applied. The next context

analysed the work of the South-East Asian Fearless Collective, going through the steps in their methodology and how this was influenced their practical output. Despite being the most contemporary case study, Fearless already have an established style and strong sense of political and moral identity. Their modest size and structure are belied by their immense murals which reclaim spaces of danger and anger with love, solidarity and peace. The final context of the Americas began with the mural practices of post-conflict Guatemala and Chile, moved up to community activism of San Francisco and Los Angeles, moved across to the alternative masculinities of 1960s Chicago, before settling in Philadelphia, the paragon of a disarming symbolic landscape.

Chapter seven explained RAM, the paradigm for disarming, by breaking it down into its three fundamental elements. ‘Radical’ was clarified by examining three traits: the declarative visual voice, verbing the mural, and the 3 ‘Rs’ of disarming. The first stated that radical art should endeavour to make bold statements and assert its positivity with a similar power and presence of spectacular conflict imagery. To further this point, the author compared imagined interventions with several prior, top-down interventions. Though sympathising with the difficulties they faced, it was recommended that the rather bland neutrality of these efforts should be avoided; if theirs was a ‘whisper’ of negative peace, i.e., merely an absence of conflict imagery, then the radical voice should be a full-throated argument for positive peace. In order to realise the full potential of murals, the author argued that we should stop thinking of them as only ‘products’ and start perceiving the process as a series of opportunities for meaningful interaction and personal transformation, as opposed to just surface-level change. When outlining how this verbing would unfold, we borrowed Mosher’s tennis game as a procedural template with decision-making being passed from active resident-participants to artist/facilitators and back again. This carefully followed steps of location scouting, community-led research into subject matter, formulating designs, and

executing the work in relative degrees of creative responsibility. While verbing emphasises the time during the making of the mural, repeated activation (the last of the 3 Rs of disarming along with removal and replacement) shifted our concerns to when the mural was made.

Unlike the more passive Reimagining which fades into irrelevance, repeated activation strives to maintain the mural (not only its physical condition) but its meaning, magnifying its significance as a site of engagement. The educational, political, and cultural variants of activation all demonstrate that it is somewhat fallacious to even consider the radical mural 'finished', for if public art is ever to truly effect its public it must be activated as frequently as contentious commemoration and divisive street drama. Determining what 'alternative' might look like is fairly straightforward given how homogenised the weaponised material is. Alternative is essentially an equal and opposite response to the archetypes. Collectively referred to as the C-HV, this involved both accounting for the glaring representational imbalances as well as redefining terminology from the weaponised lexicon. Here the acutely gendered renditions of social roles such as defender, protector, warrior, and hero all underwent drastic change in an adaptation of stereotypical masculine performances. The values and virtues that these characters embody were also redefined as we widened the interpretation of previously narrowed notions of duty, service, sacrifice, courage, and strength. Utopia, as an upside-down world, was not one plunged into chaos and confusion. Rather, it would be home to a revolutionary inversion, not only of the contents of the symbolic landscape, but how this material would be used to embolden genuine gender equality and social transformation. The final facet of RAM, gave an overview of the current status of mural ownership, being a tyranny of a minority imposing its agenda through coercion and intimidation onto a population whose willingness is very onerous to ascertain. The flaws in this are obvious but further highlighted when we compare the tyranny to how murals are generally used elsewhere, both geographically and historically.

By contrast, the mural as a people's art would allow them to seize the means of cultural production and choose both the past, present and future they wish to live amongst. This citizens' media would differ from some mainstream coverage, depicting a spectrum of loyalism and masculinities from a democratic platform. Chapter eight developed the search for tangible disarming material in loyalism and affiliated identities, told across six sections. It was proposed that new loyalism disarms much of the dominant paramilitary iteration and its progression was documented from the prison compounds of the early 1970s, political experiments and key documents, involvement in the peace process, and activities after GFA. The author argued that the prominence of women-led activism and social movements should be matched by a prominent place on the visual frontline. This section again followed a chronology of continual commitment even against internal opposition to the pioneering bravery of transversal dialogue. A feminist landscape would disarm the erroneous and essentialist belief of women as the natural opposite to men: weak, soft and vulnerable. This feminised stigma of excessive emotionality is also aimed at non-straight masculinities. Queering the stage would therefore set out to break the binary with artful experimentation, dark satirical humour, and defiant pride revealing a veritable dressing room of different costumes, props and masks of masculinity. The fourth section disarmed the belligerence, zero-sum absolutism, and hypermasculinity of 'Super Prods' with the courage, empathy and non-conformity of 'Rotten Prods'. While the originals of the early 20th century disobeyed a middle-class divide and rule, we appreciated how historical examples of 'rotteness' provide a firm foundation of Presbyterian radicalism and liberation theology as an ecumenical thirdspace between the us and them. The author developed this dissenting tradition further by advocating for Ulster-Scots to be regarded as another thirdspace; one of cultural identity in which both the arts and education are highly valued for fostering critical pedagogies and philosophical curiosity. By turning this proclivity for dissent on regressive gender identities,

intellectual tools such as the arts and education could help dismantle the master's cold house and with it his master narratives. We ended the internal sources by considering youth subcultures as an alternative to the weaponised sanctuary, built from paranoia and anxiety. As safe spaces largely free from the divisions of gender, race, religion and sexuality, movements like punk, rave and hip hop provide rare chances to protest against orthodox masculinity and launch bold new performances.

The pacifist rebellion often voiced by youth subcultures encouraged us to rethink the valorised legacy of the First World War. This seems apt given how throughout all of part one, young men remain the target audience for romanticised propaganda. To disarm these myths, we considered several factors such as a class-conscious brotherhood in the trenches, as well as objective facts that return the verdict that the Somme was arguably far more futile slaughter than glorious blood sacrifice. Other realities also stripped soldiery of its honour like the physical condition of some recruits, instances of insubordination, and the untold devastation of servicemen's mental health.

This final section offers some closing remarks regarding contemporary NI; further developments in related research and the loyalist mural practice. If we reflect on one of the most underlying aspects of the thesis' structure and content, we notice that the C-HV is a useful anomaly in perspectives scripted by binary oppositions. It moves us away from absolute singularities, a view of monoliths such as class or gender exploded into fragmented multiplicities. Throughout this great transition, elasticity proves a vital strategy of resilience allowing for a deep commitment to innovation and flexibility. The ambition and adventure beyond one's own boundaries —whether territorial or behavioural —opens before us as a widened worldview of tolerance, inclusion and love whilst disarming the belligerent maintenance of its limits. The masculinities of part one were content to live within the

militarised sanctuary, shut the gates of their mind and build their walls higher. The masculinities of part two at least lower the walls. Some will go further and seek to tear them down while lowering their bridge. Further work is surely to be encouraged then, which supports imagery that persuades more branches of loyalism to lift the siege mentality and confidently leave the confines of a masculine self that might have seemed a sanctuary but had in fact been a prison. It is the emotional enclosure from which we must free our dialogical selves and others, not only removing one's own masks of masculinity, but honourably helping others to do the same. Likewise, both research and practice on young men making that awkward crossing from childhood to adulthood could offer moral guidance as they take on more complex and demanding roles in society. A reformed symbolic landscape could provide an accommodating environment in which young loyalists increasingly become aware of their ability to think, reason, and contemplate in initially abstract ways. From these skills, however, may emerge the creativity to imagine 'what-if?' and to compare ideals of justice, access to opportunities, and the reality of tremendous inequalities.

To this end, murals are a vast communicative network which we should not seek to eliminate but ameliorate. There is nothing wrong with the delivery mechanism. In fact, for social movements, locally and globally, this kind of media is the life blood, the very oxygen, to the possibility of progression. This research has deviated from most of the discourse on murals which are generally concerned with 'the entrenchment of existing structures and beliefs...rather than advocating any Utopian possibility of a new Ulster'.¹⁸⁷ To this contribution of originality, the author would recommend further exploration into the prospect of subverting to two principal modes of operation considered in this project: the advertising analogy and the dramaturgical dimension. We have seen how neither are primed essentially

¹⁸⁷ Graham, 'No place of the mind', p. 263.

for weaponisation. Rather, it is how they are applied to the social construction of masculinities that determines their influence. It is abundantly clear that prior attempts fall well short of true disarming, lacking the drama and excitement hitherto reserved for spectacular displays of conflict. Any peaceful, non-violent masculinities would need to be sold to us as convincingly as those of war. It is just as apparent that there are performances of gendered behaviour no one wishes to see acted out again.

Thus, those alternative roles readily identified which would benefit all NI should be the characters young men are motivated to follow; the positions for which men should be recruited. If gender is something we do, we can do it differently. The fact that the past is shaping the future need not trouble us since it is a fiction that present uses of the past cannot change. Like much else in part two, this pivots on what pasts we remember and how, this will establish what the future of the past is in NI. To an extent the future of political loyalism is in the hands of a new generation of activists; the direction they take it in would no doubt be steadied by implementing clear and bold gender-based initiatives. The importance of modern masculinity as ‘part of the cement of modern society’¹⁸⁸ certainly makes manly ideals difficult to defeat. Yet the writing on the wall is not indelible and while history is never so easily undone, Miller reminds us that ‘Clio was one of the Muses, not one of the Fates.’¹⁸⁹ Miller also furnishes us with an interpretation of duty pertaining to the study (indeed art) of history, to which the author wholeheartedly subscribes. It has been a central aim of this research—and could inform further work—to provide perspectives of understanding which may enable ‘the actors in this drama-if tragedy it be-to play the heroic rather than the ignoble part’.¹⁹⁰ Notwithstanding the distinctly problematic definition of ‘heroic’, itself a subject of

¹⁸⁸ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 193.

¹⁸⁹ Miller, *Queen’s Rebels*, p. xxix of the preface.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 166.

much discussion in this project, Miller's prognosis is one worth expanding on; the notion that 'life is not art, and in life, tragedy understood can be tragedy overcome.'¹⁹¹ For every mention of utopia, this thesis has set out to balance optimism with grounded realism. Naturally, a total overhaul of the current weaponised landscape is highly unlikely, but it may be reached incrementally—and that in and of itself makes it a valid pursuit. Just as the buttressing of hegemonic masculinities occurs via multi-generational transference, so too will its dismantling take root over a similar timeframe.

During this period, new social paradigms would implement a transformative revolution distinguished by being an entire culture of peace. In such circumstances, non-violence is embodied and practiced as a lifestyle; an all-embracing philosophy engaged in a daily non-militarised battle. Should the ideologies in the landscape struggle to become firmly and fully radical (a term we must judge in the cultural relativity of loyalism) then a questioning at least of old dichotomies could encourage further movement away from zero-sum positioning toward one of egalitarianism and emancipation. Change in a weaponised world of loyalist NI has often been perceived as a threat even exaggerated to the point of crises, but of all these there is one that is very clear and present, and it is the crisis of good men who do nothing. The responsibility of acting against weaponised masculinities then is to be shared. It is a proposal which will probably be described by some as idealistic, ambitious, fraught with difficulties and even dangerous to attempt. So has anything that was ever worth doing. The most dangerous thing to do would be to do nothing. Although this project has finished, it is the author's last hope that this contribution may affirm those who, in their own way, make their mark on loyalist identity in brave brushstrokes of a beginning.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 166.

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