

CHAPTER 1

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TROUBLES

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Northern Ireland is a small region, comparable in size to Yorkshire or Connecticut, and with just 1.8 million inhabitants. But for scholars and students interested in the burgeoning field of memory studies it presents a vast academic safari park. Where else can we find a society—or perhaps we should say two societies—that reenact their violent past so obsessively? In the 1990s there were close to 3,500 commemorative parades taking place annually—one for every five hundred inhabitants, or ten for each day of the year.¹ The vast majority of these are sponsored by the Orange Order, that curious mixture of Masonic fraternity, old boys club, and vigilante patrol, and its cognate organizations; they mark the anniversaries of the two iconic seventeenth-century confrontations, the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry, but also of the Battle of the Somme (1916) and more recent confrontations. Republican parades are fewer but are still vital to mobilizing the faithful; this is no longer the job of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which closely mirrored the

structures and symbols of Orangeism but is now effectively controlled by Sinn Féin and related groups such as the National Graves Association, Belfast. Easter remains the crux of the republican calendar, and the 1916 rising is still the paradigmatic act of resistance, even if Belfast's contribution to it was practically nonexistent.²

It is hard to overstate the absolute centrality, in terms of both ideology and organization, of these processions to unionist and nationalist mobilization. In the lulls between Northern Ireland's various elections they keep the pot boiling. This is especially true of the marches of the Orange Order, whose leadership has painted the organization into a series of increasingly futile corners since the Drumcree standoffs of the mid-1990s.³ In all the upheavals within Unionism since the sixties the Orange Order has indicated where the political center of Unionism lies, and the bands, banners, and slogans associated with it have provided the standard trappings of loyalist rebellion.⁴ It is the oldest political institution in Ireland, twice as old as the Ulster Unionist Council or the original Sinn Féin, and it is remarkable that no satisfactory historical study of the organization exists.⁵ Like Terence O'Neill and Brian Faulkner before him, David Trimble became convinced in the 1990s that Northern Ireland could not survive without cross-community support. Like them he found it necessary to articulate a modern, pluralist kind of Unionism, and indeed did so with more conviction and imagination than any of his predecessors. Eventually, however, he was defeated by segregationists who emphasized the traditional religious and cultural expressions of Ulster Protestants and above all the rituals of Orangeism.⁶

Republicanism has been equally reliant on "memory work."⁷ A trawl through issues of *An Phoblacht* over the past fifteen years quickly confirms this point. In just a few weeks during the summer of 2011, *An Phoblacht* reports a march through Kilrea in remembrance of volunteer Tommy Donaghy, led by a color party from the South Derry Martyrs Band, with a graveside oration by the Sinn Féin politician Francie Molloy; the Eamonn Lafferty Memorial Lecture, given by Martin McGuinness, in honor of the first Derry volunteer killed by the British Army in the 1970s; a graveside oration for Patrick Cannon, who died in a premature explosion on the Donegal/Tyrone border in 1976; the unveiling of a plaque in memory of Fian Tobias Molloy, killed by a rubber bul-

let fired by the British Army in 1972; and an article to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the assassination of the vice president of Sinn Féin, Máire Drumm.⁸ "Republicanism sustains itself," Malachi O'Doherty once caustically observed, "for the work of respecting the dead. . . . If the cause collapses, there may be no one left to tend their graves or honour their memory. Conversely, if people forget to honour the dead, the cause will collapse, and scepticism is as close as a neighbour."⁹

The republican movement is by far the most dynamic manipulator of collective memory on the island of Ireland. The Provisionals often present themselves as a natural outgrowth of the Civil Rights campaign of the 1960s. They have quietly co-opted Joe McCann, the preeminent icon of the Official IRA.¹⁰ And, all the while, they preserve the republican tradition of Wolfe Tone, the Fenians, and Patrick Pearse in what they regard as its purest form. Without abandoning the language of national self-determination, republican groups have broadened their appeal by reframing political demands in the newer discourse of human rights violations. The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign, to take one prominent example, has demonstrated the remarkable capacity of republicanism to reinvent itself, successfully internationalizing the elaborate rituals that grew up around the annual commemoration of the fourteen unarmed protesters killed by soldiers of the Parachute Regiment (Paras) on 30 January 1972. At the same time, the prolonged campaign to overturn the findings of the Widgery Tribunal became linked with other, exclusively republican goals: the recovery of the remains of Tom Williams, the IRA man hanged for killing a member of the Catholic Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in 1942, or the call for an inquiry into the three unarmed IRA members killed on Gibraltar in 1988.¹¹ This closer identification with physical-force resistance to British rule takes us a long way from the famous image of Fr. Edward Daly waving his white handkerchief as he helped move the dying Jackie Duddy. The brutality of the Paras marked a turning point precisely because it was indiscriminate: ordinary Catholics realized that "it could have been me."¹²

In the years since 1998 Sinn Féin has successfully repositioned itself as the most effective guarantor of equality for nationalists while simultaneously protecting its monopoly over the memory of republican armed struggle. Maintaining this tightrope act means that, for some of the time

at least, republican violence has to be characterized not so much as a revolutionary instrument in the struggle for national liberation, but as the unfortunate product of unequal political and social relationships. Such elisions have shocked historians and journalists but are easily forgiven by nationalist voters who see Sinn Féin as their most effective political voice.¹³ As with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Féin has compromised its founding principles for electoral gain, maintaining the illusion of ideological fundamentalism through the energy it devotes to memorialization, thus safeguarding its core constituency from more radical alternatives. Each celebration of armed struggle risks alienating moderates within the nationalist bloc; but the offense caused to unionists is always much deeper, and ultimately the inevitable unionist reaction will reproduce the basic communal fault line which sustains the Sinn Féin vote.¹⁴

These entrenched cultures of commemoration profoundly shaped the emergence of the Northern Ireland conflict.¹⁵ They continue to shape the postconflict era, in which the Troubles are fought over again, this time symbolically, as the main protagonists seek to control public discussion of the past. Scholars interested in the memory boom will find all the hard cases familiar from other “transitional” societies.¹⁶ Investigation of the “dirty war” has uncovered evidence of persistent collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries.¹⁷ The publicity surrounding public inquiries into state violence (most obviously Bloody Sunday) has reinforced the demand for official investigations of particular republican atrocities: Omagh, Claudy, La Mon, Kingsmill. Those injured or bereaved in such notorious attacks have sometimes combined to exert political pressure, as when the La Mon victims denounced Ian Paisley for entering government with Sinn Féin.¹⁸ Northern Ireland also has its own “disappeared”: the painstaking identification and excavation of burial sites has so far uncovered the remains of ten of the seventeen individuals killed and secretly interred by republican paramilitaries.¹⁹ Finally, the Troubles created their own *lieux de mémoire*, most obviously the prisons of the Crumlin Road, Armagh, and, above all, Long Kesh/the Maze; the subject of recurrent controversy since the 360-acre site was transferred to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2002.²⁰

The plan to construct a “Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution Centre” alongside the retained buildings of the Maze prison has on several occasions produced a state of paralysis in the power-sharing executive. But an examination of newspapers during the first fifteen years since the Good Friday Agreement also reveals the continuous low-level antagonism caused by the “memory wars” at a local level. The memorialization of the Troubles dead began soon after the first IRA ceasefire.²¹ A number of republican memorials were denounced by unionists as offensive to those families who had suffered as a result of paramilitary violence. Perhaps the most dramatic case was the sculpture of a ten-foot masked Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) man in Derry City Cemetery, erected in honor of the hunger strikers Michael Devine and Patsy O’Hara. One Protestant pensioner threatened to exhume the remains of his parents from the cemetery and have them reburied elsewhere so that he would not have to pass “this disgusting statue of a terrorist” every time he visited their grave.²² The Equality Commission was asked to investigate complaints about two other Hunger Strike memorials in Dungiven and Dromore (Co. Tyrone), and a Celtic cross dedicated to Colum Marks, an IRA man killed during a mortar bomb attack on the Downpatrick RUC station.²³ Both are located in public spaces. Depressingly, memorials on all sides—to republicans, loyalists, British soldiers, the local security forces and even civilians—have been paint-bombed, defaced, or smashed.²⁴

Like flags, murals, and painted curbstones, memorials to the victims of the Northern Ireland conflict have become boundary markers in a society where communal segregation has increased rather than diminished since the ceasefires. The combination of voter polarization and the relative stability of power-sharing has created a situation where cultural validation—and perhaps even the past itself—becomes a resource to be sliced up and allocated like social services, schools, broadcasting funds, or housing. The result is a kind of territorialization of memory, in which mutually exclusive narratives of the conflict become embedded in Northern Ireland’s tangled sectarian geography, and the task of establishing a principled basis for coexistence between the two communities is abandoned. The impossibility of reaching a common understanding of the conflict is encapsulated in the comments of the Democratic

Unionist MP Jeffrey Donaldson, a key figure in discussions over the Conflict Resolution Centre intended for the vast Maze prison complex:

Hand on my heart, if I'm being totally honest with you, I would have levelled the site, I just would have levelled the site. It's in my constituency. I would have put things on it that are about the new Northern Ireland not the old Northern Ireland. Look, if people want to retain an H-Block, or want to retain elements of the prison, fine, take it down, ship it off to West Belfast. . . . You could give the Loyalists an H-Block and put it wherever they want to put it as well.²⁵

In spite of increasingly high levels of segregation, not all the inhabitants of the six counties live in ethnic enclaves, or want to, however, and even those who do still share the same state-run institutions (including the Equality Commission, the Parades Commission, the Victims Commission), the same public spaces, and the same mass media, where they not unreasonably expect to have their values given some form of expression. So far it has proved impossible to devise a method of dealing with the past that commands widespread support. The past has been used to maintain ethnic solidarity in the divided towns of the North, and used in ways that reinforce hostility between the two communities. For those who hope that history—or memory—might help people of the North to overcome division the outlook is bleak.

THE CONFLICT ABOUT THE CONFLICT

Surveying rival explanations of the Troubles, Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry have remarked that Northern Ireland is the subject of a "meta-conflict," that is, "a conflict about what the conflict is about."²⁶ The antagonism between unionists and nationalists has variously been viewed as an ethnic conflict, a clash of cultures, an anticolonial struggle, or a terrorist campaign; some think it is about national self-determination, and others see it as an expression of religious sectarianism. Concealed within the term "Troubles," the rather homely euphemism used in everyday



Loyalist mural, Shankill Road, West Belfast, 2004. Claremont Colleges Digital Library. Photo copyright © Tony Crowley. By permission of Tony Crowley.

speech by large sections of both communities in Northern Ireland, there exists a complicated range of violent acts. It might be helpful to make a basic distinction between two patterns of conflict, which can be described as vertical and horizontal. The first, or vertical, pattern consists of the violence between republican insurgents and the security forces of the British state, and it accounts for many of the deaths that resulted from gun battles, sniper attacks, assassinations, and ambushes. Of the 2001 deaths attributable to republican paramilitaries, more than half were members of the security forces. The British Army meanwhile killed 117 republicans, and the principal objective of Operation Banner was to contain the IRA. Many observers viewed this conflict as a

form of anticolonial struggle, a continuation of the IRA campaign of 1919–21. This is also how the Provisionals portrayed their own “armed struggle.” It is an interpretation embodied in the military terminology employed by republicans—of volunteers, OCs, active service units—and mimicked to some extent by loyalist paramilitaries.

Republican insurgents saw themselves as fighting a war against the British state. But the IRA campaign was activated and fueled by street disturbances between Protestant and Catholic crowds. Patterns of residential segregation, rioting along territorial boundaries, and localized bursts of ethnic cleansing, or “burning out,” were all recurrent features of the history of Belfast since the 1830s.²⁷ The sporadic rumbling of this horizontal violence was present during those periods of Irish history which appeared to be relatively calm at the level of high politics. As early as 1813 a Twelfth of July parade in Belfast precipitated a riot resulting in two fatalities. Regular detonations followed in 1832, 1835, 1841, 1843, 1852, 1857, 1864, 1872, 1880, 1884, 1886, 1898, 1907, 1909, 1912, 1920–22, and 1935. Orange processions frequently provided the spark, but other precipitating factors included elections, the preaching of antipopery sermons, a funeral procession, even on one occasion a Sunday school procession. In Derry, meanwhile, there were major disturbances in 1869 and 1883, while riots occurred in other towns such as Lisburn, Lurgan, and Portadown. By the 1880s these riots had already assumed ritualized forms. In his vivid book, *The Truth about Ulster* (1914), the journalist F. Frankfort Moore recalled how he had learned “the proper way to construct a street riot” in Portadown in 1869; in later decades he charted the adaptation of the street fighter’s technology as kidney-shaped cobbles gave way to “square setts” and eventually to riveters’ nuts from the shipyard.²⁸

That the IRA should have been resurrected in the streets running between the Shankill and the Falls Road should not surprise us. West Belfast had provided the fault lines of Victorian and Edwardian disturbances, as it provided them in 1964 and 1969. The most recent scholarly account of the early Troubles documents fully the communal tensions fomented by John McKeague’s Shankill Defence Association, frequently but inaccurately labeled “Paisleyites” at the time. The stone throwing and street fighting orchestrated by McKeague escalated into

full-scale rioting and the intimidation of Catholic families living in “Protestant areas,” creating the conditions in which “forties men” like Billy McKee, Seamus Twomey, and Joe Cahill were able to reactivate the IRA. If the loosely structured Protestant crowd was the initial aggressor, it was the armed interventions of this small group of veteran republicans at Unity Flats in August 1969 and at St. Matthew’s Church in June 1970 that propelled the violence onto a more lethal plane.²⁹

In their attempts to manage the Northern Ireland problem, London and Dublin have left the “meta-conflict” to the natives. It is surely part of the historian’s job, however, to test the concepts and categories employed by the protagonists, particularly where they depend on simplified or distorted representations of the past. Since the 1994 ceasefire our understanding of the character of political violence in Northern Ireland has been transformed by the statistical analysis carried out by Marie Smyth and the other researchers associated with the Cost of the Troubles Survey.³⁰ Their findings have challenged common perceptions of perpetrators and victims in a manner that discomfits both unionists and republicans. Most notably, the examination of those killed reveals that republican paramilitaries have been responsible for more Catholic deaths than the British Army and the local security forces combined—in spite of the IRA’s self-image as the defender of nationalist communities. For most unionists, meanwhile, Northern Ireland was a successful democratic polity in which ordinary people came under attack from terrorists. A subconscious tendency to equate the majority of ordinary, law-abiding people with the *Protestant* majority is perhaps evident in a detailed memorandum drawn up by FAIR (Families Acting for Innocent Relatives) in 2004:

We must make the point that [our case] was in fact a mirror image of the South African experience where instead of a majority being denied their rights and democratic expression by a minority we saw the opposite. Here a violent terrorist minority sought to overturn the democratic wish of the majority and impose their political will through force. In the process they abused the rights of all and murdered with abandon. To equate that to a struggle for liberation and freedom is simply to accept the propaganda of the terrorist.³¹

This link was explicitly recognized in the “Long March” of victims’ groups and their supporters between Derry and Portadown in the summer of 1999, where the organizers’ aims slipped unthinkingly from drawing attention to the “forgotten victims” of the conflict to the broader project of securing “parity of esteem for Protestant culture and heritage and for support for deprived unionist communities.”³² In fact the Catholic minority (roughly one-third of the population in 1969, rising to roughly two-fifths by 1998) accounted for a majority of all those civilians killed. (Table 1.1.)

The statistics on who was responsible for the deaths between 1966 and 1999 (Table 1.2)—particularly the finding that republican paramilitaries caused almost 60 percent of them—are now frequently repeated in the public domain, where they are used to close down debate rather than open it up. They do not provide anything like a complete view of “the cost of the Troubles.” Much less research has been carried out on those injured during the conflict, about ten times the number of fatalities. To get some idea of the challenge it is worth considering a little-known survey on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) conducted by four psychiatrists working at hospitals in and around Belfast in the 1980s. On examining the case records of 499 victims of political violence they found a high incidence of depression, sleep disturbance, and startle reactions; 46 percent had experienced marital disharmony, and 4 percent had attempted suicide. The cases remind us of the wider impact of insurgency and civil disturbance, scarcely the subject of serious research. They include 90 targets of attempted assassination, 34 people injured in knee-cappings or other “punishment” assaults; and 75 people held captive by paramilitaries, usually in their own houses. Almost 40 percent of the total had witnessed a violent incident in which the subject or someone close to him or her was at risk; almost 30 percent had sustained injuries of various degrees of severity; 17 percent had seen someone being killed. Of the total group it was found that 23 percent had suffered PTSD.³³

It has been pointed out that these regional statistics conceal significant local variations which have shaped perceptions of responsibility and blame.³⁴ In the working-class nationalist areas of West and North Belfast we can find patterns of violence dominated by the vertical struggle

Table 1.1. Distribution of Deaths by Religion, 1966–1999

	No.	%
Catholic civilians	1,232	33.88
Protestant civilians	698	19.20
Security forces (NI)	509	14.00
British Army	503	13.83
Republicans	392	10.78
Loyalists	144	3.96
Other	158	4.35
Total	3,636	100

Source: 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, 1999), 1477.

Table 1.2. Responsibility for Deaths, 1966–1999

	No.	%
Republican paramilitaries	2,139	58.83
Loyalist paramilitaries	1,050	28.88
All security forces	367	10.09
Other	80	2.20
Total	3,636	100

Source: McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives*, 1476.

between the IRA and the security forces. In Ardoyne, for example, 99 local people died during the conflict, most of them Catholics. Although 26 residents were killed by the state forces, more often than not in disputed circumstances no one has ever been arrested or questioned about these deaths. A further 50 residents were killed by loyalist paramilitaries, who in some cases at least benefited from collusion with the state forces. It is easy to see how many people in North Belfast came to regard the Troubles as an attempt by the British state to coerce and control the nationalist people. Following four years of gathering oral histories, the Ardoyne Commemoration Project reached three conclusions:

1. The British State forces acted with impunity.
2. There was collusion between the British State agencies and Unionist paramilitaries. This was structured and institutional.
3. The British Government was an armed, active participant in the ...conflict.³⁵

In many rural areas east of the Bann, by contrast, members of the local security forces greatly outnumbered civilians or paramilitaries among those who lost their lives. In many cases family members witnessed the attacks, and sometimes were injured or killed. In the town of Dungannon, County Tyrone, republicans were responsible for two-thirds of all deaths, while the local security forces killed none. In the "bandit country" of Newry and South Armagh republicans were responsible for 88 percent of all deaths, and 60 percent of those killed belonged to the state forces.³⁶ Particularly vulnerable were the members of the RUC and the UDR, often part-timers, who lived on isolated farms in areas where republican sympathies were entrenched. Of forty police officers and UDR soldiers killed in County Armagh during the 1980s, more than a quarter were ambushed while off-duty: visiting a livestock market, driving to a darts match, doing the milk delivery round or other day jobs. In addition, the IRA killed four civilians who were former members of the security forces and one retired unionist politician—mostly in their homes. The nature of these attacks inevitably gave the impression that family members were fair game: seventeen-year-old Trevor Foster was blown up while parking his father's car in the family's garage; Cecily Gibson was killed by a land mine alongside her husband,

a senior judge.³⁷ Against a background of low-level harassment and sectarian tension republican violence in such areas was interpreted as a struggle to drive out the Protestants.

The most contentious element in the meta-conflict has been the role of the Provisional IRA. It should be immediately obvious that divisions over the IRA's campaign cannot be completely divorced from differences over the existence of Northern Ireland itself. Republicans were able to claim during the 1970s and 1980s that they could not join the democratic process because there was no authentically democratic process while partition remained. Sinn Féin's position is now constrained, however, by its participation in constitutional structures which do not provide any compelling reasons for thinking that a united Ireland is significantly closer than it was twenty or thirty years ago. Republicans have been unable to reverse the partition of Ireland, to undo the basic legal and constitutional framework of Northern Ireland, or even to have the criminal records of politically motivated prisoners expunged. Increasingly, therefore, mainstream republicans justify their long war by reference to the brutality of the British Army and the complicity of British intelligence agencies in loyalist assassinations, as opposed to the mere fact of British rule itself. For the most part the London and Dublin governments have tolerated this rewriting of the republican past in the interests of peace. Many people have been bewildered or angered by the latitude allowed to former paramilitaries. Michael Gallagher, whose son Aidan was one of the twenty-nine civilians killed in the Omagh bomb on 15 August 1998, has complained that "the word 'terrorist' seems to have been removed from the dictionary that we used too often in Northern Ireland over the past 35 years."³⁸

Republicans are perfectly aware that they never enjoyed the active support of most the nationalists they claimed to represent. But the self-image of the IRA volunteer as a soldier of the people is nevertheless rooted in experience. The Provisionals derived their mandate from the networks of sympathizers who gave them intelligence, shelter, and food and who supported their protest within the prisons.³⁹ Their morale was further sustained by the fact that many of those nationalists who rejected the violence nevertheless "felt they could identify with the hurt and anger that was generating it."⁴⁰ It is impossible to quantify levels of popular backing for the IRA and very difficult to interpret what little

evidence there is. John Hume's principled denunciations of violence were consistent and in the circumstances courageous.⁴¹ In the 1984 European elections Sinn Féin ran a high-profile candidate, Danny Morrison, who received 13.3 percent of first preference votes, as compared to Hume's 22.1 percent. This was perhaps the closest thing we have to a nationalist poll on the relative attractions of moral and physical force. Research carried out in 1978 found that 65.8 percent of Catholics agreed, to varying degrees, with the statement, "The IRA are basically a bunch of criminals and murderers" (table 1.3). Even Sinn Féin voters were divided on the use of armed struggle, with more than a fifth of those sampled in a MORI poll conducted in 1984 opposing the pursuit of political change by physical force (see table 1.4).

Table 1.3. Attitudes to Paramilitary Violence, 1978

	<i>"The IRA are basically patriots and idealists"</i>	
	Catholics	Protestants
Strongly disagree	18.8	45.8
Moderately disagree	19.9	13.0
Slightly disagree	14.9	6.5
Slightly agree	21.8	11.6
Moderately agree	15.7	9.2
Strongly agree	8.8	13.9

	<i>"The IRA are basically a bunch of criminals and murderers"</i>	
	Catholics	Protestants
Strongly disagree	11.8	2.1
Moderately disagree	9.6	1.9
Slightly disagree	12.9	3.8
Slightly agree	21.2	5.0
Moderately agree	21.2	13.0
Strongly agree	23.4	74.2

Source: E. Moxon-Browne, "The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 5, no. 1-2 (1981): 1-72, at 58.

Table 1.4. Nationalist Attitudes to Political Violence, 1984

How strongly do you agree or disagree that the use of violence can sometimes be justified to bring about political change?

	Sinn Féin (%)	SDLP* (%)
Agree	70	7
Neither	7	8
Disagree	22	81
Don't know/no opinion	1	4

*Social Democratic and Labour Party.

Source: E. Moxon-Browne, "Alienation: The Case of Catholics in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Political Science* 14 (1986): 84.

Perhaps we can conclude that the IRA campaign enjoyed the active or passive support of somewhere between one-third and two-fifths of nationalists. All serious scholarship stresses that the momentum of the Provisionals' campaign in Belfast was closely related to the aggression of the security forces, in particular of the British Army.⁴² Even in strongly nationalist areas of Belfast, however, attitudes were not static. In 1972-73 the sociologist Frank Burton found that around a third of the Catholics of Ardoyne were consistently pro-IRA, with the local priests leading the critique of militant Republicanism. Between these poles, the majority of residents tilted backward and forward, depending largely on the behavior of the British soldiers (house searches, verbal abuse, physical violence, humiliation). Many local Catholics complained that the Provisionals, far from acting as defenders of their districts, were cynically using the local population as a shield, manipulating children and adolescents. There was some ill feeling too about punishment shootings and beatings inflicted on residents. On the other hand, Burton emphasized that the Provisionals took care not to overstep the boundaries of tolerable behavior: "If the movement persistently violated community norms, doors would stop opening, billets would be harder to get, informing would rise and their isolation would increase."⁴³ Even in

Ardayne, ambivalence was probably more common than absolute positions on the morality of physical force.

NORTHERN IRELAND IN TRANSITION

In the Good Friday Agreement itself the importance of grappling with the legacy of violence was clearly recognized, but reconciliation was hastily subordinated to more urgent political priorities. The Northern Irish political settlement is based on a variety of consociational governments, creating institutions which work around the entrenched antagonisms of the two main communities rather than attempt to overcome them.⁴⁴ Its most distinguished theorist is Brendan O'Leary, who has memorably described the accommodation in Northern Ireland as "a bargain derived from mutually conflicting hopes about its likely long-run outcome."⁴⁵ These mutually conflicting hopes could be sustained because the external forces in London and Dublin that have driven the peace process forward have no desire to impose an official version of the past on the region's inhabitants.

The devolved structures created in 1998 constitute a repudiation of the simple majority-rule model of government which had been discredited under the old Stormont regime. By institutionalizing cross-community consensus as the basis of decision making, however, the agreement also inadvertently institutionalized the communal division deplored by so many of the individuals and groups who actively tried to make Northern Ireland a more equal, tolerant, and peaceful society.⁴⁶ Members of the Legislative Assembly are required to register as unionist, nationalist, or "other." Executive power is exercised by a duumvirate appointed by parallel consent, that is, by the support of concurrent majorities in both the unionist and nationalist blocs. Other key decisions are reached by a 'weighted' majority procedure, that is, by 60 percent of Assembly members, including 40 percent in each of the communal blocs. Ministerial positions are then allocated according to the d'Hondt rule, with parties nominating ministers in proportion to their strength in the Assembly. The resuscitated Stormont government reflects an entrenched stalemate rather than the hope of conflict resolution.

The drawback is that political stability derives from the hard bargaining of the political elites rather than any broader societal shift in attitudes. A stark demonstration of this situation can be derived from results in the first elections to the Legislative Assembly, held in June 1998. The adoption of the single transferable vote system created the welcome possibility that moderates on either side might transfer their lower-order preferences across the divide in attempt to protect the Good Friday Agreement against the extremes. But the habits of communal solidarity proved resilient, with most voters transferring predominantly within their own ethnonational bloc. The available evidence suggests that a relatively small number of SDLP votes (17 percent) and "Yes" unionist votes (13 percent) were cast in support of each other's candidates. By contrast, 41 percent of SDLP transfers went to Sinn Féin, and 56 percent of Sinn Féin lower-preference votes went to the SDLP. The pattern on the unionist side is even more revealing. The largest beneficiaries of transferred votes from the pro-agreement unionists—candidates, that is, backing David Trimble—were in fact "No" unionists, including the DUP (31 percent). Although the DUP fought the election on a belligerent "No" platform, their bitter personal attacks on Trimble for caving in to the "IRA/Sinn Féin" did not prevent 44 percent of their lower-preference votes—by far the largest single category—from going to Trimble's "Yes men."⁴⁷ Even during this brief honeymoon period, the traditional determination of the Northern Irish voter to keep "the other side" out remained decisive.

Whereas all nationalists elected to the Legislative Assembly in June 1998 were supporters of the peace process, the unionists were split down the middle. What needs to be emphasized, however, is that the division within Unionism was not caused by unhappiness with the constitutional arrangements agreed upon on Good Friday: power sharing plus cross-border bodies. The institutional links between North and South which absorbed so much attention in the all-party negotiations before Good Friday have since been viewed with remarkable indifference by unionists and republicans alike. In 1998, for the first time, the vast majority of Irish people, North and South, effectively recognized the partition of Ireland, albeit in a new, pluralist form. Sinn Féin ministers in the devolved executive engaged in an increasingly token opposition to the

Union, as when Conor Murphy advised his Civil Service staff to refer to Northern Ireland as “the North” or simply “here.”⁴⁸ Every act of the assembly, unionists point out, is an act of the crown—a judgment shared by dissident republicans. Instead, Protestant alienation was overwhelmingly focused on the early release of paramilitary prisoners, the reform of the RUC, and the refusal of the IRA to decommission its weapons.

The importance of guns was not merely symbolic. The existence of Northern Ireland had always been closely linked to its security forces—and to some extent had actually grown out of them. But prisoners, policing, and decommissioning were issues with fundamental implications for the clashing historical narratives cherished by unionists and republicans. By refusing to engage convincingly in the decommissioning process between 1998 and 2005, the republican movement made it impossible for David Trimble to survive as unionist leader. Reluctance to hand over its weapons also kept Sinn Féin at the center of the peace process and left the SDLP struggling on the sidelines. This was not a risk-free strategy. Polls showed that Catholics were split over the early release of prisoners, with a third in favor, another third opposed, and the remaining third somewhere in between. More than half of all Catholics surveyed believed that decommissioning should take place *before* the release of politically motivated prisoners (57 percent) and before the admission to government of parties with paramilitary links (53 percent).⁴⁹ But as decommissioning became the rallying cry of the unionist parties—and, indeed, the key area in which the DUP sought to outbid Trimble’s moderates—it increasingly appeared to nationalists that the real obstacle to peace was not so much the failure of the IRA to destroy its weapons as old-fashioned unionist intransigence.⁵⁰

The Good Friday Agreement has therefore brought the political class together in a workable form of devolved government; to some extent, indeed, it has helped to create a political class which did not exist twenty or twenty-five years ago. In doing so, it defied the expectations of many of Northern Ireland’s most experienced commentators, including some of its most accomplished historians.⁵¹ But it rests upon one central, constructive ambiguity. The question of the perceived legitimacy of the IRA’s campaign is still bitterly divisive, often cutting through nationalist communities as well as exacerbating hostility between na-

tionalists and unionists. This question was left unresolved by the 1998 agreement, which provided for the early release of politically motivated prisoners but also required committed parties to renounce the use or threat of physical force for political purposes. As Sinn Féin has entered the political mainstream so too has the term “IRA volunteer,” once strictly avoided in the media, and the grouping together of the security forces and paramilitary organizations as “ex-combatants.”

The core principles of consociational democracy provide that executive power should be shared across the two communities; that each community enjoys a measure of autonomy, particularly in cultural matters; that each benefits proportionally from public resources; and that each possesses the right of veto over major changes. It is very difficult to see how this kind of logic can be applied to the profoundly moral challenges of “dealing with the past.” Consociationalism has proved capable of managing the Northern Ireland conflict, but it has done nothing to resolve the conflict-about-the-conflict.

To illustrate the point we only have to recall the complete failure to find agreement on the definition of the “victims” of the Troubles. When the executive was unable to agree on the appointment of a victims commissioner at the beginning of 2008, the decision was taken instead to appoint four, rather in the spirit of the d’Hondt mechanism. They were Bertha McDougal, whose husband, a reserve police officer, was shot dead by the INLA in 1981; Patricia McBride, whose brother Tony was killed in a shoot-out with the Special Air Service (SAS) near the Fermanagh border in 1984; the peace activist Brendan McAllister, director of Mediation Northern Ireland; and Mike Nesbitt, a former television newscaster who would go on to become leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. It was an admirably balanced team, representing both the shades of opinion in the region and the multifaceted nature of the conflict. But a press release describing McBride’s brother as an “IRA volunteer” who was “killed on active service” instantly alienated unionists, forcing the DUP to harden its position on “dealing with the past.”⁵² As the party’s spokesman for victims put it:

There has to be some moral line that you create here, because if you don’t create that moral line what you say to future generations is

that, well, actually it's okay to go out and kill people, it's okay to engage in criminal and terrorist activity because eventually you'll be almost absolved of it, and you yourself are a victim.⁵³

THE TROUBLE WITH THE TRUTH

Union

Official attempts to deal with the legacy of the conflict began with the appointment in October 1997 of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield as victims commissioner, a new post with a controversial future, as we have seen. Bloomfield had previously been head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and governor of BBC Northern Ireland. His approach reflected the more liberal, cosmopolitan strand of Unionism that Jennifer Todd has called the "Ulster-British" tradition.⁵⁴ Perhaps predictably, Bloomfield's report, *We Will Remember Them* (1998), displeased some of the most vocal elements within both Unionism and Nationalism. The political context for the report was the anger caused by the phased release of paramilitary prisoners envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement, hence perhaps Bloomfield's conclusion that "victims must, at barest minimum, be as well served as former prisoners in terms of their rehabilitation, future employment, etc," and his recommendation that those killed or injured in the service of the community—that is, the security forces—should receive special consideration.⁵⁵ This was not enough to satisfy some of the unionist victims organizations, but Bloomfield's relatively brief consideration of those killed by the security forces also led to accusations that "a hierarchy of victimhood" was being constructed: over the next decade Bloomfield was repeatedly attacked by organizations such as Relatives for Justice, which lobbied for inquiries into state violence, with an increasing emphasis on allegations of collusion between the security forces and the loyalist paramilitaries.

Bloomfield's vision of a Northern Ireland Memorial Building, set in "a peaceful location, amidst beautifully-landscaped gardens," inspired partly by the Hadassah Medical Centre in Jerusalem, with its "extraordinary Chagall windows," implied a level of decorum rather at odds with the unfolding debate on victimhood.⁵⁶ The various options he considered—a memorial, an annual Reconciliation Day, a truth recov-

ery process—were subsequently explored in a series of extensive consultation exercises and reports carried out by the Healing Through Remembering project (2002), the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons (2005), and the Consultative Group on the Past (2009) chaired by Robin Eames and Denis Bradley. The creativity, sensitivity, and sheer hard work involved in these investigations provide a stark contrast with the masterful inactivity of the politicians. The Eames-Bradley team, in particular, crafted plans for a series of interlocking mechanisms to deal with sectarianism, the review of "historical cases," a victim-centered mode of information recovery, and "thematic" inquiries into collusion and paramilitary activity. Months of painstaking research and reflection were nullified when the Consultative Group's recommendation that relatives of those killed during the conflict—paramilitaries included—should receive a recognition payment of £12,000 was leaked to the press.⁵⁷

In the absence of state-driven projects, the memorialization of the dead has proceeded in the partisan and piecemeal manner described earlier. Rather than bringing together the two communities on the basis of their shared experience of loss, commemoration has reinforced the convoluted sectarian geography of the North, adding new refinements to its enclaves, interface areas, and borderlands. Even the most appalling civilian losses, such as the Omagh bombing of 1998, cannot be remembered without objections.⁵⁸ Although the number of paramilitaries who lost their lives is far outweighed by the British Army (approx. 400), the RUC (approx. 300), and the UDR (approx. 200), the state security forces have mourned their dead largely in closed spaces. There are exceptions, such as the memorial windows to the RUC and the UDR in Belfast City Hall; but the RUC George Cross Gardens inside the headquarters of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, can only be visited by prior arrangement, and British Army memorials are sited within barracks. Individual officers have been commemorated privately, on plaques in churches or Orange Halls or on Orange banners: in Clogherny Parish Church, near Omagh, seventeen members of the security forces and three civilians are named in a Roll of Honour.⁵⁹

While the British government naturally seeks to protect the reputation of its political institutions and armed forces it is neutral in the

struggle between unionists and nationalists across the water. British governments have seldom expressed any commitment to foster a British identity in Northern Ireland.⁶⁰ During the peace process Ulster unionists discovered that they could still obstruct the removal of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom, but they could not prevent the United Kingdom, as an ideological or cultural force, from being incrementally removed from Northern Ireland.⁶¹ The bitter disagreements over republican memorials, mentioned earlier, are exacerbated by the demotion of the symbols of Britishness, particularly west of the Bann, where the political and demographic retreat of Unionism has been most marked.⁶² Nationalists now occupy public spaces which unionists had monopolized under Stormont. Derry's Guildhall Square, once the preserve of the city's unionist establishment, provided the stage for the dramatic broadcast of David Cameron's apology to the Bloody Sunday families. Even in Stormont buildings, the greatest monument to unionist power, it is now possible to celebrate the life of the IRA martyr Mairéad Farrell as an inspiration for contemporary Irish women.⁶³

Proposals for a truth recovery process have encountered the same obstacles, above all the difficult question of how to treat victims, like Mairéad Farrell, who have themselves been perpetrators of violence.⁶⁴ At one end of the spectrum are those like FAIR which believe that the only appropriate way to deal with the past is through the British criminal justice system. A number of the submissions made to Healing Through Remembering rejected talk of truth and reconciliation in language that implied entrenched hostility to the entire peace process and the compromises it required, including one recommendation that the best way to remember the victims of the conflict would be to build more jails.⁶⁵

A much broader section of opinion, mostly but not entirely unionist, expressed fears that a truth process would be exploited by republicans to rehearse the familiar justifications for armed struggle, and to "condemn so-called British imperialism as the root cause of everything that is wrong with Northern Ireland society."⁶⁶ For these groups and individuals, it was vital that the remembrance of victims of the Troubles should exclude those who were killed while engaged in acts of terrorism and focus on the "innocent" people "who had no choices in their lives."⁶⁷

At the other end of the spectrum are the nationalist lobbying groups such as Relatives for Justice, the Eolas Project Group, the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, and Firinne which have sought to expose the brutality and unaccountability of the state security forces. For these organizations the British criminal justice is not the solution but a large part of the problem. The following two statements, taken from memoranda drawn up for the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in 2004, make the point forcefully.⁶⁸

The British Parliament justified torture in Castlereagh and other police interrogation centres as referenced in various UN reports. They justified British soldiers murdering men, women and children on our streets. And worse still soldiers who murdered our loved ones were retained as serving soldiers within the ranks of the British Army. Their legislation facilitated daily harassment, house raids, physical and verbal abuse. (Relatives for Justice and the New Lodge Six)

It is important to note that a *de facto* amnesty has existed for the actions of the security forces since 1969. On the few occasions where soldiers have been convicted of murder for instance they have been granted early release from life sentences and allowed to rejoin the armed forces. At present two soldiers convicted of murder, Guardsmen Wright and Fisher, are serving soldiers. One has been promoted. Mrs Thatcher's claim that 'murder is murder is murder' has not been reflected in the actions of various governments to wrongdoing by the security forces. (Pat Finucane Centre)

Matters would be simple if one or both of these views were manifestly absurd, but they are held by substantial numbers of people and accurately reflect the complex realities of the situation. Between these two polarized positions, what is most striking is the sheer diversity of responses to the problem of dealing with the past. The 108 submissions collected by Healing Through Remembering range from lengthy disquisitions with citations of Bourdieu or Derrida to the brief declaration that loyalist and republican paramilitaries deserved to "Rot in Hell."⁶⁹

Many of the clergy of all denominations have viewed both the Northern Ireland problem and its solution within a Christian framework in which constitutional preferences and national allegiances are muted or set aside. One of the most memorable statements came from a Presbyterian elder, who described how he used a marked-up copy of *Lost Lives* to pray every day for the victims of the Troubles.⁷⁰ Indeed spiritual commitments are clearly vital to some of the most prominent figures associated with Healing Through Remembering. Christian perspectives on forgiveness and reconciliation increasingly overlap with the psychological language of pain, closure, trauma, and acknowledgment employed by a significant number of respondents, also generally free from overt political allegiances.

An extensive survey carried out in 2004 found that just over 40 percent of respondents believed that a truth recovery process would help the people of Northern Ireland come to terms with the past, although unionists were notably more skeptical than nationalists. When given the statement, "You wouldn't necessarily get the truth from a truth commission," however, a resounding 83 percent agreed.⁷¹ Analysis of the South African experience reinforces the view that the truths uttered to truth commissions are likely to be selective, and that in many cases the tactical release of information rather than full disclosure is the likely result. In South Africa "powerful groups and organisations have determined their own acceptable levels of truth through negotiation."⁷² The investigation of human rights violations was inevitably subordinated to political considerations: Chief Buthelezi's refusal to participate was tolerated, for example, by those anxious not to endanger the fragile relationship between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission abandoned attempts to obtain documents from the South African Defence Force, and the records of the Directorate of Special Tasks, the branch of Military Intelligence at the center of the "dirty war" in Angola, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe, appear to have been shredded. Access to the ANC's own records was also severely limited.⁷³

It is hard to imagine that truth commissioners meeting in, say, Armagh might be able to compel American citizens to give evidence about the gun-running operations which were vital to creating the Pro-

visional IRA, or former MI5 operatives to reveal details of the agents they handled, or members of paramilitary punishment squads to describe how they inflicted lacerations and bone fractures on thousands of teenagers with metal bars, baseball bats with nails driven through them, hammers, knives, axes, concrete blocks, and handguns.⁷⁴ Members of loyalist groups are acutely aware that they never received the levels of communal support enjoyed by their republican counterparts, and have been particularly anxious about proposals for South African-style truth hearings:

Children today will probably find it difficult to imagine the threats and fears that inspired their fathers to take up arms. Once their fathers became involved in the 'dirty war' a certain hardening often took place, which will be difficult to understand unless one has been in the same situation and political context.⁷⁵

Is it actually helpful, anyhow, to imagine that loyalist assassins are capable of knowing the truth about their own motivations? What might it mean for individual republicans to give a true account of the deaths and injuries for which they accept responsibility? Even those who are not practiced politicians must have mentally arranged and rearranged their experiences in the light of their political commitments, which have often evolved over time. Presumably the men and women who joined paramilitary organizations share with the rest of us the subconscious tendency to construct self-serving truths that enable us to live comfortably with the choices we have made.

The most compelling argument in favor of a truth recovery process is the palpable need of the bereaved to find out what happened to their relatives. Reading the House of Commons report *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*, one encounters again the range of human responses to physical injury and emotional pain. Here are three female voices from the report. The first is Barbara Deane, a mathematics teacher who sustained multiple injuries in a bomb blast on Belfast's Ormeau Road in 1971, which resulted in the amputation of her right leg, a thousand stitches, and plastic surgery to her mouth and jaw.

I had my hand on the red skirt when I became aware of a commotion behind me and turned to see a man with a gun. He put something down next to the wall beside the police station and I realised it was a bomb since it was lit. Calmly I asked him how long we had got—up until then there had been 20 minutes warning. He answered '20 seconds from when it was lit'. My memory is that I tried to marshal the others on the ground floor and as I emerged (last of them) I saw the police emerge and I went towards them to direct them after the man. I hesitated then, because he was heading round the corner to where mother was sitting in the car. If I had dashed in the other direction I might have got away as some others did. As I turned he was firing at them from the corner but I must have been looking down the barrel of his gun because I saw the intense light coming from it and thought 'Oh that is where the lost energy goes'—we had been doing sums in A-level maths about this. Afterwards someone told me that he had shot my ear almost off.

I personally would have no problems with an amnesty but I know that some of the wider groups in the community might not feel like that. I just go on living; that is thrown you see. I would not let them win by making me bitter.⁷⁶

The second is an Armagh social worker who, like a surprising number of people, was made a victim of the Troubles more than once. In August 1969 her father was shot dead by the B Specials, one of the very first to die. Twenty-one years later she was injured in a land-mine explosion which killed three policemen and a nun on the outskirts of Armagh. One of the IRA bombers, released under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, had returned to live in the town and now saluted her in the street.

He knows me personally, this man who had served 10 years for four murders and one attempted murder. For me, I would like at some stage to get in a room with him, sit down beside him and talk to him. I would like that to be facilitated in a way that would make it easy for me and make it equally easy for him. I do not want any

apology from him but I would like him to hear my story and the impact that it has made on me and to hear, unlike the stories he has been told that he did not do me any harm, but I went on to live my life, have a nice home, have a nice job, have a nice car and a nice family, what he has put me and all my family through. For me he is a victim in that sense in that he does not really know what it has done to me. He sees it from his side. I would like to hear what his story is. I do not want an apology from him but I would like to hear his story.⁷⁷

Finally, "Witness C" is the mother of a thirty-four-year-old man who was shot dead in 1999, when Northern Ireland was supposed to be at peace. He was the target of a random sectarian attack carried out by a loyalist group calling themselves the Red Hand Defenders.

We are very lost people. We are here today now talking to you but we are very lost people. We are like a book you take off the shelf and dust us and take us out now and again and it makes everybody feel good and we have coffee or we have a meal and it is all very nice and we go away and we do not hear a thing. I really want to know what is going to come out of this. . . . I reared my child to be a moderate and so when it came to my door I could not understand because I taught my children not to hate. As we were saying earlier on, only when it comes to your door do you understand. I said to an MP, 'When your daughter or son walks down a road and somebody shoots him in the back of the head then you can tell me you understand'. I just think we are used. . . . There are a lot of people that you do not hear about. There are a lot of Catholics who are not Sinn Féin supporters here. We are just ordinary people and you never hear our voices; you do not hear our voices.⁷⁸

Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past shows how a truth commission might help to recover the experiences of ordinary people who found themselves in very extraordinary circumstances after August 1969. It reveals how many individuals sought to maintain a moral space in which the pressures of communal solidarity could be weighed against

other commitments. The same can be said for the numerous “storytelling” projects and workshops which have set out to encourage and record testimonies from individuals and groups who have suffered in the conflict.⁷⁹ Its advocates suggest that storytelling has a “levelling effect”: although we might disagree with the narrator’s political viewpoint, we can nevertheless “recognise and appreciate the human experiences of loss, trauma, disappointment, hope and triumph.”⁸⁰

This kind of latitude is probably an unrealistic aspiration for many of those damaged by the Troubles. Two academics from Queen’s University who recorded the experiences of border Protestants in 2004–5 have described unforgettably the emotional intensity of storytelling, in this case concerning harrowing experiences of IRA attacks. Listening to the story of one man, shot seven times with an Armalite automatic rifle in his home, and now partially paralyzed, they were confronted by two local women who asked, “Are you going to tell the truth? Do you know that this is a story of innocent victims murdered by butchers?”⁸¹ The members of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project equated “storytelling” with fiction, preferring to publish their oral histories as *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* (2002); the “truth” in this case was “very much bound up with a sense of bearing witness” and consciously opposed to what the residents viewed as the “hierarchy of victimhood” established by Bloomfield.⁸² Nevertheless, the accumulation of individual testimonies is already helping historians to appreciate further the complexity of violence in Northern Ireland and the multidimensional nature of the conflict. In time it may also help us to understand that the inhabitants of Northern Ireland do not all come neatly stacked in two opposing piles labeled “perpetrators” and “victims” but that many played more than one role in the conflict still widely known as the Troubles.

NOTES

1. Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 1997), 119. This figure is for 1995, when there were 2,581 loyalist and 302 republican parades; the remainder included St. Patrick’s Day parades and May Day parades but also events organized by the Boys Brigade and the Salvation Army. The population was then 1.6 million

2. The Rebellion is, of course, traditionally commemorated on Easter Sunday.

3. See Eric P. Kaufmann, *The Orange Order: A Contemporary Northern Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), chs. 6 and 7.

4. Henry Patterson and Eric Kaufmann, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland since 1945: The Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester, 2007).

5. David Fitzpatrick is currently working on a major book on Orangeism. In the meantime, the work of David W. Miller remains essential; see “The Armagh Troubles, 1784–95,” in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly Jr., eds., *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780–1914* (Madison, WI, 1983), 155–91; *Queen’s Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin, 1978). See also Frank Wright, *Two Lands on One Soil: Ulster Politics before Home Rule* (Dublin, 1996). On the social and cultural functions of Orangeism, see Dominic Bryan, *Orange Parades* (2000); and Desmond Bell, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 1990). Also relevant is A. D. Buckley, “The Chosen Few: Biblical Texts in the Symbolism of an Ulster Secret Society,” *Irish Review*, no. 1 (1986): 31–40.

6. Jonathan Tonge and Jocelyn A. J. Evans, “Faultlines in Unionism: Division and Dissent within the Ulster Unionist Council,” *Irish Political Studies* 16, no. 1 (2001): 111–31.

7. Surprisingly, the commemorative culture of Northern Irish republicanism—as distinct from Irish nationalism more generally—has attracted few scholars. See Margaret O’Callaghan, “From Casement Park to Toomebridge: The Commemoration of the Easter Rising of 1916 in Northern Ireland in 1966 in Political Context,” in Margaret O’Callaghan and Mary Daly, eds., *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), 86–147; John Mulqueen and Jim Smyth, “‘The Che Guevara of the IRA’: The Legend of ‘Big Joe’ McCann,” *History Ireland* 18, no. 1 (January–February 2010): 46–47.

8. These examples are taken from *An Phoblacht*, 18 August and 9 September 2011, the period when the first version of this essay was written. They also contain articles on the Pat Finucane campaign and the thirtieth anniversary of the Hunger Strikes.

9. Malachi O’Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA* (Belfast, 1998), 22.

10. “Families Unite to Honour Memory of Shot IRA Chief,” *Irish News*, 14 April 1997.

11. Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester, 2007), 160, 183.

12. Graham Dawson, “Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972–2004,” *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005): 151–78.

13. Henry McDonald, *Guns, Smoke and Mirrors: How Sinn Féin Dressed up Defeat as Victory* (Dublin, 2008).
14. For the most recent example, see <http://sluggerotoole.com/2013/07/31/republican-castle-derg-parade-the-insensitivity-of-the-impotent/>.
15. See Ian McBride, "Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland," in Ian McBride, ed., *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 1–42.
16. Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past?*
17. See, e.g., *Statement of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland on her investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Raymond McCord junior and other related matters* (Belfast, 2007).
18. "La Mon Victims Lash Out at Power-Sharing," *News Letter*, 28 January 2008. Michelle Williamson, whose parents were killed in the Shankill bomb of 1993, has actively campaigned to have the statutory definition of a victim redefined to exclude those engaged in acts of terrorism.
19. See <http://thedisappearedni.co.uk>.
20. See, e.g., "Coiste Proposes Museum for Long Kesh," *An Phoblacht*, 12 June 2003; "Raze It to the Ground," *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April 2004; "Interpreting and Developing Contested Sites," *Coiste.comm* 8, no. 1 (January–April 2006); "Long Kesh: Preserved Site Will Tell Story of Those Held There," *An Phoblacht*, 26 January 2006; "Shared Vision for Long Kesh Site," *An Phoblacht*, 2 November 2006; "Historical Status of Long Kesh Must Be Maintained," *An Phoblacht*, 12 July 2007; "Victims Oppose Euro Funding for Maze Site," *News Letter*, 28 December 2010; "Maze 'Shrine' Row in Assembly," *News Letter*, 26 November 2011. See also Brian Graham and Sara McDowell, "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh," *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 343–68. There are other, less well known *lieux de mémoire*, including the restored First Presbyterian Church, Derry, a regular target of sectarian violence during the past forty years. Indeed the entire walled city and the Bogside constitute one complex site of memory.
21. See "Memorial to Black Taxi Dead Unveiled," *Anderstown News*, 15 February 1997; "Plaque Unveiled in Honour of Fian," *An Phoblacht*, 18 April 1996; "Harvey Memorial Unveiled," *An Phoblacht*, 23 January 1997; "New Memorial to Strabane Volunteer," *An Phoblacht*, 14 August 1997.
22. "Pensioner's Anger over Terrorist Memorial," *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 March 2000; "Anger over Terror Statue in Graveyard," *Belfast Telegraph*, 2 March 2000; and for other examples, "Unionist Anger at Memorial to IRA Murderer," *Irish News*, 2 October 1998; "IRA Memorial to Be Erected on Peaceline," *News Letter*, 3 February 2009.
23. The debate over the Marks monument can be followed in "Row over Tribute to Shot IRA Man," *Irish News*, 22 February 2000; "Graves Group to Care for IRA Statue," *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 June 2000; "War of Words on 'IRA

Plaque," *Irish News*, 8 November 2000; "Memorial Is 'Sending Out Wrong Message,'" *Irish News*, 17 September 2001; "Marks Memorial Is Unveiled," *Irish News*, 2 April 2002. For a similar case in Fermanagh, see "Unionist Anger at Memorial to IRA Murderer," *Irish News*, 2 October 1998.

24. "Monument for Dead IRA Men Vandalised," *Irish News*, 21 October 1998; "Headstone Stolen from an IRA Grave," *Irish News*, 30 June 2000; "IRA Memorial Demolished by Sledgehammer Attack in Town," *Belfast Telegraph*, 20 November 2001. Other vandalized monuments include a memorial to the eight Protestant workmen killed by the IRA at Teebane crossroads in 1992 ("Teebane Memorial Reinstated Following Attack," *Tyrone Courier*, 6 November 1996), a granite memorial to two UDR men killed by an IRA land mine in 1980 ("Shattered Memories," *Belfast Telegraph*, 15 November 1996); a monument to the fifteen Catholic civilians killed by an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) bomb in McGurk's bar, 1971 ("Memorial to Bar Bomb Victims Is Vandalised," *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 June 2002), and the memorial to the eight British soldiers killed near Ballygawley roundabout in 1988 ("Anger as Arsonists Attack Memorial," *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 August 2002). Finally, loyalist factions have defaced each other's memorials, as when a mural tribute to Billy Wright on the Shankill estate was defaced, apparently by UVF supporters ("UDP Fury at Mural Attack," *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 April 2000).

25. Interview with author, Westminster, 8 December 2010.

26. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (Oxford, 1995), 1.

27. S. E. Baker, "Orange and Green: Belfast, 1832–1912," in H. J. Dyos and M. Wolff, eds., *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, 2 vols. (London, 1973), 2:789–814; A. C. Hepburn, "The Impact of Ethnic Violence: The Belfast Riots of 1936," in A. C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast 1850–1950* (Belfast, 1996), 174–202; Mark Doyle, *Fighting Like the Devil for the Sake of God: Protestants, Catholics, and the Origins of Violence in Victorian Belfast* (Manchester, 2009).

28. F. Frankfort Moore, *The Truth about Ulster* (London, 1914), 16, 22, 25, 45.

29. Simon Prince and Geoffrey Warner, *Belfast and Derry in Revolt: A New History of the Start of the Troubles* (Dublin, 2012), chs. 6 and 9; quotation on p. 208.

30. Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey, and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs* (London, 1999).

31. House of Commons, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past: Interim Report—Victims and Survivors* (London, 2005), II, Ev. 180. Hereafter cited as HC, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*.

32. Andrew Finlay, "Defeatism and Northern Protestant 'Identity,'" *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1, no. 2 (December 2001): 17.
33. G. C. Loughrey, P. Bell, M. Kee, R. J. Roddy and P. S. Curran, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Civil Violence in Northern Ireland," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 153 (1988): 554–60. Cases of PTSD have also been reported among both former prisoners and targets of paramilitary punishment squads.
34. The next two paragraphs are indebted to Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement: Victims, Grievance and Blame* (London, 2002), ch. 2.
35. HC, *Ways of Dealing with the Past*, II, Ev. 46.
36. Fay, Morrissey, and Smyth, *Human Costs*, 175.
37. *Lost Lives*, nos. 2385, 2834.
38. HC, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*, II, Ev. 185.
39. Interview with Patrick Magee, King's College London, 27 October 2010.
40. O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns*, 86.
41. For examples, see P. J. McLoughlin, ". . . It's a United Ireland or Nothing? John Hume and the Idea of Irish Unity, 1964–72," *Irish Political Studies* 21, no. 2 (2006): 169–70.
42. Richard English, *Armed Struggle, the History of the IRA* (Oxford, 2003), 140.
43. Frank Burton, *The Politics of Legitimacy in a Belfast Community* (London, 1978), ch. 3; quotation on p. 109.
44. See, e.g., John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland's Conflict, and Its Agreement," *Government and Opposition* 41, no. 1 (2006): 43–63; 41, no. 2 (2006): 249–77. Consociationalism is not the only component in the Good Friday Agreement. It builds upon the efforts of the British government since the 1980s to redistribute economic power and cultural esteem more evenly between the two communities. In the long term this social engineering may have more important consequences than the constitutional arrangements of 1998.
45. Brendan O'Leary, "The Nature of the Agreement," in John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements* (Oxford, 2004), 263.
46. Robin Wilson, "From Violence to Intolerance: Ethno-Nationalism and the Crowding out of Civic Life," in Christopher Farrington, ed., *Global Change, Civil Society and the Northern Ireland Peace Process: Implementing the Political Settlement* (Basingstoke, 2008), 199–213.
47. Geoffrey Evans and Brendan O'Leary, "Northern Irish Voters and the British-Irish Agreement: Foundations of a Stable Consociational Settlement?," *Political Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (January–March 2000): 89–90.
48. Kevin Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* (Liverpool, 2007), 174.
49. The corresponding figures for Protestants were 84 percent and 88 percent: Evans and O'Leary, "Northern Irish Voters and the British-Irish Agreement," 93, table 14.
50. David Mitchell, "Sticking to Their Guns? The Politics of Arms De-commissioning in Northern Ireland, 1998–2007," *Contemporary British History* 24, no. 3 (2010): 341–61.
51. Richard English, "Challenging Peace," *Fortnight* 362 (June 1997).
52. "Victim's Daughter in Legal Challenge to Commissioners," *News Letter*, 26 February 2008; "'Volunteer' Row Rocks Victims' Commission," *News Letter*, 30 January 2008.
53. Interview with author, Westminster, 8 December 2010.
54. See her influential "Two Traditions in Unionist Political Culture," *Irish Political Studies* 2 (1987): 1–26.
55. *We Will Remember Them: Report of the Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield KCB* (Belfast, 1998), 3.3, 8.1.
56. *Ibid.*, 7.13–18.
57. For unionist reactions, see the extended coverage in *News Letter*, 26, 27, 28, 30 January and 2, 7, 24, 26, 28 February 2009; for the cross-community Wave Trauma Centre, see *Wave News Letter*, February 2009. Eames's defense of the recognition payment is in "We Have Listened to All Sides—Eames," *News Letter*, 28 January 2009.
58. See, e.g., "War of Words over Omagh Memorial," *News Letter*, 19 September 2007; "Omagh Memorial Wording Is Agreed," *News Letter*, 7 March 2008.
59. "Crossgar Murder Victim Remembered by Plaque at His Place of Worship," *Down Recorder*, 22 November 1995; "IRA Victims Remembered," *News Letter*, 19 April 1996; "Dromore Fire Bomb Victims Remembered," *Orange Standard*, May 1996; "Troubles Memorial," *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 October 1997 (for Clogherny); "Banner Painting 'Fitting Tribute to Murdered Soldier,'" *News Letter*, 3 February 2009; "Order Pays Tribute to Troubles Victims," *News Letter*, 22 September 2010.
60. Indeed it is arguable that this reticence dates back to the Act of Union. See Peter Mandler, "Nation and Power in the Liberal State: Britain c. 1800–1914," in Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer, eds., *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005), 354–69.
61. I am paraphrasing John Lloyd's well-known remark, made during his interview with John Reid, *New Statesman*, 26 November 2001.
62. One of the more creative was the greening of up to fifty Royal Mail postboxes in County Tyrone by members of Ógra Shinn Féin. "Anger as Republicans Paint Postboxes Green," *News Letter*, 31 July 2010.

63. "Fury over Tribute to Terrorist," *News Letter*, 23 February 2008; "Republican Women Celebrated in Stormont," *An Phoblacht*, 13 March 2008.

64. Few republicans will accept Christopher Andrew's account of the Gibraltar incident, which dismisses accusations that Farrell, McCann, and Savage were the targets of a shoot-to-kill operation. But his conclusion that the IRA bombing mission, executed successfully, would have caused many civilian as well as military casualties seems entirely reasonable. See Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London, 2005), 744.

65. I am grateful to Kate Turner and the staff of Healing Through Remembering, Belfast, for permitting me to consult anonymized versions of the 108 submissions summarized in their 2002 report. Quotation from S039; see also S005.

66. *The Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project, June 2002* (Belfast, 2002), 30.

67. Healing Through Remembering, Belfast, 2002 submissions, S024, S073. One victim of a loyalist assassination attempt (S062) commented, "I know that we have to move forward but not at the cost of giving all to the Perpetrators and **fuck all** to Victims" (boldface in original).

68. HC, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*, II, Ev. 45.

69. HTR, Belfast, 2002 submissions, S082, S086, S020.

70. *Ibid.*, S085.

71. Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, "Attitudes towards a Truth Commission for Northern Ireland in Relation to Party Political Affiliation," *Irish Political Studies* 22, no. 3 (2007): 328–29.

72. Elizabeth Stanley, "Evaluating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2001): 531.

73. Janet Cherry, John David, and Madeleine Fullard, "Researching the 'Truth': A View from Inside the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," in Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, eds., *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg, 2002), 17–36.

74. Between 1970 and 2000 more than 4,000 people were hospitalized as a result of vigilante attacks and around 115 people were killed. Even by Belfast standards their experiences make for horrific reading. Andrew Silke, "The Impact of Paramilitary Vigilantism on Victims and Communities in Northern Ireland," *International Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 1 (2000): 1–24.

75. HC, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*, II, Ev. 4.

76. *Ibid.*, Ev. 107. I have silently corrected the misspelling of the Ulster Scots word *thrawn*, meaning "obstinate."

77. *Ibid.*, Ev. 75.

78. *Ibid.*, Ev. 112.

79. There have been at least thirty-three of these: Healing Through Remembering, "Storytelling" *Audit: An Audit of Personal Story, Narrative and Testimony Initiatives Related to the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 2005; updated 2007).

80. "Memorandum submitted by David Bolton," in HC, *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past*, II, Ev. 257.

81. Hastings Donnan and Kirk Simpson, "Silence and Violence among Northern Ireland Border Protestants," *Ethnos* 72, no. 1 (2007): 18.

82. Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, "Participation, Truth and Partiality: Participatory Action Research, Community-Based Truth-Telling and Post-Conflict Transition in Northern Ireland," *Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2006): 83.