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THE BRIGHTON 'GRAND HOTEL' BOMBING:

History, memory and political theatre

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Introduction

The Brighton ‘Grand Hotel’ bombing: History, memory and political theatre

Graham Dawson

On 12 October 1984 a bomb planted by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) exploded in Brighton’s Grand Hotel, where Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, members of her Government, delegates attending the Conservative Party’s annual conference, and their families, were staying. Five people were killed and thirty-four people were injured, some very seriously.¹ The Brighton bombing was one of the most significant among nearly 500 incidents in the PIRA’s campaign of political violence in England over twenty-five years from 1973–97. It has generated impassioned as well as critical reflection and debate, nationally across Britain and locally in Brighton and Hove, about how and why the armed conflict in and over Northern Ireland had come to this town in England, the political and ethical meanings of the attack, and its human consequences for those harmed by it.

‘The Brighton “Grand Hotel” Bombing: History, Memory and Political Theatre’ was a commemorative event to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Brighton bombing, comprising a symposium and a semi-staged theatre reading that took place over two days on 15–16 October 2014 at the University of Brighton. It was one of a number of ways in which this anniversary was commemorated in the city and more widely across Britain during the week or so either side of Sunday 12 October. On that day, a Minute’s Silence took place at the Grand Hotel, marked by sixty staff and some guests who gathered for a ceremony beside a memorial plaque to the bombing.² The charity Building Bridges for Peace (set up by Jo Berry, whose father Sir Anthony Berry MP was killed by the bomb, and Patrick Magee, the PIRA activist responsible for planting it) held an event for young people and those who work with them, entitled ‘What’s the Alternative? Beyond Violence, Injustice and Extremism’; and in the evening screened the film, *Beyond Right and Wrong*, followed by a discussion about the Brighton bombing, held at the Old Market Arts Centre, Hove.³

On Monday 13 October Jo Berry and Pat Magee spoke at The Forgiveness Project event ‘Does Knowing a Person’s Story Make It Harder

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to Hate Them?' at St Ethelburga's Peace Centre in Bishopsgate, London.⁴ There was wide-ranging coverage of the anniversary in the national media in both Britain and Ireland, and in local radio, TV and print media in Brighton and Hove, in Sussex, and across the country.⁵ A prominent voice was that of the former Conservative MP Norman Tebbit – who was injured and whose wife, Margaret, was left permanently paralysed by the bomb – arguing that 'the Brighton Bomber' is not welcome in the city, and calling for Magee (a 'little rat') to 'name names' of others responsible for the attack, in the interest of justice.⁶ The online Comment pages of the local daily newspaper, the *Argus*, hosted some hostile postings expressing anger and other anti-IRA sentiments.⁷ Clearly, thirty years after, this remained an event characterised by conflicting meanings and understandings, and charged with intense emotional significances, both personal and political.

Our contribution here at the University of Brighton stemmed from the conviction that this thirtieth anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on the histories behind the bombing and responses to it, as well as to explore the continuing and rarely discussed legacies of the Northern Ireland conflict in Britain, and in Brighton. Jointly organised by the University's research grouping, 'Understanding Conflict: Forms and Legacies of Political Violence', and the Brighton-based Wildspark Theatre Company, the event was rooted in and brought together two distinct projects.

One set of roots lay in teaching and research at the University on the history of the Irish 'Troubles', on the politics of memory in the conflict seen in relation to political identities and the traumatic effects of violence, and on problems of 'dealing with the past' in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process.⁸ Since 2011, under the auspices of the University's Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories, I have been working with Stephen Hopkins of the University of Leicester and Jo Dover, who was Programme Manager of the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace at the Warrington Peace Centre from 2001 until 2004, on a project entitled 'The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories'. This collaboration began from our shared perception and concern about how little engagement there has been in Britain, either with the history of the Irish conflict and its ongoing impact and effects here – which have been and continue to be profound – or with grassroots peacebuilding to address the 'unfinished business' of this contested past. In 2012 we organised a conference on these questions at the University of Brighton that brought together peace and human rights campaigners; artists, writers, and film-makers; former armed forces personnel; political activists from Sinn Féin and Irish solidarity organisations such as the Troops Out Movement and the Women and Ireland Group; local

history professionals; members and representatives of the Irish-in-Britain community; as well as academic scholars from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.⁹ An informal research network was established and an edited collection of writing developing themes from the conference – described in Stephen Hopkins’ paper below – was published by Manchester University Press in 2016.¹⁰ A number of contributors to this book with MUP participated in the Brighton bomb symposium, which reflected a similarly wide range of interests, experiences and expertise.

A second set of roots lay in the work of Wildspark Theatre Company, formed by two local playwrights, Julie Everton and Josie Melia. In 2012, they conceived the idea of writing a play about the Grand Hotel bombing – ‘a momentous occurrence that happened on our doorstep’¹¹ – with a view to staging it during the thirtieth anniversary year. They began to conduct extensive research in Britain and Ireland, including interviews with local people who experienced the bomb and its aftermath, and also with Jo Berry and Patrick Magee. In 2013 they began writing the play, entitled *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*, which explores the causes and consequences of the Brighton bomb, highlighting the personal journey towards empathy of Pat Magee and Jo Berry within the ongoing wider peace process. Supported by an Arts Council grant, in early 2014 they put on rehearsed readings of an early draft at the Old Market Arts Centre, Hove, and the Cockpit Theatre in London. Julie, Josie and I had met a number of times to talk about the bombing, the play, and the wider questions of memory and representation that are involved. In April 2014 we decided that it would be very exciting to collaborate on an event – part performance, part historical and critical discussion – as near to the anniversary of the bombing as possible. This event would include opportunity to discuss their play, the issues it raises and the way it addresses them, in the context of a wider debate with other practitioners about political theatre in Ireland and Britain today.

The commemorative event that we eventually organised brought together these two projects and integrated their particular approaches and modes of engagement to open up critical discussion of the Brighton bombing and re-evaluation of its significance today, in the light of the Irish peace process that has brought the PIRA’s armed struggle to a close. It was organised in three parts. The centrepiece was a work-in-progress performance of Julie and Josie’s play, in the form of a rehearsed reading of the latest draft by a group of six actors,¹² contributing to its development towards a fully-staged production due in April/May 2015. This performance was framed by a symposium in two parts. Part One of the symposium began with a lecture reflecting on the historical significance, impact and consequences of the Provisional IRA’s attack on the British Government at

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Brighton, by Gary McGladdery, author of the only scholarly study to focus on the PIRA's armed campaign in England between 1973 and 1997. This was followed by a panel that situated the Grand Hotel bomb in the wider context of histories, memories, and legacies of the Irish Troubles in Britain. Presentations discussed the impact of the Brighton bombing on the politically active Irish community and Labour Movement in Britain; the local community's work of coming to terms with tragedy in response to the Warrington bombing in 1993; and reasons for the ways in which the Troubles are remembered and also forgotten in Britain.

Part Two of the symposium began with a discussion of the dramatic questions posed by Josie and Julie's play, how these are explored in terms of its style, structure, characters and plot, and the wider issue of its representation of the Brighton bombing. Contributions were made by the playwrights themselves, by Sarah Jane Dickenson of the School of Drama, Music and Screen at the University of Hull, by Ellen Muriel who drew on her study of the play for her recently submitted undergraduate dissertation about the ethics of representation in theatre, and from members of the audience for the rehearsed reading. This was followed by a panel of theatre practitioners who discussed the role and value of political theatre in Britain and Ireland today; considered the various means of engagement with live political issues, in terms of venues, forms of drama, and relationships with audiences, utilised in their own practice; and reflected on the contribution made by political theatre to understanding violent conflict in the context of the Northern Ireland Troubles and other recent armed conflicts. The speakers were Paula McFetridge, Artistic Director of Kabosh Theatre Company in Belfast; Neil Fleming and Jem Wall, respectively the principal writer and Artistic Director of Hydrocracker Theatre Company in Brighton; and Dave Wybrow, Artistic Director of the Cockpit Theatre in London, which presented an early rehearsed reading of *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel* and, subsequently, the fully-staged production of the play in its final form. For each of these sessions, we identified a number of key questions for the speakers and audience to consider, with the aim of generating and guiding discussion.¹³

Running throughout the event, and of central concern to both the play and both parts of the symposium, were two more general questions about how the meaning of the Brighton bombing has been framed. First there was the question of how the significance of the bombing has been shaped by discourses, some more powerful than others, that have structured what can and cannot be spoken about it, and the terms in which it is made meaningful. A further question concerned whether these frames of meaning have changed over time, in the thirty years since the bombing and in the context

of the Irish peace process and a very different political context in Britain, Ireland, and globally; and if they have changed, how, and to what effect?

Here in Britain, what we might consider as the dominant discourse, that of the British State – voiced originally with the authority of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Government and the Labour Opposition, and most of the news media, and commanding widespread public and popular support – condemned the bombing as an act of ‘terrorism’ perpetrated by cowardly assassins. This involved demonising the PIRA volunteers responsible: after his arrest, and at his trial, Patrick Magee (the ‘Brighton Bomber’) was represented as a psychopathic killer without human feelings or political motives.¹⁴ This highly charged wartime discourse had a number of effects. It instituted an ideological polarisation based on a normative ‘British’ common-sense in which ordinary decent people united in condemnation of ‘Irish’ terrorist atrocity. It also denied credibility or validity to the Republican discourse of resistance, as can be seen in the reporting by the British media of the statement made by the Provisional IRA claiming the bombing as a legitimate political act striking against British ‘warmongers’. Furthermore, it closed down the space in Britain where alternative perspectives and understandings of the conflict in and over Northern Ireland might be voiced and heard – whether these be Republican, pro-Republican and Irish nationalist voices from Britain’s Irish communities or the British Left; or voices critical of the British State’s political strategy in Ireland, and of its repressive military intervention in the North and anti-terrorist activities in Britain; or voices calling for greater understanding of the reasons behind the political violence perpetrated by Ulster loyalist paramilitaries and British armed forces as well as Irish Republicans. Reinforced by intense hostility from sections of the British public and by violence from far-Right political groups, these effects of dominant discourse were tantamount to a silencing or at least a marginalising and discouragement of a whole range of voices and perspectives on the Irish conflict more widely and on particular events within it, including the Brighton bombing. This generated resistance from those who refused to be silenced or marginalised, leading to conflicted debate about the political and moral issues raised by the armed conflict. (Here in Brighton, the local Labour Party was one site of such debate.)

As became apparent in some of the British national and local media coverage of the thirtieth anniversary, in some respects the Brighton bombing continues to be framed according to the pattern of conflicting wartime discourses. Yet in other respects, new spaces and opportunities for reassessment and re-evaluation have opened up in recent years. 2014 was the year of another significant anniversary, the twentieth anniversary of the

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paramilitary ceasefires – by the Provisional IRA on 31 August 1994 that kick-started the Irish peace process, and its reciprocation by the Combined Loyalist Military Command (representing the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force) on 13 October 1994. The peace process has introduced new discourses – for example, of peacebuilding, conflict transformation, healing, reconciliation – that place a premium on unlocking the fixed positions, suspicions and hostilities produced in and by wartime violence. It has stimulated efforts towards recovering, listening to, and attempting to understand a plurality of experiences and perspectives from the time of violent conflict that engage with each other and frame meaning in new ways that would not have been possible in the past. This commemorative event was intended as a space of engagement and critical reassessment of this kind.

In this volume, the second issue in our *Working Papers in Memory, Narrative and Histories* series, a number of spoken contributions to the symposium have been revised, developed, in some cases freshly articulated by the authors, and edited for publication by Sacha van Leeuwen and I. It begins with Gary McGladdery's longer paper developing the analysis presented in his lecture. This is followed by three papers that reflect presentations and debate at the symposium contextualising the Brighton bomb within wider perspectives on the history, memory and legacy of the Irish Troubles in Britain: Natalie Reside presents 'A civil rights perspective', Lesley Lelourec writes about a bereaved community 'coming to terms' with the Warrington bombing, and Stephen Hopkins explores 'Remembering and forgetting the Northern Irish Troubles in Great Britain'. Hopkins' paper establishes a wider picture of the conflicts and silences of memory that provide the backdrop for Everton and Melia's play, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*. The paper by the playwrights is based on an interview with them exploring their retrospective reflections on the process of writing and producing the play, including the changes introduced after its rehearsed reading for the anniversary commemoration that led to a rather different final version at its full staging in April and May 2015, and on its reception and value. (Two extracts from the final version of the play are published for the first time in Appendix 2 below.) The playwrights' account of the struggle to find an effective dramatic form for their material lead into Ellen Muriel's discussion of ethical issues raised by the play. The final two papers focus on two theatre companies, one working in Britain and the other in the North of Ireland, noted for their innovative approaches to engaging audiences in live political issues, as a catalyst for challenging established perceptions and meanings. Neil Fleming explains his understanding of political theatre and the principles that guide the work of the Hydrocracker company. Suzanne Foy

engages Paula McFetridge in conversation about her theatrical practice as Artistic Director of Belfast's Kabosh Theatre Company, and explores a recent work staged by Kabosh as an intervention in 'dealing with the past' within the Irish peace process, which offers a fascinating counterpoint to Everton and Melia's play about the Brighton bombing.

The writing collected in this volume establishes a record of a unique collaboration between academic scholars and theatre practitioners to re-evaluate the significance of the Brighton 'Grand Hotel' bombing, through consideration of its historical context and effects, the ways it has been represented and remembered, and the possibilities afforded by theatre to engage audiences in issues of political violence and its aftermath. Everton and Melia's play, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*, both emerges from the recent resurgence of political theatre in Britain, and provides a catalyst for fascinating and important questions about the potential of theatre to create new, thought-provoking and emotionally powerful representations, and the forms and venues of dramatic storytelling that best serve these ends. In making available for a wider readership the critical reflections of speakers from Ireland and Britain presented on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the event – reflections that have since been deepened by further thought, dialogue and formulation – this volume is also offered as a contribution and spur to ongoing debate about the legacies of the Northern Ireland conflict in Britain and Ireland, and the ways in which its complex and painful kinds of violence might be recognised, understood, and confronted.

Notes

¹ 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, 2007), pp. 996-8; 'Patrick Magee: The IRA Brighton bomber', BBC News, 22 June 1999, available at: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/301223.stm, accessed 30 May 2016.

² www.theargus.co.uk/news/11530151.Silence_held_to_mark_Brighton_bomb/, accessed 30 May 2016.

³ www.buildingbridgesforpeace.org/whats-alternative/, accessed 30 May 2016. *Beyond Right and Wrong: Stories of Justice and Forgiveness* (dir. Roger Spottiswoode and Lekha Singh, USA, 2012).

⁴ Edited recording available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvadmmvGyY. For Berry and Magee's contribution to The Forgiveness Project, see: theforgivenessproject.com/stories/jo-berry-pat-magee-england/. Both accessed 30 May 2016.

⁵ See, for example, ITV News, 10 October 2014, www.itv.com/news/meridian/story/2014-10-10/thirty-years-since-bomb-exploded-in-brighton/; 'The day the Grand was bombed', *Argus*, 12 October 2014, http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/11529122.The_day_the_Grand_was_bombed/; 'My father's killer is my "friend"', *Irish Post*, 11 October 2014, <http://irishpost.co.uk/fathers-killer-friend/>; 'Brighton bombing horror recalled: Sombre ceremony marks 30th anniversary of bid to wipe out the Cabinet', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 October 2014,

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<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/brighton-bombing-horror-recalled-sombre-ceremony-marks-30th-anniversary-of-bid-to-wipe-out-the-cabinet-30658186.html>; 'Brighton to mark 30th anniversary of Grand Hotel bomb', *Irish Times*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/brighton-to-mark-30th-anniversary-of-grand-hotel-bomb-1.1960839>; 'Brighton bombing: The night that changed politics', *The Scotsman*, 12 October 2014, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/brighton-bombing-the-night-that-changed-politics-1-3570245>. All accessed 30 May 2016. Our own commemorative event was reported by, *inter alia*, radio stations *Heart Sussex*, 24 September 2014, *Cool FM*, 12 October 2014, and *Downtown Radio*, 12 October 2014; by *BBC News Sussex*, 23 September 2014, and *Meridian TV News*, 24 September 2014; and by the *Evening Express*, 24 September 2014; *News Letter*, 25 September 2014; *Herald*, 25 September 2014; *Courier and Advertiser*, 25 September 2014; *Irish News*, 25 September 2014; and *Irish Post*, 10 October 2014.

⁶ 'Magee should name names, says Lord Tebbit', *Argus*, 10 October 2014, available at: www.theargus.co.uk/NEWS/11527934.print/. See also: '30 years since the Brighton bombing', *Argus*, 10 October 2014; 'I hope there's a hot corner of Hell reserved for the Brighton bomber who paralysed my wife. He has never repented': Lord Tebbit tells of his anger 30 years on at IRA bomber Patrick Magee', *Daily Mail*, 12 October 2014, available at: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2789772/. All accessed 30 May 2016.

⁷ The *Argus* archive includes many such views stretching back to Magee's first visit to Brighton to mark the twentieth anniversary of the bombing in 2004. See, for example, www.theargus.co.uk/news/6710742.Letter_Never_apologise_to_cowardly_terrorists/; and www.theargus.co.uk/news/6710663.Letter_Shame_of_playing_host_to_a_terrorist_bomber/. For my response to the latter, see my letter:

www.theargus.co.uk/news/6710477.Letter_Let_s_move_on/. For views expressed on Magee's return to Brighton for the thirtieth anniversary, see Comments at: www.theargus.co.uk/news/11530678.Brighton_bomber_refuses_to_apologise/. All accessed 30 May 2016.

⁸ See, for example, Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Trauma, Memory and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Louise Purbrick, 'The last murals of Long Kesh: Fragments of political imprisonment at the Maze Prison, Northern Ireland', in Adrian Myers and Gabriel Moshenska, eds., *Archaeologies of Internment. One World Archaeology* (New York: Springer, 2011), pp. 263-284. For further details of the University of Brighton's work in this area, see arts.brighton.ac.uk/research/centre-for-research-in-memory-narrative-and-histories/projects, accessed 30 May 2016.

⁹ For details of the conference, see arts.brighton.ac.uk/research/centre-for-research-in-memory-narrative-and-histories/centre-events/conferences/the-brighton-grand-hotel-bombing-history-memory-and-political-theatre, accessed 30 May 2016.

¹⁰ Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹¹ 'Our story so far', available on Wildspark Theatre website: wildsparktheatre.com/how-we-began-our-first-co-written-play/, accessed 14 October 2014.

¹² The actors were: Tom Bevan, Rachel Blackman, Beth Fitzgerald, James Kermack, Jason Pitt, Amy Waugh. The director was Paul Hodson, the movement director Emma Roberts, and the musical director Steve Wrigley.

¹³ These questions are reproduced in Appendix 1 below.

¹⁴ 'Patrick Magee: The IRA Brighton bomber', *BBC News*, 22 June 1999, available at: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/301223.stm, accessed 30 May 2016.

Part I

The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Histories, memories and legacies

Reflections on the historical significance, impact and consequences of the Provisional IRA's attack on the British Government in Brighton, 1984

Gary McGladdery

The thirtieth anniversary of the bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) provides the opportunity to reflect on the event's historical significance and impact. The Brighton bombing took place against the background of continuing violence in Northern Ireland, the rise of Sinn Féin (the political wing of the Republican Movement) and an ongoing difficult relationship between the British and Irish Governments, which had to date brought about no political agreement. The bombing was part of a sporadic but no less lethal campaign in England, which characterised the 1980s. It was also part of a longer bombing campaign, which brought the conflict to the mainland throughout much of the history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The contrast between the political environment in Northern Ireland in 1984 and today could not be starker. The aim of this paper, which has developed out of a lecture at the University of Brighton's symposium in October 2014, will be to assess how the Brighton bombing could be viewed in the context of the PIRA's twenty-five year campaign of violence in England during the Troubles. Moreover, it will assess the bombing's historical significance, given the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985 and the subsequent peace process which ultimately led to Sinn Féin sharing power with Unionists in Northern Ireland.

The Grand Hotel bombing

On 12 October 1984 at 2.54 a.m., the PIRA detonated a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton, killing five people and injuring thirty others. Even the most rational observer could not deny that this was one of the most audacious attacks in Irish republican history, which followed several previous attempts by militant republicans (some successful) on the lives of British politicians, their leaders and many symbols of what they saw as the British establishment. In a cruel twist of fate, out of five married couples residing in rooms near the explosion, each lost one partner in the explosion.¹ Despite

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the fact that many would see those killed as innocent civilians, the PIRA recognised this as a legitimate and direct attack on the State. Two major factors made this attack successful for the PIRA. Firstly, during the week of the Conservative Party conference, the Anti-Terrorist Branch at Scotland Yard issued a warning that the PIRA were targeting political and military figures.² This warning failed to get through to Sussex Police with the Chief Constable at the time, Roger Birch, believing that the PIRA threat was 'not very high' in relation to the British Prime Minister's security.³ It emerged in the days after the explosion that a security meeting between senior officials of the Conservative Party and Sussex Police concentrated on the Brighton Centre where the Conservative Party conference was taking place.

Secondly, the development of the 'long delay timer' on most video recorders also ensured that the PIRA could plant the device weeks in advance. A leaked Ministry of Defence report in December 1978 correctly speculated on the danger which the long delay timer posed in the hands of organisations such as the PIRA:

The availability of long delay timers makes it feasible for bombs to be placed at a target before suspicion arises. Such a system is very accurate and can produce a delay of weeks or even years. We would expect to see more use of these long delay timers particularly with a view to causing explosions at sensitive moments, such as the time of a VIP visit.⁴

Patrick Magee, along with another republican, checked into the Grand Hotel in Brighton on 15 September 1984 under the name of Paul Walsh (a republican who was involved in the Old Bailey bombing in 1973 and who was in prison at the time). The bomb was placed in room 629, high enough to avoid detection but also within range of the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who would reside a good distance from the ground floor (ironically for security reasons). Taking advantage of lax security only weeks before the Conservative Party Conference, Magee placed a bomb, which was later believed by the security forces to be 30lb in weight, behind a wall in the bathroom of his suite. Magee then checked out of the Grand Hotel on 18 September.⁵

The criminal investigation into the Brighton bomb was one of the most extensive investigations ever held into terrorist crime in British history. Amongst the debris examined was the hotel register, which the police used as the basis of their enquiry.⁶ The police were eventually able to trace Patrick Magee's fingerprints from this register and they were matched with police records in Norwich, where he had been arrested as a teenager for

shoplifting.⁷ After he was seen meeting PIRA suspect Peter Sherry at Carlisle railway station, he was followed to Glasgow and eventually arrested at a flat in the city on 24 June 1985. Magee was sentenced to thirty-five years in prison on 11 June 1986 and four other PIRA members were sentenced to prison for conspiring to cause explosions in England.⁸ Magee was released from prison on 22 June 1999 and was the 277th person to be released from prison under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, which would eventually lead to Sinn Féin taking its place in a power-sharing government at Stormont.⁹ When those involved in the Brighton bombing were arrested, it became clear that the PIRA were intent on mounting a more co-ordinated campaign of violence across England. The Provisional Army Council (PAC) had given the go-ahead for such a campaign in January 1985.¹⁰ Documents found illustrated how the PIRA would launch an offensive in London and on a number of holiday resorts in England, with the aim of severely damaging the tourist industry. Bombs would go off at these locations on sixteen consecutive days except for Sundays, representing the first sustained bombing campaign in England by the PIRA since the mid 1970s. A total of 140lbs of gelignite was found in the Glasgow apartment used by Patrick Magee along with a number of timing devices. One of the devices had already been placed in room 112 of the Rubens Hotel in London. It took police several hours to find it.¹¹

The day after the explosion at the Grand Hotel, the PIRA issued what is now seen as one of their most recognisable statements of responsibility for a particular attack over the course of the Troubles:

The IRA claims responsibility for the detonation of one hundred pounds of gelignite against the British cabinet and the Tory warmongers. Thatcher will now realise that Britain cannot occupy our country, torture our prisoners and shoot our people on their own streets and get away with it. Today we were unlucky, but remember, we have only to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always. Give Ireland peace and there will be no war.¹²

While the statement was expressed in gloating terms, it underlined a fundamental point, which was difficult for anybody connected with British politics to play down. The PIRA had proved that the idea of total security was an illusion and there would always be some risk to the ordinary British MP. The *Guardian* commented: 'If words mean anything, those words portend a broadening of the Provisionals' recent British mainland hit list of soldiers, judges and directly involved politicians.'¹³ While it might be possible

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to protect figures such as the Queen and the Prime Minister in future, it would be impossible to protect ordinary MPs and party personnel – precisely the type of people who were killed as a result of the Brighton bombing. The British Prime Minister, however, remained defiant.

We will never give up the search for more effective means of defeating the [P]IRA. If the [P]IRA think they can weary or frighten us, they have made a terrible miscalculation. People say that it is sometimes wrong to use the word 'never' in politics. I disagree. Some things are of such fundamental importance that no other word is appropriate. I say once again today that the government will never surrender to the [P]IRA. Never.'¹⁴

Why did the PIRA bring their campaign of terror to England?

During the course of the PIRA's twenty-five year campaign of terror in England, over five hundred incidents were recorded. 115 people were killed, 2,134 people were injured and the campaign cost the British Government billions, particularly during the 1990s.¹⁵ The campaign was also costly for republicans, as dozens were imprisoned as a result of their activities in England and it would eventually prove to be a significant drain on the resources of the PIRA. There was always a body of opinion within the PIRA that bombs should be detonated in England, to bring the war home to the British Government and the British people. However, the debate over bombing England continued for some time in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, there were many within the movement who remained to be convinced of the benefits of bombing England for the Republican Movement.

During the course of the Troubles, militant republicans often looked to past actions against the British State to help explain the rationale for some of their activities in England. The activities of the Fenian Movement or the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1867 resulted in the detonation of the first Irish bomb on mainland Britain (outside Clerkenwell Prison in London). This was not an attack aimed at forcing a United Ireland, but rather an attempt by Irish revolutionaries to free their own prisoners. However, this incident, along with another which saw a policeman shot dead in Manchester during another botched attempt to free Irish prisoners, led to the Prime Minister William Gladstone looking at Irish affairs more closely and addressing nationalist concerns such as land and tenant rights as well as disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Gladstone's actions in the face of this violence essentially sowed the seeds of the republican argument that

bombs in England or Irish revolutionary action of any description in England would force the British Government into a re-thinking of its policy on Ireland.

Irish American Dynamiters were responsible for a series of bombs in England and Scotland during the 1880s. While this led to the creation of the Irish Special Branch to combat serious crime and terrorism in Britain, the campaign also coincided with the Liberal Government's first attempt to introduce home rule in Ireland in 1886. The proposed legislation was aimed at meeting the demands of Irish nationalists to determine their own affairs, which made the bombing campaign more credible to latter day militant republicanism. Between 1881 and 1887, there were at least twenty-three major recorded incidents in what was the first concerted terrorist campaign in England by Irish revolutionaries and arguably the first campaign of its nature anywhere in the world. The Dynamiters were responsible for the first significant attacks on symbols of the establishment. They targeted the Tower of London and the Chamber of the House of Commons, attacks which have gone down in Irish republican folklore. The target selection suggests that the campaign was aimed at 'terrorising' the general public and influencing British public opinion towards support for an independent Ireland.

Between 1919 and 1921 (coinciding with the War of Independence in Ireland), numerous attacks of sabotage aimed at exerting more pressure and raising the costs of the conflict took place in England. Targets included farm buildings, warehouses and telephone lines. Over the course of the campaign of sabotage there were hundreds of incidents, costing the Government millions of pounds. Shops, banks and transport buildings were targeted. In 1939, with tensions mounting in Europe and the increasing possibility of a Second World War breaking out, militant republicans sensed another opportunity to exert maximum pressure on the British Government, with the clear intention of stretching the resources of the security forces and intelligence services on both sides of the Irish Sea and ultimately the British Government's resolve to remain in Northern Ireland. However, the campaign was ill-thought and ill-conceived from the outset and the IRA misjudged the mood of the Irish Government, which had declared neutrality in the war and had no desire to see militant republicans undermine this. The IRA's activities in England resulted in 291 incidents between 1939 and 1940 and the deaths of seven people. The campaign was met with a robust response by the British Government and particularly from the Irish Government. By 1 September 1939, sixty-nine people had been convicted in Britain in relation to IRA activity.

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Meanwhile, the Irish Government introduced the Offences Against the State Act in June 1939, followed by further anti-terrorist legislation in December, which allowed for large numbers of IRA suspects to be rounded up and interned at a military camp in the Curragh. Significant public support for the Irish Prime Minister Éamon De Valera's policy, aimed at curtailing the activities of the IRA and the arrest and internment of so many volunteers, had a significant and detrimental impact on the IRA, virtually finishing the organisation as a military force.

The bombing campaign 1973–97

The first major incident in England since the outbreak of the Troubles was attributed to the Official IRA, when it detonated a device at the army base in Aldershot (the headquarters of the Parachute Regiment) in February 1972. In addition to the publicity generated by the Aldershot bombing, several factors influenced the PIRA's decision to take their bombing campaign to England. Once the Troubles began in Northern Ireland in 1969 and once the PIRA became fully active during the 1970-71 period, it was arguably only a matter of time before bombs started going off in England. The PIRA found it increasingly difficult to operate in Northern Ireland as the army and police closed in on key members of the organisation, and by late 1972 several hundred volunteers had been arrested. Amongst those arrested was the Chief of Staff, Sean MacStiofain, who had been captured in November 1972. By that time, the Northern Ireland conflict was not being featured on the national news so regularly. However, the PIRA believed in publicity terms that one bomb in Oxford Street was worth ten in Belfast. This point was underlined after the first series of bombs in London on 8 March 1973. The BBC News bulletin that evening devoted fifteen minutes to the bombings in London, with a few minutes concentrating on eleven bombs in Northern Ireland, two murders and the Border Poll to determine whether Northern Ireland should remain a part of the United Kingdom, which was also taking place that day. Over the course of the campaign there were instances when publicity generated a negative image for the Republican Movement, undermining support in influential areas such as Irish America. For instance, the pub bombings in Birmingham in 1974 and the Warrington bombing of March 1993 (discussed by Lesley Lelourec in this volume) were followed by public and political outrage. Such outrage could also lead to a more draconian response from the British Government, as was the case in 1974 when the Prevention of Terrorism Act was rushed through Parliament days after the Birmingham bombings.

The PIRA believed that bombs in England would influence British public opinion in favour of withdrawing from Northern Ireland. They wanted the British people to ask why the bombs were going off and in turn put pressure on the Government to consider withdrawing from Northern Ireland. They believed that the British people showed much indifference to the ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland and would only become interested once bombs started going off in England. There was a certain element of truth in this analysis – one only has to look at media interest generated by bombs in England. However, there was never any real clamour for withdrawal of the troops from Northern Ireland. The most prominent campaign of the early 1970s was the ‘bring back the boys from Ulster’ campaign, which eventually received over 119,000 signatures in support of withdrawal from Northern Ireland. This campaign only materialised after three soldiers were murdered in Northern Ireland and was led by the parents of one of those killed in the incident. This was the most explicit example of public clamour for withdrawal and was not brought about by bombs in England, but by events in Northern Ireland itself.

The PIRA believed that the bombs on the doorstep of the British Government would force it to address the issues surrounding the conflict in Northern Ireland. They based this view on the historical experiences of the Republican Movement in England and in particular what they saw as the reaction of the Government to republican activity in the 1860s and the 1880s. In more recent times, the PIRA believed that the intense bombing campaign in Belfast in 1972 led to direct talks between the Republican Movement and the British Government in June of that year. They believed that the bombs in England would have a similar accelerating effect. Some actions in England could also be used to send a political message to the Government with much more effect and publicity than would be the case as a result of a similar act in Northern Ireland. For example, the London bombs in March 1973 were the PIRA’s response to the Border Poll taking place in Northern Ireland on that day. Many republicans also believed that the ceasefire of 1974–75 and the secret contacts of the early 1990s were brought about by bombs in England. When the British and Irish Government’s signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985, which would give the Irish Government a say in Northern Ireland’s affairs, it was widely recognised as evidence of the bombing influencing the British Government. However, the agreement, in the view of the British Government was aimed at improving cross-border co-operation on security to thwart PIRA activities in Northern Ireland and was also seen as a mechanism to shore up Irish nationalist support for the moderate SDLP and

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undermine Sinn Féin politically. This had limited effect, however, but did see the Sinn Féin vote stagnating in the late 1980s.

Tactics and targets

The 1970s

When assessing a chronology of the campaign in the 1970s, it becomes clear that the PIRA were willing to attack political, military and economic symbols of the establishment in order to disrupt daily life in Britain and make sure everyone experienced the effects, not just political and military figures. Following the arrests of the London bombers in March 1973, the PIRA established a number of sleeper cells in England, where several operators could plant small bombs in a range of locations.¹⁶ This period is also associated with the series of pub bombings as the campaign peaked during the autumn of 1974. A chronology of December 1974 (when twelve major incidents were recorded, injuring fifty-two people, many of them civilians), demonstrated that the public outcry after the events of October and November 1974 had little impact on the PIRA as they continued their campaign. Following the arrest of the Balcombe Street Gang in December 1975, the activity of the PIRA became much less evident in England in the late 1970s.¹⁷ The most high profile attack of the late 1970s was the detonation of a car bomb by the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), which killed the Conservative MP Airey Neave in the Palace of Westminster car park during the 1979 General Election campaign. There were a number of attacks in 1980 and 1981 but not at the intensity of the period 1973–75. The killing of Neave was an early reminder to the incoming Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher of the potential danger posed by militant republicans and a warning that the Northern Ireland problem should be high on her agenda.

The 1980s

The 1980s were characterised by sporadic but often spectacular attacks by the PIRA. A chronology of the period 1982–88 shows a total of thirteen major incidents, killing twenty-three people and injuring 188 others. The PIRA largely focused on political and military targets, as demonstrated by the Hyde Park and Regent's Park bombings and the Brighton bombing. However, the bombings in London in 1983, which included a car bomb outside Harrods department store, which killed six people and injured ninety-one others, demonstrated many members still believed that hitting civilian targets would impact British public opinion, bringing the war home to the British people as republicans put it.

The 1990s and the peace process

The 1990s saw the PIRA 'establish an ongoing presence in Britain', with the organisation 'waging a sustained and in effect, continuous offensive'.¹⁸ Much of the time, the Government and Republican Movement were engaged in secret talks which would eventually lead to the first ceasefire in 1994 and the subsequent peace process. When assessing the PIRA campaign of the 1990s in retrospect, it had become increasingly concentrated in England and particularly London with the big City bombs in 1992 and 1993. At the same time, the ability of the PIRA to operate in Northern Ireland and particularly some of its heartlands, such as South Armagh, was becoming increasingly constrained. This was partly attributed to increasing successes on the part of the security forces in Northern Ireland, but may also be partially explained by the PIRA's concentration of additional resources on the bombing campaign in England. However, the PIRA were finding it increasingly difficult to kill British soldiers in places such as South Armagh. From a militant republican point of view, this meant that their campaign in Northern Ireland was having less impact and underlined the importance of the England campaign during this period.

The PIRA's 'economic war' with the British Government became a key aspect of their campaign in England in the 1990s – from bomb scares causing massive disruption across London to the large Home Made Explosive (HME) devices, which devastated large parts of the City of London. The PIRA reasoned that if they could raise the costs of the conflict, then the British might be more likely to negotiate or seek a way out of it. By 1993 and the attack on Bishopsgate, the costs of such attacks were running into billions of pounds worth of damage and insurance payouts. The attack at the Baltic Exchange in April 1992, for example, cost the Government more in insurance claims than the cost of some 10,000 bombs in Northern Ireland over the previous twenty-three years.

However, this masked the difficulties which the PIRA were facing as an organisation – even though they were having what they would call some successes. By the early 1990s, many of the bombs and personnel responsible for the attacks in London were coming from the PIRA stronghold of South Armagh. In the 1970s and 1980s, the 'England Department' tended to comprise of personnel who were 'additional' to those operating in Northern Ireland. However, by the 1990s, the PIRA were using what was known as 'the cream of the crop' to carry out attacks in England.¹⁹

This problem became increasingly acute with the campaign between 1996 and 1997. While the PIRA did detonate massive devices in Canary

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Wharf and Manchester, the security forces were closing in on them. Following the Manchester bomb, eight PIRA suspects were apprehended in July 1996, including Gerard Hanratty – eventually convicted for his part in the Canary Wharf bombing. The apprehension of what John Grieve, Metropolitan Police Commander of SO13 (Anti-Terrorist Branch) described as one of the best teams that the PIRA had ever put together in England, effectively marked the end of the PIRA campaign in England before they called another ceasefire in July 1997.²⁰

The Brighton bombing's historical significance

There were a number of issues during the period prior to the Brighton Bombing which arguably influenced its timing and choice of target, despite the obvious risks. With pressure building on the PIRA in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s as a result of a range of security initiatives, there was the need for the organisation to score a significant propaganda victory against the British Government. Since she came to office, Margaret Thatcher had seen the problem of Northern Ireland as a security problem. 'Her attitude to republicans was that they should be faced down and defeated.'²¹ There was also the issue of revenge, following her stance in not conceding to the demands of republicans for their prisoners to be treated as political prisoners and not criminals. The H-blocks protest eventually led to the hunger strikes in which ten prisoners died during 1981. From the PIRA's perspective, it was essential that they initiated a major strike as they 'had failed spectacularly to offer a military response at the time of the hunger strikes.'²²

The bombing of the Grand Hotel presented republicans with a propaganda coup after a series of setbacks in Northern Ireland and was therefore 'enormously popular amongst nationalists and republicans.'²³ There was a feeling amongst them that the 'Armalite and ballot box' strategy had been making the military wing of the Republican Movement go 'soft'.²⁴ Pressure for PIRA action remained intense from prisoners in particular, and after the revulsion following the Harrods bombing, civilian targets were not a favourable option for many in the movement. The hunger strikes of 1981, and in particular Margaret Thatcher's stance on them, had undoubtedly left a legacy of bitterness towards the British establishment within the Republican Movement. For Sean O'Callaghan, a former member of the PIRA, turned informer, the British Prime Minister had become 'a hate figure for republicans on a scale we hadn't seen since Cromwell.'²⁵ In the republican heartlands in Northern Ireland, Thatcher had featured in 'Wanted for

Murder' posters in 1981.²⁶ The desire for revenge for the deaths of the ten hunger strikers had become ingrained in republican thinking.

So extreme were the views amongst some elements of the Republican Movement during this period, that some suggested all of the PIRA's 'foreign struggle should have been devoted to the assassination of Thatcher.'²⁷ While Thatcher was the prime target, it is claimed by Danny Morrison, the Sinn Féin Director of Publicity, that the bomb was also intended to wipe out a generation of Tories and force a political crisis in Britain.²⁸ Other former members of the Provisional Republican Movement would argue that the killing of Thatcher or mass casualties amongst the British Cabinet would have made little difference to the eventual outcome of the peace process in the 1990s.²⁹

Underlining the vulnerability of British politicians

The Grand Hotel bombing was arguably the starkest example of how vulnerable senior political figures were to attacks of this nature, particularly when there were any gaps in security as there were in Brighton. Whilst the undoubted intention of the bombing was to kill senior members of the British Government, the thinking of the PIRA at the time would suggest that the killing of Thatcher and members of the Cabinet represented a bonus or secondary objective to the psychological effects which the bombing would have on the Government in the longer term. Republicans reasoned that the threat of such attacks might weaken its resolve to remain in Ireland.

Thatcher (had) set herself up as a strong leader, therefore the person to weaken is the strongest person and you do that by bringing the war to her front door. Her dying or living is unimportant. Without weakening the resolve of that type of person, you can never get them to even consider Ireland. The fact that she did not die but now has to look over her shoulder every time she goes out means she can never forget Ireland as a problem. If someone is under that degree of pressure then he or she begins to wonder how valuable Ireland is to that life.³⁰

To put it another way, a senior PIRA member stated that the attack: 'proved the capacity of the (P)IRA to strike where it wanted. Essentially anyone would know that removing Margaret Thatcher as an individual would not necessarily weaken British policy in Ireland, but the fact that you can attack Mrs Thatcher might weaken her resolve to stay in Ireland.'³¹ If one looks at

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how the British Government dealt with the PIRA before and after the Brighton bombing, it is clear that Thatcher was intent on pursuing the same path in recognising the Northern Ireland problem as one of security. If anything, the bombing strengthened her resolve to marginalise the Republican Movement. However, for Patrick Magee the Brighton bombing also succeeded in destroying the British Government's long-term strategy in dealing with the PIRA:

In lieu of the capacity to wipe out the (P)IRA, the long term strategy was to depict us as criminals while continuing the war within the North. As long as the war was kept within that context, they could sustain the years of attrition. But in the early 1980s we succeeded in destroying both strategies. The hunger strikes destroyed the notion of criminalisation and the Brighton bombing destroyed the notion of containment.³²

The PIRA would have a further opportunity to target a British Prime Minister when they launched several mortar bombs in the direction of Downing Street in February 1991, when John Major's Cabinet was meeting to discuss the ongoing crises in the Gulf – another reminder of the Government's other war closer to home.

Political developments in the months after the Brighton bombing

At the Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis* (or national conference) in November 1984, the party's President, Gerry Adams, described the Brighton bombing as 'a blow for democracy' for the United Kingdom. The bombing was a clear illustration of Adams' concept of 'armed propaganda', as he sought reforms within the Republican Movement during a period when the 'Armalite and ballot box' strategy was coming to the fore. It illustrated the move towards the dual strategy of politics and violence, with the Sinn Féin electoral machine working almost in tandem with PIRA activity on the ground. With hindsight, Adams argued that: 'the British government was rudely awakened from complacency by the Brighton bombing.'³³ Politically – in the short to medium term at least – the bombing was not beneficial to the Republican Movement. The reaction on both sides of the Atlantic was one of condemnation, which mattered to Sinn Féin particularly when it came from the United States. There was unreserved condemnation for an attack on what was recognised as the United States' closest Cold War ally. The *New York Times* stated: 'The

next time the hat is passed, those tempted to contribute should ask how they would feel if money were raised in another country to finance an attempt to assassinate the President of the United States.³⁴

The PIRA also managed to achieve something that seemed impossible in the years preceding the attack. They managed to unite the left and right in the middle of Britain's worst industrial dispute in fifty years.³⁵ The condemnation of the bombing cut across all shades of political opinion in England.³⁶ In the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement a year later, the PIRA argued that: 'The catalyst for the Hillsborough Treaty was undoubtedly a combination of the Brighton bomb and the electoral rise of Sinn Féin.'³⁷ While it may have acted as a catalyst for a political initiative, some republicans argued that it didn't change Thatcher's outlook in recognising the PIRA as a security problem. Her support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement was dependent on proposed security measures, which would be implemented by the Irish Government against republicans.³⁸ Thatcher was also under pressure from her American allies to seek a political agreement, which would address the concerns of nationalists in Ireland. The Irish lobby had a strong influence on the Reagan administration, and the lack of movement towards a political agreement in Northern Ireland would ultimately put pressure on this 'special relationship.'³⁹

Nevertheless, Cabinet papers from the period suggest that the bombing had the potential to derail any political progress rather than act as a catalyst for agreement. Four months before the bombing, Mrs Thatcher got Cabinet approval for a series of secret meetings with the Irish Government.⁴⁰ In June 1984, the Prime Minister had stated that: 'It was necessary at this juncture to look further ahead into Ireland than the British government had done before. Ten thousand British soldiers could not be left in Northern Ireland forever, nor could the very considerable cost of subsidising the province be sustained, without continuing (the) search for possible forward movement.'⁴¹ Meetings had continued between senior officials over the course of the summer months with tentative steps being made towards an agreement in the weeks leading up to the bombing. A week prior to the Brighton bombing, both Governments were in agreement on the desire for a form of devolved government in Northern Ireland. However, following the Brighton bombing, private correspondence with her closest advisers shows the extent to which Thatcher was willing to disengage with the process: 'The events of Thursday night in Brighton mean that we must go very slowly on these talks if not stop them. It could look as if we were bombed into making concessions to the Republic.'⁴² However, despite the evident difficulties, the Prime Minister stated in a letter to the Irish *Taoiseach* a month later, and following a meeting between the two at Chequers the

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previous weekend, that she was determined to maintain a 'close personal interest in the continuing discussions between our two governments over the coming months.'⁴³

While republicans interpreted the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 15 November 1985 as Thatcher's political response to the Brighton bombing, the evidence suggests otherwise. It was believed that the attack on Thatcher pressured the British Prime Minister to introduce an initiative that would give nationalists in Ireland more recognition and the Irish Government a say in Northern Ireland's affairs. However, the primary aim of the Agreement was to damage Sinn Féin politically, rather than placate them. Thatcher, along with the Irish Government, wanted to halt the increasing effectiveness of the Sinn Féin electoral machine, which was making significant gains at the expense of the SDLP. She had reached a partial appreciation of northern nationalists' sense of exclusion from the institutions and along with Garret Fitzgerald wanted to address this, bolstering support for the SDLP in the process.⁴⁴ Thatcher later conceded in her memoirs that she was not as happy with the outcome of the Agreement as she had hoped to be. The presence of the SAS in Northern Ireland and the series of incidents which led to the deaths of leading PIRA members, suggested too, that Thatcher was more intent on inflicting real damage upon, rather than placating, the Republican Movement.⁴⁵

Conclusion: How is the Brighton bombing best understood?

There is no doubt that republicans still recognise the England campaign as a key element of their terror campaign against the British. In 2013, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness claimed that PIRA bombs had a significant influence in bringing the British Government to the negotiating table.⁴⁶ Patrick Magee also argues that the peace process was undoubtedly the result of the political leverage which he believes the Brighton bombing gave republicans. 'Until Brighton we were not being taken seriously by the British political establishment. We were trapped in the acceptable level of violence strategy and it's important to remember that the only way we could have lost the war was to be trapped in indefinitely fighting it.'⁴⁷ The weakness of Magee's argument is that the result, being the peace process, demonstrated that the PIRA did not win the war and that any political leverage gained by republicans failed to significantly alter Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom.

Shortly before the thirtieth anniversary of the Brighton bombing, the journalist Peter Taylor suggested in a BBC documentary that by looking

at the present, one could conclude that the British and Unionists won the war in Northern Ireland.⁴⁸ Despite the republican bombs and shootings in both Northern Ireland and England, there is still no United Ireland and there won't be unless a majority of people in Northern Ireland agree to it. Sinn Féin are now a part of the State the Republican Movement sought to smash for so long. However, the Brighton bombing should be seen as one of the defining incidents of the Northern Ireland Troubles. It was the PIRA's most audacious attack on the heart of the British Government and it dispelled any lingering notion that the Government may have had, that the PIRA could be defeated militarily and the violence contained within Northern Ireland. Whilst the British and Irish Governments sought a political way forward through the Anglo Irish Agreement, secret contacts were made between the Government and republicans later in the 1980s, even as both sides continued with the 'war', to explore how it might be brought to an end.

Until the Cabinet papers from the 1980s and 1990s are all released, we may never truly know what impact incidents such as Brighton actually had on the British Government. However when we assess what Sinn Féin has achieved through the political process, particularly their position as the largest political party on the island of Ireland, it is clear that many of their advances in Irish politics have taken place in a new political dispensation which they have subscribed to. This vividly contradicts the republican argument that they were able to gain political leverage against a backdrop of continuing violence in Northern Ireland and England and particularly with high profile incidents such as Brighton.

Notes

¹ 'The Brighton Bomb', *BBC Television*, 20 September 2005.

² *Ibid.*

³ Roger Birch, former Chief Constable, Sussex Police, quoted on 'Secret History: Brighton Bomb', *Channel 4 Television*, 15 May 2003.

⁴ *Northern Ireland Future Terrorist Trends*, Brigadier J.M. Glover, BGS, (Int.), DIS, 2 December 1978. This secret report for the MOD was lost in transit in the Midlands. Sections of it were later reprinted in *Republican News*. This quote was cited in 'Bombers', *Granada Television*.

⁵ See Eamonn Mallie and David McKittrick, *Endgame in Ireland* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001), pp.11-21.

⁶ *BBC News*, 11 June 1986.

⁷ 'The Hunt for the Brighton Bomber', *BBC Television*, 20 September 2004.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Patrick Magee interview with Tom McGurk, *Sunday Business Post*, 27 September 2000.

¹⁰ Cited in 'Bomber', *RTE Television*, 2005.

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¹¹ Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: The Military History of a Domestic Conflict* (London: Harpercollins, 1998), p.212.

¹² Issued by the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau in Dublin, 12 October 1984.

¹³ *Guardian*, 16 October 1984.

¹⁴ Quoted in J. Bowyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence 1967-1992* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1993), p.687.

¹⁵ Gary McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England: The Bombing Campaign 1973-1997* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006). Unless otherwise referenced, this is the source for material presented in the current and subsequent two sections.

¹⁶ The PIRA used this tactic during much of their campaign in England where groups of operators would reside in England undetected by the security forces for a period before carrying out a number of attacks.

¹⁷ The Balcombe Street Gang were a group of PIRA members responsible for a series of attacks across the West End of London during the Autumn of 1975. They were eventually arrested on 6 December 1975 following a six-day siege at a flat in Balcombe Street, London.

¹⁸ Mallie and McKittrick, *Endgame in Ireland*, p.62.

¹⁹ Tommy McKearney, interview with the author, July 2002.

²⁰ Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p.351.

²¹ Mallie and McKittrick, *Endgame in Ireland*, p.18.

²² Tommy McKearney, interview.

²³ Gerry Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland* (Dingle, Co Kerry: Brandon, 2003), p.32.

²⁴ 'Horror at Brighton', *Observer*, 14 October 1984.

²⁵ Sean O'Callaghan, quoted in 'Secret History: Brighton Bomb'.

²⁶ Liam Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield: The H Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p.205.

²⁷ Anthony McIntyre, former member of the PIRA, interview with the author, July 2002.

²⁸ Clarke, *Broadening the Battlefield*, p.205.

²⁹ This was an argument put forward in particular by Anthony McIntyre and Tommy Gorman, also a former member of the PIRA, during interviews with the author, July 2002.

³⁰ Private information, most likely a former member of the PIRA not willing to put their name to the interview, quoted in Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA* (London: Transworld, 1987), pp.426-27.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Magee interview with Tom McGurk.

³³ Gerry Adams, *The Politics of Irish Freedom* (Dingle, Co. Kerry: Brandon, 1986) p.105.

³⁴ *New York Times*, 13 October 1984.

³⁵ Kevin Toolis 'The British Left after Brighton', *Fortnight*, November 1984.

³⁶ See 'British politics and the Brighton effect', *Economist*, 1984.

³⁷ Quoted in *Iris*, October 1987, cited in M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.189.

³⁸ Anthony McIntyre, interview.

³⁹ John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), p.429.

⁴⁰ 'IRA Brighton bomb slowed British-Irish peace talks', *BBC News*, 3 January 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25576164, accessed 14 November 2016.

⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴² Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴³ Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Garret Fitzgerald, 21 November 1984, cited in Nick Higham, 'Cabinet papers reveal "secret coal pits closure plan"', *BBC News*, 3 January 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25549596, accessed 17 November 2016.

⁴⁴ Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher*, p.428.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Brits*, p.267.

⁴⁶ Martin McGuinness, interviewed in 'Thatcher and the IRA', *BBC Television*, 3 April 2013.

⁴⁷ Patrick Magee interview with Tom McGurk.

⁴⁸ 'Who Won the War', *BBC Northern Ireland Television*, 8 September 2014.

A civil rights perspective

Natalie Reside

I listened with interest to Gary McGladdery's account of the IRA's bombing campaign in England in the 1970s and 1980s, but found it to be a somewhat partial account of the events of that period and their impact on the Irish in Britain and the wider community. I am old enough to have my own personal memories of the bombing campaign in England and remember being moved from cinemas and restaurants because of bomb scares. However, these memories should not be viewed in isolation. The newspapers were also full of other current struggles. Some of these were for independence in Africa and the Caribbean. Others were more local, as this was an era of great political awakening for feminists, the Black community and those campaigning for lesbian and gay rights. I am also old enough to have seen British soldiers on the streets of the North of Ireland when I visited friends and relatives in the 1970s and 1980s. I also remember my own Protestant parents, who had left the North of Ireland to join up in the Second World War, sending back any official documents issued in the North of Ireland as they were afraid of the discrimination which was attached to these documents and to their Irish accents. But they retained their love of the Irish landscape and Irish songs and their closest and most durable friendships were with friends who had also migrated from Ireland – whether they were Catholic or Protestant.

And this is one of the first memories I bring to the symposium – a sense of being Irish, which is not dictated by religion or being born north or south of the border. Something my parents instilled in us as children, celebrating St Patrick's Day and an Irish version of Halloween with vigour and following the prospects of Irish racehorses and the Irish rugby team with equal enthusiasm. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity to be a part of this symposium and give testimony to a history and to memories which have been largely overlooked by the consistent attention given to the fact that some people in the North of Ireland took up arms as a solution to what they saw as the intractable problems caused by partition and colonialism. It is also important to recall that for many the starting point was not an armed struggle but the civil rights movement, which began in the 1960s. This movement had very basic demands, which included the end to blatant employment discrimination, which ensured that no Catholics were

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employed by major companies such as Harland and Woolf. At the same time, Catholics were denied equal access to public housing and the electoral boundaries were gerrymandered so that the votes of the Nationalist community were concentrated in certain areas, such as Fermanagh and South Tyrone, meaning that overall they had less political representation.

This all led to an economic and social stagnation and constant pressure to migrate, which affected both Catholic and Protestant communities. It was mediated by class and opportunity and those with more education were able to migrate further but it is significant that of my own thirteen pairs of uncles and aunts, only one stayed in the North of Ireland. Others moved to New Zealand, North America, Australia, South America, England and Scotland. They moved because of economic necessity, not 'the Troubles'. This means that I bring a view to this symposium, which is informed by the political, social and economic forces which have impacted on me throughout my life. Without a doubt, this is the same for all those who formulate histories, personal or otherwise.

Throughout the 1970s I was a teacher in the north of England and became aware of the plight of elderly and homeless Irish workers, the signs which still said 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs', the unemployment of Irish youth and the increasing protest about the denial of civil rights in the North of Ireland. In the 1980s, I had moved into academia and undertook research relating to the Irish community. This research revealed that the bias and treatment of the Irish community was based on historical, social, economic and political factors which pre-dated by decades the IRA's bombing campaign of the 1970s and 1980s, and which were in part based on a belief that the totality of the Irish community was 'suspect'. For example, Mr Loftus, a former President of the Irish Travel Agents Association, reported that prior to the 1987 Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool he had been contacted by Bob Waters Travel, a tour operator specializing in Blackpool holidays. He was asked for the addresses for six members of two different families and told that the Blackpool police wanted this information and that they were checking all Irish people going there.¹ Similarly, a spokesperson for the Blackpool District of the Union of Communication Workers said that Special Branch questioned post office workers about their Irish connections and asked them about their political views and the views of their colleagues.²

In the background lurked the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 (PTA), which became law on 29 November 1974, shortly after the Birmingham pub bombings.³ Its powers were extensive and did not conform to the human rights safeguards generally contained in comparable criminal legislation. For example, the Act permitted the police

to detain an individual without charge for up to forty-eight hours and without any contact with members of his or her family, friends, a lawyer or a court. It also provided the police with the power to detain a person for a further five days with limited access to legal advice if this was approved by the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Section 3 enabled the Secretary of State for the Home Department to exclude British citizens from entering Great Britain but did not prevent them from living in the North of Ireland. In addition, Section 8 enabled the authorities to examine any passenger arriving in or leaving Great Britain or Northern Ireland for purely information gathering purposes.

The PTA was said to be an essential tool in the fight against terrorism, but in fact the numbers of individuals actually charged with any offence connected with Irish terrorism was very small. For example, in 1980, 537 individuals were detained under the PTA but only twelve were charged with any offence under that Act. This trend continued and in 1983, 191 individuals were detained but only sixteen were charged.⁴ The Act was subsequently amended in 1976 to add a new Section 11, which made it an offence not to provide information which may be of material assistance to the police in relation to acts of terrorism or the conviction of any terrorist.⁵ It was the police who set the parameters for the scope of this information, and detainees, who were not provided with legal advice, were usually under the impression that they had to answer any question they were asked. As Viscount Colville reported in 1986 there was 'a widespread feeling that both port procedures and detentions are often "fishing trips" to gather information rather than an exercise directed at people who might themselves be terrorists'.⁶ One example in 1987 was that of Marian Stewart, the wife of an ex-prisoner from the North of Ireland, who was detained and told that if she did not co-operate, her children would be taken from her and put in care, including a child who suffered from cerebral palsy.⁷

As explained above, Section 8 of the PTA 1974 also provided police, immigration and customs and excise officers with the power to 'examine' passengers arriving in or leaving Britain or Northern Ireland to ascertain whether they were involved in Irish terrorism. This operated under a National Ports Scheme at 147 seaports and airports. Its records showed that in the period up to 30 September 1987, 6,610 people were detained for over an hour under this provision. But this under-represented the use of the power. In 1985, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's Annual Report revealed that in that year alone 55,328 individuals were examined for under an hour.⁸ This had a chilling effect on travel between the North of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Many of those detained did not wish to disclose that they had been stopped or what they had been asked for fear of being tarred with an association with terrorism. But newspaper reports of individual incidents in the 1980s indicate that those with a history of speaking out about abuses of human rights and civil rights were often targeted and/or asked questions on the basis of their general political profile. For example, Sheena Clarke, a local Sheffield councillor, who was also a member of the Labour Committee on Ireland, was detained at Manchester airport in 1985 on her return from a housing conference in Belfast. She was questioned about her opinions on events in Ireland, whether she has been on Irish demonstrations, what she thought of Labour Party policy on Ireland and whether she had been on Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament demonstrations.⁹ A Dublin-based Sinn Féin member, Aonghus O Snodaigh, was also detained after he had toured Northern Ireland addressing public meetings on the issues of civil rights and employment discrimination. Graham Hallowall, who had taken him to Leeds Airport, was also detained and questioned.¹⁰

At the same time, anti-Irish racism was rife, which is very well recorded in Liz Curtis' seminal work *Nothing but the Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism* (1985). For example, on 29 October 1982 the *Evening Standard* carried a JAK¹¹ cartoon which showed an imaginary poster for a film with the caption 'Showing Now – The Ultimate in Psychopathic Horror – THE IRISH'.¹² Marches commemorating Bloody Sunday or the death of hunger strikers were regularly attacked by the National Front, and the police just stood back and watched. In addition, political activity was also discouraged and the Irish community were isolated by this racism and by self-censorship.

But there were a few first and second generation members of the Irish community in Britain who did take political action. For instance, within the Labour Party, the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) was formed. The LCI concentrated on two main policy areas. The first was a call for a United Ireland and the second was opposition to a wide range of civil rights abuses which continued in the North of Ireland. These included the oppressive use of strip searching of prisoners, the indiscriminate use of plastic bullets to discourage protest, the imposition of Diplock courts and on-going employment discrimination. The LCI was particularly successful in relation to the latter, calling for companies to adopt the MacBride Principles, which obliged them to take the necessary steps to ensure that individuals of all political and religious persuasions could obtain employment in their workplaces.¹³ The LCI did not persuade the totality of the Labour and trade union movement to support a call for a United Ireland, but a resolution in favour of a United Ireland was passed by the London Labour Party

Conference in 1980 by 10:1 on a card vote. In 1985, the Annual NALGO¹⁴ conference passed an Irish unity resolution and the National Labour Women's Conference overwhelmingly supported open discussion on British withdrawal from the North of Ireland with Sinn Féin and feminist organisations. In June 1985, Peter Archer, the Labour Party's Spokesperson on Northern Ireland, vigorously defended the right of the Labour Party's NEC Northern Ireland Working Party to have discussions with Sinn Féin. In 1985, the London Labour Party Conference also passed a motion welcoming the involvement of majority Republican opinion in consultation, discussion and public meetings and decided to invite a representative to the 1986 London Labour Party Conference.

This progress reflected the growing political development of Sinn Féin and the work undertaken by the LCI to promote a meaningful dialogue between the Labour and trade union movement and Sinn Féin. In the North of Ireland, the 1981 hunger strikes and the election of Bobby Sands as the Anti-H Block/Armagh Prisoners MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone on 9 April 1981¹⁵ had marked the beginning of Sinn Féin's public political campaign, characterised at first by the use of the Armalite and the ballot box. Later in 1981, Owen Carron, who had been Bobby Sands' agent, won the by-election to become MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone following Bobby Sands' death on hunger strike. In 1982, Owen Carron was also elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly, as a Sinn Féin candidate. Another prominent Sinn Féin activist, Alex Maskey, was elected to Belfast City Council in 1983 and Gerry Adams was elected to the Westminster Parliament as MP for Belfast West. In addition, by May 1985 there were fifty-nine Sinn Féin councillors who had been elected to district councils in the North of Ireland.¹⁶

In response, the LCI organised fringe meetings at Labour Party and trade union conferences at which Sinn Féin elected representatives and activists were invited to speak. One particularly notable meeting was the one held at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in 1983, which was addressed by Gerry Adams and was attended by more than 600 delegates and activists. These fringe meetings continued at successive annual conferences of the Labour Party and the LCI issued invitations to Labour Party Spokespersons on Ireland, such as Peter Archer and Clive Soley, to speak on these platforms alongside Sinn Féin representatives, which they accepted. These meetings were instrumental in countering the false perceptions engendered by the anti-Irish racism prevalent in the media and opened up useful dialogues on the abuses of civil, political and human rights in the North of Ireland.

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From around 1985, Sinn Féin councillors also began regular speaking tours in Britain where they made contact with both the Irish and the wider British communities. For example, women councillors attended NALGO and other trade union conferences in that and following years. The LCI also organised a tour of Labour held councils in London and other cities, which was very successful; not least because it identified many common day to day concerns and issues which were being tackled by councillors in both the North of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

As can be seen from the dates given above, the Brighton Bombing did not interrupt this process. Although reaction to the bombing in some publications by predominantly British left wing organisation exposed their inability to fully understand the legacies of colonialism and their own unconscious anti-Irish racism. For example, one editorial came very close to suggesting that those supporting calls for Irish Unity were not capable of rational argument and political debate, echoing the infamous JAK cartoon in the *Evening Standard* in October 1982.¹⁷

Protest about this editorial is one example of the lively debate on events in the North of Ireland which occurred throughout the early and mid 1980s. The fact that the Government took steps to silence this debate owed more to the fact that Sinn Féin and others arguing for a United Ireland were gaining support than to the Brighton Bombing. The Government attempted this by imposing a Broadcasting Ban, which meant that between 19 October 1988 and 16 September 1994 the BBC and commercial radio and television stations were prohibited from transmitting the voices of any Sinn Féin representative or any representative of a number of named paramilitary groups. This included Sinn Féin members who had been democratically elected to district councils in the North of Ireland and Gerry Adams who had been elected to the British Parliament in 1983. As Scarlett McGuire, one of the journalists who unsuccessfully challenged the ban in the High Court, later said: 'the case is not just about journalists and their ability to report Northern Ireland properly. It is about people not being able to understand what is happening there because it has not been reported properly'.¹⁸

It was also notable that many in Britain who were arguing for a United Ireland approached the issue from an internationalist perspective and were also involved in proposing resolutions calling for a Palestinian State, in opposition to apartheid in South Africa and in support of the anti-imperialist struggles in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Grenada. Many agreed with the speech to the Dáil in Dublin by Sean MacBride on 13 July 1949 in which he said that 'our sole claim is that the Irish people should be allowed to determine their own affairs democratically and of their own free will, without interference by Britain. The fact that Britain succeeded (...) in

retaining a corner of our Ireland and that she has since occupied it, in no way entitled her to divide the historic Irish nation and to pretend that our island now consists of two separate nations'.¹⁹

Notes

¹ *Guardian*, 22 September 1987.

² *Irish Post*, 26 September 1987.

³ 1974 C. 56. On 21 November 1974 bombs were detonated in two pubs in Birmingham which killed twenty-one people and injured 182 others.

⁴ Home Office statistics, published on a quarterly basis throughout this period and quoted in *Policing London: Collected Reports of the LSPU Police Monitoring and Research Group*, No. 2 (London: London Strategic Policy Unit, December 1987), p. 53.

⁵ The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976.

⁶ Viscount Colville's *Annual Report on the Operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Interim Provisions) Act 1984* (1986).

⁷ *Republican News*, 13 August 1987.

⁸ *HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's Annual Report* (1985).

⁹ *Leeds Other Paper*, 28 June 1985.

¹⁰ *Irish Post*, 31 October 1987.

¹¹ JAK, otherwise known as Raymond Jackson, drew cartoons for the *Evening Standard* from 1952 – 97.

¹² Liz Curtis, *Nothing but the Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism* (London: Information on Ireland, 1985), p. 84.

¹³ The MacBride Principles, formulated by the Republican and human-rights activist, Seán MacBride in 1984, consisted of nine fair-employment principles. These were adopted in the USA but not in the North of Ireland, although they are believed to have helped progress to be made on this issue during the 1980s.

¹⁴ NALGO was the trade union which represented the vast majority of white collar local government employees at that time.

¹⁵ With 30,493 votes to the Ulster Unionist Party's 29,046.

¹⁶ 'Unionist outrage: Attempt to exclude republican councillors', *New Labour & Ireland*, 8, July/August/Sept 1985, p 4

¹⁷ *London Labour Briefing*, November 1984. The editorial gave rise to very strong protests by readers and contributors and the resignation of one member of the Editorial Board, who was an Irish activist.

¹⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 27 May 1989.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Keane, *Sean MacBride: A Life* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2007), pp. 94-95.

Coming to terms with a tragedy: The community response to the Warrington bombing

Lesley Lelourec

Why Warrington?
Why Bridge Street?
Why that litter bin?
Why the day before Mother's Day?
Why that precise moment?
Why did Tim not get well away from the area after the first bomb?
Why did Tim run towards, and not away from, the second bomb?
Why did the shrapnel hit Tim?
Why did it hit his head, and not another part of his body?¹

These words were penned by Colin Parry, father of one of the two young boys killed in the Warrington bombing, as he strove to comprehend his son's death and calculate the probability that his son would be murdered in such horrific circumstances.

Indeed the circumstances surrounding the Warrington bombing on 20 March 1993 were very different to those of Brighton 1984. In Warrington, the target was not the head of the British State; one which in terms of republican thinking was legitimate as the IRA sought revenge for what they saw as a total lack of empathy from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her government during the 1981 hunger strikes and the continuing occupation of the North of Ireland by Britain. In Warrington, the two explosive devices, hidden in dustbins in the busy high street on a Saturday lunchtime, albeit much smaller than the 20 lb bomb planted in a bathroom in the Grand Hotel in Brighton, would claim two young lives and injure over fifty others. Each separate IRA bombing attack has been remembered for different reasons. What marked the Warrington bombing most of all was the fact that the two boys who died were young children. The image which appeared in the media of an angelic-looking Johnathan Ball and the smiling school photo of Tim Parry struck a chord with the general public which reverberated far and wide. Whilst the political context and choice of target were completely different in Brighton and in Warrington, what both bombings have in common is that they both sparked unlikely

personal responses from bereaved family members who would take up the mantle of crusading for peace through building bridges and promoting reconciliation.

The choice of Warrington

Warrington was in fact targeted twice: there had been a previous attack on 25 February 1993, on the Warrington gasworks, destroying a gasometer. Three IRA members were apprehended by police constable Mark Toker who was shot and injured carrying out a routine vehicle check. Two of the attackers were later arrested and sentenced to 25 and 35 years' imprisonment. The third bomber escaped and was never caught.² The second and deadly attack took place in Bridge Street in Warrington town centre, just after midday on Saturday 20 March 1993, the day before Mother's Day. A warning had been sent to Merseyside Samaritans, indicating that a bomb had been planted outside the Boots store. Police assumed the warning referred to the Liverpool store and thus evacuated the area. However, two devices exploded one after the other some seventeen miles away in Warrington, killing three-year-old Johnathan Ball outright, and claiming the life of twelve-year-old Tim Parry, who had sustained severe head injuries, five days later.³ Johnathan had been out buying a Mother's Day card, accompanied by his babysitter. Tim, still recovering from an appendix operation, had gone into town with a friend to buy some Everton football shorts, so that he could play in the less strenuous goalkeeping position for his local team. Fifty-six people were injured, including a young mother, Bronwen Vickers, who lost a leg. She died from cancer a year later.

The choice of Warrington, a seemingly ordinary small English town situated halfway between Liverpool and Manchester and boasting no major industry, took the local people completely by surprise, as it did not correspond to either a military or economic target. Senior police officers at the time believed that the second bombing might have been a reprisal for the arrest of the two IRA men after the second attack a month earlier. No one was ever convicted for the bombing.⁴ The immediate local reaction in Warrington was unsurprisingly one of anger and bewilderment. The local social services helpline reported that: 'The overwhelming difficulty was the question "Why"?'⁵ Irish people living in Britain were often victimised during the Troubles, convenient scapegoats in the wake of atrocities, and Warrington's hitherto well-integrated five thousand-strong Irish community initially bore the brunt of anger vented by a small minority. The town's Irish

club was targeted by stones and an outhouse was set on fire. However, the attacks ceased quickly after calls for restraint from civic leaders.

Responses from Ireland

The huge media response in the aftermath of the bombing was heightened by the fact that the two fatalities were children. In the Republic of Ireland, the bombing sparked an unprecedented peace drive (which became known as Peace '93) initiated by Susan McHugh, a housewife, who phoned an RTÉ radio Liveline programme to voice her indignation as an Irish citizen at what had been committed 'in her name' (i.e. for the goal of Irish unity). She organised a meeting in Trinity College Dublin on 24 March 1993 which was attended by over one thousand people. The movement gathered momentum and a Rally for Peace was planned for 28 March outside the GPO in Dublin. Registers of condolences were opened in over one hundred Irish towns, and thousands of bouquets and messages were laid on St. Stephen's Green. They were later flown to Warrington, courtesy of the Irish Government, in time for the funeral of Tim Parry.

The Irish Head of State, President Mary Robinson, attended the high-profile memorial service for Warrington's victims on 7 April 1993 along with Prime Minister John Major and the Duke of Edinburgh. During the service, extracts from a letter sent by Cardinal Cahal Daly, Archbishop of Armagh, were read out by Derek Worlock, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool: 'Rarely have I experienced such intensity of revulsion and indignation as this atrocity in Warrington has evoked all over Ireland. People here are outraged that such deeds are claimed by the IRA to be done in the name of the people of Ireland. The Irish people reject that claim with vehemence.'⁶

In Northern Ireland, several nationalist sources spontaneously condemned the bombing, as exemplified by the nationalist *Irish News* editorial: 'The death of Johnathan Ball advanced the cause of a united Ireland by not one solitary inch; his death, and the death of countless others throughout the present conflict, has cast a shadow over our country.'⁷

Actions of the victims' families

What caught the public's attention locally, nationally and worldwide, was the dignified demeanour of the bereaved parents, Colin and Wendy Parry, and Wilf Ball and Marie Comerford. Their determination that their sons would not be forgotten and that their deaths should have a meaning gave rise to

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the extraordinary civic response to the bombing that would play a significant part in the peace process. As Colin Parry would later write: 'Here was an appealing and, if I may say, a handsome young man, whose life had been snuffed out in an instant. Was he to be just one more statistic in the long line of killings arising out of the Northern Ireland problem? Not if I had anything to do with it he wouldn't.'⁸

From the outset, the bereaved parents adopted an attitude that espoused dialogue and eschewed vengeance. Indeed, Colin and Wendy Parry embarked on a veritable crusade, which has been two-fold: to perpetuate the memory of their son and to build bridges between Ireland and Britain in the hope of preventing further acts of violence. The actions of the victims' families have focused on striving to contribute in some positive way to further mutual understanding between Britain and Ireland rather than on revenge or simply a demand for bringing the perpetrators to justice. Having never previously set foot on Irish soil, the Parrys, accompanied by Wilf Ball, made their first trip to the Republic of Ireland to attend the Peace Concert in Dublin on 24 April 1993 and appear on Gay Byrne's 'Late Late Show'. In 1994, the Parrys published their account of events since the bombing, entitled *Tim: An Ordinary Boy*, as a tribute to their son. They undertook a series of trips and initiatives in the weeks and months following the death of their son. In July 1993, the couple set off on a 'journey of understanding' - a trip to Northern Ireland on a fact-finding mission for a BBC 'Panorama' documentary which was broadcast on 6 September 1993, meeting people from both traditions within the region with the aim of discovering the reasons for the conflict and especially why some people would carry out such an act of atrocity. This quest for information echoed the bewilderment of so many people of Warrington.

Over the course of the years, the families, especially the Parrys, have made countless media appearances and met with the main political leaders, on both sides of the Irish Sea. Colin Parry, in particular, has not shied away from the media. His immense public suffering and dignified reaction has given him huge stature and the moral authority to engage with the other protagonists in the conflict and insist that politicians do the same. According to Marie Smyth: 'It seems that great suffering is perceived as having one of two main social, political and/or moral outcomes: as motivating revenge; or, if the sufferer manages to avoid being driven towards revenge, as morally educating and therefore qualifying the sufferer to act as a "moral beacon"'.⁹

Colin Parry, like Wilf Ball, has stopped short of forgiveness. He agreed to meet Martin McGuinness in 2001 at a press conference chaired by Rev. Stephen Kingsnorth, a prominent local Methodist minister, in which the

former senior IRA man apologised for the bombing. Like her husband, Wendy Parry has campaigned for a lasting response to the death of her son and had the idea of setting up an organisation that would bring young people together from different sides of the divide in the Irish conflict. The Parrys founded a charity in 1995 in memory of the two boys, initially called the Warrington International Youth Centre trust, which became the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Trust in 1998 and subsequently the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace in 2006. The foundation is located in the Peace Centre in Warrington, undoubtedly the most tangible legacy of the bombing. The £3 million building, co-owned and co-run with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Warrington Youth Club, provides accommodation, catering facilities, an IT suite and a sports hall. The Peace Centre was officially opened on 20 March 2000 by HRH the Duchess of Kent with Albert Reynolds and John Major and is the only UK organisation located in Great Britain working with the victims and survivors of political violence, including both military and paramilitary ex-combatants. It runs preventative programmes working with children and young people. For Colin Parry, 'We have an open door policy whereby we talk with all sides involved in violent conflict. It is an ethos at the heart of the work we do in memory of my son and Johnathan Ball, because by doing so we are doing something positive in their names.'¹⁰ Despite recurring funding issues, the Centre continues to provide support through its flagship Survivors for Peace programme, and was even mentioned in the 2014 Budget as Chancellor George Osborne pledged £150,000 to cover the running costs of the project for a further twelve months until a more permanent solution could be found.

Community response

The community response mirrored that of the bereaved parents: townspeople and key civic and community leaders mobilised to show support for the victims and to endeavour to foster closer links between the people of mainland Britain and Ireland, north and south. Several community groups undertook peacebuilding initiatives, including members of the local clergy, local councillors, and educationalists.

All the groups and protagonists who had contributed to Warrington's response officially came together in an umbrella organisation, WIRE (Warrington Ireland Reconciliation Enterprise) on 1 September 1995, which coincided with the first anniversary of the IRA ceasefire. WIRE constituted a general forum for exchanging information and sourcing grant

aid. It comprised Warrington Borough Council, the Warrington Project, the Bridge (a cultural association), Warrington International Youth Centre, Warrington Peace Walkers, the Warrington Male Voice Choir, the Town Centre Clergy, Peace '93 and the victims' families.

The Warrington Project (officially launched on 9 October 1993 in the presence of Mary Robinson and Prince Charles) was an educational response to the bombing, aiming to bring together schoolchildren from Britain and Ireland, North and South. At the inauguration, the Irish President declared: 'It seems to me that the people of Warrington have in this Project the great moral authority which such a community can draw upon when they make a common possession of their suffering and a common purpose of their healing'.¹¹ The Warrington Project received a £40,000 government grant and its trustees, who included John Dolan, the uncle of Johnathan Ball, were conscious of the need to support projects of a long-term nature. Links were set up between some Warrington schools and schools in the Falls Road, Belfast, in County Down and County Offaly in the Irish Republic. Exchange programmes began with Irish schools (Dublin 1994-95). One particular school, the Thomas Boteler High School, was prominent in taking active steps to increase pupils' awareness of Ireland in general, by choosing to work on Irish topics within the curriculum: 'Since the IRA's bomb attack upon Warrington in 1993, the school has worked hard to develop the Irish dimension within the curriculum. It was felt very necessary to do so in view of the anger, bewilderment, ignorance and misconceptions about Ireland which figured so prominently in pupils' attitudes at the time of the tragedy'.¹²

The Warrington Peace Walkers began by organising an annual walk from Warrington to Ireland to raise money for the Warrington Victims' Appeal Fund. On the second anniversary of the bombing, The Bridge organised an Irish festival (*Fleadh*) in Warrington which would become an annual event. The Warrington Male Voice Choir already existed but championed themes of peace and reconciliation after the bombing, becoming hugely involved by touring the island of Ireland and appearing on Irish TV. After a benefit concert in aid of the Victims' Appeal Fund on 16 April 1993, the choir went on to become the first English group ever to participate in a St. Patrick's Day parade, in South Armagh in 1996.

WIRE was officially wound up on the tenth anniversary of the bombing, although many of the various groups have continued independently; the Bridge continues its work, as does the choir, and of course the Peace Centre. There was a feeling among some members of the community that it was time to move on, as Rev. Kingsnorth, who was at the helm of peace initiatives undertaken by the Town Centre Clergy, commented: 'We have a commitment to carry on the work that has already

been done. The Peace Centre is a permanent fixture and we want to give the people of Warrington a chance to lay the bombing to rest.'¹³

The Warrington bombing and the public response it generated arguably constituted a significant development in the 1990s peace process, on several counts. The attack is seen as being an 'own-goal' for Republicanism, targeting civilians on a Saturday afternoon in a busy high street in such an ordinary town as Warrington. The scenario of children - innocent victims *par excellence* - being blown up matched the British State's portrayal of the IRA as fanatical murderers and caused outrage within the nationalist community and even discomfort within Republican ranks. The wave of popular revulsion expressed in the Irish Republic, championed by Mary Robinson, took away any justification of a higher cause (i.e. Irish reunification) as citizens on both sides of the Irish Sea reacted by expressing empathy and stressing the common ground in Anglo-Irish relations rather than the 'othering' of either side.

The legacy of certain bombings has been defined by the way in which survivors of those attacks have confronted the atrocity and become empowered by the experience. An overarching discourse of mutual understanding and reconciliation, spearheaded by the bereaved families, emerged in Warrington which muted the habitual onus on simply equating the Irish with the IRA and seeking revenge. Albeit in a more auspicious context for peace, Warrington shifted the focus towards building bridges between Britain and Ireland. The acts of the IRA were set against the dignity of the victims and their families, and the ethos of the civic response was 'talking, not fighting'.

Conclusion

The journey of the Parrys in particular bears similarities to the journey of Jo Berry, who lost her father, Conservative MP Sir Anthony Berry in the Brighton bombing. Another example is Gordon Wilson whose daughter Marie died in the Enniskillen massacre. All three have confronted the traumatic experience and endeavoured to engage with the perpetrators (the Provisional IRA) or their representatives, espousing dialogue and pragmatism. All three would fall into the category of 'moral beacon'. Their terrible sacrifice - losing a child or parent and, in Gordon's and Colin's cases, seeing their child pass away having suffered atrocious physical injuries - has given them the moral authority to speak out on highly sensitive political issues and go against the grain of the dominant political discourse of the time, which in these cases was not talking to terrorists and excluding them from

political negotiations so as to 'starve them of the oxygen of publicity'.¹⁴ However, such a stance has exposed these victims to controversy. For example, the *Sunday Telegraph* editorial on 28 March 1993, entitled 'How to help the IRA', criticised Gordon Wilson for volunteering to speak to the IRA after the Warrington tragedy: 'For it is grotesque sentimentality to imagine that moral example will turn the hearts of the terrorists.'¹⁵ In addition, such an approach has not been approved of and shared by all victims of IRA bombings. For instance, the group representing victims of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, 'Justice for the 21', staged a protest outside the Peace Centre on September 2014 to voice their disapproval of Martin McGuinness being invited there by Colin Parry to deliver the annual Peace lecture, and continues to campaign for a full investigation into the circumstances of the bombing.

On 20 March 2003, the tenth anniversary of the Warrington bombing, HRH the Duchess of Kent concluded: 'No-one has tried to erase that day's memory but rather there is a feeling of embracing a disaster, a determination to gain from the experience rather than succumb to the evil of violence.'¹⁶ The twentieth anniversary of the bombing, which took place on 16 March 2013, on the site of the explosions, involved the release of twenty doves of peace by Tim's mother, Wendy. Speaking at the ceremony, Rev. Kingsnorth, of the Warrington Borough Ministry, declared: 'We commemorate the victims of the terrible atrocity visited upon us but celebrate that good followed from evil as the community of Warrington became a byword for those who work for reconciliation.'¹⁷

Notes

¹ Colin and Wendy Parry, *Tim: An Ordinary Boy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), p. 220.

² *Warrington Guardian* (26 February 1993)

www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/news_archive/warrington_bombing/history/4289902.The_first_IRA_attack_on_Warrington/, accessed 8 August 2009.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Statement by ACC Guy Hindle received by author on 1 September 2014: 'Cheshire Police carried out a comprehensive, thorough and professional investigation into the Bridge Street bombings of 1993 - an investigation which saw a dedicated team of detectives follow hundreds of lines of enquiry over a considerable period (the initial investigation ended in 1995). Cheshire Police has not currently got any active lines of enquiry. The case remains unsolved and if any information is received at any time then we would follow the same process as with any other unsolved case and this information would be reviewed.'

⁵ Graham Dawson, 'Trauma, memory, politics: The Irish Troubles', in Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydersdorff and Graham Dawson (eds), *Trauma and Life Stories* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.193.

⁶ *Independent*, 8 April 1993, www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/bombers-show-their-defiance-with-london-blast-warrington-memorial-service-hears-pleas-for-peace-1453965.html, accessed 18 February 2016.

⁷ Reproduced in *Daily Post*, 23 March 1993.

⁸ Colin and Wendy Parry, *Tim*, p. 101.

⁹ Marie Smyth, 'The human consequences of armed conflict', in Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen (eds), *A Farewell to Arms: From 'Long War' to Long Peace in Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p.134.

¹⁰ 'Warrington bombing remembered by hundreds on 20th anniversary of IRA attack', *Daily Record*, 16 March 2013, www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/warrington-bombing-ira-attack-20th-1767960-tHXtevuDrxfgRRGV.97, accessed 27 March 2016.

¹¹ Mary Robinson, inaugural address, 9 October 1993.

¹² 'The Irish Dimension', Thomas Boteler High School, available in WIRE archive, Warrington library.

¹³ *Warrington Guardian*, 20 March 2002.

¹⁴ Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the American Bar Association, 15 July 1985, www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106096, accessed 27 March 2016.

¹⁵ *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 March 1993.

¹⁶ 'Warrington 10 years on: A message from the Duchess of Kent', www.thefreelibrary.com/WARRINGTON+10+YEARS+ON%3A+A+MESSAGE+FROM+THE+DUCHESS+OF+KENT.-a098979315, accessed 27 March 2016.

¹⁷ *Daily Record*, 16 March 2013, www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/warrington-bombing-ira-attack-20th-1767960-MzLzKutD7jcmYdOZ.97, accessed 18 February 2016.

Remembering and forgetting the Northern Ireland Troubles in Great Britain

Stephen Hopkins

There has been relatively little systematic research to date addressing the complex legacies and memories of the Northern Ireland Troubles (1968-98) in Great Britain. This paper seeks to examine and assess the reasons for this lack of attention, and introduce a recent attempt to redress the balance somewhat. The politics of memory, whether at national, social/collective or individual levels, are complex and sensitive, and remembering and forgetting are not necessarily mutually incompatible. This paper starts from the premise that these societal processes are nuanced and are deserving of close critical scrutiny.¹ Moreover, the paper argues that initiatives in Great Britain to remember the impact of the Troubles have been piecemeal and fragmented. Whilst there has been a general, though unfocused, sense of relief that the violent conflict appears largely over, nonetheless for both political elites, and the wider public, Northern Ireland, in both its historical and contemporary settings, remains viewed as 'a place apart', with a lack of salience for British politics, society and culture.² This should not be viewed as altogether surprising, given that both during the Troubles, and prior to them during the Stormont era of devolved government (1921-72), British attitudes often reflected embarrassment, indifference and a desire to keep Northern Ireland at arm's length, to 'quarantine' the problems associated with the conflict. Northern Ireland was seen by many as 'an intrusion in British politics, despite continued efforts on the part of successive governments to keep it off the agenda.'³ As far as the broad mass of the public was concerned, there was 'considerable uncertainty in electors' minds [in Great Britain] as to whether Northern Ireland was actually part of the United Kingdom.'⁴

In keeping with the political elites, there is only patchy evidence that British public opinion has been willing to engage in a process of critical interpretation and self-reflection regarding the Troubles, and in particular the role of the British State (and its armed services) in the conflict. In short, if the Troubles are much considered at all, then there is a strong sense of relief that the violence appears to be (largely) a thing of the past, and an even stronger desire to relegate this unhappy episode to the annals of history.

Furthermore, this is usually presented as if it was, in any case, a marginal history, rather than an integral element of the mainstream national narrative of the British people and their society. For many people, then, memories of the Northern Irish conflict are fragile and contingent, perhaps based around events such as bombings which occurred locally. Yet, for some in Britain, primarily ex-soldiers who served tours of duty during the Troubles, or political activists who campaigned on behalf of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, the subject remains of authentic significance and has a searing quality. However, these narratives have not initiated a broader political or societal 'coming to terms' with the memories and legacies of these experiences.

This has been in sharp contrast to the position in Northern Ireland itself, where efforts to discuss the contested past have been a regular, and fundamental, aspect of the contemporary political discourse over the period of the last ten to fifteen years. This has occurred in terms of UK Government-sponsored endeavours to formulate an institutional means for addressing the legacies of the violent conflict (such as the Report of the Eames-Bradley Consultative Group on the Past [CGP] in 2009, or the Haass/O'Sullivan negotiations of autumn 2013). The most recent effort has been the negotiation of the Fresh Start Agreement of November 2015 (itself the product of the inter-party talks which led to the Stormont House Agreement of 2014).⁵ It remains to be seen whether the 'policies for the past' enshrined in the 2014 agreement will actually be enacted, amidst ongoing inter-party and *intra*-bloc divisions in Northern Ireland. However, popular engagement from civil society organisations with the legacies of conflict have been very significant in shaping the historical narratives of the conflict (through organisations like Healing through Remembering, Relatives for Justice or Families Acting for Innocent Relatives). Academic treatments of these thorny issues specifically relating to Northern Ireland have also proliferated in the past decade or so.⁶

Dealing with the past?

These wide-ranging debates and initiatives to work through the social, cultural and psychological legacies of violent conflict have encompassed collective memories, storytelling, commemorative practices, theatre/performance, oral history projects, and myriad others. The state-sponsored attempts at 'dealing with the past' have tended to become highly politicised and partisan encounters, despite the best efforts of their supporters to ensure that consultation is meaningful and broadly-conceived. The CGP and the Haass/O'Sullivan initiative did not produce consensus

regarding how best to take this work forward in a spirit of 'post-conflict' peacebuilding. Instead, the inter-party talks in Northern Ireland have tended to be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, with parties acutely sensitive to what they view as efforts to rewrite their communal interpretations and experiences of the conflict.

One of the reasons for this has been the tendency for the UK State to implicitly or explicitly deny its roles and activities as a protagonist in the conflict. This is not to endorse the traditional Irish nationalist belief that the UK State was (and perhaps, still *is*) the unproblematic historical 'cause' of the conflict. For pro-Irish nationalist sympathisers on the British left, accustomed to viewing Northern Ireland through an anti-imperialist lens, the role of the UK State was self-evidently nefarious. One of the problems with such an approach is that it tends to write out of the historical narrative the role and interests of the Protestant unionist community in Northern Ireland, seeing the conflict in Manichaean terms, as a struggle primarily between Irish nationalism and the British coloniser. However, this paper argues in favour of a more nuanced and subtle account, one which does not seek to minimise the faults or problems associated with the Westminster elite's sporadic engagement with Northern Ireland, but one which can also see beyond old verities concerning alleged British 'colonial misrule'. It is certainly the case that the British State has been unwilling to respond positively to Sinn Féin (SF)'s demand for a fully-independent and international truth recovery process, but equally it has been unwilling to take full responsibility for setting up its own such process. In any case, such a process under the auspices of the UK State (which has the political and administrative resources to actually create such a 'truth commission') would not be acceptable to many Irish republicans and nationalists (nor to many loyalists and unionists, for that matter).

The ambiguity that characterised the UK's status *during* the conflict has in some ways been replicated in the post-conflict era since the Belfast 'Good Friday' Agreement (GFA) of 1998. For instance, was it essentially an 'insider', the sovereign power in the territory, fighting a determined insurrection by terrorists? Or was it instead really an 'outsider', keeping the peace between two antagonistic ethno-nationalist and religious communities, trying to act as a 'neutral arbiter', and 'honest broker', encouraging the 'moderate silent majority' who would be willing to share power under a renewed devolved administration in Belfast? Arguably, whilst this ambivalence suited the purposes of Westminster policy-makers (from both major parties), who could portray their Northern Ireland policies in terms that represented a careful balancing act, this uncertainty was

ultimately damaging for British popular understanding of the conflict, and specifically the role of the UK Government in responding to it.

This reflected a real uncertainty regarding what kind of conflict was occurring in Northern Ireland, and it also led to confusion in Great Britain regarding the nature of the 'peace process'. Some right-wing commentators have argued that the ending of the conflict involved an appeasement of violent Irish Republicanism, with SF now enjoying genuine power in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. On the other hand, it might instead be viewed as a clear victory for the UK State; it retains its territorial integrity, and the challenge of a determined insurgency has been contained, if not defeated. Perhaps the most popular 'reading' of the 'post-conflict' era is that it represents an honourable compromise between historic enemies, which has facilitated a lasting reconciliation between the peoples of 'these islands'. Ultimately, this complex and uncertain engagement, both during and after the violence, has served to inhibit efforts to wrestle with the legacies of conflict. Arguably, some civil society and bottom-up initiatives have proven more adept at handling the legacies of the past in Great Britain, but it could be argued that they have done so despite the ambiguity at the heart of the British State's response.⁷ They have also made some headway in terms of personal healing and reconciliation, at least in part because they have been able to circumnavigate the central problem of political responsibility and accountability within the UK State.

Addressing official neglect

It might be argued that the Northern Ireland conflict was 'intellectually interned' in Great Britain, with few among the political elite or the mass of the British public deciding to engage with either the historical context or the lived experience of the violent conflict. Whilst there were periodic bouts of intense scrutiny, often after IRA bombings in Britain (such as the 1984 Brighton Grand Hotel bomb), these were usually followed by a sense of weary resignation. In 1985 ex-Prime Minister Edward Heath lamented in the House of Commons: 'I confess I have always found the Irish, all of them, extremely difficult to understand.'⁸ Conforming to the prevailing spirit of bipartisanship with regard to policy towards Northern Ireland, the Labour ex-PM, Harold Wilson, expressed similar views: 'Any politician who wants to be involved with Ulster needs their head examining.'⁹ Of course, for some of the direct victims/survivors caught up in the violence, as well as the tens of thousands of British service personnel with direct experience of the conflict, this luxury of indifference was simply not available. For a small

number of political activists motivated to intervene in the conflict, it was also true that Northern Ireland became a significant cause in British political life (but this was always a minority view).

In the representation of Northern Ireland as an incomprehensible place (what Mary Hickman termed the 'othering of Ireland'), official discourses arguably helped to promote a 'turning away' from the problem in the British population at large.¹⁰ This was aided by mainstream media reporting (with some honourable exceptions such as Peter Taylor's regular documentaries). During the conflict, consistent opinion polls showing a majority in favour of the withdrawal of British troops did not, in reality, represent a principled anti-colonial or anti-imperialist political stance, but rather reflected sentiments of indifference, embarrassment and unease at the ongoing violence.¹¹ There is surely a parallel to be drawn between the widespread desire during the Troubles years that the conflict would simply 'go away', and the post-conflict sentiment that this unhappy period is best 'forgotten', and that British society and politics can 'move on' from a *tabula rasa*.

By contrast, in the post-GFA era there has been a mixture of relief that the conflict appears to be 'over', and also impatience with any groups in Northern Ireland who might be accused of 'dragging politics back into the past.' There are even some British politicians and officials from the New Labour era who have argued that the peace process is a 'model for export'.¹² The Blair administrations (1997-2007) deserve genuine recognition for prioritising policy in Northern Ireland, and persevering with inter-party negotiations, in a fashion that was not true for many of their predecessors, and has not been the case for the Cameron Governments since 2010. Nonetheless, in the memoir-writing of senior New Labour figures, their reflections have been accompanied by a misplaced confidence, even hubris.¹³ The peace process has sometimes been portrayed as a totemic and unique achievement, an incontrovertible example of a successful understanding of how to defuse an insurgency, or handle terrorist challenges. As this paper has argued, this simplistic approach has not been supported by a sustained engagement with the ongoing legacies of the conflict, nor the continuing elements of instability and sectarianism that still characterise political relations in Northern Ireland. 'Bringing in the extremes' or 'talking to terrorists' has become a mantra in British rhetoric, but it masks a vacuum in serious efforts to reflect critically upon the UK State's role in the conflict, whether for good or ill.¹⁴

Switzer and Graham identify a type of 'memorial agnosticism' on behalf of the UK State towards the Troubles.¹⁵ Both during the conflict, through policies such as the 'Ulsterisation' of the security forces, and

subsequently, the vast majority of British politicians have sought to 'externalise' Northern Ireland from British affairs. In an era of apparently settled power-sharing (or what critics would describe as the sectarian *share-out* of power), and devolution to Belfast, there is even less incentive to grapple with the thorny issues of the legacies of violence. This is not simply about a cultural amnesia with regard to the history of British military action and over-reaction in Northern Ireland; the Saville Enquiry into 'Bloody Sunday' and the apology of the Prime Minister, David Cameron, in 2010 suggest that there is some belated willingness to face up to the realities of at least some specific, and egregious, instances of British Army malfeasance. It is also about a range of unresolved (and sometimes unaddressed) issues that open up important questions concerning the wider relationship between the British people and their own State (and its understanding of its imperial history). This is one reason why the silences (and, latterly, some of the noise) that characterise the UK's attitude towards the legacies of conflict in Northern Ireland is of wider import.

The book project

In 2010 several academics and practitioners (including Graham Dawson from the University of Brighton and Jo Dover from the Foundation for Peace in Warrington, as well as the present author) began to discuss some of these questions, in the margins of a conference that addressed the politics of victimhood in an Irish context. Subsequently, in July 2012, the University of Brighton hosted a three-day conference which invited papers on a range of themes dealing with the impact, engagement, legacies and memories of the Northern Ireland conflict in Great Britain. Arising from the conference, the editors put together a book proposal and the book was published by Manchester University Press in late 2016.¹⁶

This is the first book to reflect the significance of acknowledging, understanding and transforming the legacies of the Troubles in Britain, in the context of peacebuilding, strategies for 'dealing with the past', and profound questions of historical responsibility, truth recovery, justice and societal and personal reconciliation. In brief, the project addresses three main questions. First, it investigates the history of responses to, engagements with, and memories of the Northern Irish conflict in Britain. Second, it explores absences, weaknesses or silences in this history. Third, it hopes to begin a wider academic and public debate in Britain concerning the significance of this history, and the lessons to be learned from the post-conflict efforts to 'deal with the past' in Northern Ireland.

The book brings together contributions by twenty-six authors and includes personal testimonies, other life writing, and reflective pieces, as well as analytical papers, that examine the impact of the Troubles upon individual lives, political and social relationships, communities and culture in Britain. It is intended to establish a new field of enquiry, generating and setting an agenda for further research. It is also conceived as an intervention designed to open up public debate on these questions in Britain and Ireland. More than twenty years after the ceasefires of 1994, and with the fiftieth anniversary of the civil rights marches that triggered the conflict due to fall in 2018, this should be a timely initiative.

Conclusion

What does it mean to open up these hitherto unexamined histories and memories of the Northern Irish conflict in Great Britain? Particularly in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the Brighton Grand Hotel bombing, can we envisage a broader process of critical self-reflection, engaging both the political elites and the wider British public, such that our understanding of this complex part of *our* collective history might be enhanced. If genuine mutual understanding requires, as a minimal first step, engagement, then many in Britain have yet to cross this threshold, but whether we like it or not, we are implicated in the long conflict, and we have a duty to educate ourselves concerning its origins, its character, and its outcome.

Notes

¹ Aleida Assmann, 'To remember or to forget: Which way out of a shared history of violence', in Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (eds.), *Memory and Political Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 53-71.

² Dervla Murphy, *Northern Ireland: A Place Apart* (London: John Murray, 1978).

³ Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall, 'Introduction: Northern Ireland in British politics', in Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1996), p. 1.

⁴ Catterall and McDougall, 'Introduction: Northern Ireland in British politics', p. 1.

⁵ Cillian McGrattan, 'The Stormont House Agreement and the new politics of storytelling in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 69:4 (2016), pp. 928-46.

⁶ See *inter alia*: Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, 'Truth, justice and dealing with the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland 1998-2008', *Ethnopolitics*, 7:1 (2008), pp. 177-93; Kirk Simpson, *Truth Recovery in Northern Ireland: Critically Interpreting the Past* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Cillian McGrattan, *Memory, Politics and Identity: Haunted by History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁷ See Lesley Lelourec's contribution to this volume.

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⁸ Heath was speaking in the House of Commons debate on the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement; see www.hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1985/27/nov/anglo-irish-agreement, accessed 18 December 2015.

⁹ Paul Dixon, *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) p. 58.

¹⁰ Mary Hickman, "'Binary opposites" or "unique neighbours"? The Irish in multi-ethnic Britain', *Political Quarterly*, 71:1 (2002), pp. 50-58.

¹¹ Paul Dixon, "'A real stirring in the nation": British public opinion and the campaign for withdrawal from Northern Ireland', in Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Memories and Legacies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹² Eamonn O'Kane, 'Learning from Northern Ireland? The uses and abuses of the Irish "model"', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 12:2 (2010), pp. 239-56.

¹³ See, for example, Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010); Peter Hain, *Outside In* (London: Biteback, 2012); Peter Mandelson, *The Third Man: Life at the Heart of New Labour* (London: Harper, 2010); Jonathan Powell, *Great Hatred, Little Room: Making Peace in Northern Ireland* (London: Bodley Head, 2008).

¹⁴ Jonathan Powell, *Talking to Terrorists: How to End Armed Conflicts* (London: Bodley Head, 2014).

¹⁵ Catherine Switzer and Brian Graham, "'From thorn to thorn": commemorating the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10:2 (2009), pp. 153-71 (156).

¹⁶ Dawson, Dover and Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*.

Part 2

The Bombing of the Grand Hotel and political
theatre in Britain and Ireland

The writing, production and reception of *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*

Julie Everton and Josie Melia

In 2015, Wildspark Theatre Company produced the play, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*, by Julie Everton and Josie Melia. The play explores the causes and consequences of the bomb at the Grand Hotel in Brighton. The production went through three key iterations: rehearsed readings at the Old Market, Hove, and the Cockpit Theatre, London, in January 2014; a revised reading at Sallis Benney Theatre at the University of Brighton as part of the symposium in October 2014 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the bomb; and finally, the full production. This comprised eighteen performances at the Cockpit Theatre in April 2015 and three performances at the Warren (Otherplace Productions), as part of Brighton Fringe Festival, in May 2015.

Our play, in its final staged form, concerns the journeys of two lead characters, Pat Magee who planted the bomb at Brighton's Grand Hotel during the 1984 Conservative Party conference, and Jo Berry whose father, Sir Anthony Berry MP, was one of five people killed in the blast. The play uses a cast of six. It aims to bring insight to what led Magee towards this devastating act, and how it impacted on Jo Berry as a victim trying to reclaim her life. She is compelled to address her feelings when Pat Magee is released from prison in 1999 under the Good Friday Agreement. He is compelled to acknowledge his when they meet face to face in 2000. Using a non-linear narrative and alternate timelines, the play addresses issues of perspective, motivation, memory and most of all, humanity in conflict.

This paper explores how we researched, wrote and produced this play, the many stories we discovered, and memories people shared with us. It discusses the challenges of co-writing a historical, political play about the Grand Hotel bomb and the issue of post-conflict reconciliation. Moreover, we consider the kind of contribution the play has made to an understanding and memory of the Northern Irish conflict in England. The paper is the result of an interview with us, conducted by Graham Dawson and Sacha van Leeuwen,¹ and is based on summarised responses to questions.

How did the idea of working together on a play about the Grand Hotel bomb come about?

In May 2012, we saw Hugh Whitemore's play about the Suez crisis, *A Marvellous Year for Plums*, at Chichester Minerva Theatre.² We realised that many in the audience had direct memory of the Suez crisis, reflected in overheard conversations in the foyer. Driving home, we discussed large-scale political events that we could remember directly. We realised that, in two and a half years' time, it would be the thirtieth anniversary of the IRA bomb at the Grand Hotel, Brighton, and as Brighton-based playwrights we were interested to find out more about an event that happened in our city in our lifetimes.

What did you know and think about the significance of the bomb at the outset of the project?

Like many people, we were aware of the impact of an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in the midst of the miners' strike and polarised opinion about her government. We were aware of the context of the Northern Irish conflict and other bombs in England prior to the one in Brighton. We also knew about the peace process in Northern Ireland.

We looked through the archives of the local newspaper, *The Argus*, for the days prior to and immediately after the bomb in October 1984.³ Quite soon we discovered the story of Jo Berry, whose father, Sir Anthony Berry MP, had been one of the five people killed in the bomb. We learned that she had met Patrick Magee, the Provisional IRA Volunteer convicted of planting the bomb, after his release from prison in 1999 as part of the Good Friday Agreement, and that they worked together on reconciliation, which seemed remarkable. We made the decision to see if we could make contact with them.

Can you describe the research you did on the event, its aftermath and repercussions? What kinds of existing material was there to draw on and to what extent did you need to conduct original interviews?

As well as researching local history archives, we researched audio and written archives in the British Library, including an audio recording of Thatcher's speech immediately after the bomb, Pat Magee's doctoral dissertation 'Gangsters or Guerrillas'⁴ and pamphlets and poetry by hunger strikers. At the Imperial War Museum, we found the report of a schools history GCSE project using material from the Grand Hotel bombing as source material,⁵ and we later interviewed David Linsell, the teacher who

had designed this. We were shown round Brighton Town Hall's Old Police Cells Museum by former policeman Paul Solis, who shared with us his memories of the aftermath of the bomb at the Grand Hotel. The Museum is open to the public for guided tours on a pre-booked basis from April to November. Cell Four is dedicated to artefacts and photographs relating to the bomb, including a twenty-seven page report by Roger Birch, then Chief Constable of Sussex, to the chairman and members of the Sussex Police Authority, detailing the bombing incident and subsequent police operation, the reasons for inviting Mr John Hoddinott to lead an independent inquiry and the findings of the Hoddinott Report.⁶ We also had a tour of the Grand Hotel.

Knowing of Jo and Pat's involvement as early participants in The Forgiveness Project,⁷ we went to their annual lecture and heard stories of reconciliation between perpetrators and victims of violence. The next day we drove to Dartington College, Devon, to see Jo and Pat share their stories with an audience at the start of a week-long course on conflict transformation. Some weeks after this first forum, we went to Belfast to interview Pat Magee and to Somerset to interview Jo Berry. We also found and interviewed a number of ex-policemen, including Neil Sadler and Dave Brechley about their extraordinary memories before and in the aftermath of the bomb.

We spoke to Richard Stanton, a Brighton Labour councillor at the time of the bomb who had refused to toe the Labour Party line. He had said the IRA was justified in the armed struggle. This was an unspeakable thing, instantly translated as 'justified in attempting to kill Thatcher.' He was vilified for it. He showed us letters people had written that were absolutely poisonous. It was interesting to talk to him and gain an understanding of the vehemence in society at the time, even on the left, against any idea that this attack could be the anything other than evil monstrousness. A key theme of the play was the need to see enemies as humans rather than monsters.

We talked to Brighton resident Ty Galvin, who had been involved in Brighton Irish Social Club in the 1980s. There had been a lot of anti-Irish prejudice after the Grand Hotel bomb. The club was in one of the arches under the seafront - it went right through under the road and practically backed on to the Grand Hotel. He recalled how many Irish labourers would meet there, and a lot of them were 'on the lump'. He told us that after the bomb the whole place became full of plain-clothed policemen and the place closed down - people wouldn't go in there because they weren't fully legal in their work.

We interviewed the wife of a Conservative MP who had been in Brighton at the time of the bomb. She and her then husband had been friends

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with many Tory grandees during the 1980s. In later life, after her divorce, she'd trained as a trauma therapist, and she'd been involved helping in the aftermath of the 7/7 bomb attacks in London in 2005. She had a surprising range of experience and talked about other women that she knew who were connected with the party, who were all active socially and intellectually and her recollections changed our view of a fictional character in our play who was the wife of a Tory MP.

We discovered two other plays on the subject. Kevin Dyer's play for young people, *The Bomb*,⁸ and *Talking to Terrorists*, a verbatim play by Robin Soans.⁹ We read *Seeds of Hope*¹⁰, a pamphlet compiled by Michael Hall, inspired by the work of Anne Gallagher who collected the personal stories of a group of male ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland. Their experiences encompassed all four of the main Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organisations: IRA, INLA, UDA, and UVF.

We read extensively in the archives of news media from 1984-85 and in the lead-in to the October 2014 anniversary, when the story was revisited in the media, including interviews with the former Conservative cabinet minister, Norman Tebbit, who was badly injured and whose wife was left permanently paralysed by the bombing, and who spoke of his antagonism towards Pat and his work with Jo.¹¹

We found the website CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet), hosted by Ulster University a very useful resource, along with the writings of journalist Peter Taylor and his renowned documentaries on 'The Troubles'.¹² We watched films such as *Hunger* (2008) by Steve McQueen, *Bloody Sunday* (2002) (by Paul Greengrass and *Sunday* (2002) by Jimmy McGovern, and many YouTube videos, which helped provide us with our contextual understanding of Pat's involvement in IRA violence. We also consulted Professor Graham Dawson and read his book, *Making Peace with the Past? Memory Trauma and the Irish Troubles*.¹³

As you began writing the play, what issues did you want it to explore, and how did you begin shaping the historical material?

We both were hugely challenged by the idea of what would happen if we were those people in Ireland and this was happening in our area, and we were seeing all this unjust and violent behaviour all around us. Could you ever say: 'I will never use violence'? At what point would you really be tested on that? And that's where the central dramatic question came out – can violence ever be justified?

We wanted to create Brighton characters, staff at the Grand Hotel – an Irish chambermaid and an English waiter with a soldier brother – to

show both anti-Irish prejudice post-bomb and the impact of trauma on bomb victims. We also thought it was important to dramatise Norman Tebbit's anti-forgiveness stance after his wife's injury, in Barbara and Philip, a fictitious Tory couple. In telling the true story of Pat and Jo, whose journey towards reconciliation was always at the heart of our play, our aim was to try to draw audiences' sympathies and allegiances from one perspective to another and just keep people questioning, 'I thought *I knew about this*, but now I see it *that way*.' We drew images of the key points of the story, and mapped out what we felt were scenes we needed, on postcards and on large sheets of paper. We finally wrote our very first, very rough draft in a week.

What problems did you encounter and how did you resolve them in rewriting the play for the rehearsed readings at the Old Market in March 2014 and the symposium in October 2014?

We applied three times for Arts Council England (ACE), lottery-funded Grants for the Arts (GfTA) research and development money to employ a director and actors and organise a rehearsed reading. When this finally came through in September 2013, we began to work with Paul Hodson, who became our director and dramaturg through the whole process. He helped us clarify the three central stories and the way those could be plotted. One of the dramatic challenges was to work out how the different timeframes of characters' journeys could work together dramatically. Other scenes, that we were animated about, that had come from our research, he insisted were 'for the film.' For example, we had dramatised the investigation, which had been a fascinating part of our research, but he pointed out that as this section was not related to any of our main characters, it slowed down the drama.

One problem with a story that stretched over thirty years and involved different characters in different places, was how to frame the narrative using a limited number of actors and characters. An additional challenge that emerged with the characters we had created, was combining the true story of Pat and Jo with fictional characters whose lives and timelines did not interact with each other. The rehearsed reading at the Old Market was very lively, but the fictional characters came to life more vividly than the central characters and this needed to be addressed.

We spent the whole summer applying for GfTA funding through ACE for a full production, and seeking match funding, so we could not work more on the play at this time. We launched a Kickstarter campaign with a video directed by Sonali Fernando and we had thirty days to raise £3,000 by 15 September 2014. We set up a company, Wildspark Theatre, with a new website, a Twitter account, a Facebook account; we were busy with social

media at this time, promoting the play and our Kickstarter campaign. We hired a producer, Beccy Smith, to help with the wording of the application, and the very detailed budgeting.

We had to make a case to ACE about the contemporary relevance and urgency of the themes and the form of the play. By this time, the 'landscape' of violent conflict internationally had shifted with the prominence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the terror they were creating, the dehumanising 'us and them' vocabulary of media reportage and instances of young British people travelling to Syria to join them. It was very relevant to address these issues in our application. Additionally, the live theatre landscape had also been shifting, and whereas 'political theatre' had gone out of fashion as being too strident and preaching to the converted, it was now beginning to make a comeback. This trend was picked up later in the year by Michael Billington in *The Guardian*.¹⁴ We had to describe why writing this play was important to our artistic development. We were not only researching and writing about real people and events,¹⁵ but also collaborating, both with each other and with other artists. Our artistic team comprised fourteen people. Deals had to be struck with venues in London and in Brighton. We had to consider and describe what the wider impact would be, the proposed audience reach, how many artists would benefit, how we would benefit. We felt that as two women engaging with history and politics as co-writers using a blend of fact and fiction in a non-linear narrative, we were breaking new ground as well as adding to the legacy of research and writing about the impact of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Our GfTA funding came through finally on 14 October 2014. We also received £500 from the Unity Theatre Trust. The symposium reading was on 15 October 2014. For this reading, for which we received £500 from Brighton University, we introduced a character who was a documentary maker in an attempt to dramatise Jo and Pat's story more dynamically. We felt this reading was not as successful as the first reading. The relationship between fiction and fact was still unbalanced.

The final form of The Bombing of the Grand Hotel is dramatically tighter and more focused, if narrower than previous versions. What was lost and gained in this?

After the symposium draft, there was a strong view, taken from the director, the producer, and Dave Wybrow at The Cockpit Theatre, that we needed to go back to the drawing board. This was quite disheartening but we recognised there was value in taking a fresh approach. A key decision was to focus totally on working out the dramatic arcs for Jo and Pat viscerally

and chronologically, showing rather than telling their stories. We abandoned the stories of the two Grand Hotel staff and developed a very different theatrical style. For example, our movement director showed us a way to express sixteen years' passage of time while Pat was in prison and Jo was having a family and burying the past, in a simple, effective sequence of movement, music and words, with both actors sharing the stage and using the space in different ways to illustrate their relative experiences of literal and metaphorical 'imprisonment' leading up to Pat's release.

Jo Berry sent us a verbatim account of the second meeting she had with Pat. When we received this, the actual language, the literal words of their meeting, was totally compelling. To illustrate the immediacy and authentic tone of verbatim speech in contrast to planned written dialogue, the following extract is a verbatim account of our discussion of this style, in interview with Graham and Sacha:

Josie Melia (JM) – And so very different from when they were interviewed, or when they speak live, even, you know. We'd been to some very moving things of them speaking live, but this was just...the hesitation, the skirting around each other, the negotiation and the subtext.

Julie Everton (JE) – They had very different ways of talking and very different use of language, very, very noticeable.

JM – Whereas over time, obviously, that's kind of become more the same, when they now appear in public, the edges have been smoothed, if you like.

JE – But that transcript, and it had a lot of unusual colloquialisms, incomplete sentences...

JM – a lot of real detail of time

JE – There was a lot of 'er...um...' colloquialisms...which, when you were just trying to write something that was based on report, you just, those things just...you can't imagine them, really, in the same way, so...

JM – Certainly not as live people. I mean, I don't think we would have taken that risk of imagining something quite that strong.

How important was the casting process in relation to the message you wanted to convey?

Casting Ruairi Conaghan as Pat and three other Irish actors, Aoife McMahon, Glenn Speers and Paul Mundell alongside Rachel Blackman and Beth Fitzgerald, made a huge difference to the production. On the first day of

rehearsal, everyone in the room was asked to recall our own memories of the bomb and it struck us how much impact it had had in Ireland as well as in England. And what it meant to grow up in Belfast, in Ireland at that time. The cast brought that experience to bear, made more intense by their different geographies and backgrounds.

We faced many production challenges; changes to the venue in the Brighton Fringe meant changing from a thrust stage set-up to a proscenium set-up at the last minute. Working together as two writers when challenges came up was extremely helpful, even if we sometimes had different perspectives on problems. Sometimes we had our very own conflict transformation process! As dramatists, there are always glorious multidimensional possibilities at the start, and then you have to deal with the concrete reality of a stage set, a limited budget, a set number of actors, and an hour and a half playing time, and real specific audiences in specific venue spaces. However, these limitations can make you more creative.

In terms of where the play ended up, and the power of the final production, what do you think it says about the conflict? Do you think it makes an intervention into cultural memory?

As writers, it's a difficult question to answer, because this was not our starting point. Marina Cantacuzino of The Forgiveness Project, who knows Jo and Pat's story extremely well, saw the play in London. She said that seeing their story dramatised gave her an insight into what had happened and how it had happened, that she hadn't seen before. Drama enables something that a straight storytelling mode can't give, however powerful that storytelling is. The production of the play ignited thoughts and feelings in a lot of people, it stayed with people.

We had two post-show discussions with Jo Berry. The first was about the questions raised in the play about post-conflict reconciliation with Jo and Marina Cantacuzino; the second was about the challenges of writing about real people. The audience for these were very varied, with contributions from a survivor of the Warrington bomb, from the daughter of an IRA member, and from a range of people with unique relationships to the issues.

Throughout the process and towards production, many Brighton people came out with stories and memories of that time of conflict. A local Irish woman talked about giving birth at the hospital in October 1984, while the injured were brought in, and being questioned about her Irish connections; another person shared her knowledge of a woman who lived in the flat behind the hotel, who died of a heart attack that same night. She

called her the sixth victim. These memories were not just about Brighton. It was people saying things like: 'When I was in Northern Ireland, when I was a child, I remember seeing British soldiers in the garden.' At a very moving and intense forum in London, where Pat and Jo shared their story and talked about conflict and resolution, we found ourselves sitting next to one of the police team who arrested Pat Magee for the Brighton bomb at a flat in Glasgow. A huge financial contribution to our Kickstarter campaign was from a man who had been a soldier in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and who said: 'I was a soldier as a young man in Northern Ireland, I had no idea what it was all about.' It was clear the bomb continues to impact on many people in a vivid way.

We were aware how much the times themselves were changing as we wrote the different versions of the play – the idea of young men leaving their homes to fight for a cause in another country, feeling they belong culturally and ideologically elsewhere than home, resonated with younger audiences who had no memory of the Grand Hotel bomb. More than that, though, the play explored universal issues around forgiveness and reconciliation. These issues, around conflict resolution, have never been more pressing.

Notes

¹ The interview was conducted at the University of Brighton on 18 November and 9 December 2015.

² Hugh Whitmore, *A Marvellous Year for Plums* (London: Oberon Books, 2012).

³ Archives of *The Argus* are now held in the local history collection at The Keep, Brighton.

⁴ Patrick Magee, *Gangsters or Guerrillas? Representations of Irish Republicans in 'Troubles Fiction'* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2001).

⁵ David Linsell, *The Brighton Bomb Incident*, Young Historian Scheme, GCSE Projects Pamphlet 2 (London: Historical Association, 1989).

⁶ Roger Birch, 'The Terrorist Bomb Attack on the Grand Hotel, Brighton on October 12, 1984'. Report by the Chief Constable to the Sussex Police Authority, 23 January 1985.

⁷ Journalist Marina Cantacuzino set up The Forgiveness Project in 2004. Jo Berry and Pat Magee's story is documented in Marina Cantacuzino, *The Forgiveness Project: Stories for a Vengeful Age* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015).

⁸ Kevin Dyer, *The Bomb* (Twickenham: Aurora Metro Books, 2005).

⁹ Robin Soans, *Talking to Terrorists*, Oberon Modern Plays (London: Oberon Books, 2005).

¹⁰ Michael Hall (ed.), *Seeds of Hope: An Exploration by the 'Seeds of Hope' Ex-Prisoners Think Tank*, Island Pamphlets 27 (Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim: Island Publications, March 2000).

¹¹ See, for example, "'I hope there's a hot corner of Hell reserved for the Brighton bomber who paralysed my wife. He has never repented": Lord Tebbit tells of his anger 30 years on at IRA bomber Patrick Magee', *Daily Mail*, 12 October 2014, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2789772/lord-tebbit-says-never-forgive-patrick-magee-planted-brighton-bomb-paralysing-wife-margaret-magee.html - ixzz4Q2UMLyDf, accessed 14 November 2016.

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¹² Peter Taylor has written extensively and made many documentaries about the Northern Ireland conflict. We were particularly interested in Peter Taylor, *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Féin*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), and his trilogy of multi-part documentary series' made for the BBC in the late 1990s, *Provos*, *Loyalists* and *Brits*.

¹³ Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Michael Billington, 'Speaking truth to power: this is the rebirth of political theatre', *Guardian*, 7 November 2014.

¹⁵ We have described our experience of writing real people for *The Guardian* Culture Professionals Network: Julie Everton and Josie Melia, 'Bringing the bombing of Brighton's Grand Hotel to the stage', *Guardian* online, 18 April 2015, www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2015/apr/18/bombing-brighton-grand-hotel-stage, accessed 15 November 2016.

Ethical issues in the theatrical representation of real historical people and events, with reference to *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*

Ellen Muriel

I became interested in the early drafts of Julie Everton and Josie Melia's play, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*, and the process through which it was developed while studying for a drama degree. I was concerned with the ethics of representation and the decisions involved in representing real-life people, and real-life events on stage.

A playwright choosing to engage in stories and characters which exist beyond the realms of the play is immediately faced with numerous contrasting responsibilities. Firstly, there is a responsibility to respect the personal stories of those being portrayed, particularly if they are complicit with or involved in the development of the piece. By entrusting the playwright with their portrayal, the individuals behind the characters hand over control of how they are represented, and often judged by viewers, and this places them in a vulnerable and dependent position. Secondly, the playwright has a responsibility to their audience, to engage, inspire and entertain them with the story they are telling. Ultimately the audience form the basis on which the performance is built, they determine its success or failure and generally influence its funding and profit. Therefore the needs and expectations of the audience will inevitably influence the writing of a play and should be kept in mind throughout the development process. Thirdly however, the writer is also responsible for ensuring they stay true to themselves, the work they want to make and the message they want to portray. Every playwright comes to a project with an opinion and motivation, and it would be inauthentic and unrealistic to try and suppress this.

As a student analysing the ethics of representation I became interested in the dynamic between these three contrasting responsibilities (personal stories, audience and playwright's intentions) and the dilemmas which arise from prioritising any one of these. I envisaged this as a triangle, where each corner represents one such responsibility as a way of thinking about their relationship to each other and the effect that prioritising one has on the other two. If a playwright chooses to favour the telling of the personal stories involved, does this consequently affect the play's ability to engage and

entertain its audience? In relation to and Everton and Melia's play I wanted to explore whether it might be possible to provide a truthful, authentic representation of the conflict and those involved whilst at the same time creating work which is relevant, relatable and engaging for an audience. When I chose the play it was still under development and therefore while the style was not yet apparent, I was instead attracted by its aims. Dealing with a sensitive political issue which was in many local people's living memory felt ambitious and provocative. It resonated with areas I was studying at the time; the relationship between the audiences' lived experience and the constructed world of the stage, the use of theatre to deal with history in a relevant and immediate way.

Verbatim theatre

I turned initially to the field of verbatim theatre which constructs its scripts entirely from live interviews and official documents. Here the role of the writer, rather than creating or writing any material themselves, is to collect material through carrying out research and interviews and then to edit this rigorously to form a script. For many this method is seen as a way of ensuring the play provides a 'truthful' and 'authentic' representation of its subjects as, by using transcripts to form the script, it allows them to speak for themselves. It is commonly argued that this is the most ethical way of representing an incident on stage as those involved are aware of the fact they are being recorded, they know the purpose of the material which ensures they are in control of what is known about them and therefore what can be shared with a wider audience. At face value this would suggest that verbatim prioritises the subject, the people who are being represented. How then does this affect the other two corners of the triangle?

Traditionally verbatim is heavily text-based and naturalistic and it is mostly used to investigate serious and complex political topics. This can often result in static, monotonous and unimaginative performances which leave the audience feeling slightly neglected. The writers' obsession with trying to recreate a situation as it was or a character as they were can result in them failing to make full use of the variety of creative tools that theatre has to offer by needing to remain so rooted in an apparent reality.

The third corner of the triangle concerns the playwright's responsibility to the story they want to tell. In verbatim theatre where the script is made up from transcripts, it is easy to assume there is no place for the playwright's opinions or subjective influence. As a result verbatim is often felt to possess a high status of authenticity. However, decisions such as who

is interviewed, when interviews take place, what questions are asked and how the material is edited have a huge influence on the way in which people or events are perceived by an audience, and these decisions are made by the playwright and fuelled by their objectives. Alecky Blythe, for example, is a verbatim writer in its most traditional sense. Her actors recreate original scripts by performing with headsets through which original interviews are played back to them, so that they can recreate these with identical stress and intonation. Her recent play, *Little Revolution*, is about the London riots of 2012. Speaking at a post-show event in September 2014, she told of how one of the women who was portrayed in the play came to see it and felt upset by how the piece misrepresented her and her situation. Blythe said that when picking which aspects of her material to use in the final edit of her script she had to think about the story structure, choosing elements which were funny, emotional or dramatic in order to drive the piece forwards and keep it engaging for an audience. As a result she was inevitably manipulating the material in some way. This seems to suggest that even in the case of a conventional verbatim approach, one corner of the triangle prevents another from succeeding. Despite its attempts to remain authentic and ethical by using factual, research-based methods, individuals behind the characters still felt betrayed by the way their words were re-presented on stage and audiences felt neglected. Does this then suggest that attempts to faithfully represent reality on stage can never successfully satisfy both living subjects and audience?

The Bombing of the Grand Hotel

Realising that even an accurate retelling of an event can raise ethical questions about the representation of living individuals and real life events on stage caused me to consider the role of fiction in the retelling of these. What happens when fiction is used within representational theatre to make it more dramatic or moving for an audience? How does this relationship between fact and fiction affect its ethical status?

In order to explore this in more depth I compared two separate plays written about the 1984 Brighton bombing and the subsequent relationship of Jo Berry and Patrick Magee. The first, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel* by Everton and Melia, was performed in 2015, but an earlier play about the same event, *The Bomb*, was written by Kevin Dyer in 2006. Both of these plays use elements of fact and fiction to tell a similar story and do so with varying degrees of success.

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Everton and Melia's play includes elements of verbatim and they structure the piece through a factual framework – drawing on actual media reports, real names, specific times and a chronology of events. Alongside this they also incorporate fictional characters to help fulfil their aims of showing the extended and lasting impact the explosion had on a variety of different people, rather than focusing solely on Berry and Magee. The intimate, fictional storylines of the two hotel employees provide humour and drama, trauma and romance, which engage, move and entertain the audience.¹ This means rather than manipulating Pat and Jo's stories or the specifics of the event in order to create dramatic effect, fiction is used around them, to provide emotional and dramatic breadth. Although the fictional characters were inspired by real-life people, their personal stories are dealt with subtly ensuring the connection isn't immediately obvious. This provides protection for the individuals as their distinct identity is never revealed. The use of fiction in the play helps with the balancing of the three separate corners of the triangle: focusing on the sensitive treatment of some of the living subjects, acting as a device for telling the story the writers wanted to tell and creating a piece with dramatic tension and effect.

However, by placing these fictional elements and characters within a factual structure, it becomes difficult for an audience to distinguish between which scenes or characters are strictly rooted in reality and which are fictional. After speaking to various audience members following a reading of the play everyone had very different opinions as to which was which. This led me to question whether the elements which are factual are devalued in any way by this juxtaposition, allowing them to be perceived as fiction or whether additional status is conferred upon those aspects which have been invented by the writers.

The Bomb

Dyer's play on the other hand stems from a very personal interest in Berry's emotional journey rather than an intention to explore the factual details or historical context of the event itself. He was also keen to make it exciting to a teenage audience who would relate themes of tragedy and reconciliation to their own lives and apply it to contemporary situations as opposed to learning about the specifics of the Irish Troubles. This personal objective caused him to change the names of the real people involved and disregard specific factual details in order to detach it from its original context. He then dramatised characters and elaborated events through the use of fiction to the point where the play becomes almost melodramatic. This suggests he

has prioritised his responsibility to his audience and his intention as a writer over and above any responsibility towards those involved in the original event. Therefore through choosing these two points of the triangle above and beyond the third, the story of the living subjects exposed by the piece are misrepresented, elements of their lives are manipulated and retold for the benefit of the audience.

However, what stands out from published interviews with Dyer on the process of producing the play is his approach to 'truth', which focuses not on factual legitimacy but on authentic honest intention to capture the sentiment at the heart of the story. He defended the move away from factual representation as the most ethical way of dealing with Berry and Magee, using fiction to protect their identity. By changing the context in which these events happened he hoped to make the process less exposing for and of them in a similar way to that in which Everton and Melia dealt with the stories of a Conservative MP and his wife through their two fictional characters, Philip and Barbara. Rather than playing up the factual specifics of Berry and Magee's relationship for an audience to witness and make judgement on, Dyer intended his audience to experience a piece of dramatic theatre and to focus on their own personal and emotional responses to the political issues involved. At first glance Dyer's treatment of the audience and the living subjects seems biased and unbalanced. However acknowledgement of his own intentions (the third corner of the triangle) to capture the truthful sentiment at the heart of the story for the benefit of both throws a new light on the use of fiction within the ethical representation of real historical people and events.

Conclusion

Both plays approach this triangle of responsibilities differently, and use elements of fact and fiction in order to do this. As a result two very different theatrical experiences are created. The first confronts audiences with a specific event, encouraging them to consider their own relationship to this infamous historic moment and the implications of it within their locality. The second however initially distances audiences from reality, using various dramatic devices to immerse them in the world of the story. They are then left to reflect on the issues raised and form their own connection between what they have witnessed and what they know and understand of the world around them. Both approaches raise interesting questions about the ethics of representation and the dilemmas facing a playwright choosing to recount contemporary political issues on stage. This research, and experiments

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within my own practice, have led me to believe that no single formula can be successfully applied to all cases. Each project must be approached with an awareness of its personal and historic significance and a willingness to give time and space to those implicated in whichever form this may take.

Notes

¹ This storyline was cut in the final, staged version of the play.

Political theatre: A Hydrocracker Theatre Company perspective

Neil Fleming

My mother's family is from Northern Ireland, although I was brought up in London. My grandparents – my grandfather was a Methodist minister, a farm boy from County Down – lived in Warrenpoint, just on the border with the Republic, and I spent my summers from the age of about six to sixteen at their house. The experience was a strange one. As a child, there was no sense that what was happening around you was odd: it was somehow normal to be stopped crossing the border by soldiers who pointed machine-guns at your car. Bombs exploded. There were rocket attacks on Newry police station. My child's mind took this all in and accepted it. But it also began to notice some odd things: I think in particular there was the gradual realisation that the world of Northern Ireland as I experienced it was nothing at all like the world portrayed in the media, or by the political establishment. And this was maybe somehow the start of a lifelong interest in the difference between 'official' histories of events, and their confused and complex reality.

In my twenties I became a journalist, and in my thirties I worked as a war reporter in Liberia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the townships of South Africa. These experiences left me with a permanent, pathological revulsion against violence in all its forms, an abiding suspicion of those who use violence or justify violence to achieve their goals, along with a deep distrust of the machinery of formal politics and its ambiguous relationship with violence and power.

That distrust has carried over into my later career as a writer: a conviction that the formal, the neatly packaged agenda, is almost certainly wrong, and very possibly dangerous. For me, the term 'political theatre' has therefore come to have a very specific meaning, which has to do with challenging the easy assumptions people make, our political or religious orthodoxies, our astonishing capacity for self-deception, those constructs we all live with, whether they are belief systems, or 'constructed memories' – the things we hold to have happened, and which underpin our ideas about what is right and wrong, and even what is real.

Political theatre, in short, is about making people think, and about making people question – about using performance as a means to stimulate

debate. Conversely and emphatically, it is not about marketing a political agenda.

Political theatre

As a writer, of course, I am pre-occupied with – or maybe obsessed by – language. That pre-occupation with language takes three forms. Firstly, as a playwright I am fascinated by the use of language to achieve what we want: language as an instrument of power, whether it's the power of a propagandist to persuade, of a person in authority to compel, or of a liar to obscure the truth. My plays, I think, are all in one way or another about power; and the great thing about theatre, the pure thing about it maybe, is that *words* are the only weapons our characters have with which to achieve their goals. Secondly, I am also a linguist and a translator of other people's plays. This is language from another angle – the astonishing discovery, when you learn to speak another language, that discourse is not just discourse: it is coloured and constrained by the actual human language in which it is expressed – that at one level, there is *no such thing* as a translation. Working as a translator has also brought me into direct contact with European theatre in its many forms – something I'll come back to in a minute. The third preoccupation with language has to do with the 'language of theatre:' that is with theatre's capacity, as an art form or a medium, to communicate with an audience, and with its capacity to bring about change.

And that I think is the heart of what we are about at the theatre company I co-founded in 2003: Hydrocracker. Hydrocracker was the brainchild of a writer, a director, and two actors, with a simple, common goal. Our aim in life is to do theatre that is capable of effecting change. As it says on our website from time to time, we want more for our audiences than to sit in the dark and watch. For us, the essence of political theatre is that it is theatre which changes the minds of those who watch it. Political theatre is not the same as theatre about politics. Of course, nothing prevents political theatre and theatre about politics from overlapping. But at its heart, political theatre is theatre which finds a means – a language, indeed (that word again) – to break through the preconceptions and expectations of audiences and communicate with them directly.

And here's a thought: in England today, it may actually be impossible to do political theatre *in a theatre*. The very fact that a performance is occurring in a space designated 'theatre' appears to have come to limit an audience's willingness to engage: it treats a play as a 'play' that lies, as ever, in a removed space behind the infamous fourth wall. Efforts to break down

that wall, which in the 1950s were at the forefront of avant-garde theatre, have become routine and familiar, to the point where we might suggest a 'fifth wall' is in place: built from the audience's self-awareness, and its awareness of the games that theatre-makers play.

In effect, I suggest that the contract between audience and play has somehow become ossified; the expectation of the audience is fundamentally to be entertained in the framework of a set of entertainment rules, and the efforts of writers, directors and actors to break through that expectation have in recent years veered in the direction of trying to shock, rather than to communicate. It doesn't work, of course: a slice of misery is not the same as a tragedy; violence on stage is still just stage violence and audiences still sit behind their invisible wall, and they still retire to the bar to discuss the acting, or what's for supper.

The paradox has parallels with the situation that has arisen in the world of the visual arts. Efforts to convey meaning by new means result in a spiral of increasing desperation, in which simply being 'different' can become an end in its own right, and those making 'art' lose sight of the need to communicate emotionally as well as intellectually. The situation is not helped, in theatre, by a tendency to confuse 'new' with 'raw', or 'new writing' with 'young writing' which has led over two decades to a disposable culture of promoting young writers and then discarding them, because they are no longer young.

Beyond this, if we look at England in particular, it's arguable that outside the major cities, mainstream theatre-makers have largely abandoned any attempt to perform what we would call 'political' theatre. The theatre world has split in two: state-funded, or commercial, unchallenging theatre; and fringe theatre that mistakes what it is doing for something radical, but frequently does not challenge, nor subvert – but merely confirms the ideas and beliefs and biases of its natural audience. That's the paradox of doing 'theatre about politics': you run the risk that your audience will consist of people who already agree with you.

This paradoxical situation in English theatre is very different, I think, from the situation in Ireland. It's a very different situation from that in Europe, too. In Germany, for example, every city and town boasts a serious theatre, and each of those theatres is prepared to stage uncompromisingly avant-garde work, radical theatre and experimental pieces. In Romania, or Serbia, or Kosovo, the theatre is a place of public debate: a genuine forum in which people try to make sense of their own past. The conversation between theatre and audience is a real one – one that we in England seem to have lost touch with.

New languages

So coming back to what we're trying to do at Hydrocracker, therefore, I think it's best expressed as attempts to find new languages. We don't do site-specific theatre for its own sake, or because it's trendy, or cheaper, or whatever. We're not even sure it's a useful label. We do site-specific theatre first and foremost to try to cross the wall. And there are more ways than one to cross that wall.

Hydrocracker's productions of Harold Pinter's *The New World Order* have been staged in town halls in Brighton and London in the form, as it were of 'tours' of the building. Audiences are taken from the Council Chamber on a literal journey from grandeur to depravity, ending in the cellars (and in Brighton in the actual cells) below the building. They become witnesses to scenes of torture and cruelty as they go, and because there is no formal theatre involved, they also become complicit in these scenes. 'Watching' changes its meaning from passive spectating – the activity to which theatre audiences have grown accustomed – to an uncomfortable action, in which to do nothing (as audiences do) comes to have a sinister meaning.

To give a second example, when we staged a trial outing of my new play *Wild Justice* at the Brighton festival in May 2014, we did it not as a 'piece of theatre' but as hybrid event: it was part performance, part public debate, and part workshop, with the audience as the workshop participants. Why? Because, I suppose, we are looking for a new language. The play is about revenge. And the idea for the play sprang from the sudden realisation three years earlier, as I watched on television Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton watching (also on television) their Special Forces 'taking out' Osama bin Laden, that Revenge, in its grand sense is alive and well and an enormous political force in the world today.

And yet we rarely think about it. We all have vengeful feelings, revenge happens all around us, from the petty revenges of road rage to state-sponsored assassination. Yet when you ask most people what they think revenge is, they don't have a good answer. So in May we performed a couple of scenes, as a provocation. We stood the audience up and got them to discuss their own experiences of revenge. And we introduced a panel that featured Jo Berry (whose story is represented in Julie Everton and Josie Melia's play, *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel*, discussed in this volume), Marina Cantacuzino, who runs a charity called The Forgiveness Project, a psychotherapist of revenge called Robin Shohet, and Mark Devenney, a philosopher from the University of Brighton. The ultimate idea behind *Wild*

Justice is to create what we've called a 'Revenge Tragedy for the twenty-first century'. What we know about revenge tragedy in its original form in this country, in the sixteenth century, or in Greece in the fifth century BC, is that it provoked a burning response from its audience: it was fascinating, horrific, and actual for Shakespeare's audiences. For the ancient Athenians, it was the arguable centre of their cultural and political life. The theatre of Dionysus, on the slopes of the Acropolis, had a seating capacity of 70,000. Seventy thousand people... we can only dream. Our ambition though is to find a way to reconnect with that kind of passion. We want debate. We want to have the conversation. And we don't think we can do it by staging a conventional play.

The role of theatre in helping deal with the past in the North of Ireland: Kabosh Theatre Company's *Those You Pass on the Street*

**Suzanne H. Foy,
in collaboration with Paula McFetridge¹**

At the symposium on 'The Brighton "Grand Hotel" Bombing: History, Memory and Political Theatre', Paula McFetridge, the Artistic Director of Belfast's Kabosh Theatre Company spoke about the positive role theatre can play in helping people confront, deal with and look beyond the residues of the past. As a theatre-maker, Paula believes in the politics of theatre to transform people's lives. This is reflected in the methodology used by Kabosh in giving a voice to the narratives of silent communities and contested space in a society still grappling with the complex and divisive legacies of conflict. Kabosh presents reality on stage but not as documentary theatre, verbatim theatre or living history: it is a site-specific theatre company producing work based on reality of space and/or of 'real' narratives. Where does the factual and fictional meet? What is the role of the professional theatre-maker within contested space? How can immersive theatre explore history, reassess the present and assist individuals, communities and decision-makers to imagine new possibilities for the future? This paper addresses some of these questions through a survey of the methodology utilised by Kabosh for the delivery of performances of *Those You Pass on the Street*, premiered in January 2014.

Those You Pass on the Street is the first full-length play commissioned by Healing Through Remembering (HTR) as part of their exploration into ways of shedding light on the complexities of dealing with the past in order to move forward.² Written by Laurence McKeown, this drama explores less visible connections between people, places and events. It was written, staged and performed to act as a catalyst for informed discussions within and across communities. This paper outlines its premise and offers insight into Kabosh's artistic process regarding the delivery of performances. It then presents excerpts of my doctoral research interview with Paula on 3 February 2015, revisited with her in March 2016 for this paper. It ends with an update on the play's travels supporting a call for the recognition of theatre as a central mode of inquiry in the field of peace and conflict studies.

Creating an accessible yet challenging performance space

*Those You Pass on the Street*³ challenges the view that any mechanism for dealing with the past is simply about 'whose side gets what'. The play poses the difficult question of how these four very distinct characters – Elizabeth, Ann, Frank and Pat – can 'sit together' and tell a collective story of loss, grief and survival against a 'big picture' political canvas. It tells the story of Elizabeth, who walks into a Sinn Féin constituency office seeking help after the escalation of anti-social behaviour at the back of her house. Frank, the office worker she meets, promises to look into it as he lives just down the road from her. Pat, Member of the Legislative Assembly (Northern Ireland) for that constituency, spots her as she exits the office. He tells Frank that she is the widow of Michael Farrell, a Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officer killed by the IRA for his role in brutal interrogations of IRA members during the early 1990s. Back at her family home, Elizabeth and sister-in-law Ann are planning their annual trip to Scotland when Frank calls at Elizabeth's door to give her an update on the case.

The unusual coming together of Elizabeth and Frank sets off a chain reaction that breaks longstanding silences for each character, challenges personal preconceptions and beliefs, and tests family and political loyalties. All is not what it seems: as viewers hear one story and think they have it all figured out, the next conversation along with body language and the entering/exiting of different spaces makes them reassess what they thought the play was about. Kabosh make viewers bear witness to the characters' stories and collective journey. The production invites audience members to get at the core of each character's personal baggage, and in so doing they become conscious of and reflect on the residue of conflict in their own lives. For playwright Laurence McKeown, dealing with the past is about how the past lives in people's heads and how it shapes how they behave in the present.⁴ It is about small steps taken by those, like protagonist Elizabeth, who choose to deal with the residue of conflict yet understand that others may not be ready to 'have a normal conversation with those who killed' a loved one.⁵

A key task within the staging of *Those You Pass on the Street* is the creation of clearly delineated spaces: a Sinn Féin constituency office where Pat and Frank work, Elizabeth's living room in the home she shared with her husband Michael, and an 'offstage' area. This helps viewers to focus on the unusual circumstances leading to encounters between the characters, where the invisible can become visible. Set designer Elle Kent built the set out of

PVC drainage pipes found under sinks (visible) and running up and down inside home and office walls (invisible), as exhibited in *Figure 1*.



Figure 1. Set designer E. Kent used PVC drainage pipes to create a set that can be replicated on a standard stage, at a community venue or in someone's backyard. Photographs: Suzanne H. Foy (January 2014).

The stark space purged clean of all stuff asks audience members to hold 'multiple and even competing and contradictory needs and perspectives together at the same time'.⁶ As Kabosh wanted to replicate the set anywhere, actors would remain onstage at all times. As illustrated in *Figure*

2, when not in action they would bear witness to the narrative in full view of the audience on each side of the main stage in character-specific seats: a kitchen chair for Elizabeth, an office chair for Pat, a wicker chair for Ann and a comfy leather chair for Frank.

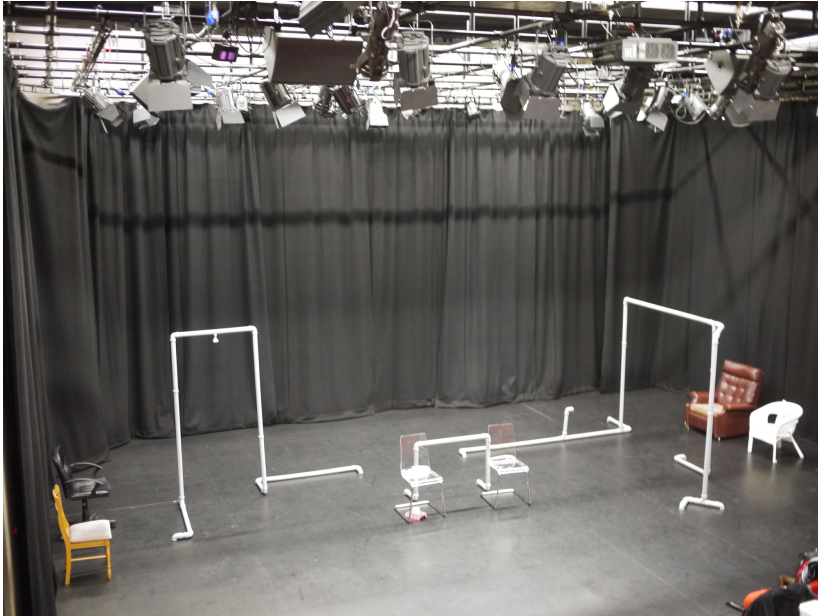


Figure 2. Clearly delineated spaces: Sinn Féin constituency office; Elizabeth's living room; 'offstage' areas for actors who, when not in action, sit in character-specific chairs. Photograph: Suzanne H. Foy (January 2014).

The on/off stage design addressed the need to summon a sense of deep listening: that is 'listening with one's ears, eyes, and intuition [...], listening without the judging mind'.⁷ It is never possible to fully anticipate an audience's reaction. At the play's premiere on 29 January 2014 at the Skainos Centre in East Belfast, something unusual occurred during and immediately after the performance: total silence. Its presence and quality was very palpable: it was as though we had taken a collective deep breath before the opening scene and not exhaled until after the end of the play. We were so focused on the different contexts and subtexts that we seemed incapable of catching our breath, showing emotion or laughing. This confirmed the underlying transformative qualities of a play written, staged and performed

to act as a catalyst for informed discussions around difficult issues about the past in the North of Ireland. The work that goes into the delivery of performances in the context of 'theatre for change' is further explored in the interview that follows.

In conversation with theatre-maker Paula McFetridge

*Suzanne Foy (SF): Why did Kabosh choose to get involved in *Those You Pass in the Street*?*

Paula McFetridge (Paula): I am always interested in the idea of how we find and present new histories, new stories, how you make them three-dimensional, and so challenge people's preconceived ideas about an individual, a community, and a space. We did some work with Healing Through Remembering (HTR) for one of their first conferences called 'Whatever You Say ... Say Something' (2008), where they were trying to pull together key individuals involved in trying to look at how we develop a new future for the North, how we look at peacebuilding, how we tease out difficult issues around the past. We staged a series of pop-up performances written by Laurence McKeown, I recognised his incredible ability to give soul to a character voicing a personal history that other people mightn't be receptive to.⁸ Later on, HTR were very keen to commission a narrative that would deal with some of the issues of the past that they felt weren't being given a voice, and they had seen through collaboration with artists that arts engagement can open doors and break down barriers and raise very difficult, sensitive issues in a provocative manner; stimulating conversations that weren't achievable by politicians and the media. From the initial commission to the first performance of *Those You Pass on the Street* was a four-year process (2010 to 2014).

SF: What is the importance of inviting people to look beyond the presenting situation, as in the case of this play, in the wider context of social transformation?

Paula: Conflict can reinforce the notion of isolation, sharing of personal histories puts them into the public domain. You hear other stories from people with a similar perspective as yourself, but also from people with a very, very different perspective to yourself. Often, sectarianism and bigotry breed in lack of knowledge and due to ignorance. One of the key roles theatre can play is education. When you see or experience somebody else's space or their personal narrative, it often breaks down a fear of them that

comes from ignorance. Knowledge can be incredibly empowering. It's not that you will get to a point of agreeing with all the narratives you hear, but at least you will hear them and based on that decide if you are receptive to them. Then your ongoing narratives are informed by this newfound knowledge. That is invaluable. Having a society that is proactive about encouraging informed debate can only be good for the health of a society, particularly when you're dealing with issues of conflict.

SF: You've said elsewhere that your responsibility as an artist vis-à-vis the audience extends to post-show engagement, to help people reflect on or make sense of the work that's been presented to them. Can you dissociate your personal choices from your artistic choices?

Paula: The two for me are completely connected. Theatre that challenges and provokes discussion, stimulates imaginations and creates an emotional reaction has always been what excites me. I am acutely aware of its potential and power when it's produced to a high professional standard. There's no point producing something if it's only going to fall on deaf ears and there's no point producing something at the other extreme where you're only going to present it back to people that were going to hear it anyway or already knew the narratives. It's how you balance those two things, what compromises do you make – personally and artistically – to qualify something to ensure impact is maximised and more people hear it, experience it, see it and respond to it.

There are certain times to tell certain stories, there are certain times to challenge certain beliefs, there are certain locations in which to do that work, and there are certain people to embody the work in order to maximise its impact. With *Those You Pass on the Street*, the style in which it was developed and staged was absolutely 100 per cent from the word go, knowing that it was a catalyst for discussion. It is agitprop, documentary-drama, it leaves things open-ended and creates provocative air for an audience to have a reaction. The contract between HTR and Kabosh was that we were creating a piece of drama that could be performed in a range of spaces, that would always be followed by a post-show discussion, because the themes within the play were about dealing with the past, about dealing with personal ownership of history, and what steps an individual can or can't take in order to move forward. How do you take care of peers, of family, of community when you decide to move forward? Do you have to? How do you look at moving from the Armalite to the ballot box? How do you look at dealing with grief, dealing with loss? How can you forget and yet keep the memory of a murdered loved one alive? As viewers, we can easily place

ourselves into the narrative and decide what our voice would be if we were in the same situation. This then encourages us to think more about the necessities of our own lives: what would enhance our place within the world today; what are our aspirations for the future? It is important that as artists we deal with the issues sensitively, we have to hear and bear witness to our audiences' frustrations, angers, emotional extremes and daily concerns. In the chaired post-show discussion, audience share their personal histories and give of themselves in articulate, impassioned voices.

SF: You often refer to 'informed' post-show discussion or debate, can you elaborate?

Paula: Experiencing the play helps an individual hear for the first time the voice of another – someone they had considered alien to them, someone to be feared, avoided, or hated. Through understanding somebody else's fears, anxieties, issues of growing up, the context in which they lived, the pressures under which they found themselves and the frustrations they feel, it gives you a window into their personality, into their culture and traditions, into their day-to-day living. This helps someone come to a greater understanding of the 'other'. That's what I mean by informed discussion, where you provide a deeper context of understanding. When you witness how incredulous Ann is at the fact that her sister-in-law Elizabeth would actually walk into a Sinn Féin office, see that it comes from a point of fear and of believing that Sinn Féin would use Elizabeth's actions to their own end, then we have an understanding of why she can only see this action as negative. Why her reaction is so extreme. Why communicating with them is impossible. What a long journey such communication would be for her.

SF: What do you feel the constant 'onstage' presence of the actors brought to the overall aesthetic experience inviting audience members to bear witness to the narrative?

Paula: The play is about hearing something for the first time, even if you think you've heard it before. The idea of bearing witness is essential to getting a greater understanding of the play. It has to do with challenging perception of 'other'; how much we read into symbols of individuals and make decisions about who they are and how they might feel. Being able to constantly see the key protagonists helps the audience to view them as ordinary or as everyman as possible; they can check back to those not in a scene as a reminder that opposites are part of the developing narrative. It is Brechtian in style in that when you experience one scene, you make decisions about participating characters, you impose a narrative on each of them, you give

them a history based on what you read into their symbols: are they working class, middle class, upper class, wearing a wedding ring or any sort of adornment, how they dress or hold themselves differently depending on who they're talking to. So seeing characters at rest – just being there and listening – gives you another lens by which you can see the play and experience the narrative. When Elizabeth goes into the Sinn Féin office and explains who she is, you have no idea who she is; all you see is a woman suffering from anti-social behaviour, clearly very distressed. Then in comes Pat, who reveals that her husband was a murdered RUC man. You make assumptions instantly – many of which are knocked down in the next scene. By having the actors there all the time you have a touchstone, you can look at each character and reassess your opinion of them. It challenges personal prejudice. That's really important, particularly with a narrative that comes across as being quite simple and yet has so many different contexts, and subtexts and layers to it. This is reinforced by having them there all the time.

SF: Has your involvement in this project impacted how you approach your work?

Paula: It reminded me how acutely important this work is and the role I can play. The majority audience for *Those You Pass on the Street* has been between the ages of 45 and 60; an audience who wouldn't consider themselves theatre-goers and who were articulate, animated and very honest about their levels of frustration, their pain, their anguish, their sense of abandonment, their disillusionment with the notion of post-conflict, the notion of peacebuilding, their lack of positive political representation. I feel a sense of responsibility as regards continuing this work as I feel we can stimulate animated discussion for this community. Unless we effectively address the past with the age group that lived through the conflict, the likelihood of returning to conflict is significantly higher. I am committed as are Kabosh to reviving *Those You Pass on the Street*, to bring it to as many people as possible, to assist with grassroots community engagement participatory work that is happening. It has reinforced my belief in the positive and valuable role professional theatre can play in dealing with the past, how the methodology that we used can transcend cultural borders and how we can share an artistic practice that effectively deals with the past internationally.

Concluding remarks

Kabosh Theatre Company is committed to reinventing ways in which stories

are told, what theatre is and where it takes place. As its Artistic Director, Paula McFetridge stresses that theatre does not have to be a big production or require a lot of technical gear: it can be set up on a standard stage, at a community venue or in someone's backyard (see Figure 3).

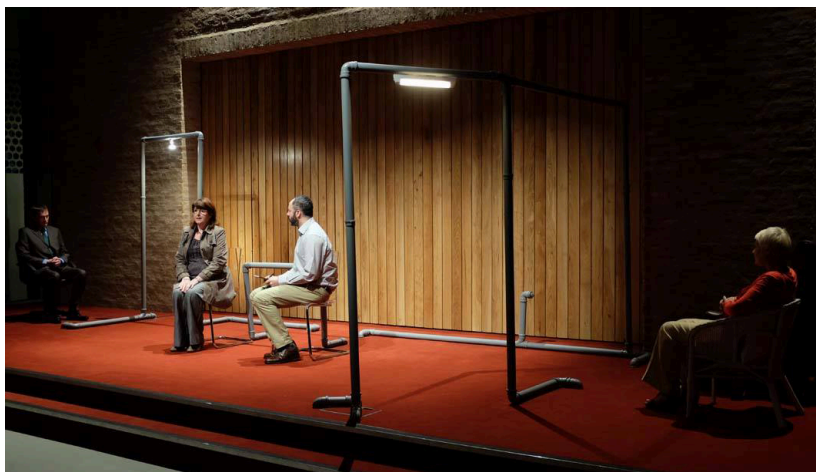


Figure 3. Opening scene from *Those You Pass on the Street* (January 2014): Elizabeth in the Sinn Féin office sharing with Frank the reason for her visit as Pat and Ann bear witness to the narrative. It features the original cast: actors Laura Hughes (Elizabeth), Paul Kennedy (Frank), Vincent Higgins (Pat) and Carol Moore (Ann). Photograph: John Baucher (January 2014); reprinted with permission.

The aim is to get people to buy into the idea of theatre and its positive use within the wider social transformation context, including those who may have never seen a professional theatrical production, funding bodies, community organisations, policy-makers and politicians.

Those You Pass on the Street was the first full-length play commissioned by Healing Through Remembering. It was written and performed specifically to stimulate discussion on dealing with the past. This innovative approach to the constructive ‘engagement of deep issues and of people’ underscores the recognition over time of the capacity of drama and performance to produce safe public spaces where challenging social questions can be asked and where people within and across communities can develop, voice, or rethink their worldviews.⁹ In fact the percentage of Kabosh’s output around dealing with the complex and divisive legacies of the past is on the rise. *Those You Pass on the Street* was revived in 2015 and 2016,

expanding the work's reach in the South and North of Ireland. This included two successful runs at the Fit-Up Theatre Festival, making professional theatre accessible to rural communities in County Cork in the South of Ireland. In July 2016, Kabosh took the play to the 42nd National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa. Kabosh was the only Irish theatre company invited to take part in a special programme on how art can act as a catalyst for peace, as part of events marking the fortieth anniversary of the Soweto uprising of 1976. The play was also performed at the 2nd Ubuntu Arts Festival held at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, which is the final resting place for more than 250,000 victims of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.¹⁰ At these festivals Kabosh also facilitated workshops and masterclasses with international practitioners as to how theatre and art can be used as a positive force within a broader peacebuilding spectrum in conflict-affected societies.

Conflict theorist J. P. Lederach argues that 'genuine constructive change requires engagement of the other. And this is not just a challenge for leaders – we must encompass and encourage a wide public sphere of genuine human engagement'.¹¹ Lederach's call for more creative ways of approaching conflict transformation is reflected in Kabosh's accessible yet challenging production of *Those You Pass on the Street*. This production provides a powerful example of Kabosh's vision of how immersive theatre can explore history, reassess the present and invite individuals and communities to imagine new possibilities for the future. So where does the factual and fictional meet in *Those You Pass on the Street*? What is interesting about this play is that it is based on an element of truth: an RUC officer's widow did walk into a Sinn Féin office seeking help after an escalation of anti-social behaviour at the back of her house. It is the one factual story around which the play was written, the rest is skilfully crafted fiction.

Notes

¹ Suzanne's doctoral research, 'Toward the Heart and Art of Peacebuilding: The Role of Socially Engaged Theatre in Northern Ireland', examines the role that socially engaged theatre can assume in peacebuilding, specifically during the period of post-conflict transition in Northern Ireland. It includes a case analysis of Kabosh's artistic process and output for *Those You Pass on the Street*. This research was conducted as part of the digital arts and humanities PhD programme at Trinity College Dublin and with funding from the Republic of Ireland Government. Paula thanks the organisers of the symposium for inviting her to talk about the methodology of Kabosh Theatre Company. Suzanne thanks Paula and the organisers for giving her the opportunity to write this paper.

² Belfast-based Healing Through Remembering is an independent initiative made up of a diverse membership with different political perspectives working on a common goal of how to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

See: healingthroughremembering.org, accessed 30 November 2016.

³ Kabosh produced a promotional video for *Those You Pass on the Street* that can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW15Syr-Fzd8, accessed 15 November 2016.

⁴ Laurence McKeown, post-show discussions, 29–30 January 2014.

⁵ Excerpt from Laurence McKeown, *Those You Pass on the Street*, March 2015 version of script [unpublished].

⁶ J.P. Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 62.

⁷ T. Sepinuck, *Theatre of Witness: Finding the Medicine in Stories of Suffering, Transformation and Peace* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2013), p. 230.

⁸ Laurence McKeown's interest in creative work, political education, and academia began during his incarceration at the Maze (H Blocks) as an IRA political prisoner (1976-1992). He is often involved in HTR projects.

⁹ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 49.

¹⁰ 'Ubumuntu' is the Kinyarwanda word for 'humanity'.

¹¹ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 49.

Appendices

Appendix I

The questions given to speakers and delegates to guide discussion at the symposium on 'The Brighton "Grand Hotel" Bombing: History, Memory and Political Theatre', University of Brighton, 15–16 October 2014, were as follows:

Lecture: 'The Brighton Bombing: the historical significance, impact and consequences of the Provisional IRA's attack on the British Government'

Why did the Provisional IRA launch an armed campaign in Britain, and sustain it over twenty-five years of conflict?

What forms of violence were deployed, for what reasons, and to what effects?

In what ways might the Brighton bombing be understood?

What was the political significance of the Provisional IRA's campaign in general, and the Brighton bombing in particular, in the context of the conflict and of the peace process to end it?

Panel 1: The 'Grand Hotel' bomb and the Irish Troubles in Britain – histories, memories, legacies

What impact did the Irish conflict have in Britain, and what are its lasting legacies?

How were local communities (British and Irish) affected by the PIRA campaign and by the British State's counter-insurgency strategy, and how did they respond?

What role did media coverage play in shaping British 'public opinion' about the bombings?

Did the IRA campaign in Britain lead to a greater awareness of the background to the conflict among British people?

How is the history of the Irish conflict remembered – and forgotten or silenced – in Britain today?

To what extent has culture and society in Britain engaged in 'coming to terms with the past' in the context of the peace process and reconciliation after conflict? Could, and should, this be deepened?

Panel 2: The Bombing of the Grand Hotel – a discussion of Julie Everton and Josie Melia’s play

How does *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel* represent the Brighton bombing and to what effect?

What dramatic challenges have been encountered in writing the play, and how are these being addressed?

What sorts of moral issues are raised in theatrical representation of real historical violence and the actions of living people? How does such representation impact on the living people portrayed?

How does the play investigate different kinds of interconnections between the personal and the political, and how these are affected by gender?

How might we view the politics of the play, as an intervention in British cultural memory from a particular time and place?

Panel 3: Forms of engagement: Political theatre in Britain and Ireland in 2014

What are the roles of political theatre in England and Ireland today, and are these different in each context?

What possibilities for engagement with live political issues are open to theatrical practitioners in 2014 – in terms of venues, forms of drama, and relationships with audiences?

In what ways has theatre contributed to critical and/or empathic understanding of the conflict in and over Northern Ireland?

How might such engagement be extended?

How does theatre engaged with the Northern Ireland conflict relate to theatre engaged with other recent or current armed conflicts?

Appendix 2

The following two extracts from *The Bombing of the Grand Hotel* by Julie Everton and Josie Melia are taken from the playscript as performed in April and May 2015.

Please note: in Extract Two, the script mark – – in place of dialogue indicates that the character is silently processing the impact of what has been said.

EXTRACT ONE

The first extract is from the opening scenes of the play.

SCENE ONE

Grand Hotel, Brighton, 1984.

A mash-up of '80's music, news bulletins, protestors, seagulls and seashore, with Tory politicians' voices beginning to dominate. The sound sucks away into silence.

JO BERRY addresses the audience.

JO

October the twelfth, 1984. Two fifty-four a.m. I'm at home in London, in bed, fast asleep. I'm having a really odd dream. I'm travelling home from a holiday in France and I look at my bright orange train ticket and realise I have to go via Argentina. I can't speak Spanish and I don't want to go. But if I don't I know I'll never get home again.

PAT MAGEE addresses the audience.

PAT

1984. October twelfth. Two fifty-four a.m. I'm in Ireland, in a safe house in County Cork. I can't sleep, especially not tonight. I've been grinding my teeth so much I keep thinking they're coming loose. This one here. I can see it in the bathroom mirror. Wobbling around. Is it?

Latin American dance music plays loudly. BARBARA BORN JONES, her husband PHILIP BORN JONES and other Tory conference party-goers burst onto the stage dancing playfully together, shaking their air maracas to the beat, thoroughly enjoying themselves.

PHILIP

Come on, Barbara.

BARBARA

Philip.

Philip twirls an unsteady Barbara as the bomb suddenly explodes. The music stops, lights go out, smoke and dust fill the room. The explosion is followed by the loud rumble of falling masonry, alarms going off, water cascading, electricity cables arcing.

Moans of pain. Voices call for help. Coughing. In semi-darkness BARBARA BORN-JONES sits hunched and in shock.

A FIREMAN searches, his head torch shining, swooping around.

FIREMAN

Fuck my old boots.

BARBARA

Philip.

FIREMAN
Is someone there?

BARBARA
Help!

FIREMAN
Okay, hold on. Coming to get you.

The fireman approaches Barbara.

FIREMAN
Are you hurt?

BARBARA
Where's Philip?

FIREMAN
Can you tell me your name?

BARBARA
Born-Jones.

FIREMAN
Okay.

BARBARA
Barbara Born Jones.

FIREMAN
Alright Barbara. Can you walk?

She stands unsteadily.

BARBARA
We were dancing.

The fireman looks up at the non-existent floors above.

FIREMAN
Up there?

SCENE TWO

In Ireland, Pat turns up the volume on a transistor radio and plays with the aerial. It is the news on *Raidió Teilifís Éireann*. A poor signal makes it hard to tune in, for Pat and us.

IRISH NEWS READER (voice over)
And this morning in Brighton ... on the ... bomb explosion
... Tory Party Conference ... at least four people killed ...
not yet known

PAT
It went off alright anyway.

Pat leaves.

Mrs Thatcher enters, in the midst of the remaining smoke.

MRS THATCHER
The bomb attack on the Grand Hotel Brighton early this morning was first and foremost an inhuman, indiscriminating attempt to massacre innocent unsuspecting men and women staying in Brighton for our Conservative Conference. And the fact that we are gathered here now, shocked, but composed and determined, is a sign not only that this attack has failed, but that all attempts to destroy democracy by terrorism will fail.

An IRA spokesperson, AIDAN enters. Thatcher's speech continues at low volume as Aidan proclaims the IRA press statement.

MRS THATCHER

I should like to express our deep gratitude to the police, firemen, ambulancemen, nurses and doctors, to all the emergency services, and to the staff of the hotel who stood with us and shared the danger.

AIDAN

The IRA claim responsibility for the detonation of 100 pounds of gelignite in Brighton against the British cabinet and Tory warmongers.

Mrs Thatcher will now realise that Britain cannot occupy our country, torture our prisoners and shoot our people in their own streets and get away with it.

AIDAN

Today we were unlucky, but remember, we only have to be lucky once; you will have to be lucky always.

Give Ireland peace and there will be no war.

MRS THATCHER

And now it must be business as usual.

SCENE THREE

Mourners whisper 'Sorry for your loss,' 'He was a wonderful man', 'IRA bastards', etc. as they gather for the funeral.

Jo regards them all in puzzled disbelief. She moves amongst them, searching for answers as the VICAR gives his eulogy to the gathered group.

JO

(at intervals during the eulogy) They're all out now. He'll be alright. He'll phone. He'll be alright. He must be alright.

VICAR

'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies,' says the Lord. Sir Anthony

George Berry, sixth and youngest son of the 1st Viscount Kelmsey, was educated at Eton and Oxford, before becoming Member of Parliament for this constituency. Sir Anthony was husband to Lady Sarah Berry, herself very badly injured in the bomb, and loving father of their children George and Sasha, and also Alexandra, Antonia, Joanna and Edward from his first marriage. He will be sorely missed by his family, his friends and his constituents.

Mourners hum a verse of 'The Lord is My Shepherd'.

VICAR

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

JO

Dad's dead.

Jo stands, unable to leave with the others. She is totally isolated on stage.

JO

Dad's dead?

Dad's dead?

ANTHONY BERRY comes stomping along.

ANTHONY BERRY

Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Jo reacts like a young child.

JO

Daddy!

ANTHONY BERRY

Be he alive, or be he dead/

JO
/be he dead. Read it again.

ANTHONY BERRY
Tuck you up now.

JO
I'll grind his bones. Go on.

ANTHONY BERRY
I've got something to tell you.

JO
No!

ANTHONY BERRY
Mummy and Daddy won't be living together any more.

JO
I'm not listening.

ANTHONY BERRY
Come on darling. We'll still have the hols.

Jo suddenly runs at him.

She jumps in front of him and lands, arms splayed. He doesn't move. He can't catch her.

JO
Watch me.

She performs gymnastic tricks, such as a handstand or somersault. Maybe she's good at this, or maybe it's a childish attempt. She desperately wants his attention.

JO
Are you watching?

He isn't.

JO
Dad!

She tries again.

ANTHONY BERRY
It's a family photo Joanne. What are you wearing?

She responds as a young woman.

JO
It's just a caftan.

ANTHONY BERRY
You're not going off the rails, are you?

JO
It's from Morocco.

ANTHONY BERRY
Always the odd one out. Come here beside me.

Classical piano music starts to play.

JO
Beethoven.

ANTHONY BERRY
You always had a flair.

JO
I'll practise every day. I promise. Scales in all keys. Sonata
in G minor.

ANTHONY BERRY
That's my girl.

JO
Where have you gone?

ANTHONY BERRY

I'm out in the slips. All in my whites.

JO

Listen. I'll play it again. I love you Daddy.

He walks away. Jo stands by his grave.

JO

Everyone came to your funeral. All the family. You would have liked that. Sarah's out of hospital. She walked down the aisle in church. Were you watching?

I can't tell anyone this – I have terrible thoughts about you being hurt so badly. Being alone in the dark, Buried under the rubble in agony. Those last moments, all on your own. Are you alright now? I wish you could tell me. It's all so quiet. Just give me a sign. Anything. A flash of lightning. A shooting star.

Pat, older than before, walks forward with a stick and a limp.

PAT

There's an obligation, coming out of conflict, to peer into the past and reappraise your actions. Not to justify, but to make sense of it. To ask the difficult questions. In the circumstances of the time, was there anything different could have been done?

SCENE FOUR

Belfast 1971.

A BRITISH SOLDIER patrols with a gun. He keeps a wary eye on the audience.

PAT

August 1971. I've just arrived in Belfast.

Nineteen years of age. Jeans, Che Guevara tee-shirt and – no. No, I didn't have the tee-shirt. It was a jacket with his face on the back. And I'd left that behind in England. Funny, you can have such a vivid memory of something in your head, but – is that the way it really was? Is that the whole picture?

Pat becomes his younger self as he speaks

PAT

Let's see. I'm definitely nineteen. My first night back here. That's certain. I'm standing outside my Auntie Mary's house in West Belfast. Blue eyes, handsome fella. Well, it is dark.

He arrives at Auntie Mary's house ...

EXTRACT TWO

The second extract is from a later part of the play, after Pat's release from prison. He has agreed to Jo's request for them to meet at a mutually agreed place in Ireland. The extract is from the first part of that meeting.

SCENE FIFTEEN

The meeting place.

Pat enters. He limps, with a stick. Pat offers his hand, Jo holds out her arms to embrace him.

JO

I'm Jo.

PAT

Good, good to meet you, Jo.

It is all very awkward. Neither knows how to greet each other. Jo offers her hand.

PAT
You're very welcome.

I'm Pat.

The handshake goes on a bit too long.

JO
Did you know – no, never mind.

PAT
No, go on.

JO
Erm, it's nothing.

PAT
--

JO
Handshakes. In the old days. You know, you put out your hand, it meant 'no weapons'.

PAT
Weapons?

JO
Don't know why I said that.

There is an awkward silence

JO
It's cold out there.

PAT
It was dark by four.

JO
Can I take your jacket?

PAT
I'm fine thanks.

JO
I said you'd be late.

PAT
Am I late?

JO
No, no you're not. I thought you might not come at all.

PAT
I always said I would.

JO
Well we're both here now.

He limps to sit down.

JO
Did you fall?

PAT
An old war injury ...

JO
Oh ... My youngest daughter cut her finger last week. We went to A and E. Blood all over the floor.

PAT
Sorry to hear that.

JO
She'll have a scar. Anyway ...

PAT
Kids!

JO

Erm. When you were in prison, I thought, thought I'd write to you.

PAT

I never heard?

JO

I never wrote.

PAT

Right. You maybe need to know. I've erm not reported for duty since. Since when I came out. I'm not involved.

JO

Okay ...

PAT

I'm still a Republican.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

I want to be clear about that.

JO

I don't follow a political party. I'm nothing really.

PAT

Right.

JO

Not a Conservative. If you thought ...

PAT

So.

JO

Yeah.

PAT

I understand you've suffered as a result of the bomb in Brighton.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

And I feel it's on me to explain.

JO

--

PAT

Is that okay?

JO

Yes ...

PAT

I haven't, you know, I haven't done this before.

JO

Excuse me.

She leaves the room. Pat waits, uncertain what's going on. It seems like forever. Jo returns.

JO

I'm sorry.

PAT

Are you okay?

JO

We'd better get started.

Pat takes a breath.

PAT

As a Republican, you know, I'm, I, I feel there's a need. Like a sort of human need – there's a – and a political need, to be open to you.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

And er, in any way I can,

JO

Hmm.

PAT

you know, to explain, you know, like, er, like, er, the reasoning behind it. I think that you need to know that. You, who've lost your father.

JO

Yes.

PAT

I mean, Nationalists, in the North of Ireland, we were second class citizens, er, from the start. Huge discrimination –

JO

Hmm.

PAT

We reached the point, we, we –

JO

As a group?

PAT

Our group, our community. Erm, I mean, the marches for civil rights. We were beaten and shot off the streets.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

And, you know, we had no other option. Brighton. It wasn't personal.

JO

It was, well it was for me.

PAT

It was political. A, erm, military operation.

You know.

The Brighton bomb, it, it, it was set to, it, in the end it achieved something. Brought the peace process closer.

JO

Hmmm. You were bringing peace?

PAT

And your dad was part of that.

JO

--

PAT

I didn't, you know, well, not, I didn't know him personally.

JO

No.

PAT

I don't know if he made any contribution to the debates on the war. I don't know if he spoke about it?

JO

Not to me.

PAT

But he was part of, you know, we would have seen him as being in, as part of the political elite. The Tory Government. Supporting their policies. And that affected people's lives on the ground in Ireland.

JO

Hmmm.

PAT

It's erm, it's very hard to say this to you, there's that cruel word, you know, erm cruel expression – but he, your father was, to us, to me, a legitimate target.

JO

--

PAT

--

JO

I'm trying to understand, very much, where you're coming from, and you, the oppression, and the lack of rights –

PAT

Hmm.

JO

And seeing that's what led to Brighton, and how it was wrong. And then, because of that, there's a whole lot more people, had their rights taken away. You know, like my daughters. Their right to a grandad. That, and how you come to terms with that. That the rights of your group, were, were so, that was so important that it was worth taking away other people's rights in order to get your point across.

PAT

It's hard to explain. How desperate we were. We, we felt we had no other choice.

JO

I might think, there is always a choice.

PAT

The things that were going on. On New Lodge Road for instance, you, you had, er, on top of the flats – you can have high storey flats – at the top of them, there's Army bases.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

Helicopters arriving and landing. On one night there were six residents of the New Lodge estate shot dead. Three were shot from the top of the flats, and three from er, er, colluding forces ... we think they were British Military Intelligence, in cars going past. Six killed, six people killed in one night.

JO

Hmm.

PAT

I mean, and there are so many other stories like that. Ballymurphy, Bloody Sunday. In other areas, all over. Er, like, what we'd call the Nationalist Belfast, or the Nationalist North. And, you know, you have to fight that.

JO

I knew so very little about Northern Ireland when I was growing up. They don't teach you about it. When Dad died, on that day, it was like suddenly I was thrown into the conflict. It became my conflict.

PAT

Yeah.

JO

And it felt my heart was broken through the conflict. And ... the suffering was my suffering. I couldn't separate it. I couldn't be detached any more.

PAT

Hmm.

JO

And that, that, erm, that pain, that loss, was shared by everyone. Dad's death threw me into a war I knew nothing about.

PAT

Hmm.

JO

After Dad died, soon after, I was on a train to Wales, and I met a woman, whose brother was in the IRA and he'd been killed. And I knew then I needed to come here, to help me understand why Dad had to die ... I first came to Northern Ireland in 1985, beginning of '85, and when I arrived, I had such a feeling of, I've come home, which might seem an odd feeling, but I felt, I'm, I'm understood here.

PAT

Yes. Exactly. That sense of belonging.

JO

It was like a war zone. It was, the army was stopping me all the time. I was going to places where I was, I was at risk if I spoke, you know. It was a very different reality. But I began to meet people who could help me understand why Dad had been a target. I met with Sinn Féin, an IRA man, a hunger striker. You know, and it was the beginning of, sort of, a journey of understanding.

PAT

That's a brave thing to do.

JO

Were you ever in that position?

PAT

What's that?

JO

The hunger strike. Did you ever –

PAT

Oh no, no. Mercifully I wasn't in the Kesh then. I didn't have to make that choice.

JO

To imagine anyone making that choice.

PAT

Hard to think of it.

JO

I was just searching for answers. But in the end, there were places I wasn't welcome. Where I was told I wasn't wanted. And then it hit me. That I might have betrayed Dad. Had I betrayed my family? No one knew I had been there. I'd got so close to people from all sides. And I went back home, and I got married, and my husband told me to move on, forget about it, put it behind me. So I buried it all, and there's been a long, long fifteen years of getting to this point. Meeting you.

PAT

--

JO

Dad wasn't even meant to be staying at the Grand that night. Peter Walker, the energy secretary had that room. He was called away for the miners' strike.

JO

He offered the room to Dad and Sarah, Dad's second wife.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon before we knew Dad had died. He was identified by his cygnet ring. He was fifty-nine. It's nothing really, these days. He had six children. People say these days I look like him. I don't know about that.

She reaches into her bag. Pat is unsettled by this. She brings out a photo. It is a head and shoulders shot of her father as MP. She offers it to Pat.

JO
This was Dad on his last birthday.

Pat reluctantly takes the photo and looks at it. Eventually he gives it back.

PAT
Thank you.

He takes his glasses off. He is overcome.

PAT
Walking into this room, er, sitting here now, face to face with you ... If you'd have come at me shouting, attacking me ...
But you're, you've, you're here with such dignity. It leaves me ...
I don't know who I am any more.

Silence. Time moves on. Jo waits for Pat to say more. He is very moved and out of words.

PAT
It's disarming.

Jo nods in agreement.

JO
How long did you think - do you have to be somewhere?

PAT

No, no other plans.

The scene continues ...

END OF EXTRACTS.

The Bombing of the Grand Hotel premiered in April 2015 at the Cockpit Theatre, with the following cast: Ruairi Conaghan, Rachel Blackman, Aoife McMahon, Glenn Speers, Beth Fitzgerald, Paul Mundell. Director Paul Hodson. For further details of the play, the full version of which is yet to be published, contact info@wildsparktheatre.com

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Neil Fleming is a playwright, screen-writer and the co-founder of theatre company Hydrocracker. His theatre writing includes *The Consultant* (2011), an exploration of the dynamics of power in the business world; *Wild Justice* (2014), a piece about the nature of revenge; and *Musik* (2005), a version of a Frank Wedekind play about the criminalisation of abortion. He is currently working on a second play about revenge, and writing a television drama series set in West Africa, about the ethics of journalism. Neil was a journalist and war reporter for 17 years, working in Britain, Africa and the Middle East.

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Paula McFetridge is Artistic Director of Kabosh Theatre Company in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This site-specific company is committed to challenging the notion of what theatre is, where it takes place and who it is for. Their work extends to the production of theatrical walking tours and interactive mobile apps – 'Belfast Bred' and 'Streets of Belfast' – creating new ways for people to experience theatre and engage with the complex histories of communities in the North of Ireland. She can be reached on paula@kabosh.net or @KaboshTheatre on Twitter.

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Ellen Muriel graduated with a BA Hons in Drama from Exeter University in 2014. She is now working as a director and performer, focussing on the use of theatre to address current and complex humanitarian issues. Her most recent work, *You, Me and the Distance Between Us* (2016) is a one-woman show that uses poetry, puppetry and song to address her own experiences of volunteering in response to Europe's ongoing refugee crisis.

Natalie Reside, a pseudonym, was a researcher and activist concerned with civil and human rights during the Irish conflict.

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