Belfast's Sites of Conflict and Structural Violence:
An Exploration of the Transformation of Public Spaces through Theatre and Performance

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Abstract

Belfast's Sites of Conflict and Structural Violence:
An Exploration of the Transformation of Public Spaces through Theatre and Performance

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This interdisciplinary project examines contemporary, everyday, and theatrical performances that represent violence in public space in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Utilizing the fields of Performance Studies, Urban Planning, and History, my thesis explores how theatre and performance can process violence and change perceptions of sites of conflict related to the Northern Irish Troubles (1968-1998). I examine Charabanc Theatre Company's *Somewhere Over the Balcony* (1987), Tinderbox Theatre Company's *Convictions* (2000), and Black Taxi Tours (2019) to address different time frames in Northern Ireland's history and assess how performance interacts with violence and public space. The theory of structural violence allows me to examine the Divis Flats, the Crumlin Road Courthouse and sites of memorialization and murals. Structural violence, I argue, is embodied by a built environment and attendant social systems that enact harms on citizens. Combining this analysis with Performance theory provides access to spaces that are located behind sectarian lines to further our knowledge on the urban landscapes in Northern Ireland. This thesis adds to the ongoing narrative of desegregation and reconciliation between the divided communities of Belfast, Northern Ireland by situating theatre and performance as a means of processing the violence of the Troubles and transforming perceptions of public space.

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Introduction

This interdisciplinary project examines contemporary, everyday, and theatrical performances that represent violence in public spaces in Northern Ireland. Ireland's northern province of Ulster is a highly contested space, with a violent history reaching back centuries. The conflict in the North arose from British colonization efforts, the most prominent being the Stuart plantation of the early seventeenth century, which imported English and Scottish Protestants to plant land for the Crown, thereby removing the native Catholic population from their ancestral lands. Long term effects of this colonial violence ripple into the present day, now manifested in the division between the two central ethno-religious identities which can be broadly categorized as Irish/Catholic/Nationalist and British/Protestant/Unionist. Historical events such as the Siege of Derry in 1689 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 hold significance to both Unionist and Nationalist communities. These events are remembered, represented, and celebrated by the Orange Order and broader northern Unionist community every year during the parading season, which peaks on the 12th of July.[1] Nationalists in the North view these parades as insulting and offensive, and "tensions arise when such exclusive narratives are taken to the streets and asserted across territories where they do not resonate and are met by organised resistance."[2] The sectarian divisions in the city of Belfast is not a recent phenomenon. Since the creation of Northern Ireland, and its partion from the southern Irish Free State formed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, separate neighbourhoods for working-class Protestants and Catholics became further entrenched in the North.[3] While there was a period of relative peace between the two

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[1]James W. McAuley and Jonathan Tonge, "'Faith, Crown and State': Contemporary Discourses within the Orange Order in Northern Ireland," *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 15, no. 1 (2008): 139.

[2] Sara Dybris McQuaid, "Parading Memory and Re-Member-Ing Conflict: Collective Memory in Transition in Northern Ireland," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 30, no. 1 (2017): 32.

[3] In the 1920s the population was split: 2/3 Protestant majority, 1/3 Catholic minory.

groups between the late 1920s and early 1960s,[4] tensions began to rise as the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) demanded better treatment of Catholics under the majority Protestant rule. These protests, modelled after the Civil Rights movement in the United States of America (USA), quickly turned violent. Events such as the Burntollet Bridge incident in 1969, where peaceful protesters marching from Belfast to Derry, were met by extreme violence. A large mob of Protestant men and off-duty police officers brutally attacked the protestors.[5]

Burntollet Bridge is one of the events that marked the beginning of the Troubles. After this event, the resurgence of the paramilitary groups, such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA), and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), became more popular, recruiting young men from the disenfranchised working-class Catholic neighbourhoods. Loyalist vigilante and paramilitary organizations, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), fiercely defended Loyalist lines. The deployment of the British Military exacerbated tensions, as they disproportionately targeted the Catholic population. Additionally, the Military created their own atrocities, such as Bloody Sunday, where soldiers fired on a peaceful protest in 1972, killing 14 unarmed men and teenage boys. Over the course of the Troubles more than 3600 people would lose their lives,[6] and thousands more were injured. After 30 years of violence, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) was signed in 1998, which created a power-sharing government.

The division of Belfast into separated enclaves has led to specific performances of identity, which in turn manifests how the city is negotiated and used by its residents. Contested

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[4]Excluding an IRA border campaign that lasted from 1956-1962, which had little success. Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006) 4.
[5] Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan Books, 2012), 96.
[6] David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002).

territories are a common occurrence in the divided city. While there are two dominant identities, there has been little integration of the two communities over the centuries. As A. T. Q. Stewart explains, "The two communities are not intermingled - that is patently what has not happened - but they are interlocked, and in ways which it is probably impossible for anyone except the native of Ulster to understand."[7] This thesis attempts to parse how this division has manifested itself in specific plays and performances and observes how memory, history, and identity play a role in perpetuating different kinds of violence.

I deal with two plays and one performance from three distinct periods in Northern Ireland to assess how theatre and performance in the post-conflict[8] city change the way we understand contentious public spaces. Chapter One analyses Charabanc Theatre Company's play *Somewhere Over The Balcony* (1987). The play provides an absurd and humorous view of three women who live in the Republican stronghold of the Divis Flats, subverting the negative narrative surrounding the flats. This building is infamous in the Troubles narrative for its high rates of paramilitary activity, poor living conditions, and the installation of a military base on top of the Divis Tower. Using a Brechtian analysis of the play and an understanding of the built form of the Divis Flats, Chapter One argues that the play becomes a means for understanding structural violence embodied by the poor construction of the flats and exacerbated by other multiple deprivation factors in the area. Moving from the active violence of the Troubles, Chapter Two addresses the site-specific performance of *Convictions* (2000) by Tinderbox Theatre Company. A stipulation in the GFA closed the Crumlin Road Courthouse, leaving it vacant as new courthouses were built elsewhere. This allowed it to be used as a site for *Convictions*. As I will

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[7] A.T.Q Stewart, *The Narrow Ground* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 181.

[8] Post-Conflict refers to post-1998.

show in Chapter Two, site-specific performance enmeshes the site's history with its proposed redevelopment. As the main courthouse throughout the Troubles where high-profile cases unfolded, the site and the performance are intertwined and cannot exist without each other. Finally, Chapter Three reads Black Taxi Tours through the lens of performance, using a first-hand account as the basis of its analysis. Building on site-specific scholars introduced in the previous chapter, I show how memory intersects with the urban sphere. All three chapters address different conceptions of violence, focusing on structural violence, a concept which I will expand upon in the literature review. In this thesis, I bridge the fields of performance studies, urban planning, history and memory studies. In doing so, I provide a new perspective on the use of public space and how performance studies can imagine new avenues for exploring past violence in the post-conflict city. This thesis argues that each of these plays and performances changes how we see these respective spaces, and that each processes violence in a different way.

The methodology used for this thesis consists of theoretical and scholarly reading, detailed in my literature review, and fieldwork completed in the summer of 2019. My research trip to Northern Ireland between June 10, 2019 and August 3, 2019 comprised of participating in workshops, engaging in site visits, and attending plays to assess the current climate of local theatre practices. Additionally, I hired a Black Taxi Tour to gain first-hand knowledge of Troubles tourism. The case studies were selected because of their in-depth engagement with specific places and spaces in Northern Ireland's history, as well as their relationships with structural violence.

Literature Review

Violence

Physical force, or the threat thereof, is the most common way of understanding violence. However, this thesis contends with the notion of violence in a broader sense. I analyze violence through what is termed 'structural violence.' Examples of structural violence are found in the systems that govern us, in building codes, or even within the state. These factors impact the quality of life that citizens are afforded, causing harm. The structural violence I discuss in this thesis is regulated by the everyday systems embedded into Northern Ireland's urban landscapes.

Philosopher Johan Galtung makes the distinction between personal, direct and structural violence. His analysis highlights that structural violence unevenly distributes power and life chances.[9] The way that these resources are distributed causes violence to the impacted communities, perpetuating cycles of violence. Philosopher Newton Garver asserts that once these power structures are in place, they require little upkeep as they self-perpetuate by further entrenching violence and inequality.[10] Galtung and Garver were writing in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and student protests in the United States. Therefore, their critique of structural violence mimics the arguments made by NICRA, who drew inspiration from the fight for freedom by black men and women in America.[11] It can be argued that the systems of violence found in government policy, the built urban form, and even segregation in Northern Ireland, the U.S., and elsewhere, reflect an effort to remove agency from a select group in the general

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[9] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," in *Violence: A Philosophical Anthology*, edited by Vittorio Bufacchi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 83.
[10] Newton Garver, "What Violence Is," in *Violence: A Philosophical Anthology*, edited by Vittorio Bufacchi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 179-80.
[11] While there is a comparison between the two deprived communities, it is important to state that there is additional harm done to the black population in America due to the violent structures that were built on the tenets of slavery, the effects of which continue to this day.

population.[12] The deprivation experienced by Catholic communities in Northern Ireland is seen through discriminatory allocation of housing stock and disproportionate lack of education, jobs, security, and resources. The deprivation is multi-generational, spanning back to Ireland's colonization by England, and fully realized by the separation of Northern Ireland from the southern Irish Free State in 1921.

Judith Butler argues that there is a human connection to be found through violence, grief, and vulnerability.[13] In Northern Ireland, memorial sites, murals, and plaques are found in abundance in the urban sphere. These sites act as an outlet to process the violence of the Troubles and provide a space for public grieving, group remembrance, and vulnerability. Many of these sites offer a point of contact for the popular tourist attraction of the Black Taxi Tours (BTT), which reflect on these memorials and use them to narrate the history of the Troubles.

Historian Joanna Bourke discusses the complex interactions of the military-industrial-entertainment complex,[14] positing that violence has become an everyday occurrence. Bourke grapples with the physical harm caused by violence, the state structures that condone or even encourage violence, and the processes that allow for violence to proliferate into our everyday lives. For Bourke, violence is insidious. She states:

> "It is precisely its everyday nature - the way it creeps up on us by stealth - that makes it so powerful. But we are not merely passive observers, in thrall to a set of amorphous,

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[12] Black, Indigenous and other visible minorities in the USA and Irish/Catholic/Republicans in Northern Ireland.

[13] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London, New York: Verso, 2004).

[14] Bourke defines the military-industrial-entertainment complex as the intersection of the military with every facet of our lives. The entertainment industry places a heavy focus on war to sell to the general public. Films and videogames focusing on military violence have become a staple in the Western entertainment industry. War-playing videogames are often used in the recruitment of teenagers to the military in the USA. Additionally, they are used as a training tool as more military operations become drone-based, folding the military-industrial complex into the entertainment industry.

> militaristic ideologies or corrupting institutions. We are involved in the production of violence: it constitutes who we are and might be and, as such, can be resisted."[15]

This production of everyday violence implicates us all. In Northern Ireland, it goes beyond laying direct blame on overt forms of violence enacted by paramilitaries and the British state. Drawing on Bourke, in conjunction with Garver and Galtung, it can be argued that we are all implicit in everyday violence and how we collectively perpetuate it with urban planning policies, as well as heritage and memory practices. It is possible to negotiate this violence by confronting our role in it, which is where co-creating arts practices are especially helpful. In seeking to understand how we perform violence, through both everyday acts and theatre, I present case studies that encourage us to confront the role of violence in our lives.

Performance and theatre scholar Lisa Fitzpatrick conceptualizes violence as something that can be engaged with and worked through. Fitzpatrick shows how theatre can be used to combat the negative effects of violence and shape a new post-conflict society.[16] Techniques as simple as the use of memory or laughter allow the audience to access a performance. Also, site-specific theatre allows the urban space to speak to the past and influence how it is perceived.

Austin Sarat, Carleen R. Basler, and Thomas L. Dumm assert that violence, both public and private, change the way we interact with the world.[17] They state that:

> "Understanding the meaning and significance of violence requires, we believe, attention to rituals and enactments as well as to displays of force, to both the private and

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[15] Joanna Bourke, *Deep Violence: Military War, War Play, and the Social Life of Weapons* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015) 4.

[16] Lisa Fitzpatrick, "The Utopian Performative in Post-Ceasefire Northern Irish Theatre," in *Performing Violence in Contemporary Ireland*, edited by Lisa Fitzpatrick, (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009), 175-188.

[17] Austin Sarat, Carleen R. Basler, and Thomas L. Dumm, "Introduction: How Does Violence Perform?" in *Performances of Violence,* edited by Austin Sarat, Carleen R. Basler, and Thomas L. Dumm, (Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 3.

> public life of violence, to the ways violence both constitutes and suppresses particular ways of being in the world."[18]

In this thesis, I follow the insights of Fitzpatrick and Sarat, Basler and Dumm, to speak of how theatre and performance process violence. My case studies make structural violence visible, and variously, entrench it or imagine new possibilities. Historian Paul Steege supports Sarat, Basler and Dumm's notion of violence as a public and private act in his essay in their volume. Steege addresses the creation of the Berlin Wall in Cold War Germany and the normalcy of everyday violence and policing. The ordinariness around the creation of the Berlin Wall during the Cold war "locates the production of an evolving border regime in everyday practices that transcend any one political system."[19] Similarly, located in the history of the Troubles is the everydayness of violence, as paramilitary attacks and military patrols became part of residents' everyday lives.

Theatre and Performance Studies

Eva Urban discusses the notion of utopian and dystopian themes in Northern Irish theatre. She looks at the use of myth in the Northern Irish narrative through plays by Frank McGuinness and David Duggan, contemporary productions like *Convictions,* and reoccurring cultural events such as the 12th of July parades. She questions whether the performances perpetuate sectarian ideals or create utopias.[20] Fiona Coleman Coffey supplements this research with a more historical approach to performance as a political act.[21] Coffey's work creates an in-depth narrative around

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[18] Ibid. 2.

[19] Paul Steege, "Ordinary Violence on an Extraordinary Stage: Incidents on the Sector Border in Postwar Berlin," in *Performances of Violence,* edited by Austin Sarat, Carleen R. Basler, and Thomas L. Dumm, (Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 140.

[20] Eva Urban, *Community Politics and the Peace Process in Contemporary Northern Irish Drama* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), 41.

[21] Fiona Coleman Coffey, *Women in Northern Irish Theatre, 1921-2012* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016).

women's involvement in political theatre in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, showing that women have been using performance to process the violence in Northern Ireland well before the conception of the 'Fifth Province' by Field Day.[22]

The first Chapter of this thesis provides a reading of *Somewhere Over the Balcony* by Charabanc Theatre Company through the lens of Bertolt Brecht's conception of "Epic Theatre". This theoretical framing calls for a remodelling of the theatre, making use of the Alienation Effect, which Charabanc employed expertly, albeit perhaps unintentionally. Brecht challenges theatre makers to create a political theatre that leaves the trappings of illusions and catharsis behind and instead opts for an aesthetic that is jarring yet entertaining, and where one exposes the knots that tie the story together. I will show that Charabanc employed the Alienation Effect by using sparse set design and uncomfortable musical numbers, interrupting the drama. Also, the use of devising methods to create stories that accentuate the voices of victims of structural violence, as outlined by theatre scholar Helen Lojek, employs Brechtian tools.

Lojek claims that Charabanc is a model for cross-community collaboration due to the mixed identities of the women who founded it.[23] Charabanc scholars usually position the company in binary opposition to the male-dominated cultural project of Field Day.[24]

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[22] Field Day's idea of the "Fifth Province" suggests that that there is an imaginary fifth province in Ireland that is enacted on peace and understanding of the other. The "Fifth Province" is an idea that embodies artistic and theatrical movements in Ireland, beginning "in Derry as a cultural and intellectual response to the political crisis in Northern Ireland" "About - Field Day." https://fieldday.ie/about/ Accessed September 4, 2020.
[23] Helen Lojek, "Playing Politics with Belfast's Charabanc Theatre Company," in *Politics and Performance in Contemporary Northern Ireland*, edited by John P. Harrington, Elizabeth J. Mitchell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
[24] DiCenzo, Maria, "Charabanc Theatre Company: Placing Women Center-Stage in Northern Ireland," *Theatre Journal*, 45, no. 2. (1993) 175-184.
Foley, Imelda. "Charabanc Theatre Company and Marie Jones: Not that kind of War," in *The Girls in the Big Picture : Gender in Contemporary Ulster Theatre*. (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2003), p. 39

Performance Scholar Katarzyna Ojrzyńska writes on Charabanc using Luce Irigaray's framework of mimesis and mimicry.[25] In her article, she argues that the women use stereotypes of themselves to disrupt and overturn the patriarchy. Adding to this analysis, the use of the everyday is important in Charabanc's work. As one of Charabanc's founders Eleanor Methven stated in an interview with Carol Martin in 1987, "It's nice just to talk about the small events, minor but catastrophic, in people's lives which to them are huge and turn their lives inside out."[26] Charabanc's performances stem from their dual existence of women working in a cross-community fashion. Their attention to the everyday combined with the Northern Irish context helps to reveal how intimately violence is knitted into Charabanc's characters' lives

Chapters Two and Three require a site-specific analysis, the theoretical basis of which is provided by Gay McAuley, Kathleen Irwin, and Joanna Tompkins. McAuley argues that social and political issues become inseparable from their spaces, creating a rich engagement from site-based art practices.[27] Irwin argues that space "does things"[28] to performance and that the move from the traditional theatre space into "found space" allows the space to add its narrative to the performance. Tompkins heightens these two frameworks. Tompkins grapples with the meaning of site-specific theatre but ultimately states:

> "This form of performative social practice requires a complex interrelationship among and between 'site' and 'performance' (on their own and in conjunction with each other)

Brenda Winter "Cultural Capital and the Men of Recognized Credit," *Ilha Do Desterro* 58 (2010): 439-458.

[25] Katarzyna Ojrzyńska, "Defying Maintenance Mimesis: The Case of Somewhere over the Balcony by Charabanc Theatre Company," *Text Matters* 8 (2018): 137–150.

[26] Carol Martin, "Charabanc Theatre Company: 'Quare' Women 'Sleggin' and 'Geggin' the Standards of Northern Ireland by 'Tappin' the People," *The Drama Review: TDR* 31, no. 2 (1987): 95.

[27] Gay McAuley, "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator," *Arts Journal of Sydney University Arts Association* 27, (2005): 30.

[28] Kathleen Irwin. *The Ambit of Performativity: How Site Makes Meaning in Site-Specific Performance.* (University of Art and Design Helsinki, 2007) 11.

> such that each has some room for manoeuvre and for the nexus that these two component parts create."[29]

McAuley, Irwin, and Tompkins show how site-specific theatre can unsettle place and bring deeper engagement with the history of place and performance. Additionally, Laura Levin's work emphasized how the site can speak. For Levin, "camouflage" contextualizes how identity is revealed or concealed in public space to show notions of the self. Levin's framework is applicable to the BTT's, as the site interprets the tour guide's stories and lends its voice to the narrative. Matthew Spangler looks at how the murals in Derry's Bogside can be read through history, memory, and commemoration, adding a Northern Irish dimension to the performance of space. Spangler's argument echoes my assertions when he states that "this performative landscape does not so much *reflect* history as *constitute* it through specific acts of remembrance, storytelling, and display."[30] History, memory and performance all tie together to show how the Crumlin Road Courthouse and the BTTs change how we see public space.

Chapter Two provides a study of *Convictions*, a play that is already the basis of significant analysis. I build on the work of performance scholar Michael McKinnie, who argues that the performance of *Convictions* in the Crumlin Road Courthouse was important for geographical and performative reasons.[31] In McKinnie's conclusion, he states that "[theatre] analyses […] have often hinged on two hierarchies: place is subordinate to theatre, and the state

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[29] Joanne Tompkins, "The 'Place' and Practice of Site-Specific Theatre and Performance," in *Performing Site-Specific Theatre: Politics, Place, Practice*, edited by Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012.) 15-16.
[30] Matthew Spangler, "Performing 'the Troubles': Murals and the Spectacle of Commemoration at Free Derry Corner," in *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* edited by Sara Brady and Fintan Walsh (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009) 101.
Italics found in original text.
[31] Michael McKinnie, "The State of this Place: Convictions, the Courthouse, and the Geography of Performance in Belfast," *Modern Drama* 46 no. 4: (2003): 580-597.

is subordinate to the nation."[32] The performance of *Convictions* troubled these hierarchies and opened up a place for a new dialogue to emerge. Urban argues against McKinnie, claiming that the performance "began when the audience were led into the building,"[33] and uses a Brechtian analysis to bolster her claim. Deirdre O'Leary commends *Convictions* for its use of the Courthouse as a liminal space, arguing that site-specific theatre has the potential to engage with contested histories and troubling narratives of the past. This idea is bolstered by performance scholar Theron Schmidt, who is writing from a Lefebvrian point of view, aided by Tompkins and geographer Doreen Massey. Schmidt argues that through the use of the Courthouse, the performance can unsettle conceptions of space, "Through spatial practice – 'drawing the curtain', as Lefebvre put it – the banality of the building itself is revealed."[34] Schmidt then applies performance scholar Jen Harvie's reading of *Convictions,* who also explores the banality of the building, but through a Memory Studies approach. Drawing on Pierre Nora's *Lieux de Memoires*, Harvie argues that "[theatre] and other forms of performance contribute importantly to the memory work of specific communities."[35] The Courthouse acts as a participant in the drama.

Chapter Three addresses the everyday violence explored by BTTs. As mentioned, this Chapter also uses site-specific scholars McAuley, Tompkins, and Irwin. However, in a manner similar to Spangler, it focuses more so on the memory of post-conflict spaces. There is significant existing scholarship that assesses the economic and political implications of BTTs. While no work has been done on these tours as a type of performance, I argue that this can be

[32] McKinnie, "The State of this Place," 593.
[33] Eva Urban, "The Performance of Power in Convictions." *Études Irlandaises* 32, no. 2 (2007): 176.
[34] Theron Schmidt, "Unsettling Representation: Monuments, Theatre, and Relational Space," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20, no. 3 (2010): 287.
[35] Jen Harvie, "Remembering the Nations: Site-Specific Performance, Memory, and Identities," in *Staging the UK*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) 41.

accomplished using Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum Approach (BSA). The BSA asks performance scholars to look outside the world of theatre and art and to see "that performance […] is a broad spectrum of activities including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life."[36] This Chapter uses a Performance Studies approach in conversation with existing literature on the tours, especially the work of sociologist Wendy Ann Wiedenhoft Murphy, who draws attention to the mobility of tourists between the divided communities in post-conflict Belfast. Murphy argues that the tours can reinforce the violence of the Troubles by keeping them in the present.

From an urban planning perspective, William J. V. Neill looks at the commodification of fear in post-conflict cities. Neill's analysis on architectures of fear looks at how "Troubles-tourism" markets itself to the outsider. Tourists can explore the fear and trauma of the past by the guaranteed safety afforded by the present day. This idea of safety is taken further by Performance scholar Emma Willis, who explains that dark tourism is highly attractive because "[tourists] are plunged into the world of the other and at the same time derive pleasure from the experience precisely because of its alterity – the sense in which that world is *not* their own."[37] The alterity of fear and pain experienced by the tourist have negative implications on the current fabric of the urban sphere, which is addressed by conflict analyst Feargal Cochrane, who notes that the tours entrench violence by visiting sites of violence, and perhaps would be better off if they addressed sites of reconciliation instead.[38]

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[36] Richard Schechner "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," in *The Performance Studies Reader* eds. Henry Bial. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007): 7.
[37] Emma Willis *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and Ethical Spectatorship : Absent Others*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 20.
[38] Feargal Cochrane, "The Paradox of Conflict Tourism: The Commodification of War or Conflict Transformation in Practice," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 22, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2015): 51-70.

The majority of the literature surrounding BTTs questions the outcome of the narratives offered, stating that they are potentially entrenching violence in the present and commodifying terror.[39] This thesis also explores this argument. Yet, instead of determining if BTTs are a positive or negative cultural industry, I seek to explore how the sites perform memories of violence. The tour guide and the performers activate these sites. While no two taxi tours are alike, this Chapter draws its basis from a tour that the author participated in on July 11, 2019.

Urban Planning

Urban planning can examine how built space can affect levels of violence based on community use. One of the central tenets of urban planning is to create harmonious spaces that benefit communities and residents and increase their quality of life. The building boom of the 1960s, which focused on replacing housing in slum clearance programs with high rises, created the Divis Flats. These new high-rise developments, which are similar to urban planner and architect Le Corbusier's designs,[40] created more segregated spaces and increased the levels of structural violence outlined above. The Divis Flats replaced the old working-class neighbourhood of the Pound Loney. The Victorian terraces were demolished to make way for the interconnected high rise. Even though the old neighbourhood was run down, the high rises proposed a new problem by erasing the intricate networks of working-class life on the streets. The Divis created new

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[39] Cochrane, "The Paradox of Conflict Tourism: The Commodification of War or Conflict Transformation in Practice," 51-70
Wendy Ann Wiedenhoft Murphy, “Touring the Troubles in West Belfast: Building Peace or Reproducing Conflict?” *Peace & Change* vol 35, no 4 (October, 2010): 537-560.
William J. V. Neill, “Marketing the Urban Experience: Reflections on the Place of Fear in the Promotional Strategies of Belfast, Detroit and Berlin,” *Urban Studies* 38, no 5-6, (2001): 815-828.
Sara McDowell, “Selling Conflict Heritage through Tourism in Peacetime Northern Ireland: Transforming Conflict or Exacerbating Difference?” *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 14, no, 5 (2008): 405-421.

[40] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture.* Translated by Frederick Etchells. (New York: Dover Publications, 1986).

streets in the sky that bred violence. The Flats created a new kind of street life, which focused on singular residential-use and homogenous identity grouping, instead of the more favourable use of designing mixed-use streets.

Sociologist Jane Jacobs outlines the importance of co-creation of urban spaces in her book *The Life and Death of Great American Cities.* Jacobs encourages residents to keep eyes on their streets, which she argues reduces crime and creates safer neighbourhoods.[41] The necessity of human, community eyes is essential, as opposed to CCTV and police eyes. Journalist Anne Minton's assessment of increased surveillance in public spaces in the UK shows that there is an expansion of structural violence through the militarization and securitization of space.[42] While Minton's locates her study in Britain, we can see extreme examples of the militarization of space in Northern Ireland, where the presence of the army and surveillance made the streets more dangerous for residents. Updating the ideas proposed by Jacobs, Stephen Zavestoski, and Julian Agyeman provides a thoughtful critique of the Complete Streets movement. The Complete Streets movement tries to accommodate all users[43] of the street, and following in Doreen Massey's[44] footsteps, Zavestoski and Agyeman argue that streets are constantly changing and evolving. Considering the streets as an ecology emphasizes how problematic Le Corbusier's "streets in the sky" are. High rise developments, like the Divis Flats which were designed by Frank Robertson, were destined to breed animosity due to their lack of amenities, diversity, and resources available to residents. The use of poor building materials exacerbated these issues.

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[41] Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (New York: Modern Library, 1961).
[42] Minton, Anna, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*. (London: Penguin, 2009).
[43] Users often refers to their mode of transportation, thereby linking them to categories such as pedestrian, cyclist, auto-user, not considering whether the mode of transportation is by choice or by circumstance.
[44] Doreen Massey, "Places and their pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39, no. 1. (1995): 192-192, quoted in Stephen Zavestoski and Julian Agyeman, *Incomplete streets: processes, practices and possibilities*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 4

Additionally, the installation of a military base on the top of the Divis Tower created a panopticon effect, thereby surveilling the residents, but not through the community-building way suggested by Jacobs, Zavestoski, and Agyeman. The militarization of the space created further tension between the residents and the state; increased pressure on the residents from state surveillance likely raised tensions and bolstered crime within the complex.

In Chapters Two and Three, I consider urban space in a post-conflict city through the case studies of the Crumlin Road Courthouse and the sites of memorials along the route of BTTs. Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh consider why Belfast remains segregated and how urban regeneration often masks how deeply divided the city is to outsiders.[45] While tourists can freely move between neighbourhoods, residents still face segregation in religious/ethnic neighbourhood enclaves. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler[46] and Scott A. Bollens[47] also frame urban regeneration practices in Belfast. Neill addresses how memory and cultural identity impact Belfast, both on a historical and planning level, because identity is tied to place, creating a "zero-sum" struggle where neither identity can be appropriately accommodated.[48] Within Neill and Schwedler's volume, Frank Gaffikin, Michael Morrisey, and Ken Sterrett[49] reflect on arts and culture in regeneration practices in the post-conflict city, where they propose the creation of a creative hub

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[45] Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London, Dublin, Ann Arbour: Pluto Press, 2006).
[46] William J. V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler, *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, eds. William J. V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave, 2001).
[47] Scott A. Bollens *Trajectories of Conflict and Peace: Jerusalem and Belfast since 1994*. (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018).
[48] William J. V. Neill "Memory, Spatial Planning and the Construction of Cultural Identity in Belfast and Berlin – an Overview," in *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, eds. William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave, 2001) 14.
[49] Frank Gaffikin, Michael Morrissey, and Ken Sterrett, "Remaking the City: The Role of Culture in Belfast," in *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, eds. William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave, 2001) 141-62.

in the then soon-to-be-vacated Crumlin Road Courthouse and Gaol. They argue that a creative hub at this location could potentially link the two communities. The creative hub was never realized,[50] but *Convictions* provides us with a glimpse of how this space could have been regenerated into something that benefits both identities while navigating memory in a contested space. Bollens iterates that peace in conflict cities can only be achieved by collaborating with policy makers, as well as stakeholder participation. Bollens looks at everyday spatial practices in Northern Ireland, underscoring the conflicts in planning policy as Belfast strives to create desegregated places. Planning policy in Belfast has focused on micro-scales and site-specific plans[51] since the GFA. While there is talk of desegregation in urban redevelopment and regeneration plans seen in the *Shared Future*[52] document introduced in 2005, desegregation has not happened. I explore this further in Chapter Three, drawing attention to how the BTTs navigate memory and conflict. These authors highlight that the separate but equal policies introduced by the GFA have created their own unique issues on urban space and regeneration of neighbourhoods post-conflict.

History and Memory

History is woven throughout this thesis, as the performances depend on the memory of the Troubles to operate. Accordingly, I have drawn on works of history to contextualize my case studies and the events occurring during the plays and performance creation. The aforementioned historians Joanna Bourke and Paul Steege help us understand the historical role of violence in society. Lorraine Dowler addresses the Divis Flats and social housing in Northern Ireland

[50] Perhaps due to its sale to private developers who wished to turn it into a hotel.
[51] Bollens, *Trajectories of Conflict and Peace,* 143.
[52] OFMDFMNI (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (Northern Ireland) (2005) *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategy Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: OFMDFMNI quoted in Bollens, *Trajectories of Conflict and Peace*, 8.

through a legal framework, highlighting how the Divis was akin to a prison due to the militarized surveillance created through the building process.[53] Her work, in tandem with historian Megan Deirdre Roy's scholarship, provides historical context for how the social housing crisis affected public space in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Journalists David McKittrick and David McVea[54] provide a critical historical suvey of the Troubles that also offers context on how areas of public space were demarcated and then protected by rival communities and groups within them.

Memory studies, especially in relation to the Troubles, is equally salient to my analysis. Maurice Halbwach's theory of 'collective memory'[55] is predicated on the assumption that memory can be held by more than an individual and that whole societies rely on a collective remembering. Collectively remembering events creates strong national identities, which can be seen in the two distinct ethno-religious-political traditions in Northern Ireland. Commenting on Halbwach's ideas of Collective Memory, Pierre Nora writes, "Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object. History dwells exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in the relations among things. Memory is an absolute, while history is always relative."[56] In Northern Ireland, we can see collective memory and Nora's *Lieux des Memoires* at play with the demarcation of neighbourhoods. The murals celebrating King William of Orange hold a collective memory for the Protestant population. The defeat of the Catholics

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[53] Dowler, Lorraine, "Preserving the Peace and Maintaining Order: Deconstructing the Legal Landscape of Public Housing in West Belfast, Northern Ireland," *Urban Geography* 22, no. 2 (2001): 100–105.
[54] McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*.
[55] Maurice Halbwachs "Space and the Collective Memory." In *The Collective Memory*, 1950. http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/hawlbachsspace.pdf
[56] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* Translated Arthur Goldhammer. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3

plays out along gable walls, reviving this memory for those who could not have been alive to witness the Battle of the Boyne themselves.

Ian McBride and Jim Smyth's respective collections both deal directly with the relationship bewteen history and memory in Northern Ireland. McBride's edited volume, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* provides a wealth of information on how we can access the past not only through historical documents, but through memory and oral traditions as well. Jim Smyth's more recent edited volume[57] focuses on the many contested memories of Northern Ireland's recent Troubles. McBride's own contribution to the latter volume further engages with the continual practice of commemoration and how it potentially keeps the violence and segregation of the Troubles alive in post-conflict Northern Ireland. [58] These texts tie together the issues discussed above in relation to violence, territoriality, and identity in post-conflict Belfast. Memory comes to the forefront most prominently in the final chapter, which deals directly with the mobilization of memory in public spaces through a Black Taxi Tour.

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[57] Jim Smyth, *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland*, eds. Jim Smyth. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).
[58] Ian McBride, "The Truth about the Troubles," in *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past* in *Northern Ireland*, eds. Jim Smyth (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2017), 9-41.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> "(*SFX early morning sounds – e.g. traffic, helicopters, the signature tune of an early morning soap, 'Neighbours'. LX up on balcony* […] KATE *and* ROSE *pretend to bring chopper to land with hand signals while* CEELY *looks at it through army binoculars. SFX of chopper landing on roof of nearby tower block. SFX of music fades in for song. […]*
> ROSE: (tongue in cheek). British Airways. They'll be staying in the Penthouse."[59]

It's the opening scene of the play *Somewhere Over the Balcony*,[60] and Charabanc's signature humour makes it clear that this is not a straightforward dramatic retelling of the Troubles. Aware of the surveillance that they are under from the British Military post on top of the Divis Tower, the women gesture rudely at the helicopter and objectify the new British soldiers within the same breath. Kate Tidy, Rose Marie Noble, and Ceely Cash, the only characters that we see, spend the entire play animating the action occurring on the streets below them from their balconies on the Divis Flats. The play takes place on August 8, 1987, the sixteenth anniversary of the introduction of internment in Northern Ireland,[61] and the neighbourhood surrounding the Divis is full of life. Internment without trial is a strand carried through the play and is one reminder that *Balcony*

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[59] Charabanc Theatre Company "Somewhere Over the Balcony," in *Four Plays by the Charabanc Theatre Company: Inventing Women's Work* eds. Claudia W. Harris (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Limited, 2006), p. 183-184.
[60] Hereafter referred to as *Balcony.*
[61] Internment without trial was introduced in August 1971 and consisted of sweeps by the British Military, usually in Catholic neighbourhoods, to try and apprehend members of the IRA. Disproportionately targeting the Catholic population in Northern Ireland further exacerbated tensions between the Military and citizens.

uses to show how the neighbourhood of the Falls Road, and the residents of the Divis Flats, experienced violence at the hands of the British State.

This Chapter will analyze the 1987 play *Balcony* by Charabanc Theatre Company and how it reflects the structural violence of inadequate housing enacted upon residents of the Divis Flats. Providing a bizarre portrayal of a day in the life of the Flats, *Balcony* uses Bertolt Brecht's Alienation Effect to process violence in public spaces and change the way we see the space of the Flats. By tracing the history of the Divis, from its creation as part of a slum clearance program, to the inadequate materials used in its construction, to its decline and demolition, I explore the different facets of structural violence represented by the failed housing project. This Chapter analyses *Balcony*, underlining real events written into the play, which, I argue, function paradoxically to make the play appear even more absurd.

The Enniskillen Bombing occurred on 10 November 1987. During a Remembrance Day ceremony, an IRA attack on a war memorial killed eleven people and injured an additional sixty-three.[62] In the shadow of this event, Charabanc Theatre Company performed a cut-down version of their new play *Balcony* in Belfast at the Arts Theatre. This opening night was a stark contrast from the warm reception it had previously received in London. While the height of violence of the Troubles was over, it must not have felt that way as the women gathered to perform their play. The Divis Flats has become infamous in the Troubles narrative.[63] Seen as a Republican

[62] Claudia W. Harris, "Inventing Women's Work: The Legacy of the Charabanc Theatre Company," in *Four Plays by the Charabanc Theatre Company: Inventing Women's Work* eds. Claudia W. Harris (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Limited, 2006), xlvi.

[63] Jean McConville, one of the IRA's "disappeared," was kidnapped from her apartment in the Divis Flats. In addition, a military base was installed on the roof to ensure extra surveillance of Nationalist paramilitaries. The Flats were also a site of multiple deprivation factors. Megan Deirdre Roy states that 51% of residents within the Divis were on welfare assistance programs. According to Stella Lowry, one

enclave and known to be plagued by poor construction manifest in moulding walls and broken elevators, the portrayal of the Flats in the play – though absurd – rings true. Structural violence represented by the Flats is visible not only in built form but also in intergenerational poverty, perpetuating cycles of violence.

Charabanc Theatre Company was founded in 1983 by Eleanor Methven, Marie Jones, Carol Scanlan (Moore), Brenda Winter and Maureen McAuley. These women came together to address the lack of female roles on stage in Northern Ireland and created their first play *Lay Up Your Ends*, with the playwright Martin Lynch. *Lay Up Your Ends* used devising theatre techniques to stage the history of mill workers in Belfast in the 1900s. Performance scholars Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling succinctly summarize devising theatre as "a process for creating performance from scratch, by the group, without a pre-existing script."[64] Charabanc worked collectively to go through archives, conduct interviews, and draft versions of the play alongside Lynch. This collaboration allowed for flexibility in the creative process and added a depth of history that made space for marginalized voices on stage. *Lay Up Your Ends* was a hit, and the company went on to produce six more plays in the five years they were active, the most successful being *Balcony*.[65] As Helen Lojek states,

> "[…] the company walked a fine line. The stories were not their own, but carefully researched both in libraries and, more extensively, through personal interviews. In creating them the company gave voice to elements of the Belfast community that had

third of children had been taken to see a general practitioner in the 1970s, and 96% of adults and children were living in poor households.
Roy, "Divis Flats: The Social and Political Implications of a Modern Housing Project in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1968-1998," 2.
Lowry, "Getting Things Done," 391.
[64] Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A Critical History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire: Palgrave, 2016) p. 3.
[65] Harris "Inventing Women's Work," xlvi.

> been relatively voiceless in the past: mill workers, market vendors, residents of the Divis Flats."[66]

Additionally, Lojek highlights that with Charbanc members being from both Protestant and Catholic communities, the production and process of creation of *Balcony* "was itself a model of cross-cultural understanding."[67] This creation of cross-community collaboration was vital for Charabanc's success as they chose to perform in community centres and parish halls across Northern Ireland, on both sides of the divide. By bringing their theatre to the community, Charabanc provided a space for audience members to engage with their work without having to leave the relative safety of their neighbourhoods.

Somewhere Over the Balcony and Bertolt Brecht

Residents of the Divis Flats, Kate Tidy, Ceely Cash, and Rose Marie Noble, are the only characters witnessed by the audience. The women describe the action on the streets below from their stance as observers. They have an eventful day as they watch the British Military surround the local chapel, trapping everyone inside due to suspected paramilitary activity. Using a CS gas gun to shoot over tin-can telephones, the women stay up to date on the drama inside the chapel and try to communicate their demands to the British Military. Ceely, who dreams of being a bingo caller, has her pirate radio station stolen. Kate screams at a pink-high-heeled nun who turns out to be her mother-in-law in disguise trying to collect Kate's children. Rose Marie's husband, one of the many Tuckers in the play, sports a saucepan on his head as a helmet, and Ceely's father-in-law, Oul' Tucker, hijacks a military helicopter with a tortoise. These events signal an almost child-like game of war being narrated by the women on the balcony. As

[66] Lojek, "Playing Politics with Belfast's Charabanc Theatre Company," 95.

[67] Helen Lojek, "Troubling Perspectives: Northern Ireland, the 'Troubles' and Drama," in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama 1880-2005*, eds. Mary Luckhurst (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 332.

mentioned above, this play takes place on the sixteenth anniversary of the introduction of internment. The women discuss how internment affected their family members, including Oul' Tucker, who hasn't spoken since he was interned. Kate says, "He used to talk years and years ago. Then he got interned. He was 56 years of age … too old… nearly killed him. Threw him out of the helicopter and it only six inches off the ground. Hasn't spoke from the day and hour they let him out."[68] Internment is a cultural touchstone that provides a realistic background to the absurd events in the plot. This blending of real and fictive elements produces a layer of Alienation Effect in Brecht's sense. It makes the familiar strange.

Brecht outlines his conception of Epic Theatre and the Alienation Effect in *A Short Organum for Theatre*. The *Organum*, written in 1948 in the wake of World War II, is critical of the theatre culture of its time, proclaiming that,

> "[the] stage's inaccurate representations of our social life, including those classed as so called Naturalism, led it to call for scientifically exact representations; the tasteless rehashing of empty visual or spiritual palliatives, for the noble logic of the multiplication table. The cult of beauty, conducted with hostility towards learning and contempt for the useful, was dismissed by it as itself contemptible, especially as nothing beautiful resulted."[69]

Brecht states that with the rise of industrialization and new modes of production, the working classes are being kept out of the theatre.[70] He also asserts that popular theatre is being created for consumption rather than for social change. Brecht states that "[the] theatre as we know it shows the structure of society (represented on the stage) as incapable of being influenced by society (in

[68] This form of torture is both discussed in the play *Binlids* by DubbelJoint, as well as in Patrick Radden Keefe, *Say Nothing : A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (New York: Doubleday, 2019), 75. It draws the conclusion that it was also a real form of violence to which Catholics who were interned were subjected.
Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 197.
[69] Bertolt Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* (1948) 1.
[70] Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 5.

the auditorium)."[71] He offers the reader an alternative. Writing against Aristotle's conception of catharsis in drama to restore order, Brecht delineates a Marxist approach. The order restored through catharsis is not a just order. Thus, there needs to be a new theatre for a modern age: Epic Theatre. A technique Brecht terms The Alienation Effect can help to achieve this new aesthetic. He says, "a representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar."[72] By alienating the familiar,

> "[This] technique allows the theatre to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. In order to un-earth society's laws of motion this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself. This also goes for those human feelings, opinions and attitudes through which at any time the form of men's life together finds its expression."[73]

Charabanc applies the Alienation Effect through sparse set design, music, and humour. The sparse set design, consisting of only a few chairs used for monologues, [74] relies on the women to describe the action. Brecht asserts the importance of creating an anti-illusory performance:

> "As we cannot invite the audience to fling itself into the story as if it were a river and let itself be carried vaguely hither and thither, the individual episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to impose our judgement."[75]

This anti-illusory dramaturgy leaves the audience free to use their imagination to create the scenes where poodles go joyriding, and Oul' Tucker and a turtle hijack a helicopter to save the wedding party that has barricaded itself into a church. The use of song provides a jarring disruption from the storyline. The songs do not weave seamlessly into the drama like songs in a musical. Rather they puncture the storyline and provide a strange look into the women's lives.

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[71] Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 7.
[72] Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 8.
[73] Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 9.
[74] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 190.
[75] Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 14.

The songs revolve around themes such as bad husbands and the disappointment of the Flats themselves, while bringing a sense of humour to these situations. For example, in "The Wedding Song" Ceely's tells the story of her unhappy marriage and the death of her husband. This is followed by:

> "CEELY: Then we moved to this luxury apartment.
> It was just like a villa in Spain
> ROSE: Kitchen, bathroom, and through-lounge,
> KATE: Designed to soak up the rain.
> ALL: I still have my lucky black cat,
> My horseshoe and my rabbit's foot,
> That little piece of blue ribbon
> That was sewn to my stocking foot.
> I had all the things your need,
> So I'd never have bad luck again,
> But I thought they might be suspect,
> As I stood there in the rain."[76]

Before the audience can process the song, Ceely begins speaking into her headset, asking for someone to tell Mena Mackle how the last 10 minutes of the soap opera *Neighbours* ends because "[she's] ready to kill dead things."[77] The knots are easily noticed in the above example. The audience cannot be carried away by the song as they are immediately doused with Ceely's present reality.

Traditional modes of theatre, which focus on Aristotelian methods that prioritize audience catharsis, are broken in Brechtian Epic Theatre. Here, Charabanc's Brechtian methods expose the issues within the sectarian system, alienating the audience and showing the structural violence present in the Divis Flats. Brecht turns theatre into a political tool and asks the audience to actively engage with what they are seeing, as opposed to passively consuming art. *Balcony*

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[76] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 193.
[77] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 193.

asks the audience to see the structural violence of the Divis Flats through a comic lens. As the working-class characters perform the quotidian absurdity of their lives as women in a warzone, the play highlights the role of class oppression in perpetuating state violence in Northern Ireland. In *Balcony*, Brechtian techniques put the structural violence inherent in the capitalist and sectarian system under the spotlight. The knots of the play are revealed along with the faulty architecture of the Divis flats, reminding the audience, to draw on Johan Galtung, that structural violence unevenly distributes power and limits opportunities for afflicted populations, creating intergenerational cycles of violence.[78]

The Divis Flats, Le Corbusier and Charabanc's Brechtian Theatre

According to Stella Lowry, "The Divis Flats have been described as "the youngest slum in Europe," yet ironically, they were built as part of Belfast's slum clearance programme in the 1960s to replace mill workers' houses in the Old Pound Loney district."[79] The Divis Flats was a high-rise housing complex built in a Catholic/Nationalist area of Belfast called the Falls Road. Construction on the Divis Flats began in 1966 and was completed in 1972.[80] "The Divis complex covered a 14-acre site and comprised of 12, seven and eight-story high "sectra" deck-access blocks, and Divis Tower, a 19-story high-rise on the north east edge of the complex."[81] The Divis reflects popular urban planning ideas for the time. The use of high-rise apartments to house

[78] Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," 78-109.
[79] Stella Lowry, "Getting Things Done," *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 300, no. 6721 (Feb. 10, 1990): 390.
[80] Adam Page, "Appropriating architecture: violence, surveillance and anxiety in Belfast's Divis Flats," *Candide Journal for Architectural Knowledge,* 10, (2017): 3.
[81] Page, "Appropriating Architecture," 3.

people became commonplace after architect and urban planner Le Corbusier developed his 'Cities in the Sky' approach to planning.

There is a clear correlation between Corbusier's designs and the designs of the original Divis Flats. Architect and urban planner Alexi Ferster Marmot details Le Corbusier's legacy, arguing that his original plans were only mimicked on a surface level in Britain, which caused undue criticism of his ideas.[82] However, even if proper amenities are provided, it can be argued that high-rise developments can rarely mimic good-quality neighbourhoods with green spaces and a diversity of users and amenities. Le Corbusier's residential form included high rises set back from main arteries, each house acting like a cell in a larger structure. Looking at the images in Marmot's text and the Divis Flats' original plans shows a clear correlation between these two designs (figures 1 and 2).

Le Corbusier also advocated for the division of modes of transport.[83] This form appears to be replicated in the construction of the Divis Flats (see figures 3 and 4). The Divis separated access to pedestrian-only zones from the other modes of transport commonly found at street-level. The use of pedestrianized balconies created an interlinking network of 'streets in the sky.' This format proved to be quite problematic with the Flats, as it allowed for the whole complex to be sealed off from the ground level by the British Military, trapping all the residents within the structure. The lack of diversity in transportation can also isolate those who need mobility assistance, such as ageing populations and mothers, who often rely on wheelchairs, scooters, cars, and baby strollers to get around. *Balcony* subtly remarks on the divided modes of transport

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[82] Alexi Ferster Marmot "The Legacy of Le Corbusier and High-Rise Housing" *Built Environment (1978-)* 7, no. 2 (1981): 82–95.
[83] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 60-61.
This is exampled in Le Corbusier's 'Town on Piles' plan, found on the same pages as cited above.

and critiques Le Corbusier's design. *Balcony* shows the women gesturing down to the streets below, the balconies acting as their main street. Our vantage point as audience members does not allow us to peer over the balcony with the women but instead relies on them to accurately portray the exciting events from the high-rise. The main artery, consisting of their balconies, which they seem to only share with two dogs,[84] is isolated. The women remain static while cars, saracens and helicopters move above and below them. The oppression of the community functions as part of the cycle that structural violence deploys, which is accentuated by the Ceely, Kate and Rose's lack of mobility.

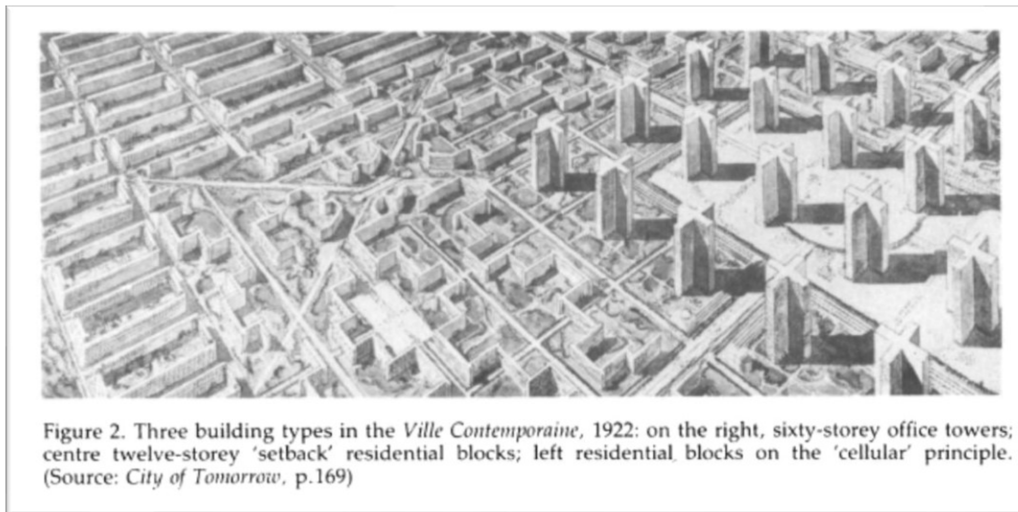
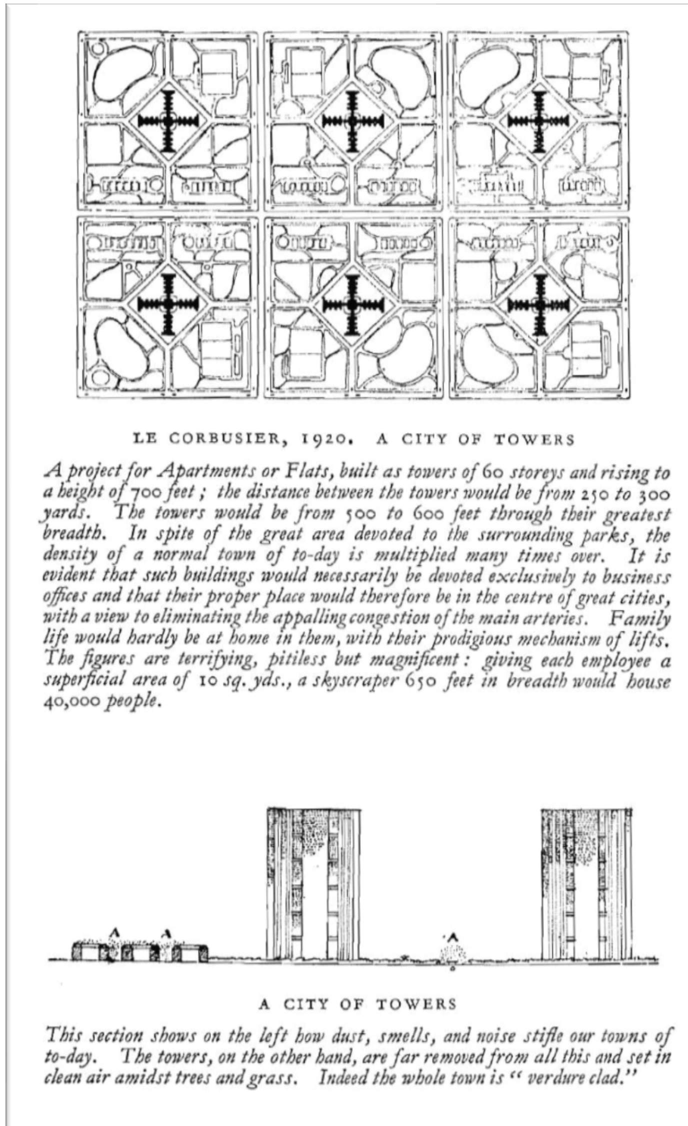


Figure 12. Aerial view of Le Corbusier's designs, found in Alexi Ferster Marmot, "The Legacy of Le Corbusier and High-Rise Housing." Built Environment (1978-) 7, no. 2 (1981): 84.

[84] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 185.

Figure 13. Aerial view of the Divis Flats. Architect Frank Patterson. Photographer unknown. sourced from ArchiSeek: https://archiseek.com/2014/1969-divis-flats-belfast-co-antrim/ Accessed May, 16, 2020.



LE CORBUSIER, 1920. A CITY OF TOWERS

A project for Apartments or Flats, built as towers of 60 storeys and rising to a height of 700 feet; the distance between the towers would be from 250 to 300 yards. The towers would be from 500 to 600 feet through their greatest breadth. In spite of the great area devoted to the surrounding parks, the density of a normal town of to-day is multiplied many times over. It is evident that such buildings would necessarily be devoted exclusively to business offices and that their proper place would therefore be in the centre of great cities, with a view to eliminating the appalling congestion of the main arteries. Family life would hardly be at home in them, with their prodigious mechanism of lifts. The figures are terrifying, pitiless but magnificent: giving each employee a superficial area of 10 sq. yds., a skyscraper 650 feet in breadth would house 40,000 people.

A CITY OF TOWERS

This section shows on the left how dust, smells, and noise stifle our towns of to-day. The towers, on the other hand, are far removed from all this and set in clean air amidst trees and grass. Indeed the whole town is "verdure clad."

Figure 14. Designs for the New City proposed by Le Corbusier exampling the idealistic living conditions as well as the division of modes of transportation. Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. Edited by Frederick Etchells. (New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 56.

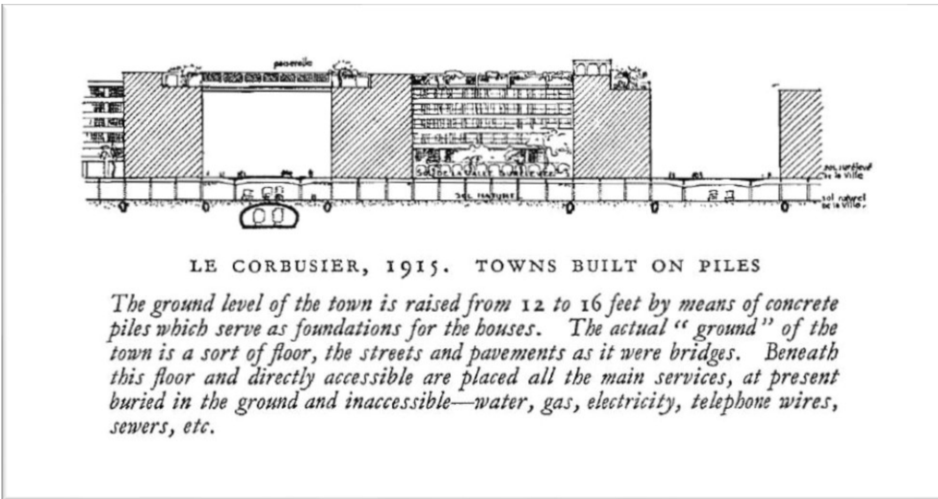


Figure 15. Additional layout of the new city. Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. Edited by Frederick Etchells. (New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 59.

Additionally, materials used in the construction of the Divis Flats were of low quality and not suitable for Northern Ireland's climate. Calcium chloride was added to the cement to increase the drying time, which lead it to fracture and become more porous. Porous concrete and cracks lead to the growth of mould as water nestled into the fabric of the Flats. Asbestos was used for insulation, and the windows hardly fit the frames that were constructed.[85] The damp and cold apartments of the Divis were a far cry from the utopian high-rises that Le Corbusier and Frank Robertson envisaged. Within five years, the Divis Flats were already the subject of complaints from residents about the quality of the building materials. By the 1980s:

> "a group of disillusioned residents in Divis Flats were forming both the Divis Residents' Association and the Divis Demolition Committee. While the Residents' Association attempted to raise public awareness through publications and studies, the Demolition

[85] Lowry, "Getting Things Done," 390.

> Committee took a more militant approach, closing up vacant apartments with cinderblocks, and calling for the demolition of the entire complex."[86]

In *Balcony*, we see this activism carried out by the Divis Demolition Committee (DDC) subtly. In the first act, we encounter a group of German tourists who encourage wee O'Neill, a child that we never see, to hang a tricolour out of the empty flats for a photograph. Wee O'Neill falls out the window of the flats landing on Mena Mackle's aerial, interrupting her television show. Kate states: "Oh, aye, right enough. All them empty flats was missing was a tricolour."[87] She continues later down the page that "She's the only flat not blocked up on her row, and he goes and lands on her aerial."[88] Here we see the activism of the DDC in play. The blocking up of apartments by the DDC lends itself to the real narrative of the play producing a level of Alienation Effect by superimposing fictive events on real narratives. The absurdity of Mackle being the only woman left on the block, followed by a child landing on her aerial, is the least bizarre connection to reality that this play makes.

If the women represent the isolation created by the 'streets in the sky,' the men in the play represent the lack of economic mobility. High rates of unemployment and the absence of amenities are apparent when Rose sends her Tucker to guard the empty flats.[89] In the play, a dole inspector disguised as military personnel is robbed and stripped of his uniform – potentially symbolizing the removal of classic power structures in favour of community organizing. The lack of amenities and employment ties the women to their balconies, unable to move from this

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[86] Megan Deirdre Roy, "Divis Flats: The Social and Political Implications of a Modern Housing Project in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1968-1998," *Iowa Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (2007): 12.
[87] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 188.
[88] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 188.
[89] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 189.

structure, even when their walls are literally falling in around them. Kate, instead of accepting the help of a plasterer to repair her walls, says:

> "I've done four novenas, lit six candles, Mena Mackle is doing a daily vigil to St. Teresa, the two holy sisters from the Tower block are doin' 'Our Lady of Perpetual Succour', and wee Bridie is coming round the night to rub them down with Padre Pio's mitt."[90]

More instances of the horrendous quality of the Flats are revealed by Kate: "Flies, wasps, ants, cockroaches … It is like a flippin' jungle in my flat (*Shouts up at army post*). My toilet is blocked up again."[91] Shouting to the army surveillance post is about as useful as praying to a seemingly deaf god. This humorous parallel should be recognized by anyone who has lived in the Divis or the Falls road. Finally, the lack of diverse uses of the streets leads to the impressive range of improvised activities for the entertainment and occupation of the residents presented by *Balcony*.

Le Corbusier warned of the dangers of creating new high rises which do not adapt to new lifestyles stating that:

> "Here, then, we have a layout of streets which would bring about an entirely new system of town planning and would provide a radical reform in the tenanted house or apartment; this imminent reform, necessitated by the transformation of domestic economy, demands a new organisation of services corresponding to modern life in a great city. Here again the plan is the generator; without it poverty, disorder, wilfulness reign supreme."[92]

While the Divis Flats reflect the housing structure which Le Corbusier advocated for, the planners did not complete Le Corbusier's plans by adding amenities, like parks or businesses in the area. The lack of businesses and greenspaces was further exacerbated by the lack of diversity of people residing in the Divis, represented in *Balcony* through the dole inspector, Rose's refusal to let her kids play on the balcony as she dreams of a garden, and the endless number of

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[90] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 186.
[91] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 185.
[92] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture,* 61.

characters named 'Tucker.' Building on sociologist Jane Jacob's use of neighbourly surveillance,[93] urbanist Vikas Mehta stresses the importance of looking at "The Street as Ecology."[94] Mehta outlines the ecology of the street as a place that "thrives on the coexistence of diverse people, activities, forms, and objects, and modes of control and negotiation, as it operated as a social, cultural, economic, and political space."[95] Le Corbusier's ideas break down the natural ecology of the street and its diverse uses. With hindsight, we know now that segregating residential housing from other activities and other classes tends to breed anti-social and dangerous behaviour by a lack of access to amenities and contact with people who differ in social circumstances.

The Divis, Violence, and Surveillance

The structure was supposed to be state-of-the-art and secure, but instead, the flats quickly became a site of high-level violence and surveillance culture. In *Balcony,* Rose is afraid of letting her children play near the Crying Stairs, which Kate calls the Whispering Stairs.

> KATE: Two Soldiers … Glorious Gloucesters … got blew up over there. They come back to haunt … I've seen them many a night floating about on the balcony and whisperin' like this. (*Mimics ghostly whisper.*) Then they throw things out and try to land them on people's heads. You think wee Tucker O'Neill fell? (*Nods her head mysteriously*.) They are getting their own back. Ever hear them chitterin'?
> ROSE: I wouldn't go near them empty flats.
> KATE: Won't be content until the whole building is demolished… then they are going to come over here.
> ROSE: Are they responsible for your walls?
> KATE: Oh; no! I got Father McCann to exorcise me.

[93] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*
[94] Vikas Mehta, "The Street as Ecology," in *Incomplete Streets*, eds. Stephen Zavestoski and Julien Agyeman (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 94-115.
[95] Mehta "The Street as Ecology," 97.

This whole exchange sounds like a character replicating the ramblings of a madwoman carried away by her nerves, but the Whispering Stairs were a real place within the Divis Flats. As historian Adam Page explains,

> "In July 1973, a booby-trap bomb, concealed in an old mattress left beside a lift shaft killed two soldiers and injured a woman in the area, as well as damaging many near-by flats. This bombing […] so early in the life of the complex, left an indelible mark on the residents as well as the soldiers. For some of the residents, the site of the bombing became haunted by the deaths. The stairs where the soldiers were killed became known as the "Crying Stairs."[96]

The overlay of fictive and real events again signals to the devising process carried out by Charabanc and lends itself to the Brechtian reading of the play. It also highlights the continual struggle for control of this space between the residents and the Military. The British Military took Jane Jacob's idea of surveillance one step further and put a military outlet on top of the Divis Tower, the highest complex in the Divis area. Constant surveillance created a panopticon effect,[97] ensuring that the Divis felt more like a prison than a home. Urban planner Oscar Newman, the inventor of 'Defensible Space,' bolstered the idea of surveillance in cities by arguing that "the way to change behaviour was by controlling the environment rather than improving social conditions."[98] High crime rates inspired the 'Defensible Space' movement in high-rises in the USA,[99] aimed at controlling residents to make areas safer. Needless to say, Newman's ideas create discomfiting living conditions.

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[96] Page, "Appropriating Architecture," 16.

[97] See: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) for more information.

[98] Minton, *Ground Control*, 71.

[99] Other high rises that experiences similar negative views due to structural violence through segregation, poor construction and lack of amenities are the Cabrini-Green homes in Chicago, Illinois, USA, Pruitt-Igoe building in St. Louis, Missouri, USA and Robin Hood Gardens in London, England.

While the Divis lacked traditional 'street space,' the flats mirrored Le Corbusier's 'streets in the sky' because the balcony walkways "enabled residents to traverse from block to block without encountering any doors or barriers, and without having to go down to ground level."[100] This specific design allowed the British Military and paramilitary organizations to continuously patrol the flats. The design of the Flats also lent itself usefully to instilling fear within the residents, as the Military could seal the whole complex to conduct raids.[101]

Kate reminisces on when the British Military moved into the top two floors of the Divis Tower and the use of surveillance in the opening lines of the play. In typical Belfast black humour, Kate states that "I don't care cos I never done nothing' as long I can't see them looking at me. So I just bought myself a new dressing gown and ignored them."[102] Kate then goes on to lament about the demolition of the Divis Flats:

> "I wonder how many videos they have of me and my bin? Hundreds over the years. I'll be doing them a favour cos they'll have nothin' to look at soon … Only four families left in that block (*Indicates block of flats opposite.*) The army won't be wasting any more film on them. We're the next block to be demolished, I can't wait. Wonder what they'll do then. Ach, I suppose they'll jus get bored and go back to England."[103]

Charabanc created this play when parts of the Divis Flats had already been demolished due to uninhabitable living conditions. Kate's lighthearted musings draws attention to just how mundane and everyday structural violence became for the Divis Flats residents. The slum clearance program that destroyed the Pound Loney neighbourhood was a failure, forcing the residents to move out of the crumbling Divis. Kate's musings above end with some hope that once the flats are gone, the British Army will return to England; whether she means the removal

[100] Page, "Appropriating Architecture," 3.
[101] Page, "Appropriating Architecture," 10.
[102] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 183.
[103] Charabanc, "Somewhere Over the Balcony," 183.

of the army or the British state is up for interpretation. Perhaps once the army is done watching, as opposed to helping the residents, there might be some peace and space for progress for the community.

Conclusion

Charabanc's performance of *Balcony* was a potent tool to process structural violence and change how we look at and interact with the space of the Divis Flats. Charabanc achieved a Brechtian Alienation Effect through the use of sparse set design and song to create a jarring production that stemmed from the basis of reality, into the absurd. The sparse set design meant that it was easy to transport, bringing it directly to the people who would be most impacted by the play, the residents of the Divis itself and the community of the Falls Road. The humour allowed for a thoughtful engagement that empowered local residents, instead of reinforcing the Aristotelian notion of catharsis, which, in Brecht's formulation, leads to acceptance of social conditions. Additionally, the use of interviews and archives, which aided Charabanc in their devising process, added a layer of reality to the play that could not have been fabricated. The use of real stories provided the sensation of the familiar but in a strange new light. *Balcony* highlighted the state's harmful practices through its deployment of the military and the rushed construction of the flats, allowing us to grapple with the reality of living in the Flats.

The history of the Divis flats shows the lack of care that went into creating the building, which intensified cycles of oppression by affecting the quality of life available to residents. Building the Divis without using the proper construction materials, and without integrating amenities or employment into the area ensured that unemployment rates and health issues would remain high. Le Corbusier's ideas focused on the isolation of modes of transport, which in turn isolated residents as the walkways were subjected to the control of the British Military. Furthermore, the removal of a healthy ecology of businesses, green spaces and a diversity of

users created a monotonous landscape which bred anti-social behaviour. This behaviour was amplified by the constant surveillance from the Military post on the Divis Tower, ensuring that the Flats felt akin to a prison, rather than a home. The decline and demolition of the Divis through community organizations like the DDC and the Divis Residents Association shows the active role that residents had to take to dismantle this violent structure. This history is represented in *Balcony*, but the play does not represent the Flats as a miserable place. The Alienation Effect exposes the flaws in the system, and allows the audience member to see the way that space was controlled by the state, and how Ceely, Kate and Rose inserted themselves into the narrative. Charabanc changes how we remember the Divis, from a site of violence and sorrow to a site of humour and resilience in the face of multiple facets of adversity from the state.

Chapter 2

Introduction

> "So. It's been an interesting night. Belfast says goodbye to Crumlin Road Courthouse. The place stank, and it was the Belfast poor who got it right up the nose. It was only solicitors and the like, who will remember the sweet smell of roses."[104]

Convictions (2000) by Tinderbox Theatre Company was a site-specific theatre performance that navigated the Crumlin Road Courthouse's violent history at a pivotal moment for Northern Irish society. This Chapter looks at the intersection of site-specific theatre and creative reuse of historical sites of violence in the era of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Site-specific theatre is a type of theatre that takes place outside of traditional performance venues and, in some instances, can focus on the history or narrative of the space. To borrow a pertinent definition of site-specific theatre from performance scholar Joanna Tompkins, "A basic aim in site-specific work is to encourage audiences to see and experience more of their surroundings, and/or to see their surroundings differently; […]."[105] In the years following the signing of the GFA, we can observe very intuitive theatre workers who employed site-specific theatre in the post-conflict city of Belfast to help renegotiate sites of violence. Site-specific theatre practices have the capacity to foreground the forgotten, contested, and spatial histories of the city. The site and the performance cannot be separated. As one of the key sites for prosecuting the crimes tied to the Toubles, the Courthouse seeps into the performance, and in turn, the performance seeps into the Courthouse.

Performance scholar Gay McAuley states that theatre buildings "[…] are the places that our society has set aside where the magic can be wrought without risk of disruption to other

[104] Martin Lynch, "Main Hall," in *Convictions*, (Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000) 19.
[105] Tompkins, "The 'Place' and Practice of Site-Specific Theatre and Performance," 11.

public spaces and the activities they house."[106] The 1960s saw a push back against traditional modes of theatre, and site-specific theatre was a result of this radicalization of the arts.[107] Site-specific theatre allows for the space to tell its story instead of living as a representation on the stage. This radical departure from the proscenium arch allows for a revealing of a different narrative to audience members that goes beyond the performer/audience binary.[108] The site becomes a central theme to the performance, allowing for a deeper level of engagement to be presented to the spectator. McAuley continues that:

> "In site-based performance, the site becomes the dominant signifier rather than simply being that which contains the performance, as the theatre building does in traditional theatre practice. Site-based performance engages more or less deeply with its chosen site and as a result tends to be drawn into engagement with the social and political issues that seem inseparable from place."[109]

Additionally, notions of ownership and power can be questioned through the use of site-specific theatre, as McAuley states:

> "Ownership brings with it power, authority, rights, boundaries, the policing of boundaries, rights of exclusion, rights of inclusion. Our sense of who we are and other people's sense of who we are is deeply bound up with where we are, and where we come from, so place is implicated in profound ways with both individual and group identity."[110]

These questions of ownership are explored in the site-specific performance of *Convictions*. Tinderbox Theatre Company used the Courthouse for their performance because it was recently closed as per a clause within the GFA. At the time of the performance, the Courthouse was on the brink of being redeveloped into a hotel, to match the Crumlin Road Gaol redevelopment

[106] McAuley, "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator," 27.
[107] Miwon Kwon, *One place after another: site specific art and locational identity* (London: M.I.T Press, 2002) 11-13.
[108] As opposed to representing it on stage through props and stage sets.
[109] McAuley, "Site-specific Performance," 30.
[110] McAuley, "Site-specific Performance," 30-31.

across the street.[111] This Chapter will explore how *Convictions*, which weaved local history, violence, and performance together, changes how its audiences perceive the building and acts as an avenue to process the violence that the Courthouse inflicted on the population of Belfast. This Chapter also looks at how urban redevelopment of the Courthouse continues to affect the population of North Belfast and how creative reuse of the building opened up space for the local community to engage with the past. This allows us to see what impacts the GFA had on the built fabric of the city and calls into question the role of urban redevelopment in historical sites of violence.

The Courthouse and Urban Redevelopment in Historical Sites of Violence

Joanne Tompkins rightly claims that "studying site requires an understanding of politics and social production, since the control of place is determined by power structures well beyond topography."[112] This section will outline the historical uses of the Courthouse and the role of the GFA to better analyze the play *Convictions*, and understand how it changes the way we see a space of historical violence.

In 1998 the GFA was signed, heralding a new era of peace, creating a border between the past violence of the Troubles to the present day 'post-conflict' society. This agreement came after months of negotiations between political parties from both the Unionist and Nationalist camps. The GFA set out a new arrangement in the political sphere, introducing a power-sharing executive into the Northern Irish Assembly. This ground-breaking peace agreement was hard-won, bringing an end to the thirty years of conflict called the Troubles. This legislation transferred power from Britain to the Northern Irish Assembly, where a power-sharing system

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[111] Nuala McCann, "Courthouse Hotel Evokes Ghosts of Past." *BCC News*, September 12, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/5337712.stm. Accessed October 27, 2020.

[112] Tompkins, "The 'Place' and Practice of Site-Specific Theatre and Performance." 5.

was put into place.[113] With new political representation, and a slew of promises for desegregating the population of Northern Ireland, the GFA opened spaces that were previously inaccessible. For example, the GFA called for the closure of the Courthouse allowing it to be used for the performance of *Convictions.* While there have been proposals to turn the Courthouse into a hotel, it still sits empty 20 years on from the performance. This liminal state allowed it to represent a transition in Northern Irish society between a dark past and a promising future. As a site-specific theatre work, *Convictions* was significant at this time in Northern Ireland as it traced the past and present traumas of the Courthouse.

What makes this play so compelling is the use of a contested urban space in a peaceful manner. In the case of *Convictions*, the location of the Crumlin Road Courthouse is paramount. As discussed in my literature review, performance scholar Eva Urban uses a site-specific reading to show the intermingling of performance and audience. Her application of a Brechtian analysis is deployed to argue against Michael McKinnie's proposition that the state and geography are tied to the performance of *Convictions*, but they do not "break down boundaries between performer and spectator."[114] While Urban's analysis is valid, both McKinnie[115] and Urban misplace the Courthouse between the Falls and Shankill Roads,[116] which would provide a different reading of the site altogether. The actual location along the Crumlin Road, between the Shankill and neighbourhoods of Ardoyne and New Lodge, allows a much more interesting analysis of the Courthouse due to its situation amidst multiple interface areas (figure 5). As Urban's analysis convincingly shows, Brechtian performance techniques are applicable to

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[113] Bollens, *Trajectories of Conflict*, 129.
[114] McKinnie, "The State of this Place," 11, quoted in Urban, "The Performance of Power in *Convictions*," 176.
[115] McKinnie, "The State of this Place," 583.
[116] Eva Urban, "The Performance of Power in *Convictions*," 174.

Convictions, but this thesis highlights the site of the Courthouse in light of its positionality in liminal space, both geographically and functionally.

The Courthouse straddles an intersection of the neighbourhoods of Ardoyne, New Lodge, and the Shankill. Architect Sir Charles Lanyon designed the Crumlin Road Courthouse in 1850, which sits opposite the Crumlin Road Gaol. Lanyon creates an air of authority and power with his structures. Architect Dawson Stelfox states that the Courthouse (figure 6) "with its use of overscaled classical orders and the giant glass portico it was designed to impress all who entered with the power and status of the law. Justice herself stands astride the central pediment with sword and scales ready to pass judgement and dispense the verdict."[117] The Courthouse was the site where seventeen men were sentenced to death in Belfast between the years 1854 to 1961.[118] The Courthouse was connected to the gaol by an underground tunnel. It is estimated that "'As many as 25,000 Loyalist and Republican prisoners are believed to have trekked through the tunnel during the course of the Troubles.'"[119] The Courthouse also received a dark reputation due to its prominent role as the site of the Diplock Courts which have become infamous due to "their reliance on anonymous "supergrass" testimony and their abandonment of trial by jury."[120] Just as the Troubles touched every fabric of life in Belfast, this Courthouse became a central symbol in the violence, as a place where legal judgement was rendered against thousands of defendants. The Courthouse remains empty 20 years on from its closure, while the Gaol across the street has flourished into a tourist hotspot. Visitors can tour the gaol, learn about its history, and attend conferences, concerts, and other events that are held on the premises of the gaol. The Courthouse

[117] Dawson Stelfox, "Conviction," in *Convictions*, (Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000), 50.
[118] These hanging are addressed in one of the playlets in *Convictions* by Martin Lynch called "Main Hall".
[119] Bowcott 2006 quoted in Urban, *Community politics and the peace process,* 76.
[120] McKinnie, "The State of this Place," 583.

was excluded from this redevelopment project because private developers owned it.[121] While multiple plans have been proposed to turn it into a hotel, there has been no movement on these plans.

While the economic revitalization of Northern Ireland was one of the goals of the GFA, it also set out to create peace and cross-community collaboration between the divided communities. Jenny Muir, who writes on urban regeneration in Belfast, states that:

> "The settlement has ended over 30 years of violence but has not been able to alter the long-standing territorial nature of the region's social relations, with implications for all aspects of public policy. Although overt and protracted violence has ceased, the territorial nature of the conflict continues to impact on many aspects of life in Northern Ireland, and much residential segregation between Protestant and Catholic areas remains."[122]

This is a failure of the GFA's aim to bring the two communities together to create a lasting peace. While the GFA did stop overt violence and provided a space for the future disarmament of the military and paramilitaries, it has not been able to dismantle the structural violence seen in the day-to-day operations of Northern Ireland. Fiercely protected community lines accentuate the contemporary implications of redevelopment projects in Belfast in the present day. *Convictions* explored these contested histories and future redevelopment plans, which are detailed in the next section.

[121] Jenny Muir "Neoliberalising a divided society? The regeneration of Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Park, North Belfast," *Local Economy* 29, no. 1-2. (2014): 58.
[122] Muir, "Neoliberalising a divided society?" 53.

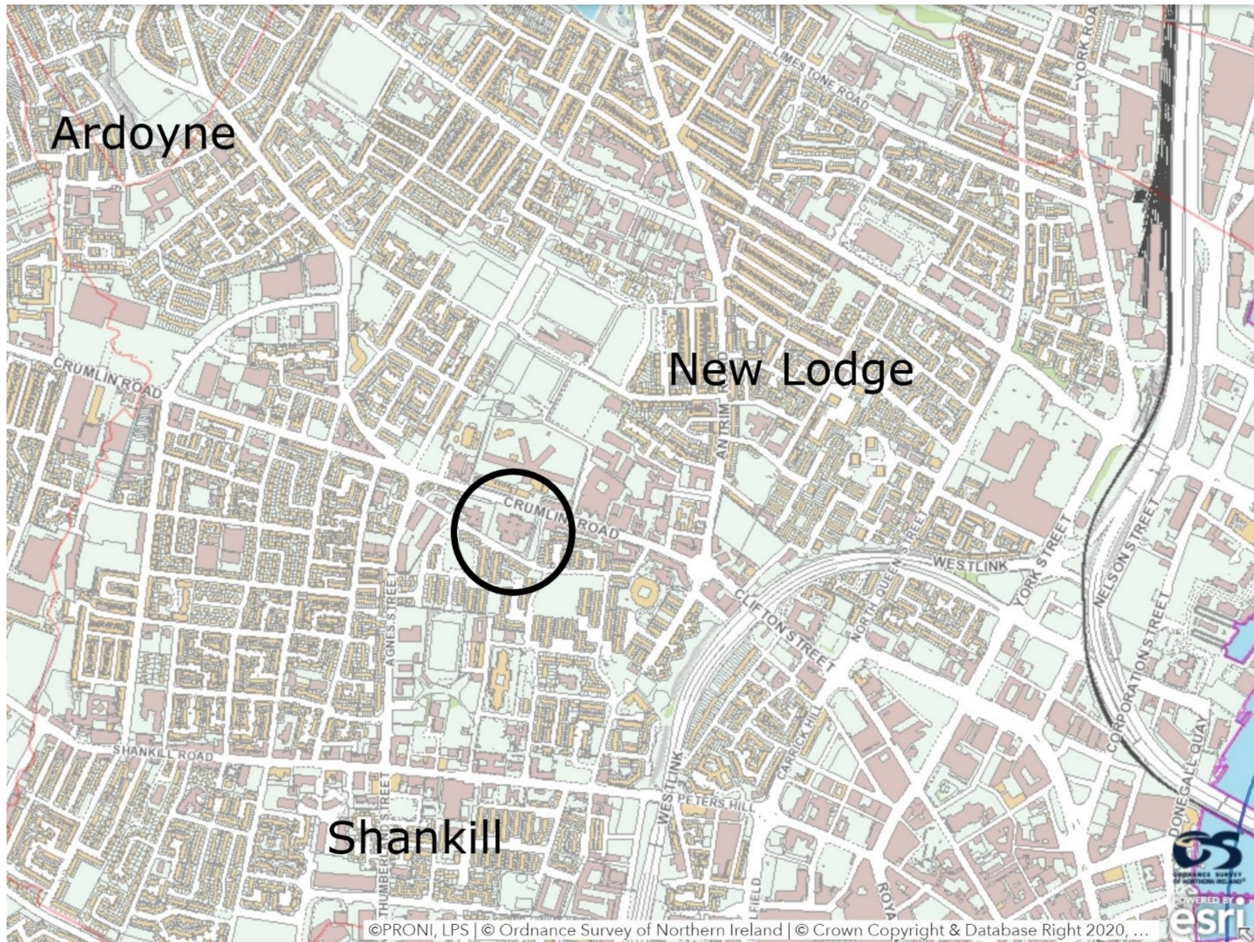

Figure 16. Map of North and West Belfast, highlighting the Courthouse (circled) and the multiple neighbourhoods surrounding it. Sourced from the Historical Map Viewer from the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). https://apps.spatialni.gov.uk/PRONIApplication/

Figure 17. Crumlin Roach Courthouse in the summer of 2019. Photograph taken by the author.

Convictions and Site-Specific Theory

The audience entered the Courthouse and was divided up and ushered off into different rooms for the performance of *Convictions.* In each new space, the audience explored the implications of the Courthouse's history and stories regarding the past, present, and future redevelopment of a building imbued with painful memories. The performance structure brought in playwrights to write short ‘playlets.’ As Urban explains,

> "Seven twelve-minute playlets had been commissioned alongside art, film and sound installations, all under the common themes of justice, the act of passing judgement, the notion of laying to rest the past, and the anticipation of the future. Each short play was written out of the context of a specific room in the courthouse building, and drew its title from that room."[123]

The audience converged at the end for Martin Lynch's playlet titled "Main Hall," where a ghost of a hanged man harangues the audience for participating in such a voyeuristic performance of pain embodied by the Courthouse. According to McKinnie, "the focus of *Convictions* was the historically contingent and authoritative place that its staging practice allowed the audience to encounter: the courthouse itself."[124] As part of my analysis of the site-specific and co-creative[125] nature of *Convictions*, I want to reflect on the anxieties related to urban redevelopment in the play compared to the outcome of the Courthouse, which remains unused and falling deeper into disrepair.

A summary of three of the playlets and the program notes provided by conservation architect Dawson Stelfox will provide the basis of my analysis for this site-specific play and how it changes perceptions of the space of the Courthouse. In "Court No. 2" by Marie Jones,[126] three characters are hired to turn the Courthouse into a heritage centre. The heritage center will include a dramatic rendition of an old court case aimed to inform school children about the history of the site. Karen Daly is described as "corporate, under pressure, tense, first assignment to oversee the new project of turning the site into a heritage centre"[127] and Claire Cathcart as "Overly

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[123] Urban, *Community politics and the peace process*, 75.
[124] McKinnie, "The State of this Place," 584-585.
[125] Co-creative in this Chapter pertains to the collaboration of the playwrights, art installations music, photography and interviews conducted for this play. The work of this co-creation is highlighted in the *Convictions* program, which ties together all these works. In addition, co-creation also relies on the corollary of site and performance. The two work together and cannot exist without the other.
[126] One of the members of Charabanc Theatre Company.
[127] Marie Jones, "Court No. 2," in *Convictions*, (Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000), 9.

enthusiastic, confident, excited at being given the job of realising Karen Daly's assignment."[128] Both women are in their mid-30s. The third character is Fabian, an overzealous musical "genius" who derails the conversation. There is tension between the two women over whether the heritage centre's dramatization of a criminal's sentencing should include theatrics or present the plain facts of the court records. The dramatization causes the project to dissolve. Karen walks out, and Claire gets into an argument with Fabian for portraying a scene that was too political. This argument ends with the audience stuck in limbo, unaware if the plans to turn the Courthouse into a heritage centre will be realized, or if it is even a possibility, given the complicated narratives surrounding the Courthouse itself.

As seen in "Court No. 2," heritage is a contentious topic in Northern Ireland. Whether you subscribe to a Unionist or Nationalist conception of Northern Ireland changes how you interact with the history of the state. While Karen and Claire are not fighting over a Unionist or Nationalist representation of the hearing in the courtroom, Fabian brings a decidedly Nationalist approach to the heritage centre, which leads to the final breakdown in communication. Heritage, as defined by geographers Brian Graham and Sara McDowell, is "meanings and representations attached to the past in the present."[129] In their discussion, they stress the contentious nature of redeveloping the Maze/Long Kesh Prison and how Unionist, Nationalist, and other special interest groups interpretations of the space are one of the main issues blocking the development of the site. This Courthouse, a similarly contentious place in the Northern Irish narrative of the Troubles, also provides a disturbing look at the past that is hard to navigate post-conflict. This play presents an argument that audiences in Northern Ireland would have been familiar with, and

[128] Jones, "Court No. 2," 9.
[129] Brian Graham and Sara McDowell, "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh," *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 345.

perhaps even found humorous, due to the banality of arguing over whether there should be warts and scowls on a representation of a trial intended for school children. The play does not end in reconciliation or compromise but in a complete breakdown of communication between Claire, Karen, and Fabian. This breakdown of communication is far from the finality of order and decision-making that would have been present in the actual courtroom were it still in use. The final decision of guilty or not guilty, followed by the appropriate punishment for the crime, is not a catharsis that we get to experience in the play. The audience is left to ponder which representation of the heritage center would be better suited for audiences, but no final decision will be made in Jones' play, and the tension regarding redeveloping heritage sites that are also sites of violence remains unresolved.

"Male Toilets" by Daragh Carville takes place in the Courthouse's basement. The two characters, the Photographer and the Words Man, debate the future of the Courthouse. The Words Man has a proposal to turn the Courthouse into a Tourist Information Centre. The photographer jokes, stating that

> "Well we never used to have them, did we? Back in the old days, like [...] I mean, we used to have TERRORIST information Centres, I'll grant you that, we had the Terrorist Information Centres. But now it's all TOURIST Information Centres. Tourist Information Centres all over the shop. It's not the same. It's fucked up."[130]

After some back and forth, the Words Man explains, "I say it's not JUST gonna be a Tourist Information Centre. There's gonna be a whole heritage complex here, a whole heritage park. Tourists Information Centre's only a part of it."[131] They discuss the implications of tourist centres, voicing a worry that now that the Troubles are over, Northern Ireland will not be in the news so much, therefore creating less tourism. The two discuss the idea of setting off the

[130] Daragh Carville, "Male Toilets," in *Convictions*, (Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000), 34.
[131] Carville, "Male Toilets," 34.

"occasional bomb" in the wintertime, away from the peak tourist season. The Photographer insists that "The yanks! Yanks'll lap it up. Look at the Troubles tours and all that. They fucking love it."[132] The two discuss the idea further, with the Words Man saying that he would think about it, and the playlet ends with them exiting the male toilets, the Photographer's arm around the Words Man's shoulder. This subtle act insinuates that they have reached a conclusion that keeping the Troubles alive in some aspect would be beneficial for the Courthouse as a heritage centre, and Tourist Information Centre, as well as broader aspects of urban regeneration and economic development in the form of Terror-Tourism in Northern Ireland.

The GFA sets out certain rights and religious liberties for the population of Northern Ireland and ensures that there will be economic development. The GFA states that:

> "Pending the devolution to a new Northern Ireland Assembly, the British Government will pursue broad policies for sustained economic growth and stability in Northern Ireland and for promoting social inclusion, including in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life."[133]

In "Male Toilets," decisions are being made about the economic future of Northern Ireland behind closed doors in the basement of a Courthouse, in the male toilets. The play presents multiple barriers to access. For example, freedom to enter the Courthouse unaccompanied by guards, the employment of the two men, and the fact that they are in a space that physically disallows other bodies excludes a range of voices that should be included in the planning process and specifically mentioned by the GFA. The Courthouse's development into a tourist information center and heritage complex again falls in line with the contested nature of heritage centres outlined above. Instead of focusing on the contested nature of the Troubles and working toward

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[132] Carville, "Male Toilets," 37.

[133] The Good Friday Agreement/ The Belfast Agreement, (1998), 23, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement.

reconciliation, the men decide to continue the violence for economic gain. Troubles tourism, explored in Chapter Three of this thesis, delves into the argument of memory and space, but here the men are more focused on economic development. In "Male Toilets," the tourism industry depends on the continuation of violence, which leads to greater economic freedom for the North. There is a certain level of irony in that these men will be profiting off the very things the GFA seeks to eradicate, such as segregation, violence, and a lack of marginalized voices in public arenas. This leaves the audience to question if the GFA can ever be fully realized if there is an economic dependency on the past and Troubles tourism.

"Judges Room" by Damian Gorman also addressed the future of the Courthouse. In this playlet, a pretentious judge, Mr. Justice Colin Wellblood, presents the audience with a pitch for the Troubles Opera Trust. An opera that is "of a kind of Wagnerian *Riverdance* for the Troubles"[134] called the *Der NordIrischeKreigZyklus – The Ulster War Cycle*. Justice Wellblood proposes that the Courthouse becomes the permanent home for the trust and enthusiastically promises that it will work with the communities surrounding it, emphasizing involving them in a limited capacity.[135] The judge then presents Maura, a victim of the Troubles, to the audience and continually interrupts her as she tells the story about how her father's murderer had reached out to her to apologize. Judge Wellblood lays the blame for the death of her father on terrorists. When Maura tries to explain that it was not terrorists who killed her father, the Judge cuts her off aggressively, contending that "It doesn't matter who it was, Maura, that really doesn't matter."[136] This diminishing of Maura's pain is a crude display of power illuminates the tensions that exist within structures of power, such as the Courthouse. Additionally, the Courthouse would have

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[134] Damian Gorman, "Judge's Room," in *Convictions*, (Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000), 39.
[135] Gorman, "Judge's Room," 40.
[136] Gorman, "Judge's Room," 42.

been the site where her father's killer might have been on trial, adding another layer to analyze the silencing power of the state.

This playlet provides another option for the Courthouse's redevelopment, adding to the other uses proposed in "Male Toilets" and "Court Room No. 2." The Opera house appears to be for a specific class of people and would directly capitalize on the pain of the Troubles. The consumption of working-class pain to create the *Der NordIrischeKreigZyklus* observes the issues with power, access and voices similar to the above playlets. Contrary to the tourist information center or the heritage complex, which is accessible to everyone, including tourists and schoolchildren, an opera house implies wealth. It would be hard to imagine how an opera house would provide long-term benefits for the surrounding neighbourhoods of the traditionally working-class neighbourhoods of West and North Belfast, apart from some employment opportunities. The threat of displacement from the gentrification of the area would increase. Justice Wellblood also reinforces the notion of power, demonstrated by the way that he dominates the narratives in his courtroom, exemplified by the conversation with Maura. Justice Wellblood silences victimhood, only allowing what he deems necessary to be spoken in the room. This control of the narrative ensures that only palatable and simple victimhood narratives are welcome in the new opera house. Nuanced understandings of the past or complicated histories are not allowed in the sanitized space of the Troubles Opera Trust, which vies for economic control and extortion of the Troubles. Justice for the poor working-class populations of Northern Ireland is a theme that is also reflected in Martin Lynch's "Main Hall," which opened this chapter. The uneven economic redevelopment of this particular site of violence in "Judge's Room" ensures that only the wealthy will profit from turning this space into an opera house,

reinforcing the scolding provided by Lynch's ghost that those who enter are engaging in a despicable act of voyeurism.

These three playlets question the site, memory and future development of the Courthouse and allow for creative exploration of the space. Historian Joanna Bourke outlines that everyone is implicated in perpetuating violence, but because of this, we are perfectly situated to also resist it.[137] Deirdre O'Leary states that "[the] use of the city as theatre site acts civically to create communal ownership of the space itself, suggesting new possibilities for revising the history of contested geography in Belfast."[138] These three playlets show the possibility for change. Site-specific theatre allowed for the space of the Courthouse to be transformed momentarily into these new imagined sites for the duration of the performance. In turn, this opened up space in the Courthouse for new uses that included community imagining and pushed against the status quo. O'Leary appears to back this idea when she states that in the case of *Convictions,* "[the] material underpins the evocative atmosphere of the building itself, in terms of both its physical impression and its historical legacy as one of the bastions of Anglo-Protestant Ulster."[139] Theatre and performance scholar Jen Harvie also supports this idea when she states that "[by] entering, occupying, and installing work in the Courthouse, *convictions* challenged the site's dominant position in the social memory of Belfast, as well as the physical, intellectual, and emotional topography of the city."[140] The site-specific nature of the performance pushed back against its historical legacy and the traditional hierarchy of power represented by the Courthouse's built form. As seen in the staging of *Convictions*, the contested socio-political histories, and thus

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[137] Bourke, *Deep Violence*, 4,
[138] Dierdre O'Leary, "No Go/New Show Staging Belfast in the *Wedding Community Play* and *Convictions,*" *Foilsiu*, 6 no. 1 (spring 2008): 61.
[139] O'Leary, "Staging Belfast," 69.
[140] Harvie, "Remembering the Nations," 60.

spatial agency of the Crumlin Road Courthouse, is made palpable and public. The play's location between multiple conflicting neighbourhoods placed it in a unique position to be open to all identities in Belfast, not just those who were standing on trial during the Troubles. Performance occupation challenges the site's social memory, in contrast to urban regeneration, which often acts as a persuasive way to reimagine memories, but usually focuses on erasing the negative aspects or adapting them into something easily digestible. For example, the regeneration of the Gaol tells the history of the space, but uses guided tours and the selling of trinkets to commemorate the visit to make it an exciting space for visitors. This reproduction of space is succinctly summarized by theatre and performance scholar Theron Schmidt, drawing on Doreen Massey: "For Massey, […] an awareness of relational space unsettles the mechanisms of representation. Space is always under production and it is our participation which produces this space: we are constantly producing space, not travelling through it."[141] They playlets were successful in producing new space within the Courthouse. *Convictions* changed the way we view this space by engaging with its historic legacy and traditional power structures in the Troubles landscape, but also by reimaging it in multiple urban redevelopment scenarios, providing new avenues to process the structural violence that the Courthouse embodies.

Conclusion

This Chapter explored history, site-specific theatre, and urban redevelopment in the Crumlin Road Courthouse, a contentious site in the narrative of the Troubles. The issue of conserving sites that were iconic during the Troubles is a delicate field that deserves consideration. One of the most contested sites, the Maze/Long Kesh Prison, provides a point of reflection for the Crumlin Road Courthouse and potential redevelopment. The Maze/Long Kesh Prison is a site

[141] Schmidt, "Unsettling Representation," 293.

rife with Republican memory, such as the Blanket Protests, the Dirty Protest, and the 1981 Huger Strikes. Also closed as part of the GFA, the Prison sits on an attractive redevelopment site, as it occupies 360 acres of land.[142] Current proposals, such as the redevelopment of the Prison into a sporting arena, imagine a new use for the land. Counter proposals, such as the International Centre for Conflict Transformation (ICCT), envisage a centre that will focus on the history of the site. Civilian victim groups call for the bulldozing of the site, as they argue that to enshrine the acts of terrorists would be problematic for the families of the victims of violence. Similarly, Unionists also wish for demolition, but out of fear that it will turn into a pilgrimage site for Republicans.[143] Both sites, the Prison and the Courthouse, lay in a state of dereliction, further damaging their physical structures while awaiting new development plans. Both sites represent a contested history, and both sites grapple with conflicting memory of the Troubles.

The role of site-specific theatre to bring attention to these spaces in the public sphere is important, and not only for the arts sector. It also navigates the misuse of the urban sphere carried out by private developers. Kathleen Irwin elaborates, "Where the performed site and the city mesh, the structures and institutions, buildings and monuments that provide the visual frame also provide the aesthetic, social, political and historical context within which event, spectator and place are situated."[144] The performance does not end with the metaphorical "final curtain." Rather, the performance becomes embedded in the history of the site. The lived experience of co-creating a work of art changes the view of the building of those involved, either as writers, artists, or audience members. The use of site-specific theatre by Tinderbox Theatre Company, has the capacity to open up public spaces as it engages with audiences and provides a use for

[142] Graham and McDowell "Meaning in the Maze," 343.
[143] Graham and McDowell "Meaning in the Maze," 352-353.
[144] Irwin, *The Ambit of Performativity*, 30-31.

these buildings, even if only temporarily. This Chapter drew on the history of the Courthouse to parse out ideas of power and control embodied by the site. By engaging with the built form and history, theatre companies such as Tinderbox, can bring the past and future of these contentious places into the forefront of the public eye. Calling into question the role of urban redevelopment in a ‘post-conflict’ city and questioning who benefits from urban redevelopment policy, seen in the fictional plans proposed in *Convictions*.

Chapter 3

Introduction

I hurried towards Belfast City Hall. I was already five minutes late to meet with the tour guide who would be taking my friend and me on one of Belfast's infamous Black Taxi Tours (BTT). The sun was out, and it was an exceptionally nice day in the city of Belfast. Our taxi driver was chatting with a security guard stationed outside of City Hall. We apologized for being late as we shook hands with the tour guide and climbed into the back of the vehicle. The driver hopped into his seat and began to ask us standard questions you would ask anyone, like where we were from and what brought us to Belfast. The conversation increasingly began to feel directed towards my friend, a native of Northern Ireland, as opposed to me, an unassuming Canadian. It became apparent that the driver was trying to establish my friends' allegiances. The taxi driver joked with him that he was chaperoning me and that this was a very 'tourist' thing to do. My friend laughed uneasily. A bobblehead of Donald Trump sat on the taxi's dashboard and nodded its head at us in the back seat as we moved away from the city centre to the first stop on the taxi tour, the Solidarity Wall located on Albert Street and the Falls Road.

In September of 1969, unofficial 'Peace Lines' were completed to keep the two communities apart[145] in the wake of violent episodes that marked the beginning of the Troubles, such as the Battle of the Bogside in Derry/Londonderry and the Burning of Bombay Street in Belfast. Peace Lines are walls of varying heights that were erected to keep the 'other' out. "The original unofficial improvised barriers made of commandeered cars, corrugated iron and whatever else came to hand were replaced, as the years passed and violence continued, by larger

[145] McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles,* 249.

and more substantial permanent brick and metal structures erected by the authorities."[146] These peace lines now proliferate across the urban landscape, as more peace lines have been built since the signing of the GFA than during the Troubles.[147] The urban landscapes of Northern Ireland carry scars that remind the visitor of the past, seemingly, at every corner. Along the route for the BTT, there are memorial gardens, plaques and murals, commemorating the fallen soldiers of the IRA and UVF, as well as civilian deaths. The language modelled around these places of remembrances are specific to the context of Northern Ireland but also subvert the viewers' positionality by evoking empathy and reinforcing rival versions of history and politics. This Chapter will analyze how BTTs influence how tourists experience sites of commemoration in Northern Ireland. Participation in these tours provides a dual application for the tour guides to process the violence that occurred in these sites while sharing the memory of violence with the customer, or what we could also call the audience member, creating new layers of memory and memorialization in these historical sites of violence.

BTTs are a new post-ceasefire development in the tourism industry in Northern Ireland. The new BTTs, which have developed over the past ten to fifteen years,[148] are different from the original Black Taxis operating during the Troubles. Black Taxis were notoriously dangerous. Commonly referred to as 'The People's Taxi,' these cars replaced bus services halted due to the unrest and violence in Northern Ireland. Taxis, such as the West Belfast Taxi Association, which

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[146] McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles,* 56.
[147] Belfast Interface Project. "Interfaces Map and Database - Overview." Accessed October 18, 2020. https://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/interfaces-map-and-database-overview.
Geoghegan, Peter. "Will Belfast Ever Have a Berlin Wall Moment and Tear down Its 'Peace Walls'?" *The Guardian*. September 29, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/29/belfast-berlin-wall-moment-permanent-peace-walls.
[148] Stated on their respective websites.

has been in operation for 40 years,[149] provided West and North Belfast with an essential service. Unfortunately, these taxis were coopted by the infamous Shankill Butchers to indiscriminately murder Catholics, and Protestants that they had mistaken for Catholics.[150] The Shankill Butchers' trial, which took place in the Crumlin Road Courthouse, sentenced these eleven men with 42 life sentences for the murder of nineteen people. Nowadays, tourists can hire a Black Taxi to usher them to prominent sites of conflict, marked by murals and memorials, to hear the stories of the Troubles. The tour guides are frequently ex-paramilitary, who provide a layer of narrative based on their personal experience with participating in the conflict.

This Chapter uses a first-person[151] account of a BTT to access urban spaces and the performance of memory. The analysis explores how sites of commemoration and memorials in Belfast are contested spaces. BBTs can change the representation and meaning of sites of violence visited by the tour participants. The tour guide layers a narrative of their interpretation of events on top of the site of violence. These layers allow for further interpretation from the participant, depending on their previous knowledge of the Troubles, Irish and British history, or even lived experience. The fact that no two tours can ever be the same allows the tours to function similarly to a theatre piece that changes depending on the participants and factors outside of the performer's control. Site-specific scholar Gay McAuley posits that the spectator

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[149] Peadar Whelan, "'Hacked off' but Still Fighting for Equality Belfast's Famous Black Taxis: Taxi Association Campaigns for Inclusion in Transport System." *An Phoblacht*, March 2, 2015. https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/24799

[150]Shane Mac Thomáis, "Remembering the Past - IRA Exectured Butchers' Leader." *An Phoblacht*, November 11, 2004. https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/12585.
Marie Louise McConville, "Forty Years Ago the Notorious Shankill Butchers Gang Were Jailed for Their `catalogue of Horror' Bringing Their Reign of Terror to an End." *The Irish News*, February 20, 2019. https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2019/02/20/news/forty-years-on-from-sentencing-of-notorious-shankill-butchers-for-their-catalogue-of-horror--1555287/

[151] The tour was taken during the author's field work trip to Belfast in the summer of 2019. This tour was taken on July 11, 2019.

has agency and that "when the performance is occurring in a 'real place' rather than a theatre, and the conventional markers are missing, the stakes are higher, and the risk is greater."[152] These risks and stakes locate themselves in the memory work at play in these highly contested urban spaces seen on the route of the BTTs. For it is "in site-based performance, artists work with the reality of spaces and places and […] are thereby drawn into an engagement with the meanings and connotations and reverberations that seem inseparable from place."[153] In this case, the artists are the tour operators, and the audience are the participants or customers who have paid to attend these tours. BTTs illuminate the performance of memory and the perpetuation of violence through the use of stories. This Chapter will use memory and history scholars Maurice Halbwachs, Ian McBride, and Jim Smyth to build on previous engagement with site-specific scholars McAuley, Tompkins, and Irwin, introduced in the previous chapter.

Irwin problematizes the notion of consensus in community-engaged art practices.[154] Similarly, this Chapter problematizes the consensus of Nationalist narratives in the BTT literature. Site-specific theatre allows for the nuances of history and narrative concerning space as it "is critical in that it suggests ways and means for alternative voices to speak from positions of knowledge through local experience."[155] By reframing BTTs as site-specific performances, I open new ways to understand memories of contested histories in Northern Ireland. Additionally, Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum Approach (BSA) allows the BTTs to be read through the lens of performance studies. The BSA encourages performance scholars to look outside the world of theatre and art and to see "that performance […] is a broad spectrum of activities

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[152] McAuley, "Site-specific Performance," 38.
[153] McAuley, "Site-specific Performance," 34.
[154] Kathleen Irwin, "Toiling, Tolling, and Telling: Performing Dissensus," in *Performing Site-Specific Theatre*, eds. Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 84-99.
[155] Irwin, "Toiling, Tolling and Telling," 85.

including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life."[156] By looking at BTTs as a type of everyday performance, nestled into the day-to-day life of these spaces, we can use performance as "a means of understanding historical, social, and cultural processes."[157] When studied through the lens of performance, BTTs unveil how urban landscapes in the post-conflict city of Belfast can reproduce violence through memory, murals, memorials, and tour guides.

A Black Taxi Tour

In this analysis, I'll concentrate on two sites visited on my BTT. I will outline my experience at the Solidarity Wall off the Falls Road and the Bayardo Memorial in the Shankill neighbourhood. These two locations provide points for reflection on how one BTT can process violence in different ways within the same tour. This tour is just one example of endless possibilities for BTTs; it should not act as a synecdoche. As seen in the literature review, other academic sources cover nuanced ways to interpret these tours. Wendy Ann Wiedenhoft Murphy notes the mobility of the tourist in contrast to residents of Northern Ireland.[158] William J.V. Neill addresses Troubles-tourism and how the past is explored through commodification.[159] Additionally, Feargal Cochrane states that violence is entrenched through these sites and reflects on how to integrate reconciliation projects into these tours as an avenue for soothing the conflict between the two conflicting communities.[160] Sara McDowell questions the motivations of commodifying heritage, asserting that "agents within local communities such as community or ex-prisoner

[156] Schechner "The Broad Spectrum Approach," 7.
[157] Schechner "The Broad Spectrum Approach," 9.
[158] Murphy, "Touring the Troubles in West Belfast," 537-560.
[159] Neill, "Marketing the Urban Experience," 815-828.
[160] Cochrane, "The Paradox of Conflict Tourism," 51-70.

groups see the landscape as a political tool through which they can vie for external support and sympathy."[161] Within this network of analysis, the argument that these tours perpetuate violence is a common strand. The websites associated with various tour companies contradict these academic findings. A brief review of the websites that offer BTTs observed that they provide an unbiased account of the Troubles.[162] BTTs have been in operation for roughly twenty years.[163] Reviews on TripAdvisor show a slew of satisfied customers, claiming fair representation and proclaiming that it is a must-do experience for anyone visiting the North.[164] The tour that I engaged with provides a salient conversation piece to these internet reviews and the tours that sociologist Wendy Ann Wiedenhoft Murphy embarked on in her case study. Murphy explains that "The tours by [Black Taxi] and [Walking Tours] were told from a Republican perspective, although this was not explicitly advertised by BT's taxi company."[165] I had the opposite experience to that most prominent in the academic literature. This Chapter looks at how a biased BTT impacted the sites of violence and memorialization of the Troubles. Changes in language around the commemoration sites on either side of the peace wall show that the tour I engaged with leaned towards a Unionist/Loyalist telling of space and memory.

The Solidarity Wall is a stretch of wall painted with various murals connecting Republicanism in Northern Ireland to other international resistance movements across the globe.

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[161] Sara McDowell, "Selling Conflict Heritage through Tourism in Peacetime Northern Ireland: Transforming Conflict or Exacerbating Difference?" *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 14, no, 5 (2008): 406.
[162] www.BelfastTours.com states that all drivers are Protestant and Catholic; www.belfastblackcabtours.co.uk strives to give unbiased tours; www.blacktaxitours.com also claims an unbiased view providing tours on both the Falls and Shankill. Accessed November 9, 2020.
[163] Belfast Tours with roughly twenty years of experience, Paddy Campbell's Belfast Black Cab Tours with 28 years and Black Taxi Tours with eighteen.
[164] Trip Advisor. "Black Taxi Tours." Accessed November 9, 2020. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attraction_Review-g186470-d2705984-Reviews-Belfast_Famous_Black_Taxi_Tours-Belfast_Northern_Ireland.html
[165] Murphy, "Touring the Troubles in West Belfast," 551.

This wall has some permanent murals, such as the mural to commemorate Black resistance and the Civil Rights movement in the USA (figure 7), which inspired the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in the 1960s. Another permanent fixture is a mural to end sectarianism (figure 8).[166] Newer murals such as the CS Gas mural (figure 9) show the changing development in the narrative around the Troubles. These murals provide talking points for tourists and residents alike. The connection with international politics shows solidarity between Ireland and other movements fighting for their independence, such as Palestine and the Basque Country.[167] A common theme of the need for justice and peace threads through the murals. Snippets of history are presented to the viewer, and they can engage with them through their previous knowledge, and the tour guide provides supplementary information. Upon our arrival at the Solidarity Wall in 2019 with our tour guide, I experienced the wall from a new perspective. The tour guide began by explaining some of the murals, such as those listed above, but added a new perspective that I was not prepared for based on my previous literature review. The tour guide began to call into question specific individuals' actions on the wall, such as Fidel Castro and Nelson Mandela. The tour guide questioned whether the men depicted on the walls were 'murderers' or 'martyrs.' This tour guide did not answer this question but reframed the Republican narrative of martyrdom present in Northern Ireland. He spoke in a calm yet quiet voice at the site of the Solidarity Wall. After visiting other sites off the Falls Road, such as the Clonard Memorial Gardens and the Bobby Sands mural, we travelled over to the Shankill.

Due to the bonfires that night and 12th of July Parade the following day, the Shankill was buzzing with life. We stopped at the Bayardo Memorial (figure 10), which commemorates five

[166] I recall seeing both these murals on my first visit to Belfast in 2015.
[167] Stanley D. Brunn, Sarah Byrne, Louise McNamara, and Annette Egan, "Belfast Landscapes: From Religious Schism to Conflict Tourism," *Focus on Geography* 53, no. 3 (2010): 88.

Protestants' death in the Bayardo Bar attack on August 13, 1975. This memorial space has a gable end, which I passed behind. The interior featured removable placards filled with faces and stories of people who lost their lives due to IRA violence (figure 11). The language of the tour guide changed and became more assertive. His voice began to rise as people gathered around to listen. Our tour guide denounced the murder of innocent civilians at the hands of the IRA with a certain boisterous quality. The carefully constructed dichotomy of murderer/martyr that had been built up for the first half of the tour was abandoned in this space. The space did not allow for this kind of proclamation as community members came closer to the tour guide to hear what he was saying regarding the memorial. The shift in performance emphasizes the power that these sites of commemoration have in their respective communities. What is allowed in one space, the questioning of involvement of violence, is heavily denounced in the other. The tour guide’s personal bias, or perhaps the presence of people at the Bayardo memorial, changed the inflection from carefully constructed binary opposition to the castigation of violence committed by Republican paramilitaries. The severity of violence represented by the murals and memorials was either heightened or diminished, changing due to the tour guide’s narration.

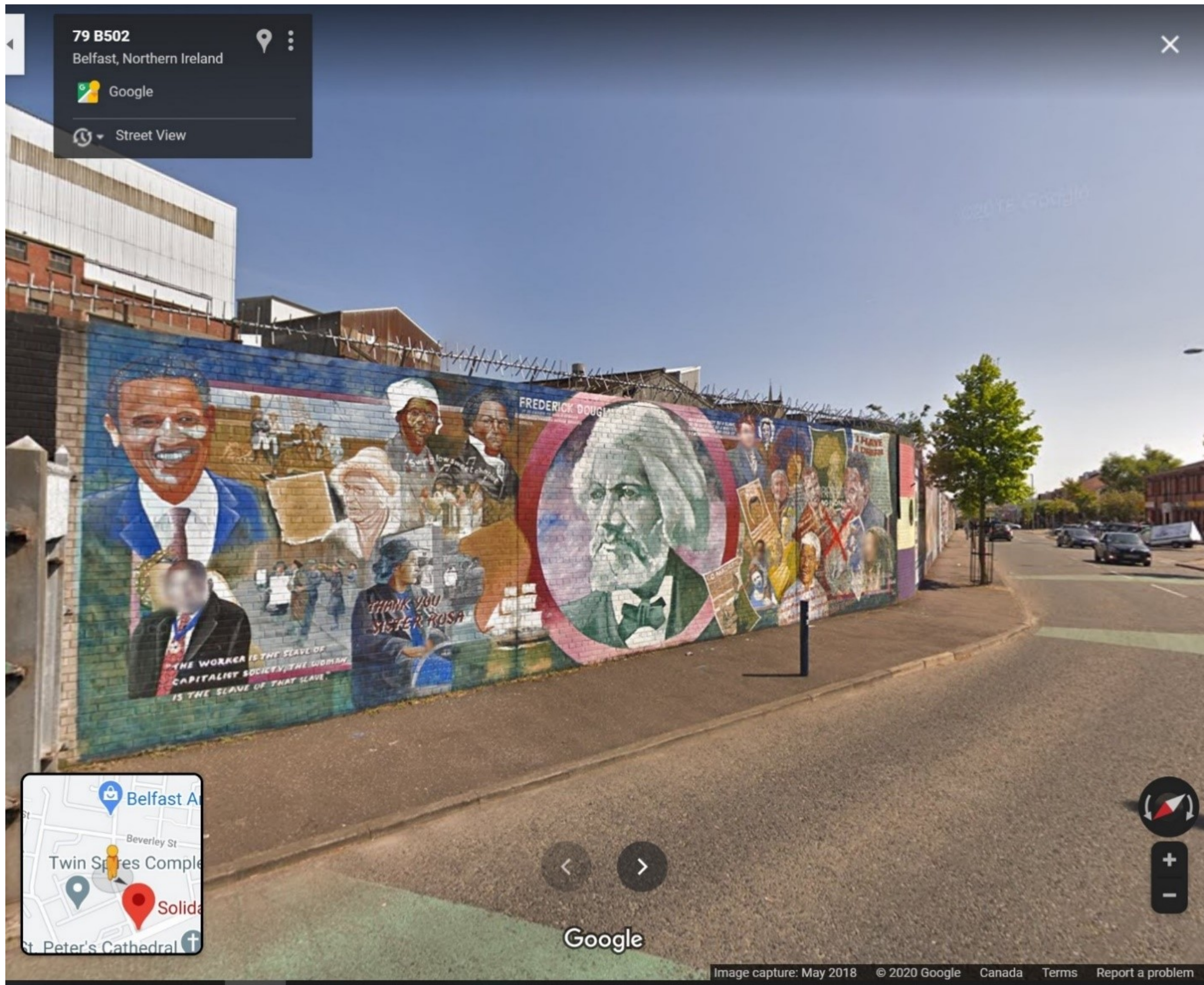

Figure 18. Black Resistance and Civil Rights Mural at the Solidarity Wall. Sourced from Google Maps: https://tinyurl.com/y3qcnzpt Accessed October 3, 2020.

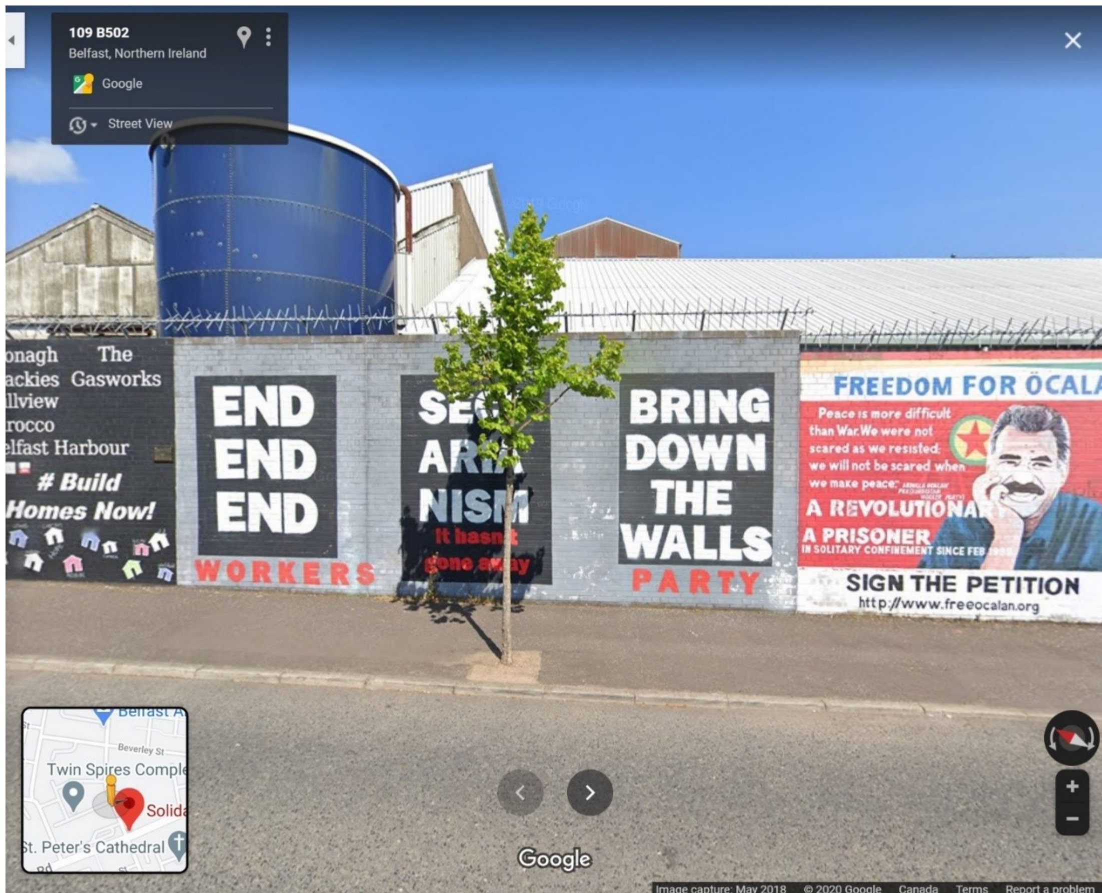

Figure 19. End Sectarianism mural at the Solidarity Wall. Sourced from Google Maps: https://tinyurl.com/y5uwzyqo Accessed October 3, 2020.

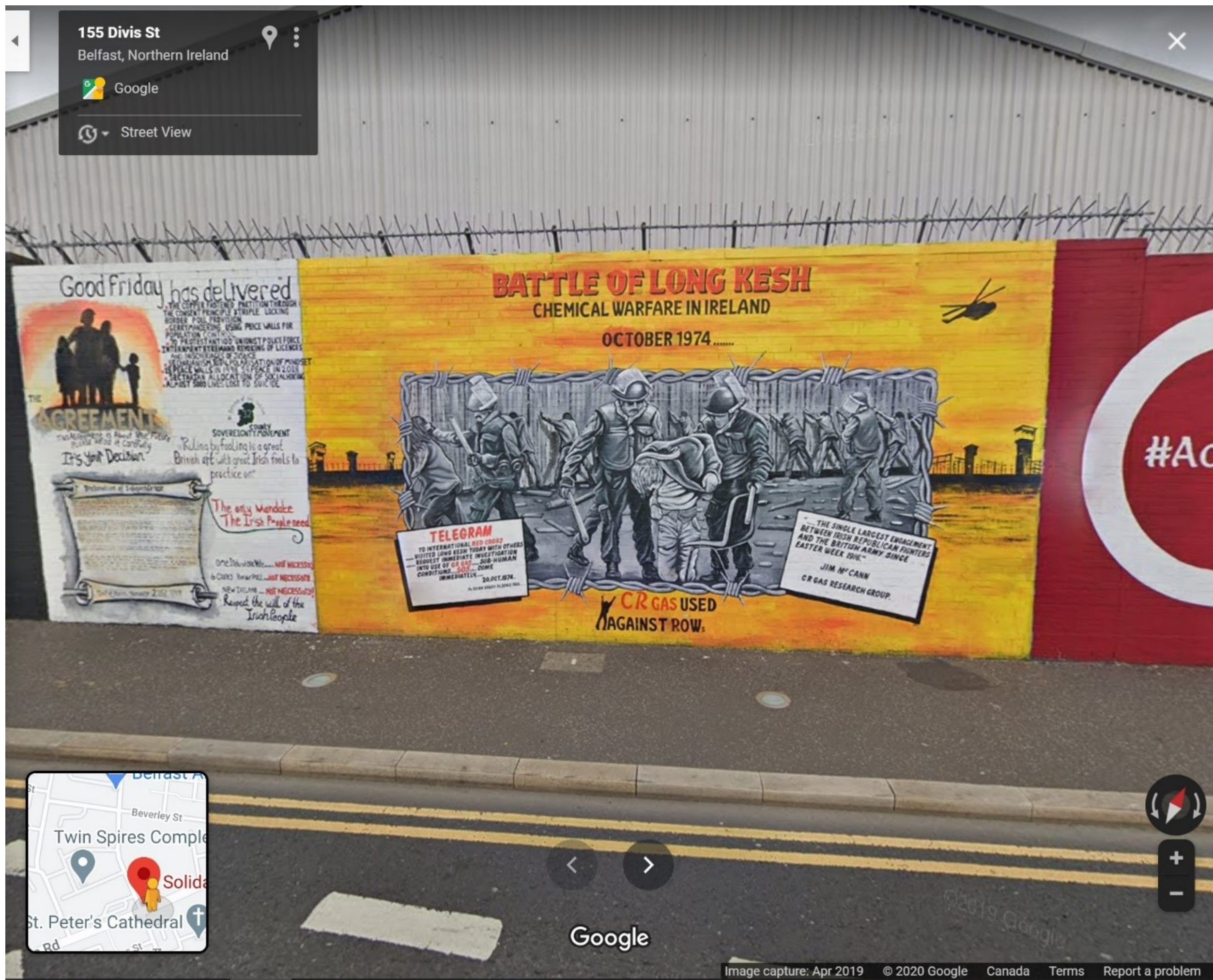

Figure 20. CS Gas mural at the Solidarity Wall. Sourced from Google Maps: https://tinyurl.com/y6l68bkw Accessed October 3, 2020

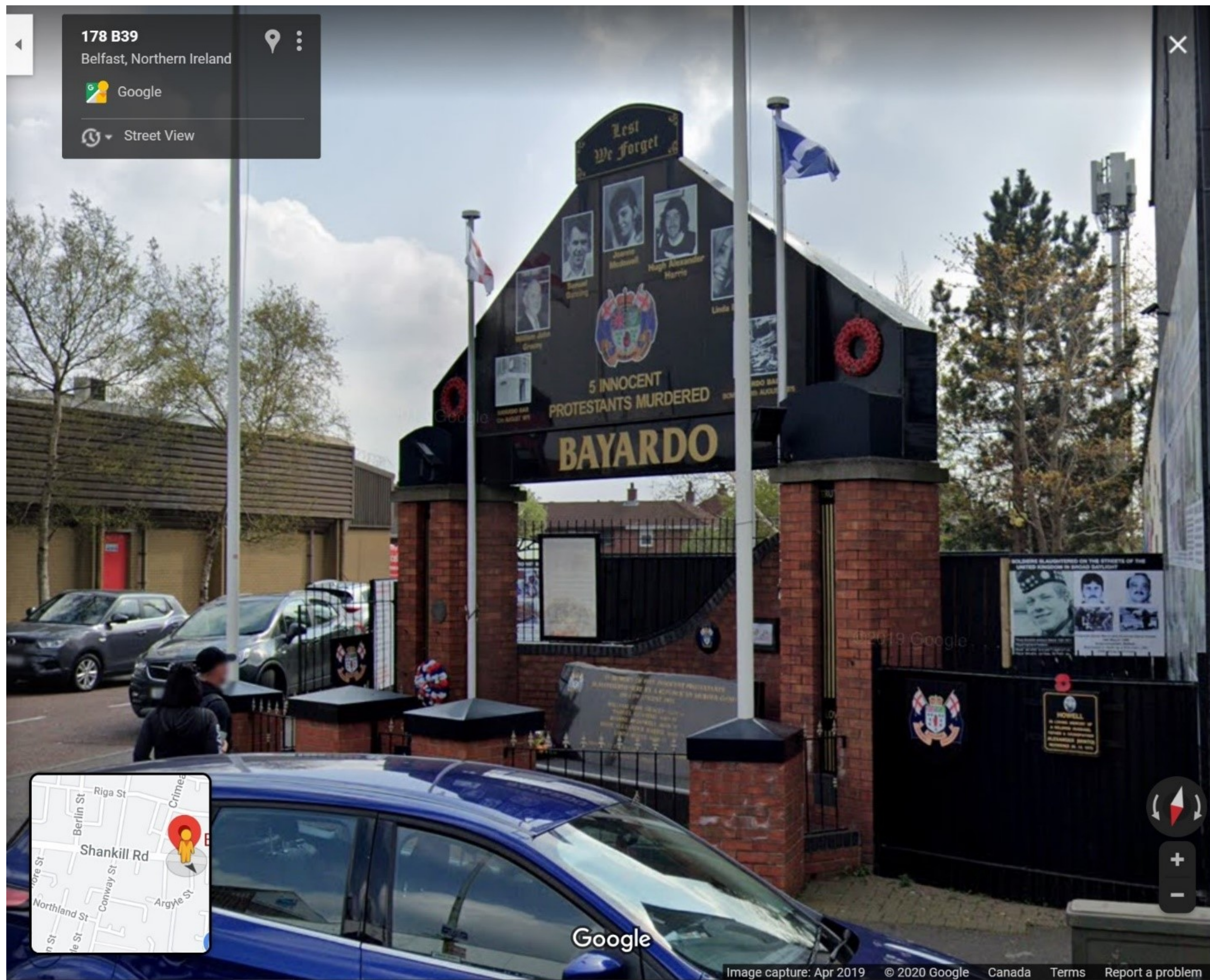

Figure 21. Bayardo Memorial - Source from Google Maps: https://tinyurl.com/yy3j2gwv Accessed October 3, 2020

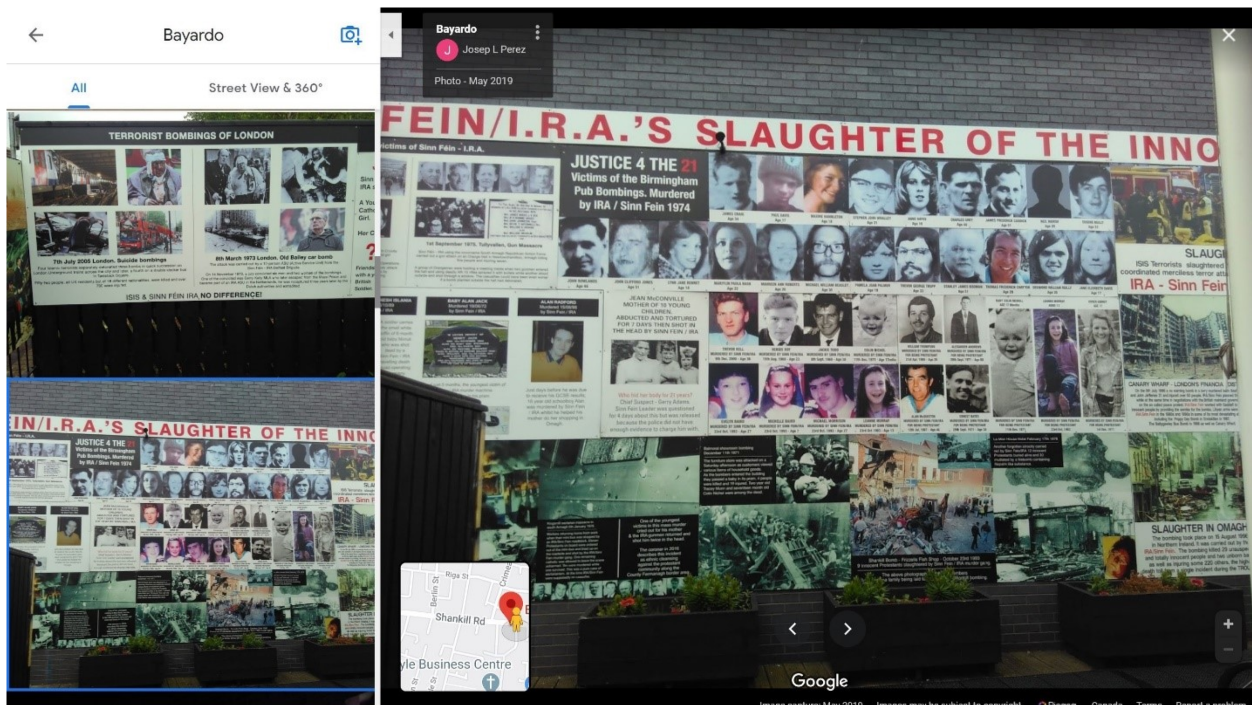

Figure 22. Bayardo Memorial and removeable placards behind the main memorial. Sourced from Google Maps: https://tinyurl.com/yy3j2gwv Accessed October 3, 2020

Performances of Everyday Violence

Drawing on Walter Benjamin's optical unconscious, performance scholar Laura Levin proposes the "'environmental unconscious,' which asks that our engagement with space proceed not from the subject's projection of self onto its surroundings, but rather in the frames that we create to allow our environments (human and non-human) to speak."[168] The sites located along the BTT route are vocal without the human tour guide interjecting their narrative. Matthew Spangler writes about memorial spaces in Derry/Londonderry,[169] Northern Ireland, which also produce agency in telling their own stories regarding the Troubles. The murals and commemoration

[168] Laura Levin, *Performing Ground : Space, Camouflage and the Art of Blending In* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 98.
[169] The city is referred to as Derry by the Catholic population or Londonderry if you are Protestant.

spaces relating to Bloody Sunday[170] in Derry, Northern Ireland's second city, do "not so much *reflect* history as *constitute* it through specific acts of remembrance, storytelling, and display."[171] These sites speak and create their own narratives. It falls to the tour guide to navigate these spaces, much like a scenographer would. Borrowing the definition from Irwin, the scenographer "maps a site through myth, memory, personal narrative, and material detail, thereby framing a specific place within a local and global context."[172] Irwin and Spangler's performance lens maps onto sociologist Brian Conway's argument regarding the commemoration of Bloody Sunday. Conway argues that for commemorations to continue, they need to be kept alive. A pertinent way of keeping memories alive is the mobilization of memory through "human actors to make it pertinent to specific social and political contexts."[173] Memorialization of Bloody Sunday is similar to the Solidarity Wall and Bayardo Memorial. They all rely on memory and display and can be further activated by a tour guide. These examples of memorialization depend on the division along ethno-sectarian lines for their continued existence.

The narrative of violence is embedded into Belfast's urban sphere twenty years after signing the GFA. The nature of the peace walls and murals reflect the everyday performance of violence. This everyday nature of violence brings us back to historian Joanna Bourke and her thoughts on violence, as laid out in the literature review. Bourke outlines that words used to describe violence help create its everyday nature. The sites and the tour guide both use words to tell their stories, although sometimes those narratives are at odds with one another. Bourke uses

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[170] Bloody Sunday occurred on January 30, 1972, where the British Military open fired on a group of peaceful protestors killing 14 young men.
[171] Spangler, "Performing 'the Troubles'," 101.
Italics in original text.
[172] Irwin, "Toiling, Tolling and Telling," 94.
[173] Brian Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: Pathways of Memory* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 149.

the example of the military-industrial complex and how it makes violence easily digestible through precise word choice. Word choice allows for new weapons to use terminology that masks their use and outcome. This distancing effect allows the user of the weapon to disassociate their actions from the outcome of violence. Masking allows for words to be subverted and for violence to be enjoyed by the actor. Bourke outlines four ways in which we talk about violence, such as:

> "aestheticizing it, converting it into an abstract formula, ignoring pertinent aspects and giving weapons agency – overlap. […] converting violence against others into something attractive, abstract or absent makes it easier to bear. They share a commitment to violence as something that can be represented in language in ways that blind us to the other person's pain." [174]

During my tour, the guide ignored pertinent aspects of violence at the Solidarity Wall. He also aestheticized violence at the Bayardo Memorial, using tone to convey a sense of justice and retribution. On the other hand, the sites presented images of the dead and historical snapshots. When mobilized by the tour guide, they risked entrenching violence further into the urban landscapes instead of creating an open dialogue with room for nuanced understandings of the past. Hierarchies of victimhood were also applied to the sites by the tour guide, leaving me to try and grapple with notions and levels of innocence in a highly militarized space.

Sociologist Katie Markham reflects on the way that innocence has been applied in small Loyalist museums in Northern Ireland. According to Markham, the lexicon of victimhood in Northern Ireland increasingly distinguishes between "'deserving' and 'underserving' victims of the conflict."[175] This hierarchy of victimhood allows the tour guide to persuade the audience

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[174] Bourke, *Deep Violence*, 38.
[175] Katie Markham, "Organised innocence in the paramilitary museum," in *Heritage After Conflict: Northern Ireland* eds. Elizabeth Crooke and Tom Maguire. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 50.

member that the pain felt by both sides was somehow different, seen with the classification of murderer/martyr. Murphy notes in her argument that "according to BT[176], only local guides from West Belfast could "tell the truth" to tourists about what happened there during the Troubles."[177] This claim of authenticity, layered with the language employed, creates an identity that the participant might find difficult to resist or question. While there are taxi tours who pride themselves on being non-sectarian or relating the story of the Troubles equally from both sides, there is also the role of the participant to consider. After all, not all words which are spoken are heard. We filter; we selectively focus; we hear what already supports our world view; we don't quite catch the rest. The performance of the taxi driver works in tandem with the experiences of the audience. The spectator has agency, and their prior knowledge of the Troubles, social contexts in which they were raised, and political affiliations all contribute to the tourists' understanding of the words being spoken to them. When presented with murals on the Peace Line linking international conflicts to the Troubles, the taxi driver's role and the images present a myriad of ways in which violence can be performed and interpreted. Placing trust in the taxi driver to tell an honest, non-biased account of the legacy of violence in Belfast is expected from the participant. Yet, the hierarchy of victimhood was still employed in my experience of a BTT. This hierarchy appeared when the words used tried to subvert violence, especially when my tour guide probed the 'murderer' and 'martyr' binary. This binary holds two highly charged ideas. Martyrdom excuses many acts of violence because it insinuates it was for the common good. In contrast, murder creates a feeling of a senseless and dangerous act, feeding off of, and into, fear of the other community. The hierarchy of victimhood that the tour guide employed on both sides

[176] Murphy's definition of BT is a "local black taxi tour in West Belfast" in "Touring the Troubles in West Belfast," 544.
[177] Murphy, "Touring the Troubles in West Belfast," 546-547.

of the divide encouraged fear of the Republican murderer and sympathy for the Unionist martyr. These tours simultaneously praise the ending of violent conflict yet entrench an everyday performance of violence in the urban sphere.

History and Memory of Urban Spaces

Memorial spaces in Northern Ireland reside in militarized spaces and intercede in the urban environment. Cultural Historian and literary scholar Andreas Huyssen writes:

> "Many of the most compelling projects to nurture and to secure public memory involve interventions in urban space. This is only natural, because cities remain the main battleground on which societies articulate their sense of time past and time present. Once embodied in memorial sites as active parts within an urban fabric, remembrance of traumatic events seems less susceptible to the vagaries of memory. Memory thus has a chance to inscribe itself into history, to be codified into national consciousness.[178]

Public memory interventions are palimpsestic in Northern Ireland. The layering of memory, material and immaterial built heritage in Belfast appears in the sites of commemoration represented by community gardens, memorials, and murals. These sites of commemoration tell part of the history of violence in Northern Ireland. Walls and border boundaries carefully protect these sites. This application of Newman's defensible space, discussed in Chapter One, further defines these sites of violence — defending these spaces with wrought iron gates and fences, such as the case with the Bayardo memorial, grants a precarious kind of access. Access is granted based on historical allegiances. Presumably, we would not have journeyed over to the Shankill on the 11th of July if we were not in the hands of a community gatekeeper. Historian and memory scholar Jim Smyth writes that "[with] […] the trauma still raw in a still deeply divided society, remembering the Troubles entails, depending on who you believe, either confronting the past in the name of resolution and reconciliation or a continuation of the conflict by other

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[178] Andreas Huyssens, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 101.

means."[179] In my experience with a BTT, the conflict was continued through the tour guide's performance. The duality of remembrance insinuated by the tour guide reflects the divided nature of Northern Ireland. The two strains of history reside alongside one another, often only mere meters away from each other but separated by a wall. These commemoration and boundary divisions in Northern Ireland scar the urban landscape. Memorial Gardens and plaques to the dead of the Troubles populate the urban sphere. Seemingly endless markers to remember hang off gable walls and grow up behind wrought-iron gates with manicured floral arrangements. After the GFA was introduced, which created a power-sharing government, McBride states that "[the] result is a kind of territorialization of memory, in which mutually exclusive narratives of the conflict become embedded in Northern Ireland's tangled sectarian geography, and the task of establishing a principled basis for coexistence between the two communities is abandoned."[180] Adding to this narrative, historian Aaron Edwards proposes that "in this sense, memorialization is a double-edged phenomenon; on the one hand, it has enormous transformative potential, while on the other, it can be used malignly to reinforce deep division and suspicion between rival communities."[181] Memorialization acts as a way of remembering, imbuing the site with memories of the conflict. These sites are then further activated by BTT guides and their performance of memory. Together, the sites of commemoration and the guide have the potential to become implicit in recreating a performance of violence and oppression, as I saw during my

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[179] Jim Smyth, "Introduction: From Popular Mythology to History and Memory," in *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland*, ed. Jim Smyth (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 5.

[180] McBride, "The Truth about the Troubles," 13.

[181] Aaron Edwards, "Beating the Retreat on a Contested Past? The British Army and the Politics of Commemoration in Northern Ireland," in *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland*, eds. Jim Smyth (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 79.

experience with the BTT as the tour guide manipulated already heightened emotions with their bravado at the Bayardo memorial.

This memorialization embeds the collective memory of violence. As defined by memory scholar Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is the appearance of memory across a group of people. Murals and memorialization spaces in Northern Ireland embody the collective memory of violence. Halbwachs asserts that collective memory and space are intertwined and that the material aspect of the city plays a vital role in perpetuating this memory.[182] The urban spaces of memorial sites on the route of BTTs perpetuate this memory. While the taxi driver engages with a territorialized memory performance, highlighted by McBride, the space also begins to speak and engage with the participants on the tour. Like the Bayardo Memorial and the Solidarity Wall, the sites of memorialization allow us to consider how the urban space speaks to the participant. Spangler underscores that using performance as a lens to study is space is essential because "it allows us to perceive objects of commemoration, not as one-dimensional reflections of a fixed and already known past, but as complex performances of identity and memory in active dialogue with the exigencies of the present."[183] These sites already carry a magnitude of memory without being activated by the tour guide. Levin also speaks to this when she argues that "[the] nonhuman site is itself a performing entity, reminding us that the communication between self and setting is rarely unidirectional."[184] The nonhuman site is changed by the human actor who projects their account over the urban landscape. The memorials speak for themselves due to the arrangement of visual clues and markers, which encourage a collective remembrance of violence

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[182] Maurice Halbwachs "Space and the Collective Memory." In *The Collective Memory*, 1950. http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/hawlbachsspace.pdf
[183] Spangler, "Performing 'the Troubles'," 110.
[184] Levin, *Performing Ground,* 97.

in these historic spaces. Adding the tour guide further monumentalizes violence, adding another narrative to create a multi-layered memory experience. This layering of memory, site, and performance shows the everyday nature of violence in Northern Ireland, changing how we perceive these historical sites of violence based on the BTT.

Conclusion

The terrain of commemoration in Northern Ireland is complex. In this chapter, I sought to engage with two memorialization sites that seemed to conflict with one another. Other conflicting accounts occur within the communities, such as the difficult relationship between the Provisional and Official IRA landscapes. Conflicting accounts, contested memories, and even the curated erasing of narratives has occurred within both groups.[185]

This is one example of how memory can shift within communities and changing local landscapes. Other attempts to change the memory landscape of the North are through the noble attempts to reduce segregation by focusing on history that united both groups of residents. Some examples are in the emerging scholarship on Irish soldiers' participation alongside Unionists in WWI[186] and the 1930s workers strike.[187] Uniting through common history and solidarity glimpses beyond the troubling surface engagement seen in the performance of the BTT. Surface

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[185] For further information on this, please see the co-opting of Official IRA member 'Big Joe' McCann, and the difficulties in PIRA and OIRA memory in John Mulqueen, "Remembering and Forgetting: The Official Republican Movement, 1970-1982," in *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland*, ed. Jim Smyth (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 142-164.; John Mulqueen and Jim Smyth. "'THE CHE GUEVARA OF THE IRA': The Legend of 'Big Joe' McCann." *History Ireland* 18, no. 1 (2010): 46-47.

[186] See: Paul Mullan, "The Decade of Centenaries and a methodology for engaging with 'difficult heritage'," in *Heritage After Conflict: Northern Ireland* eds. Elizabeth Crooke and Tom Maguire. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 34-48.

[187] See: Ronald Munck, "Class and Religion in Belfast – A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, no. 2 (1985): 241-259.

engagement and the perpetuation of the narrative of violence possibly hinders the progression of peace in Northern Ireland. As Cochrane claims:

> "It's easier to take tourists to the […] "peace wall," or to the vivid paramilitary murals, then it is to bring them to anti-sectarian initiatives such as the *Belfast Interface Project* or community groups that are working to build cross-community dialogue and peaceful coexistence in interface areas of Belfast or Derry. It is easier to see sectarianism when it is written down or drawn on a wall than it is to capture the slow and often invisible processes linked to anti-sectarian community work." [188]

While not as gripping as a tour with an ex-paramilitary, this slow process has the capacity to lead to a better understanding of the urban landscape and its role as a performer in the memory of the Northern Ireland conflict. Creating and performing a specific set of memories in the urban sphere creates a divide that cleaves along sectarian and class lines. In the post-conflict city, there needs to be a new understanding of the past. While tourism can open up avenues of remembering the past, it often focuses on exceptional forms of violence that punctuated the everyday. Cochrane spotlights that "[the] danger in all of this is that complexity is sacrificed on the altar of commercial populism in a carefully packaged tourism product that provides a synthetic experience of little educative value."[189]

For the post-conflict society, engaging with the past becomes a necessary tool to move into future iterations of the peace process. The role of BTTs in Northern Ireland provides economic opportunity to taxi drivers and communities. Mobilizing collective memory around historical sites of violence has the potentially dangerous effect of reducing lines of communication between the divided communities by entrenching fear and violence. One way that these lines of communication have been established is by reading violence through the lens of performance, seen in Chapters One and Two. Chapters One and Two, through the use of

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[188] Cochrane, "The Paradox of Conflict Tourism," 55-56.
[189] Cochrane, "The Paradox of Conflict Tourism," 66.

traditional theatre and site-specific theatre, were able to negotiate violence through co-creation. This varies from the memorial spaces in Northern Ireland, which brings violence into the present and re-entrenches the memory. While both sides of the Peace Line have a multitude of commemoration and memorial spaces, a common thread observed between the two is pride concerning their contribution to the Troubles, even while condemning the other side. The defence of these memorial spaces through the use of gates that restrict access shows the need to control who has access to these memories and how they perform and explore past violence. Admittedly, this analysis applies to one possible tour that a participant can experience. The variety of sites, words and tour guide/participant interactions leads to an endless combination of possibilities of processing and exploring violence and has definite potential for further research. As Cochrane notes, there should be a shift towards focusing on community-led initiatives that are rebuilding the North instead of focusing on the highly divisive conflict. The tour that I engaged with on July 11, 2019, perpetuated harmful cycles of violence by entrenching an everyday performance of violence. This was accomplished by utilizing memorial spaces and collective memory to process the past.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

I argued that plays and performances discussed change how we see public spaces, as they allow for different avenues to process the violence of the past. *Somewhere Over the Balcony* by Charabanc Theatre Company, *Convictions* by Tinderbox Theatre Company, and a Black Taxi Tour, provided a window to access history, space, and memory. In *Balcony,* we saw that a Brechtian analysis changed perceptions of the Divis Flats. Moving from a slapstick representation of the women's days in the Divis, Charabanc highlighted the structural violence embodied by the building. Using a Brechtian framework underscored the structural violence of the Divis Flats by working against Aristotelian notions of catharsis. Charabanc awakened the audience to the realities of the Divis through humour and song, changing the conception of the Divis Flats from a site of pain into a site of resistance. The devising process presented the untold narratives of the Flats, which allowed for certain marginalized audience members to see themselves represented on stage. The devising process also allowed for an understanding of the resistance work of the Divis Demolition Committee, and the role of the British Military and how that impacted the Catholic population of the Falls Road and its environs.

Convictions by Tinderbox Theatre Company introduced site-specific theatre practices that addressed state violence. State violence, embodied by the Crumlin Road Courthouse, hovered over the playlets written for the performance by the various playwrights. As the audience moved through the closed Courthouse, they were able to imagine new development plans for the space and reflect on the past of the Courthouse itself. The new development plans, which were often exclusionary, and driven for profit, brought in an assessment of the capital gains of redevelopment plans, and probed who would really benefit from the remodelling of this site of power. The play was performed on the precipice of past violence and a hopeful future

with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, just two years prior, still being very much at the forefront of people's minds. This play, which sat at a border, both metaphorically and physically, between multiple interfaces in North Belfast, addressed different strands of power and politics. It changed the Courthouse from a site of power into a potential tourist centre, heritage centre, or opera house.

Finally, by reading Black Taxi Tours through the lens of performance, I showed how a tour guide can change sites of memory through the words and actions that they employ. This was seen quite literally when the tour guide that ushered me through the experience of a Black Taxi Tour minimized the violence committed by one side, while condemning the violence of the other. The sites were allowed to speak, but multiple other factors impacted the processing of violence. For example, the creative agency of the spectator, the tour guide, and the date all changed the way that violence presented itself in the urban sphere. My analysis focused on one iteration of a Black Taxi Tour but concedes that there are many different possibilities for engagement with the past on these types of Troubles tours.

Overall, this thesis showed that our understanding of public space is highly influenced by the narratives surrounding these spaces. It is possible to change these previously held conceptions of space through arts practices. Plays and performance can present new narratives and redefine the stakes of the public places, which in turn, can reduce tensions between the two main identity groups in Northern Ireland. These plays and performances process violence in new ways and allows for a deeper understanding of everyday, structural and state violence, both historical and ongoing. By changing how we process violence, I argue that we can better understand the conflicting narratives of the past and move into the future with a fuller understanding of the other. Segregation in Belfast remains high, and additional scholarship

assessing desegregation in arts practices would be highly welcomed. Further, post-Brexit analysis of how the arts process violence would be valuable to the field of Performance Studies and Urban Planning due to the evolving complexity of the terrain in Northern Ireland. My case studies focused on the Unionist/Nationalist divide, but more scholarship focusing on marginalized voices and how they perceive space in the post-violent conflict city of Belfast would also be beneficial to future analyses of public space, violence and performance.

Responding to the segregated nature of Belfast, and Northern Ireland as a whole, this thesis provided a way to address intergenerational memory, memorialization, and the stakes of the space. In deeply contested areas, it is often quite hard to bring together people of conflicting backgrounds. The divided nature of Belfast affects the prosperity of the city, in both economic and cultural aspects. Addressing how performance can change the way that we see space, and reassess how violence is at play in these spaces, provides opportunities to engage with other narratives, creating shared memories. Creating new pathways to explore memory, identity, and violence in Northern Ireland can bring peace and encourage closure. Finally, the consolidation of communities can create a sense of safety between both groups. Bridging the gap between the Irish and British-identified communities in Northern Ireland through the creative use of theatre and performance can create more complete urban spaces that encourage a diverse set of uses. The benefits of creating shared space between the two communities may well be a safer, more creative, and more economically prosperous Northern Ireland.

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