GHOST-HAUNTED LAND

Contemporary art and post-Troubles Northern Ireland

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consumer rule, Jimmy tells us, was that 'hard baps' were to be sold only to 'hard' Protestants. We hear too of how the extreme and long-standing antagonisms of the Troubles disappeared on the common ground of the greyhound track – *dogs*, Jimmy surmises, *have no religion*. Aphorisms of this kind punctuate the narratives, offering local 'truths' that are used to patch together assorted stray and perhaps incompatible pieces of the past. In the recounting of these fragmentary histories, however, uncompromising convictions also surface, unwavering beliefs held by Jimmy about the rights and wrongs of the Troubles years, that hint, as Chantal Mouffe would say, at the ultimate ineradicability of all antagonism.

The overall effect of Jimmy's tour and testimony – intensified by the formal coupling of an agitated, searching gaze on the city with often uncomfortably close-up views of our genial, non-objective guide – is therefore a disconcerting, distancing one, despite the intimacy of the portrait. As in Duncan Campbell's perplexing/perplexed encounters with history, what results, and what is seemingly valued, is an inconsistent, uncertain form of document. Drawing on multifarious, marginal details of Troubles-era lives and landscapes, and creating space for other, subjective, idiosyncratic and eccentric speculations, these cautious and inquiring artist-historians anxiously emphasise the inevitability of *conflicting accounts* rather than proposing accounts of the conflict.[56] Instead of reaching an historical 'ending', there remains the hard, persistent work of historical *amending*. I want now to consider further examples of such speculative history-making in the work of two more artists – Daniel Jewesbury and Aisling O'Beirn – who have been engaged with the effect of the past on the landscapes of the present. In both their collaborative and individual work these artists have sought to find – often through diverse forms of archival research – alternative ways of negotiating, mapping and remembering the 'post-Troubles' city.

Walking in the city: exploring the everyday urban archive

> Robinson believed that if he looked at it hard enough he could cause the surface of the city to reveal to him the molecular basis of historical events and in this way he hoped to see into the future.[57]

Impossible, *inadvisable* or *improbable*: at the Belfast Exposed Gallery in July 2010 three disconcerting adjectives accompanied Daniel Jewesbury and Aisling O'Beirn's invitation to embark on a series of unorthodox urban heritage tours – low-key explorations of everyday landscapes – that proposed to take the changing city region of North Belfast as their chosen historical terrain. These artists' interest in North Belfast had been inspired, as the exhibition information explained, by the extent to which the area is now, in this era of uneasy and unending regeneration, 'overwritten with many conflicting inscriptions', with those multiple, contending versions and visions of what the city is, or of what it might become, that are to be found 'in written and visual archives, in maps and master-plans, and most importantly in everyday use'.[58] So in imagining new, idiosyncratic tours of

the diverse northern districts of Belfast, and in designing and distributing a series of small pamphlets containing sketches, photographs and short, handwritten texts that set out in a loose, non-linear manner, the options for each proposed journey, Jewesbury and O'Beirn chose to draw on that fragmentary and fractious multiplicity of archival, administrative and conversational material that creates such heterogeneous images of the city – thus attempting to address the complex discursive shaping of contemporary urban life, a subject so vital, and so contentious, in the context of 'post-Troubles' Belfast. But their project also pointed us towards the plural peculiarities of the city's *physical* form, towards miscellaneous eccentricities of the built environment. The tours turned our attention to marginal, minor geographical landmarks, to overlooked and ordinarily unremarkable elements of the landscape, asking us to reflect, for instance, on the type of unlikely informal and industrial 'monuments' that once fascinated Robert Smithson. These are the leftovers or unpromising beginnings (what Smithson called 'ruins in reverse') of urban development – variously melancholy or absurd material manifestations of history's contradictions that litter inner and outer city spaces; ubiquitous and contradictory symbols of both progress and decay, regeneration and degeneration.[59]

Hence, then, the significance of the trio of negative terms that Jewesbury and O'Beirn attached to their tour concept: terms printed in unmissable bold on the front of each of their take-away tour guides. In mapping the variety (and measuring the intensity) of the city's 'inscriptions', these artists were determined to highlight paradoxes, problems and unrealised possibilities in the conception, representation and experience of these North Belfast landscapes. Crucially, Jewesbury and O'Beirn chose to foreground the impediments to any objective survey – instead prioritising subjective, selective viewing, 'sketchy' anecdotal recollection or whimsical speculation – and concentrated on the obstacles to any easy negotiation of these places. They delineated journeys that were, to varying degrees, 'impossible'. Journeys that have, for instance, barriers as their most prominent feature. So in their 'Midtown' trip, for example, walkers were directed both towards a stretch of fence in the Ballysillan Park that prevents access to a river culvert (presumably in the interests of public safety) and towards a much more visually imposing section of the 'interface' wall on the Springfield Road that marks, and so also *maintains*, sectarian division in the area. However different in type and scale, both fences are manifestations of the intricate management of public space, demarcating limits at micro- and macro-levels: defining what forms of movement in the city are either possible or impossible. (Notably, among the images the artists used of these segregated landscapes are views from high above, perspectives accessed from different archival sources that nevertheless carry shared connotations of the totalising gaze of aerial surveillance.)

Other Belfast journeys proposed by Jewesbury and O'Beirn were deemed 'impossible' – insofar as the artists' directions send us towards historically unrealised destinations that now exist only in forsaken planning documents. An entry in a guide entitled 'Out-of-Towners' pointed potential walkers towards an 'amazing futuristic roundabout' on the fringes of the city that, unfortunately, 'leads

nowhere'. A solitary sign at the location, we were told, displays the words 'Invest NI' – but there are no further routes to follow. Attention to such atypical tourist landmarks may be one reason why these tours might also be thought of as 'inadvisable' or 'improbable'. Such a trek to the city margins is not likely to be realistically recommended to the eager tourist in Belfast, offering little of substantial local interest, addressing nothing much of established historical significance. Sites of pilgrimage such as roundabouts or typical suburban super-stores (the North Belfast B&Q Warehouse is described in the accompanying text as 'an emporium for the fetishisation of home improvement') are in any ordinary understanding of tourist expectations, banal prospects, powerfully *boring* places. And yet to travel with analytical purpose through these dispiriting territories may be, perhaps, to properly sense the alarming profundity of such boredom. These are the types of terrains once studied – and even celebrated – by the late J.G. Ballard; and indeed another of Jewesbury and O'Beirn's selected sites of interest, the wide, multi-lane motorway going north from Belfast towards Northern Ireland's International Airport is another obvious and extreme Ballard-scape. The fear expressed in Ballard's dystopian tales of affectless (post)modern existence was, as he once said, that 'everything has happened, [that] nothing exciting or new or interesting is ever going to happen again'; the future, he predicted, would be nothing more than 'a vast, conforming suburb of the soul'.[60] Paying tribute to Ballard following his death in 2009, the film-maker Chris Petit looked to London's Westway for inspiration – the 'three-mile elevated expressway singled out by Ballard as a rare example of the modern city that London never became' – in order to capture something of the late writer's bleak but ambiguous premonition of permanent, edge-city boredom.

> Overlooked now by its new skyline, the Westway feels much slower and smaller than it did when Ballard wrote *Concrete Island*. No longer a grand folly – a flyover that went nowhere – its status has been reduced to that of service road for Europe's largest (ailing) shopping mall. In *London Orbital*, a film Iain Sinclair and I made, Ballard declared that the future will be boring. Malls are boredom's cathedrals. Boredom underpins consumerism. It defines leisure (and desire), which collapses into shopping. Boredom invites terror (as its only cure).[61]

These end-of-history evocations of cultural and social uniformity, of an eventless horizon of leisure and shopping, with boredom as the standard and terror as the only release, carry a particularly unsettling charge in these North Belfast settings and in this Northern Ireland situation. (It is worth noting, in passing, that another suburban Belfast setting was used as the location for a 2016 movie version of Ballard's 1975 novel *High-Rise*.) Jewesbury and O'Beirn's tours often take us to places where traumatic or restrictive remainders of the 'old' history in Belfast meet the new consumerist imperatives of social organisation – where 'enemy' could be replaced by 'anomie', perhaps – and where the resultant, 'triumphant' models of urban planning and commercial development have actually failed or faltered. These are locations where the landscape seems readied for a post-Troubles

future that will combine the *worst* of both worlds, past and present. With their purposeful drift (and knowing *dérive*) between interface and investment territories, these tours offer glimpses of a lasting disciplinary regime of surveillance, of highly regulated geography and security-led design, as well as ensuring that we gain a sense of the even more insidious 'society of control' fostered by corporations and fervent consumerism. Reflecting on what he saw as a shift from the former, Foucauldian understanding of power's effects to the latter, seemingly freer and more flexible late-capitalist dispensation, Gilles Deleuze saw increasing evidence of 'a new system of domination', of a more 'dispersed' form of social control determined by the contingencies of the market – a system which is 'free-floating' and 'short-term' but which is nevertheless 'continuous and without limit'. Under these new conditions, Deleuze argued, 'man is no longer man enclosed but man in debt'.[62] Jewesbury and O'Beirn's fascination with the non-place landscapes of North Belfast – rather than, on this occasion, with any of the more prominent, Troubles-related histories of these places – is in part a revealing quest for the uneven, ambiguous, even contradictory effects of recent post-Troubles shifts. Perhaps Ballard's words in a late preface to *Crash*, his classic nightmare vision of traffic and transgression, have, therefore, a degree of relevance to the strange types of ghosts being hunted in Jewesbury and O'Beirn's peculiar urban trails: 'across the communications landscape move the spectres of sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy'.[63]

Within such urban 'junkspace' (to borrow the architect Rem Koolhaas's term for 'what remains after modernisation has run its course, or more precisely, what coagulates while modernisation is in progress'[64]) there may also be traces of lost possibility. A photocollage in the 'Out-of-Towners' tour pamphlet clusters together snapshots of leftover concrete pipes on a patch of suburban wasteground; this bulky industrial litter has no apparent current value, it relates to no immediate construction need. Nevertheless the presence of these forlorn waste-products prompts reflection on the recent past's unrealised possibilities and enables speculation on an alternative, though vitally 'improbable', future. On this neglected ground, Jewesbury and O'Beirn write, 'the University of Ulster was going to build a new "Springvale" campus ... in the 90s. Mo Mowlam and Billy Hutchinson actually turned the first sod together in April 1998. Then nothing happened'. Here is a history of something that could have been, but that somehow became 'impossible', at the moment of the Troubles' conclusion. Now, perceived differently as a series of side-by-side and overlapping rings on the landscape, these discarded pipes prompt an absurd, upbeat vision, converging in such a way as to begin forming a familiar symbol of cultural unification, suggesting – preposterously and amusingly – that 'this site could be the Olympic Park for the Belfast Olympics in 2028'. Catching sight of this partial Olympic image, craftily created through photographic juxtaposition of found elements in the urban landscape, calls to mind, in passing, arguments concerning actual Olympic development. As the quintessential contemporary psycho-geographer Iain Sinclair witnessed before and after the 2012 London games, the eradication of distinctive topography and

the erasure of local memory became inevitable after-effects of the Olympics' massive 'engine of regeneration'.[65] Regularly exploring certain East London locations, particularly during the preparatory period before the events, Sinclair was eager to capture memories of these places before they were transformed into new terrains of twenty-first century progress. Like Jewesbury and O'Beirn in Belfast, Sinclair covered much ground in campaigning to make visible the historical ghosts haunting land that developers and planners often understand to be merely 'empty'. And intriguingly, as he went looking for images of the East London Olympic development settings within old movies, Sinclair found traces of Belfast, and of the expanded field of the Troubles. He saw Bethnal Green masquerading as 'an Expressionist Belfast' in Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out*.[66] He found 'rogue Irish Republicans' playing a vital criminal part in John MacKenzie's premonitory tale of docklands land-piracy, *The Long Good Friday*.[67] It is perhaps an intended effect of Jewesbury and O'Beirn's psycho-geographic journeys that such unanticipated connections between time and space, between place and image, are gradually created; new routes are constructed as we newly map present and past, real and imagined, city landscapes.

But we might also wonder if in Jewesbury and O'Beirn's re-envisioning of abandoned construction materials as an odd icon of reconciled cultural difference – those five, pathetic concrete rings becoming an accidental Olympic symbol – there is still also a glimmer of *utopian* possibility. Even if the reference to the Olympic symbol is satirical, we might yet recognise the simultaneous importance of imagining situations well beyond anything that might be 'reasonably' predicted for these Belfast locations. Considering fragments of former historical promise – such as a lost plan for a new university campus or, going further, the absurd dream of a Belfast unified in civic celebration by the Olympic games – might be, in 'utopian' terms, less a matter of remembering a future *destination* as of regaining political *determination*. 'Utopianism', in this regard, is a form of thought and an instinct of politics that dreams up options for otherwise unanticipated and 'unrealistic' change. It is a faint, fleeting glow of out-of-the-ordinary illumination that, as Fredric Jameson has argued, concentrates our attention on the idea of a 'break' with the present, forcing us to think beyond 'the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible, that there is no alternative to the system'.[68] As with the defining description and the essential details of Jewesbury and O'Beirn's distinctive, difficult historical urban tours, utopian form demands, as Jameson says, 'meditation on the impossible, on the unrealisable in its own right'.[69]

Jewesbury and O'Beirn's historical tour project for Belfast Exposed was conducive to imaginative digression as much as to actual physical wandering. The artists' small, cheaply printed pamphlets – disposable, ephemeral things, rather than authoritative-seeming publications – functioned along the lines of what Rebecca Solnit has called 'field guides to getting lost': unofficial itineraries that allow us to knowingly lose our way, helping us to form unlikely connections between under-analysed features of the urban landscape as we drift away from established paths set by city planners.[70] Such activity might well accord with Walter Benjamin's

conviction, quoted by Solnit, that an urban wanderer must aim to 'lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest'.[71] This is, famously in Benjamin's writing, a practice of transgressing the governing expectations of urban life, of learning to circumvent the city's fixed patterns and hierarchies of experience. It is a technique of apprehending the built environments of modernity that extends and challenges our comprehension of 'modern' time and space; a process of exploring the everyday in which, as Benjamin says, 'signboards and street names, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars must speak to the wanderer like a cracking twig under his feet in the forest, like the startling call of a bittern in the distance, like the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect at its centre'.[72] As Susan Sontag has said, Benjamin's 'goal is to be a competent street-map reader who knows how to stray. And to locate himself with imaginary maps'.[73] Moreover, Sontag continues,

> [Benjamin's] recurrent metaphors of maps and diagrams, memories and dreams, labyrinths and arcades, vistas and panoramas, evoke a certain vision of cities as well as a certain kind of life ... With these metaphors he is indicating a general problem about orientation and erecting a standard of difficulty and complexity. (A labyrinth is a place where one gets lost.) He is also suggesting a notion about the forbidden, and how to gain access to it: through an act of the mind that is the same as a physical act.[74]

There are suggestive parallels here with Jewesbury and O'Beirn's proposals for newly negotiating the fractured geography of Belfast.[75] Their gallery-promoted trips around the northern districts of the city simultaneously encourage freer forms of urban meandering and lead us to territories that may be, in one way or another, difficult to traverse. These guides to irregular routes through the city promise obstruction as much as improved circumstances of movement, opening up potentially undiscovered pathways while 'indicating a general problem about orientation'. Fundamentally, as in Benjamin, the tours combine an aspiration towards productive *lostness* and unconventional *locatedness*: this is 'an art of straying' made possible by 'imaginary maps'.

For Rebecca Solnit, the principles of idiosyncratic perambulation that can be pointed to in Benjamin's reflections on urban experience – and that we see echoed in Jewesbury and O'Beirn's art practices – can be understood in relation to a loose lineage of artists who have set themselves on an intentional trajectory towards a state of alert lostness. And so she not only cites, for instance, Edgar Allen Poe's apparently paradoxical wish to 'calculate upon the unforeseen', to 'collaborate with chance', but also Keats's investment in 'negative capability': 'that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.[76] But in a way that is incidentally pertinent to the post-Troubles predicament underpinning Jewesbury and O'Beirn's investigations, it is also worth noting how Solnit emphasises that the word 'lost' has its distant roots in 'the Old Norse *los*, meaning the disbanding of an army, and this origin suggests soldiers falling out of formation to go home, a truce with the wider world'.[77] In the cities of the twenty-first century world, nevertheless, opportunities

for getting creatively lost – for what we might thing of as *digressive* wandering, for simultaneous imaginative and physical straying, for seeking a psychic state of uncertainty that is 'achievable through geography' – are, Solnit suggests, increasingly rare: 'advertising, alarmist news, technology, incessant busyness, and the design of public and private space conspire to make it so'.[78] From one perspective, then, to strive towards being 'lost' in a city such as Belfast today – in the wake of an extended conflict and under pressure from those forces and factors identified by Solnit as more generally arising out of contemporary conditions – may be especially meaningful. In their Belfast Exposed exhibition, however, Jewesbury and O'Beirn were, as already indicated, equally interested in non-conformist *locatedness* – in mapping unofficial co-ordinates within the changing city, in seeking significant bearings but under newly imagined terms – each artist singling out particular objects, images and sites that might allow for out-of-the-ordinary speculation on positionality, and for the proposal of alternative means of orientation and identification to those models ideologically set by existing orthodoxies of public planning and private development. (We might draw a link here to Irit Rogoff's interest in 'unhomed geographies': 'a possibility of redefining issues of location away from concrete coercions of belonging and not belonging determined by the state'.[79])

Essential to these combined lost-and-located enquiries was the inclination towards anxiously negotiating and imaginatively constructing city space as an archive. Or, rather, towards seeing the city as composed of and containing *multiple* archives: its landscapes appearing to these artists as labyrinthine sources of data storage, repositories of countless secret histories. As Michael Sheringham has written in an essay on the city as archive in literature, such strange forms of aesthetic attention are productive of a crucial estrangement: to expose the hidden histories relating to an urban setting may be, he says, 'to defamiliarise the city we thought we knew, and to wrench us out of the present into an intermediate zone of interlapping timescales'.[80] And although 'in its materiality, its layeredness, its endless transformations', the 'archival' is a dimension that all cities share, Sheringham suggests that this sphere of information and experience is not always immediately available to us: it is a realm that we learn to access, he argues, 'by consenting to let go of our familiar reference points in personal and collective time and space'.[81] This is, once again, a version of Benjamin's willed lostness; and it perhaps privileges most of all the subjective perspective of the lone *flâneur*. But there is also a more unusually located and alternatively 'collective' case to be made for artists' urban archival work. For what if 'our familiar reference points' were not just those 'coerced' from above and applied broadly across a city or a society, but were those pertaining to the particular *habitus* of an area – to the peculiar, everyday life and language of a locality? And could tactics of highlighting and holding on to these 'minor' modes of spatial negotiation offer more political potential than 'letting go'?

Collecting and discussing the distinctive details of such unofficial, less-documented relationships with place has long been at the core of Aisling O'Beirn's

art-making. The diverse elements of her determinedly situated practice draw extensively on the lore and lexicon of the local, in Belfast and elsewhere. Many of the material outcomes of her work have therefore emerged as manifestations of more immaterial urban substance. So, for instance, her content has been derived from such everyday conversational 'stuff' as commonly used, wise-crack nicknames for pathways and landmarks in and around neighbourhoods or from the area-specific superstitions and urban myths so vital to a *genius loci* – but also, potentially, so alien to the needs and interests of the forces of rational authority. Indeed, Michel de Certeau has defined one characteristic of 'totalitarian' urban governance as a tendency to attack what can be called 'superstitions': 'supererogatory semantic overlays that insert themselves "over and above" and "in excess," and annex to a past or a poetic realm a part of the land the promoters of technical rationalities and financial profitabilities had reserved for themselves'.[82] It is such superstitions, however, that de Certeau says make places 'habitable': 'there is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can "invoke" or not'; 'haunted places', he argues, 'are the only ones people can live in – and this inverts the schema of the *Panopticon*'.[83] Moreover, we can think of these 'stories and legends that haunt urban space like superfluous or additional inhabitants' as constituting the basis of a type of informal public sphere.[84] They form locally-defined geographical markers and historical reference points that create the co-ordinates for numerous, overlapping counter-hegemonic 'common spaces' within vernacular discourse.

Within de Certeau's theories concerning the dissensual potential of everyday life, such local spaces of culture are crucially viewed as not only phantasmal but also *precarious*: 'stories about places are makeshift things', de Certeau suggests, 'they are composed of the world's debris'.[85] Though immediately resonant in relation to the notionally 'immaterial' narrative and textual elements of O'Beirn's practice – her work has often featured lists of bizarre names, compilations of odd anecdotes, gathered fragments of casual conversations – de Certeau's vocabulary here also corresponds to key characteristics of her installation-based and sculptural work, which in many instances prioritises physical fragility, instability and vulnerability: a 'making do' mode of assembling and crafting, based on cheap, 'preparatory' types of materials. In this way, it is worth noting, there is a logical link to the types of 'unmonumental' sculpture that have appeared in international art since the 1990s: 'a sculpture of fragments, a debased, precarious, trembling form', according to Richard Flood, which gives us objects and arrangements that 'are cobbled together, pushed and prodded into a state of suspended animation'.[86] So by comparison, for example, ordinary cardboard has been a favoured medium for O'Beirn: a basic, unglamorous product of modern, material reality that is also, more specifically, a fundamental component of architectural model-making, allowing her to fashion provisional and non-precious mini-versions of actual, historically evocative objects in the world; such as, on one occasion, a replica of a cannon from Derry's walls or, on another, a miniature copy of Belfast's iconic 'Samson and Goliath' ship-building cranes.

Figure 16 Aisling O'Beirn, detail of 'Waterworks Park' from *Improbable Landmarks*, 2010.

At Belfast Exposed in 2010, the reconstructed form was based on the more quotidian and less obviously iconic landscapes of the North Belfast 'Waterworks Park' (Figure 16). Designated within the context of this exhibition as one of a number of 'improbable landmarks', the park is alluded to by O'Beirn as a routine urban destination for diverse Belfast constituencies: 'from families to fishermen to dog walkers to glue sniffers'. It is a place that officially and unofficially accommodates multiple layers of the 'local' – as a result, O'Beirn adds, it can appear 'idyllic or threatening depending on the time of day' – and it might, in this way hint at alternative identifications with territory to those generally associated with the landscapes of a 'divided Belfast'.[87] The Waterworks is a space of man-made, 'urban nature'. It is a fixed, bordered, planned resource within the geography of North Belfast (it was built in the nineteenth century as a reservoir and later became a public park). But it is also a developing eco-system and multi-layered arena of marginal production and occasional encounter – an ever-evolving domain of what Robert MacFarlane has called 'improvised ecologies', a terrain of unanticipated becoming, both 'human and natural', containing both tremendous biodiversity and some very varied zones of civic activity, from children's playgrounds to working community gardens: cherished spaces of spare-time contact or 'makeshift' cultivation.[88] (Coincidentally, MacFarlane describes the allotment landscapes arising out of traditions of urban farming in terms that correspond to Flood's comments on contemporary sculpture: they are, he says, 'beautifully chronic places: developed over time, cobbled lovingly into being'.[89]) As a subject for O'Beirn's ongoing

urban investigations, the park 'becomes' therefore both a recognisable object of representation and a more 'open' focus: a measurable, 'fixed' territory on the city map, and a space of socio-cultural plurality and contingency.

In this light, it is telling that the building material for her reconstruction of this urban landmark was a 'soft' substance with strong associations beyond the physical and the visual. Rather than selecting cardboard this time, O'Beirn employed acoustic foam in creating her rudimentary model of the Waterworks, the properties of which allowed for a still-more insubstantial 'solidity' than in many of her previous sculptural experiments. The foam maquette – monolithically gun-metal grey and somewhat melancholically adorned with a small selection of plastic plants – was a quite ungainly, inelegant presence in the gallery space, a purposefully inadequate and oddly gloomy architectural display, implicitly contrasting, surely, with slickly realised future-vision models of the new building schemes of regeneration-era Belfast that no doubt form part of the city's planning and promotional apparatus. The 'acoustic' foam also signalled, of course, a second-order relation to *sound* – and, in particular, to its strategic dampening, to the industrial purpose of deadening all unwelcome traces of the audible world. This foam is a substance used in buildings only to *break down* sound waves: and in some ways we could understand this 'muted' status of O'Beirn's sculpture as conceptually functioning in direct, deliberate contrast to the multi-vocal, story-telling, *information-sharing* aspirations that are fundamental to her wider place-based practice.

Crucially, therefore, the Waterworks model was complemented within the exhibition space by two connected representations of the more discursive inputs and outputs of her research. On one wall a long, vertical banner of white printed paper displayed a list of words and phrases describing the principal visible characteristics of yet more 'improbable landmarks' – among them motorway lanes, a B&Q warehouse, suburban gardens, a derelict former dance hall – and across the gallery, faintly present in the un-darkened space, an animated sequence of steadily emerging and quickly disappearing line drawings was projected, the simple pencil sketches giving a fleeting visual impression of the assorted places listed on the nearby poster. The form and content of each component of this spatially separated text-image pairing was based on filed imagery from the Belfast Exposed community photography archive, but each also came with extra associations that created a paradoxical sense of simultaneous communicative clarity and increasing uncertainty. The 'facts' of the text compilation demonstrated dedication to recording and making visible low-key aspects of life in the urban landscape, but the naming of precise attributes of places also at times rendered the points of reference poetically elusive ('city council crest/faded/congealed' stated one entry; 'doubled glazed windows / lace curtains tapering off towards window frames' offered another). The animation too suggested exacting attention to micro-geographical ordinariness in the patient recreation of the archived photograph: an honouring of fragments and traces of the marginal and the neglected within a transforming locale. But at the moment when each picture of a place, object or person from the city's past became more-or-less fully legible within the

Figure 17 Daniel Jewesbury, *NLR*, 2010.

sequence, at the culmination of an almost line-by-line emergence of the complete drawing, the image would abruptly disappear, to be replaced on this projected drawing pad, by another nascent, returning 'memory'. Any sense of stable, factual presence was refused, just as physical presence was rendered precarious elsewhere within the gallery space.

O'Beirn's *Improbable Landmarks* twinned and intertwined 'facts' with 'fictions' of place, her animated, fragmentary history of these North Belfast locations offering a faint coming-and-going of re-traced photographic traces: spectral apparitions called and created from the archive. A related spirit of uneasy coming-and-going with respect to specific places (and a shared concern for the coming-and-going *spirits* of place) also characterised Daniel Jewesbury's haunting film *NLR* (Figure 17). This was another solo contribution within the two artists' combined Belfast Exposed project, but one that nevertheless included a crucial additional dimension of two-person dialogue – the film layering onto real-life footage of the contemporary city a contemplative fictional soundtrack consisting of two voices that articulated back and forth testimonies concerned with the relation of individual lives to particular locations. The interconnecting male and female audio commentaries in Jewesbury's *NLR* articulate profoundly uncertain perspectives: they are

imagined ruminations on places and people that are composed of unavoidably 'make-shift' memories. The speakers try to recall pivotal moments in intimate relationships or catalogue noteworthy events in the private and public history of a locality. But there is, throughout, an intensifying sense of the mental 'lostness' of melancholic reverie. Four slowly spoken words are repeated many times, and bookend the film's oblique narratives: 'I had no idea.' And yet, this is also, in other insistent ways, a very precisely located film. The visual content of *NLR* is to a large extent a straightforward, strictly delimited picture of place, documenting a journey from one end of North Belfast's New Lodge Road to the other (a place-name tightly encased, of course, within the title's capitalised initials). Distanced establishing shots and obscure close-ups of the street fleetingly come and go at first, flashing into vision in different film formats, before a Steadicam view gradually guides us at a sauntering pace – under the undramatic light of an ordinary day – along this historically conflict-afflicted working-class avenue. Indeed, 'saunter' is a useful term here, since one possible etymology of the word is the French *sans-terre*, suggesting a degree of separation from place in the process of its traversal – a condition of being *without* a territory while also moving through one[90] – and as such, it might be added that this is a term both applicable and at odds with Jewesbury's simultaneously drifting and engaged gaze. The movement of the camera, in its passages of Steadicam glide, has something of the disembodied detachment from location found in Willie Doherty's *Ghost Story*. As with *Ghost Story*, however, Jewesbury's ambulatory, anxiously 'weightless' first-person perspective on the impact of the past on landscapes of the present also includes pauses in the recorded progression along this city street that suggest something of Doherty's quest for new anchorage in the landscape: an obsessive but always frustrated pursuit of the *definite*.

In *NLR*, a ghostly, ungrounded perspective is combined, then, with a fascination for grounded actuality. At certain moments, the head-on vista and floating movement might almost recall the airy virtuality of travel by Google Street View (an upgrade, perhaps, of those 'sinister technologies', that according to Ballard move spectrally across the contemporary communications landscape), and yet at others, the view is stubborn and static in its riveted attention to the particular physical details of the passing environment. Jewesbury zooms in on just-about identifiable traces of the Troubles – suggestions of historical hard evidence – and points to signs and symbols that announce assorted legacies of conflict. There are bullet marks in patches of brickwork. There are wall murals with messages diversely relating to Republican solidarity or to more non-partisan peace-era public interest (we see both Bobby Sands as an icon of 'POW' freedom, and footballer Roy Keane as a cartoon representative for children's rights). And there are also other, newly sinister, inscriptions on the urban surface. One blurry black graffito reads, for instance, 'PSNI/SF Be-fucking-ware'. These markers of time and place are presented to us in disconnected fragments – despite the spatial continuity and geographical clarity of the journey. The details are rendered curious and cryptic rather than coherent as the characteristic signifying elements of an easily

categorisable 'zone' within the city's sectarian geography (e.g. a 'Catholic area'). Moreover, the meaning and relevance of their filmic documentation is potentially altered in juxtaposition with the patient attention given to many other forms and features of the street: the other 'improbable landmarks' that substantially constitute the material culture of the area. Michael Sheringham has written of how 'one of the city's archives is its detritus': a resource that might include 'hieroglyphic blobs of gum splattering the sidewalk' or 'runic streaks and crevices on pavements or blank facades'.[91] Among the objects of both protracted and passing analysis in Jewesbury's visual survey are such constellations of discarded gum on well-trodden tarmac or those anonymous, inscrutable scrawlings and miscellaneous manifestations of decay or damage that crudely decorate the edges of paths or the sides of buildings in any city. These casual leftovers of urban life – registering former human presence, but nothing in particular of current consequence – are perhaps marks of generic modernity ('the fleeting and the contingent' according to Baudelaire's famous definition) rather than clues to something of the specificity of this unique place, the New Lodge Road. Similarly, the multiple shots of satellite dishes clipped to the facades of terraced houses and tower blocks, assist in making this geographically fixed 'here' seem less a defined, distinctive post-conflict territory than a deterritorialised, globalised 'anywhere'.

Tensions of this kind serve to intensify the unsettled tone and indeterminate meaning of *NLR*'s two-character drama. As we take in the slowly changing street scene, with its lingering views of the historically altering design features of public space – the camera inspecting the assorted styles of low- and high-rise public housing that dominate this North Belfast landscape and that have, therefore, so profoundly influenced conditions and possibilities of community over successive generations – we hear isolated voices that describe and dispute various attitudes to location, their words speaking of eccentric or strenuous individual efforts to establish a significant sense of position within time and space. The unnamed male narrator muses on remembered conversations with an anonymous woman, recalling that 'she used to tell me that she recognised some place or other, that she knew where she was, by the shape of the clouds'. This was a 'perception of the world', we are told, which had 'only the most tenuous connection with anything actual'. The female narrator, by comparison, talks of how she would explain to 'him' (the inter-subjective connections are 'tenuous' too: we cannot know for sure if these characters are referring to each other) that 'even the most complex, detailed surface, a wall or a skin, conceals something else that lies beneath'. Another of the short, disjointed speeches makes clear an unflinching commitment to a philosophy of territorial attachment: 'You're one of us. It's the way it is ... You persist, in the *unchangingness* of this place.' And yet this forceful message about unmistakable presence seems to arise out of incidental absence – this solid opinion is aired as the camera gazes at a now-empty mural space on a gable wall – while also rhetorically registering a spirit of inevitable disintegration: 'even if there's nothing left', the voice insists, 'it's still the same'. Another speech haltingly articulates a desire to identify *unacknowledged* connections within this location, to discover

occult dimensions beneath the familiar geography: 'I thought I'd started to ... comprehend the movements, and the relations, which were invisible, not there if you only saw the surface. I thought I'd started to discern them – patterns, flows, relationships.' All such discovery, all conclusive revelation, is however, provisional and contingent (we can note the twice-repeated, doubly hesitant phrase 'I thought I'd started to ...'). These are speculative realisations, meanings-in-motion, precariously pieced-together truths about place that are the products of the unavoidably subjective inventions of mental travel. As Iain Sinclair writes, the process of 'drifting purposefully' as we strive to 'explore and exploit the city', the action of 'tramping asphalted earth in alert reverie', allows 'the fiction of an underlying pattern to reveal itself'.[92]

As in the wider body of work represented by O'Beirn and Jewesbury, we are again given clues here towards alternative methods of mapping, negotiating and imagining the city. The informal archives of the neglected and the inconsequential, the repressed or the unrealised, in private and public memory, potentially offer up points of connection within the strange, unofficial cartographies of subjective and collective city experience. But there can be no final confirmation, no certainty in these reconstructed visions of place. These are stories of the city that are stories of complex plurality, of sought-after difference and difficulty – stories that anxiously alert us to the irreducible dimension of antagonism which is so often erased within the consensual propagandising of the 'peace' era. As the narrator says of the scenario prompting another of Jewesbury's elliptical narratives in the film *Irish Lights* from 2009, 'It doesn't add up ... and it doesn't have to ... it's about contradictions. It's all about contradictions, conflicts, contests'.

A protest against forgetting

> A few years ago, a Dublin editor responded to my suggestion that I write a report on a commemorative event in Derry with an impatient, 'These bloody Northerners. The Troubles are finished. Will they never get over it?'[93]

In addition to the specific artworks and practices discussed in some detail here, there have been a number of archival and history-related contemporary art curatorial/research projects made in the context of, or in recognition of, the particular circumstances of post-Troubles life in Northern Ireland. These are projects that exhibit varying degrees of sensitivity to wider tendencies in contemporary art and to wider circumstances in the contemporary world. We might cite here, for example, the interconnected *Performing the Archive* and *Arkive City* projects developed through 'Interface', an interdisciplinary and practice-based research centre based at the University of Ulster (the latter a project/institute within the college, which among other objectives, sought to examine the role of art in a post-conflict society). Led by Julie Bacon, Kerstin Mey and Grainne Loughran, *Performing the Archive* and *Arkive City* were discursive research initiatives concerned with exploring archiving in the arts; and these matters were studied in a manner that situated

questions about the post-Troubles predicament in relation to other international issues and examples. The first ('performing') stage of the project was a series of public events, held both in Belfast and the North East of England, that addressed critical questions concerning the meaning, value and use of diverse archival resources. It centred on discussion of four themes: 'investigating archives'; 'creative approaches'; 'performing' archives; and the use of archival resources in 'consensus contention'.[94] Featured speakers included significant Irish-based (but diversely-focused) artist-investigators of the cultural potential of archives who had undertaken research at Interface (for example Sarah Pierce, Justin McKeown and Una Walker) and other influential international presences deemed pertinent to these enquiries, such as the London-based psycho-geographical writer Stewart Home and Lebanese archive-artist Walid Raad, sole agent within the (meta-)fictional conceptual collective 'The Atlas Group'. The subsequent *Arkive City* section of the research was manifested firstly as a website which constituted an archive of archives – cataloguing international art practices and institutions engaged with the theory and practice of archiving – and secondly as a publication which attempted to offer 'deep and contrasting views of archival engagement and discourse'.[95] These events, online resources and published texts included an impressive range of contributors and commentaries, demonstrating a capacious understanding of how the archival might be considered within the art field and in connection with the Northern Ireland context. But also, in this wide scope beyond the immediate legacies of 'The Troubles', the accumulated outcomes of these projects demonstrated, as Derrida has identified in *Archive Fever*, how 'nothing is more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in this word "archive" '.[96] As such, there was an also an implied and deliberate indication of how our condition of being 'in need of archives' is one which demands that we are 'never to rest': it is to be interminably 'searching for the archive right where it slips away', to be always running after the archive, 'even if there's too much of it'.[97] This is the madness and malady, the *fever*, which for Derrida arises out of 'an irrepressible desire to return to the origin'.[98]

In these respects, Walid Raad was a particularly useful guest at these discussions, since his own practice is an investigation into possibilities of creating viable histories in circumstances of post-conflict, but one in which any standard comprehension of the definitive origins and reliable 'truths' of an historical narrative is subverted. 'How do we approach facts not in their crude facticity', Raad asks, 'but through the complicated mediations by which facts acquire their immediacy?'[99] Among his tentative answers has been a rejection of the often reductive distinction between fiction and non-fiction, developing and presenting archival resources relating to the history of the Lebanese Civil War (the 'group's' primary focus) that are in one sense self-consciously unreliable but that are in other ways somehow capable of doing 'justice to the rich and complex stories that circulate widely and capture our attention and belief'.[100] Characterising the 'historical documents' he makes available as 'hysterical symptoms' ('based not on any one person's actual memories but on cultural fantasies erected from the material of

collective memories'[101]), the Atlas Group's processes play on a kind of mania or indeed a *fever* (also akin, perhaps, to the earlier-noted paranoia identified by Žižek in response to Robert Montgomery's *The Lady in the Lake*) that may result from the drive to see everything, to remember all. This is a point discussed by Charles Merewether in the introduction to a survey of archival practices and ideas:

> Reminiscent of the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges, The Atlas Group files ... attempt to address the limits of what is thinkable. At the same time as they open up possibilities for new ways of writing histories, they also intimate that sense of the absurd, the futile, or the impossible, which ultimately haunts the logic of the archive.[102]

We might recall here the words of the hedge school teacher Hugh in *Translations*, Brian Friel's powerful drama about landscape and memory in colonial Ireland: 'to remember everything is a form of madness'.[103] And indeed, if there is self-conscious madness in the methods of the Atlas Group, it seems likely that the cultural and political background to Raad's work involves a degree of what Edna Longley has called the 'historiographical mania' that has also long defined debates on the history of conflict in Ireland (and so on the history of the history of conflict in Ireland).[104] Raad's archival interventions implicitly propose, of course, a productive form of 'instability' – affirming undecidablity in the distinction between fact and fiction – and if we turn back once again to specific circumstances in the North of Ireland, corresponding forms of high anxiety can be highlighted in certain post-Troubles curatorial initiatives – projects driven by post-conflict 'archival impulses' and historicising inclinations.

A series of exhibitions at the Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art* has displayed interesting varieties of these 'hysterical symptoms'. Though in most respects a very conventional proposition – a plan to stage a series of historical surveys of art from Northern Ireland, covering a well-defined time period – there is something *excessive* and eccentric about this project. It is a curatorial venture conceived by the Golden Thread Gallery's Director Peter Richards – an artist who has for several years explored through performance and photography the complex relation of representation and monument-making to lived history, and who was included in the public performance/intervention weekend that accompanied Northern Ireland's exhibition *The Nature of Things* at the Venice Biennale in 2005. Richards's aim – as artist and curator – in developing this ongoing series of exhibitions has been to 'form a significant historical archive of Northern Irish art from 1945 to the present', providing 'much-needed historical context'. In doing so, he has sought to demonstrate, with as much variety as possible, 'that there are many versions of history'.[105] This series, Richards says, 'embraces the overlapping and sometimes contradictory versions of history'.[106] It is therefore set-up to be at odds with itself, defined by internal dispute. Beginning in 2005 with *Post-War – Post-Troubles*, curated by S.B. Kennedy and Brian McAvera, the *Collective Histories* has continued over subsequent years, featuring within the ongoing series such exhibitions as *Icons of the North* (again with McAvera at the

curatorial helm), *Art and the Disembodied Eye* (curated by Liam Kelly), *The Double Image* (curated by Dougal McKenzie), *A Shout from the Street* (curated by Declan McGonagle) and *The Visual Force* (curated by Slavka Sverakova). Each has taken a different element or emphasis of Northern Irish art since the 1960s as its theme; and each has espoused, often in very explicit terms, a particular vision of art in relation to the wider history and society.[107]

Again, this approach may seem curatorially straightforward and familiar in its need to cover terrain that is, for some, well-travelled. Indeed, we might remind ourselves here of the good arguments made by Daniel Jewesbury for an 'end of the history of Northern Irish art'. Jewesbury's wish in this regard is to highlight how this restrictive art historical framing has become 'far more problematic than it has been customarily portrayed'.[108] Jewesbury insists that meaningful examinations of art in the North today 'must inevitably exceed the historiography not just of Northern Irish art but of Northern Ireland itself'.[109] He argues that an excess of art and writing arising out of the Troubles involved 'over-simplistic responses', serving up 'reiterated banalities of the media', failing to 'exceed the two traditions model'.[110] By contrast, he proposes that genuinely challenging recent art from Northern Ireland has 'moved beyond such understandings'; and now, for these reasons, 'it may no longer be meaningful to talk about Northern Irish art at all, at least not in the same way'.[111] To what extent, then, have Peter Richards's 'collective histories' delivered their narrative in 'the same way'? And if an 'end of the history of Northern Irish art' is desirable, what, we might well ask, has been the hoped-for 'end' of *this* history of art – what, in other words, is its goal? As the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips writes (echoing Derrida's counter-intuitive comments on archival temporality) 'memories always have a future in mind'.[112]

Perhaps a useful point of information here concerns the scale of Peter Richards's scheme. *Collective Histories* has been planned to run, on and off, for a lengthy extended period, punctuating the Golden Thread Gallery's programme for some years. This is, without doubt, a considerable undertaking, and, in many respects, a bizarre one for an institution of this scale and type: that is, a modestly-sized publicly funded contemporary art space without the resources usually required for a long-term, museum-scale national or regional art history project of this kind. Richards has chosen to eschew exclusive commitment to the emergent and the international in his curatorial planning (the type of programming that might be more obviously expected from an independent contemporary art gallery of this kind), privileging instead an ongoing process of examining and re-examining local conditions, going over and over the details of an historical period that, more generally, this society is being fervently urged to leave behind (on the basis of the 'fresh start' urged by the Good Friday Agreement). From one perspective, therefore, these exhibitions might be understood as rather parochial in outlook, arising from an approach that demonstrates perverse inward-and-backward-looking tendencies, rejecting the assumed strategic prestige of international art-world positioning. Yet precisely owing to its apparent perversity, the *Collective Histories* series might also be valued as a stubborn, unorthodox form of

remembering, a curatorial experiment that gambles on the possibilities for public debate that may emerge through this long-term commitment to re-making and persistently re-staging history. (In this regard we might compare Hans Ulrich Obrist's framing of an ongoing series of interviews with curatorial pioneers as a 'protest against forgetting' – a slogan he borrows from the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, whose work has perennially struggled against the way 'our society is geared to make us forget'.[113])

Valuing Richards's *Collective Histories* project as an *experiment* might well allow us to consider this component of Golden Thread Gallery programming as an instance of 'experimental institutionalism' – a term coined by the influential curator Charles Esche, and one that has been a source of much debate in European contemporary art since the late 1990s. 'Experimental institutionalism' and the related notion of 'new institutionalism' declare, as Alex Farquharson notes, a deepened curatorial interest in 'values of fluidity, discursivity, participation and production'.[114] Such practitioners frame the contemporary art institution 'as a kind of compensatory public space', an 'oasis of openness' or 'forum of possibility', in Esche's hopeful words, where 'things can be imagined otherwise'.[115] This is, in Esche's case, a curatorial ethos that, as Farquharson adds, seeks to see 'the dissolution of the homogeneous public sphere of Enlightenment (as theorised by Jürgen Habermas) ... [as] an opportunity', imagining an alternative to long-standing, received bourgeois art values 'in the form of competing publics in the plural, an "agonistic pluralism" of adversaries (rather than enemies) that, according to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, is a prerequisite of radical democracy'.[116] Considering the potential of programming at the Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast, then, we might hope that Richards's desire for plurality in the imagining of 'collective histories' – as manifested in his invitation to other, specialist curators to stage a survey or study of art in Northern Ireland since (at least) the 1960s – might similarly allow for the presentation of new or unexpected perspectives, in new or unexpected forms. Richards has sought to make visible potentially uncomfortable and productively incompatible versions of a regional art history; his project makes space (to borrow again from Jewesbury) for 'contradictions, conflicts, contests' in the post-Troubles period.

An appropriate preface to the series, given the stated interest in making evident tensions in the articulation of multiple historical viewpoints, was Una Walker's specially commissioned installation *Surveiller* (2004).[117] This was an artwork that derived from extensive archival research, presenting (on wall-mounted perspex displays and in accompanying searchable computer resources) basic reference details relating to all art exhibitions that had taken place in Northern Ireland during the Troubles years (Figure 18). Walker's unorthodox archive was staged in such a way as to be both educational and conceptually disorientating, combining in its distinctive display style the dry historical data of the research with forceful allusions to systems of control and observation: her conceit being to make the assembled exhibition lists accessible to gallery visitors within a simulation of an austere office setting that was kept under constant observation by

Beuys as a significant point of reference for these reflections, identifying the visit of Beuys to Belfast in 1974 as pivotal to the development of her understanding of art's presence and purpose in the world. This was, for Sverakova, a revelatory event that can be remembered as an 'utterly atypical' occasion, one that had a direct bearing on much of the most independent-minded art that was to follow in subsequent years.[131] For Sverakova, learning from Beuys meant being able to believe in art as a 'kingdom of freedom' (a phrase she borrows from Friedrich Schiller).[132] Beuys is also cited, in passing, by Declan McGonagle, though the reference on this occasion offers support for a position more hostile to understandings of art as its own independent 'kingdom', as a stand-alone realm of thought or practice. Instead McGonagle takes from Beuys the value of thinking art in co-operative terms (the viewer is always 'the co-producer of meaning in the art process'[133]) and so too, then, he addresses art as a necessarily provisional, *co-existent* concept. Art is, for McGonagle, an always-collaborative construct, created dialogically: its meanings and values, its processes and products, all determined in historically-specific relation to other social systems and structures. Once again, then, here is a glimpse of disagreement between curatorial positions, and they are points of difference that are not only to do with the *selection* of art appropriate to 'histories of Northern Irish art' (in fact, several of the same artists appeared in more than one of the exhibitions), but also about the cultural constitution of such categories and concepts.

It is this spirit of disagreement and divergence in the articulation of positions on the past that can be again pointed to as pertinent to the post-Troubles predicament – as proper to the cultivation of a 'public space' of agonistic contest within, and in relation to, the art field. The specific conclusions and arguments presented by each individual curator might each be challenged on different terms, from different perspectives, but it is perhaps the facilitated variance between different engagements with history-making, and the associated sense of unending enquiry and impossible resolution, that is most significant here. This sequence of historical snapshots might be seen to function like a series of Willie Doherty photographs: each image captures a 'partial' view that is inflected by adjacent views; every new addition alters our perspective on another, but never brings us closer to a 'complete' picture. A crucial 'collective' element of these histories is, then, the insistent sense of a constitutive lack or resistant 'outside' to any constructed representation. We gain in an expanded, unravelling historical project of this kind, an indication of that 'impossibility' that, as Charles Merewether says, 'haunts the logic of the archive'.[134]

Notes

1 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), p. 4.
2 Lars Bang Larsen, 'The other side', *Frieze*, 106 (2007).
3 Larsen, 'The other side'.

4 Daniel Jewesbury, 'What we will remember, and what we must forget', in *Willie Doherty: Ghost Story* (Belfast: British Council, Arts Council Northern Ireland & Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, 2007), p. 13; published on the occasion of the Northern Ireland exhibition at the 51st Venice Biennale.
5 Jewesbury, 'What we will remember', p. 13.
6 Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press/October Books, 1991), p. 42.
7 We might note the recurring importance of the word 'story' to Doherty's practice: for instance, his 2007 exhibition at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, was entitled *Stories*; while *Same Old Story* was the title of an exhibition shown in 1999 at Firstsite, Colchester and in 1997 at Matt's Gallery, London.
8 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 5.
9 White, *Metahistory*, p. 7.
10 Milan Kundera, *The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), p. 148.
11 Kundera, *The Curtain*, pp. 148–9.
12 Colin Graham, 'Every passer-by a culprit? Archive fever, photography and the peace in Belfast', *Third Text*, 19:5 (2005), 569.
13 Ursula Burke and Daniel Jewesbury, *Archive Lisburn Road* (Belfast: Belfast Exposed, 2005), p. 18.
14 Graham, 'Every passer-by a culprit?', 569.
15 Graham, 'Every passer-by a culprit?', 568.
16 Graham, 'Every passer-by a culprit?', 569. Graham also discusses Eoghan McTigue's *All Over Again*: a series of photographic investigations of overpainted paramilitary murals made between 2001 and 2003. This work has also been addressed in related terms by Aaron Kelly in his essay 'Walled communities', in *Eoghan McTigue: All Over Again* (Belfast: Belfast Exposed, 2004) [unpaginated].
17 See Hal Foster, 'An archival impulse', *October*, 110 (2004), 3–22. The lack of recognition of this wider archival impulse in contemporary art is notable in the essays accompanying the exhibition *Archiving Place and Time*, a group show of 'post-conflict art' from Northern Ireland curated by Fionna Barber and Megan Johnston and held at Manchester Metropolitan University (November–December, 2009), Millennium Court Arts Centre, Portadown (April–May, 2010) and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (June–December, 2010). Artists featured in the show were: Willie Doherty, Rita Duffy, John Duncan, Sandra Johnston, Conor McFeely, Conor McGrady, Mary McIntyre, Philip Napier and Mike Hogg, Aisling O'Beirn, Paul Seawright. See Fionna Barber and Megan Johnston, *Archiving Place and Time* (Manchester/Portadown: Manchester Metropolitan University/Millennium Court Arts Centre, 2009), pp. 2–15.
18 See Sarah Pierce and Claire Coombes (eds), *Gerard Byrne: On the Present Tense Through the Ages* (Cologne/London: Walther König/Lisson Gallery, 2007).
19 Foster, 'An archival impulse', p. 3. 'Archive fever' is also the title given by Okwui Enwezor to his survey of 'uses of the document in contemporary art', presented at the International Centre for Photography in New York, January to May 2008. See Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: International Centre of Photography, 2008).
20 Foster, 'An archival impulse', p. 4.
21 Foster, 'An archival impulse', p. 5.

22 Mark Godfrey, 'The artist as historian', *October*, 120 (2007), 140.
23 Godfrey, 'The artist as historian', p. 143.
24 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (London: Basic Books, 2001), pp. xvi–xvii.
25 Stuart Comer, 'Backward glances', in the publication accompanying *Matthew Buckingham: Play the Story*, curated by Mark Godfrey (London: Camden Arts Centre, 2007).
26 Melissa Gronlund, 'Storytelling', *Frieze*, 106 (2007).
27 Godfrey, 'The artist as historian', p. 146.
28 Godfrey, 'The artist as historian', p. 146.
29 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 18.
30 James Meyer, 'Review: Luke Fowler: Serpentine Gallery, London', *Artforum*, September 2009.
31 The films referred to here are, respectively, *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* (2006) and *What You See Is Where You're At* (2001).
32 Duncan Campbell in conversation with Melissa Gronlund, in Steven Bode (ed.), *Duncan Campbell* (London: Film and Video Umbrella and Sligo: The Model, 2010), p. 39.
33 Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl, introduction to Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (eds), *The Green Room: Reconsidering the Documentary in Contemporary Art* (Berlin/New York: Sternberg Press/Bard College, 2008), p. 16.
34 Nicholas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009), pp. 30–1.
35 Martin Herbert, 'A voice, not your own', in Steven Bode (ed.), *Duncan Campbell* (London: Film and Video Umbrella and Sligo: The Model, 2010), p. 8.
36 Herbert, 'A voice, not your own', p. 9.
37 Herbert, 'A voice, not your own', p. 9.
38 As well as pointing to the numerous other artists who have addressed the DeLorean story (listed in Chapter 4 in relation to Katrina Moorhead's work for *The Nature of Things*) it is perhaps worth noting that the poet Paul Muldoon was involved in the production of a BBC drama about DeLorean in the late 1980s that involved a process (if not an outcome) that was to some degree similar to Duncan Campbell's. As Tim Kendall writes, 'in 1989 the BBC broadcast *Monkeys*, a highly acclaimed account of the events leading up to the arrest and subsequent acquittal of the businessman John DeLorean; although Muldoon's input was "finally very small", he had edited and adapted the transcripts of the F.B.I. and Drug Enforcement Agency tapes to produce a condensed, coherent narrative'; see Tim Kendall, *Paul Muldoon* (Bridgend: Seren/Poetry Wales, 1996), p. 21. In addition, Glenn Patterson's 2016 novel *Gull* (London: Head of Zeus, 2016) is a fictionalised account of DeLorean's entrepreneurial endeavours in Belfast; and *Stainless Style*, the debut recording by the band Neon Neon (Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys and hip-hop producer Boom Bip) is a concept album focusing on DeLorean's life. For further cultural-historical reflections on the DeLorean saga see also Richard Kirkland, 'That car: modernity, Northern Ireland and the DMC-12', *Field Day Review*, 3 (2007), 95–108.
39 Martin Herbert notes that the film's title references Beckett 'while quoting graffiti about a comfortable Nationalist area of Belfast, where Catholics were thought indifferent to sectarian violence' (Herbert, 'A voice, not your own', p. 7). More accurately, the graffiti refers to those wealthy Nationalists who were living in the Malone Road area, rather than to the Malone Road as a 'Nationalist area'. The Malone Road has

traditionally been one of the most affluent areas not just of South Belfast, but of all Northern Ireland, and is the geographical base of much of the establishment culture, including two of the city's most prominent grammar schools.
40 Duncan Campbell in conversation with Melissa Gronlund, p. 39.
41 Tobi Maier, 'History through peripheries: interview with Duncan Campbell', *Mousse*, 18 (April 2009). Available at http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=77 [last accessed 16/08/16].
42 Campbell in Maier, 'History through peripheries'.
43 Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 12.
44 De Búrca has completed a practice-based PhD at the University of Ulster, supervised by Willie Doherty.
45 Tacita Dean, 'Analogue', in the accompanying notes for *Tacita Dean* at Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, 22nd March 2007 – 17th June 2007 (Dublin: Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, 2007), p. 42.
46 Svetlana Boym, 'The off-modern mirror', *e-flux journal*, 19 (2011). Available at www.e-flux.com/journal/the-off-modern-mirror/ [last accessed 05/06/16].
47 Boym, 'The off-modern mirror'.
48 A productive complication of the category '*post*-Troubles art' is prompted by Boym's playful diversion from the customary use of such labels: 'Instead of fast-changing prefixes – "post," "anti," "neo," "trans," and "sub" – that suggest an implacable movement forward, against or beyond, and try desperately to be "in," I propose to go off: "off" as in "off kilter," "off Broadway," "off the map," or "way off," "off-brand," "off the wall," and occasionally "off-color"'; see Boym, 'The off-modern mirror'.
49 Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia' [1929], in Peter Demetz (ed.), *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), pp. 181–2.
50 Hal Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', in *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 137. Foster's choice of the word 'sedimented' here closely corresponds to Chantal Mouffe's use of the term in her definition of the 'social': 'The social is the realm of sedimented practices, that is, practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted, as if they were self-grounded.' What we may perceive, Mouffe suggests, as 'the "natural" order – jointly with the "common sense" which accompanies it – is the result of sedimented practices; it is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity exterior to the practices that bring it into being'; see *On the Political*, pp. 17–18.
51 Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, capital of the nineteenth century' [1939], in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *The Arcades Project* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 13.
52 Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', p. 139.
53 Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', p. 139.
54 Quoted in Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', p. 141.
55 Daniel Birnbaum has also drawn attention to this aspect of Douglas's work, noting two ideas of particular relevance to this chapter. Firstly, as we discuss forms of 'doubtful' documentary, we can note, as Birnbaum does, how Douglas declares that 'the doubt, that pronounal doubt, doubt of pronouns, doubt of the certainty of an I, is the *a priori* of my work'. Secondly, Birnbaum notes the importance of the spectral to Douglas's films: films such as *Der Sandmann*, which draws on Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny' and more specifically, *Le Detroit*, 'a ghost story about a house that "holds

darkness within"', are understood by Douglas as studies in what he refers to as 'spectrology'. See Birnbaum, *Chronology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007), pp. 47–65.

56 A 2009 show of Paul Seawright's photographic investigations of urban space in post-Troubles Belfast (at the Millennium Court Arts Centre, Portadown) took as its title the phrase 'Conflicting accounts'. See Colin Darke's review in *Source*, 59 (2009).

57 From the film *London*, written and directed by Patrick Keiller (1994).

58 From the press release for the Belfast Exposed exhibition *Daniel Jewesbury and Aisling O'Beirn*, 2nd July to 13th August 2010.

59 See Robert Smithson, 'A tour of the monuments of Passaic, New Jersey', in Jack Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 68–74.

60 J.G. Ballard, 'Interview with J.G Ballard', *RE/Search*, 8:9 (1982).

61 Chris Petit, 'The last Modernist', online *Granta* article, 22nd April 2009, www.granta.com/New-Writing/The-Last-Modernist [last accessed 04/01/16].

62 Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the societies of control', *October*, 59 (1992), 7.

63 J.G. Ballard, Preface to *Crash* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. i.

64 Rem Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', *October*, 100 (2002), 176.

65 Iain Sinclair, *Ghost Milk: Calling Time on the Grand Project* (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 60.

66 Sinclair, *Ghost Milk*, p. 58.

67 Sinclair, *Ghost Milk*, p. 59.

68 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 232.

69 Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p. 232.

70 See Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (London: Penguin, 2006).

71 Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin chronicle', in *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1979), p. 298.

72 Benjamin, 'A Berlin chronicle', p. 298.

73 Susan Sontag, 'Introduction', in Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 10.

74 Sontag, 'Introduction', pp. 10–11.

75 A correspondence might also be drawn between Jewesbury and O'Beirn's project and the influential writings of Ciaran Carson. In particular, Carson's 1999 collection *Belfast Confetti* employs numerous references to maps and labyrinths in poems that chart psycho-geographic journeys through the changing spaces of Belfast. Benjamin's comment about learning how to 'lose oneself in a city' is quoted at the opening of the book. See Ciaran Carson, *Belfast Confetti* (Loughrew, Meath: Gallery Press, 1989).

76 In Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, pp. 5–6.

77 Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, p. 7.

78 Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, p. 7.

79 Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 4.

80 Michael Sheringham, 'Archiving', in Michael Sheringham (ed.), *Restless Cities* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 9.

81 Sheringham, 'Archiving', p. 14.

82 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 106.

83 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 108.

84 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 106.

85 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 107.

86 Richard Flood, 'Not about Mel Gibson', in *Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century* (New York: New Museum, 2007), p. 12.

87 This is the particular cliché engaged with by Ursula Burke and Daniel Jewesbury's *Archive Lisburn Road* project; see Burke and Jewesbury, *Archive Lisburn Road*, p. 18.

88 Robert MacFarlane, 'London Fields', *Guardian*, 8th December 2007 [online]. Available at www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/dec/08/photography [last accessed 28/01/16].

89 MacFarlane's essay was written after a walk around the fringe areas of East London with Iain Sinclair, a walk that in some ways resembles aspects of Jewesbury and O'Beirn's urban tours. 'The day's aim was simple', MacFarlane writes. 'We would walk the perimeter of London's "Olympic Park" – the 500-acre site in the Lower Lea valley that has been requisitioned, fenced off and depopulated in preparation for its Olympian redevelopment'; see MacFarlane, 'London Fields'.

90 John Hutchinson's comments in his essay for the Douglas Hyde Gallery publication *Saunter* have been helpful here: see John Hutchinson, *Saunter* (Dublin: Douglas Hyde Gallery, 2010).

91 Sheringham, 'Archiving', p. 1.

92 Iain Sinclair, *Lights out for the Territory* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 4.

93 Susan McKay, *Bear in Mind These Dead* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), p. 11.

94 See Julie Bacon (ed.), *Arkive City* (Belfast/Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Interface/Locus, 2008).

95 These views were presented 'with specific reference to six pre-identified themes: taxonomies, technology, memory and identities, liberty and surveillance, markets and resources, and voids'; see Bacon, *Arkive City*.

96 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 90.

97 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.

98 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.

99 The Atlas Group, 'Let's be honest, the rain helped', in Charles Merewether (ed.), *The Archive* (London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2006), p. 179.

100 Atlas Group, 'Let's be honest, the rain helped', p. 179.

101 Atlas Group, 'Let's be honest, the rain helped', p. 180.

102 Charles Merewether, introduction to *The Archive*, p. 17.

103 Brian Friel, *Translations* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), p. 67.

104 Edna Longley, 'Northern Irish poetry and the end of history', in *Poetry and Posterity* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 2000), p. 286.

105 Peter Richards, 'Foreword', in Brian McAvera, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: Icons of the North* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2006), p. 7.

106 Richards, 'Foreword', p. 7.

107 It should be noted that the ideas on *Collective Histories* developed here are less concerned with the particular artworks featured in individual exhibitions than with the broad curatorial agenda of the project and with the specific positions adopted by invited curators.

108 Daniel Jewesbury, 'I wouldn't have started from here, or, the end of the history of Northern Irish art', *Third Text*, 19:5 (2005), 527.

109 Jewesbury, 'I wouldn't have started from here', p. 527.

110 Jewesbury, 'I wouldn't have started from here', p. 527.

111 Jewesbury, 'I wouldn't have started from here', p. 527.

112 Adam Phillips, 'The forgetting museum', in *Side Effects* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006), p. 131.
113 Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'A protest against forgetting', in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007), p. 149.
114 Alex Farquharson, 'Bureaux de change', *Frieze*, 101 (2006). Available at www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/ [last accessed 19/11/14].
115 Quoted in Farquharson, 'Bureaux de change'. Farquharson cites as a source for these comments an online resource of the Rooseum in Malmo where Esche was Director from 2000 to 2004. The cited text is no longer accessible on the Rooseum website.
116 Farquharson, 'Bureaux de change'.
117 Una Walker, *Surveiller*, Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast, 2004 and Static, Liverpool, 2005. For this project, Walker 'spent 128 days, approximately 1,280 hours, producing an inventory of art exhibitions in Belfast from March 1968 to March 2001'. See www.unawalker.com/gallery_325081.html [last accessed 11/06/15].
118 Peter Richards, from the 'Acknowledgements' in S.B. Kennedy and Brian McAvera, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: Post War – Pre-Troubles* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2005), p. 47.
119 Slavka Sverakova 'Elliptical narratives: a conversation with Una Walker', *Sculpture*, 24:1 (2005). Available at www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag05/JanFeb_05/una-walker/una-walker.shtml [last accessed 25/01/16].
120 Kennedy and McAvera, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 121.
121 From information on the gallery website http://goldenthreadgallery.co.uk/about/ [last accessed 01/12/11].
122 Walter Benjamin, 'Literary history and the study of literature' [1931], in *Selected Writings Volume 2 1927–34*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 464.
123 McAvera, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, pp. 10–11.
124 Dougal McKenzie, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: The Double Image* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2007), p. 13.
125 McKenzie, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 13.
126 McKenzie, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 14.
127 Declan McGonagle, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: A Shout in the Street* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2008), p. 11.
128 McGonagle, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 15. This is a position that has been articulated variously through McGonagle's curatorial work at institutions such as the Orchard Gallery in Derry in the 1980s and at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in the 1990s.
129 Slavka Sverakova, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: The Visual Force* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2009), p. 11.
130 Sverakova, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 19.
131 Sverakova, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 11.
132 Sverakova, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 29.
133 McGonagle, *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, p. 24.
134 Merewether, introduction to *The Archive*, p. 17.

5

Phantom publics: imagining ways of 'being together'

> For democracy remains to come; this is its essence insofar as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to come: even when there is democracy, it never exists, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept.[1]
>
> [A]n aesthetic politics always defines itself by a certain recasting of the distribution of the sensible, a reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms ... The dream of a suitable political work of art is in fact the dream of disrupting the relationship between the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle. It is the dream of an art that would transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations. As a matter of fact, political art cannot work in the simple form of a meaningful spectacle that would lead to an 'awareness' of the state of the world. Suitable political art would ensure, at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification. In fact this ideal effect is always the object of a negotiation between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy the sensible form of art and the radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all political meaning.[2]

Social and situational interventions

In this final chapter I wish now to shift focus somewhat so as to address examples of art practices that have in various ways sought to create, contemplate and *complicate* situations of social encounter in relation to various aspects of the post-Troubles predicament. The main interest here will be in works and projects that (to borrow from Nicholas Bourriaud's description of the relational art of the 1990s) attempt to take as their 'theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context', or in other words, that take 'being-together as a central theme'.[3] As before, however (and as we shall see, not always in tune with Bourriaud's broader reflections on relational aesthetics), the emphasis will