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Borderlands and Beyond: Place, Space and Process —Growing up in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of borderlands in relation to sectarianism, polarisation, and the most recent political conflict in Northern Ireland (1968–1998). It describes the experiences of people living on borders, in margins, borderzones, intersections, no-go areas, interface and compression points, as well as the emptiness of no persons' land. Aside from a few clearly defined crossing points, border country is unspecified, reflecting its shiftiness, which can mirror psychotherapeutic work with its complex internal psychic states and defences. Using a vignette style of writing, my siblings and I offer collaborative family stories in order to share a sense of borderlands —an experience of being caught between the worlds. Although we are 20 years into the peace process, there may still be reverberations of the old cultural edict "whatever you say—say nothing." However, people have begun to feel safe enough to speak openly about their experiences of the conflict. In any ongoing threatening hyper-vigilant situation, children and adults can and do unconsciously activate a dormant area of consciousness—a heightened intuitive faculty as a kind of survival tactic. I further suggest that my family also developed an increasingly alert *collective* intuitive organism —a shared reality, in order to stay safe as a group. I amplify these ideas with the help of theoretical reflection and clinical material. In conclusion, I cite from a new wave of local academics, philosophers, and poets who are revisioning their ideas about place, space, and process in a more consciously fluid way, as opposed to the unconscious or subconscious fluidity and shiftiness of the traditional borderlands.

1 | BORDERLANDS, NORTHERN IRELAND

1.1 | Introduction to Borderlands

I have chosen the painting of British soldiers lost on patrol, as a local representation of the external Irish borderlands (Figure 1). Aside from a few clearly defined crossing points, border country is unspecified, reflecting its shiftiness which perhaps mirrors therapeutic work, with its challenging internal psychic states and defences. While exploring the theme of living as a child in the Northern Irish contact zones, margins, no-go areas, interfaces, compression points, political intersections, no person's lands, nowhere lands, and reflecting on the internal psychic impact of these experiences, I had a dream about "borderlands," a term I wasn't specifically familiar with, but it seemed to embrace and embody all of the above border/margin concepts—and so I began to work with it. The images in the dream aren't pertinent here, but it functioned as a catalyst for further exploration, resulting in the discovery of writers who were citing the borderlands theme at that time, including Gloria Anzaldúa and Jerome Bernstein. They initially informed and then enriched my understanding of this concept. I resist defining borderlands; I feel to define it is to miss the point. When it's defined it becomes undone. Rather, the term represents and holds the ambiguity of many worlds at the same time and, in clinical terms, may reflect the capacity to tolerate, hold, and work with ambivalence. The expression of an enigmatic and paradoxical borderlands will become more evident as I proceed through the paper with family anecdotes, followed by theoretical reflection and clinical material.

Chicana writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa, in Borderlands/La Frontera (1987, 2007), developed the theme of identity in relation to our concept of "border," not just as a simple divide between here and there, us and them, but as a psychic, social, and cultural terrain that we inhabit, and that inhabits us.

> Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an "alien" element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being "worked" on. I have the sense that certain "faculties"—not just in me but in every border resident . . . —and dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened. (1987, preface, p. 19)

FIGURE 1 *Welcome to the Irish Republic, Sir!* (Wade, 1988).

> *La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant "sensing," a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It's a kind of survival tactic that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate. It is latent in all of us. (pp. 61–62)*

Jungian analyst Jerome Bernstein (2008) described the emergence of borderlands, as a spectrum of reality that is beyond the rational. He argued that a greater openness to transrational reality which bridges the mind–body divide, allows new possibilities for understanding and healing confounding clinical and developmental enigma. Although Bernstein stated that the concept of borderlands (not borderline) has been clinically used since 1884, it was introduced to him directly through his work with client Hannah, who had read and been inspired by Anzaldúa's work on this theme.

Borderlands is a known place/space for me, both in childhood and as an adult. It is psychic territory which I am attuned to, and which I can sit in with a degree of familiarity. On reflection, this sensibility was heightened and honed as a result of living in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. As Anzaldúa suggested, it is developed unconsciously, instinctively, as a survival tactic in hyper-vigilant, dangerous situations. This intuitive faculty has proved a valuable tool in life and clinical practice—but of course I can also get caught, tripped, conned, and hoodwinked by its chameleon-like shadowy nature.

In order to contextualise the theme of borderlands, I would like to offer a brief historical sketch. In addition, a list of political terms appears at the end of this article.

1.2 | The Troubles: Conflict in Northern Ireland

The place officially named Northern Ireland is also known as Ulster, The North, The North of Ireland, The North-East, The Province, The Six Counties, The Occupied Territories, The Occupied Six Counties, or The Occupied Zone (shortened to the OZ), depending on your politics.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland are historically rooted in the colonising of Ireland by England, with the first full conquest taking place between 1536 and 1691. Following the Anglo-Irish War of Independence in 1921, Ireland won back its freedom, with the exception of the six north-eastern counties which were to become part of the newly instated United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A three-hundred-mile border was negotiated to signify Northern Ireland's split from the rest of Ireland. Catholics made up around a third of the population in the North and felt corralled and split off from the formation of the new Southern Ireland/Free State which is now officially Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

However, it was a different experience at that time for the Protestant community in the North, who saw the reconfigured union with Great Britain as a supportive bolster for their civil and political rights and felt uncomfortable with what appeared to be a potentially oppositional culture developing in the South.

The dilemma is reflected to an extent in this quote by Northern Irish poet, Seamus Heaney:

> *Each person in Ulster lives first in the Ulster of the actual present, and then in one or other Ulster of the mind. . . . The fountainhead of the Unionist's myth springs in the Crown of England but he has to hold his own in the island of Ireland. The fountainhead of the Nationalist's myth lies in the idea of an integral Ireland, but he too lives in an exile from his ideal place. Yet, while he has to concede that he is a citizen of the partitioned British state, the Nationalist can hold to the physical fact of his presence upon the Irish island just as the Unionist can affirm the reality of the political realm of the United Kingdom even as he recognises the geographical fact that Ireland is his insular home. (cited in Kennedy-Andrews, 2008, p. 2)*

"The Troubles" is a euphemism referring to the civil and political unrest and violent political conflict in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998. However, the term was first used to refer to the War of Independence (1919–1921), and

later to the Irish Republican Army's bombing campaigns in Britain in 1939, and in Northern Ireland for the seven years between 1956 and 1962.

The most recent Troubles have exposed many people to death and destruction over a period of 30 years. From Partition in 1921 through to 1972, Northern Ireland had been a one-party unionist state, but by the mid-sixties, it was beginning to liberalise, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in America. An association was formed in Northern Ireland to garner support for equal rights for the Catholic minority. It received support from all sections of the community including substantial backing from liberal Protestant opinion. However, the movement's early progress was stymied by a hard-line government which had support from militant loyalist and Orange Order allies. The stage was set for a full-blown civil eruption (Agee, 2011).

American poet in Ireland, Chris Agee described this moment in history in *The New North*:

> It came in August 1969. The spark was widespread house-burning by loyalist mobs, with some connivance by the police, in Catholic districts of Belfast, following nationalist riots in Derry; but Partition's accumulation of minority grievance and unionist intransigence, the worldwide insurrectional atmosphere of the late sixties, republican idealism, the self-perpetuating nature of sectarian communal violence, and a host of other factors—the stuff, again, of empirical history—now all combined to launch the Troubles. (2011, pp. xxi–xxii)

Army troops arrived from mainland Britain to protect Catholic districts and stabilise the situation, but events escalated. By 1971, republican and loyalist paramilitaries took centre-stage. In one day, the IRA exploded twenty-two bombs in Belfast, resulting in nine deaths, and over 100 wounded, with various loyalist terror groups stepping up their murder campaigns (Agee, 2011).

Catholics, who weren't all nationalists or republicans, and Protestants, who weren't all unionists or loyalists as commonly and simplistically presented in the media, did *not* support the use of violence. However, the terrorist campaign, actively fought by republican and loyalist paramilitaries, and the State's campaign of counter-terrorism by the British Army and the police, meant that the Northern Irish conflict became defined by widespread violence.

During the 30-year span of the Troubles, more than 3,500 people were killed. Many thousands were injured. Thousands were exposed to traumatic violence. Thousands fled, becoming "refugees." Thousands—predominantly Catholics—were imprisoned or incarcerated without trial for long periods in internment camps. However, by the 1990s there was widespread acknowledgement that violence was not going to deliver a resolution to the conflict, and success could only be possible if paramilitaries from both sides were given a voice at the negotiating table.

Northern Ireland has just lived through its 20th year of the peace process. It has seen the establishment of political negotiations, ceasefires by the main republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations, and seismic shifts in the governing of the country, which is inclusive of all of its citizens. Progress has been steady and it now appears safe enough for people to begin to think about the end of the Troubles, when the intergenerational, political, sectarian, and socio-economic conflict was expressed in violence. The generation who grew up in the shadow of the gun and the bomb has only in recent years begun to tell its stories.

1.3 | Political Projection and Polarisation

During the Troubles, the British government and media reported on the conflict in a somewhat simplistic and polarising manner as a religious war—Catholic against Protestant, nationalist against unionist, republican against loyalist, symbolic green against orange.

In Cartoon one (Figure 2), published in London's *Evening Standard* in 1982, Jak homogenised "The Irish" in this snuff movie poster as a race of psychopathic monsters who delighted in violence and bloodshed. He pictorially implied that all Irish were terrorists. This was certainly my experience living in London at that time, as it was routinely assumed, as a Northern Irish person with a Catholic background, that I was at least a supporter, if not an active
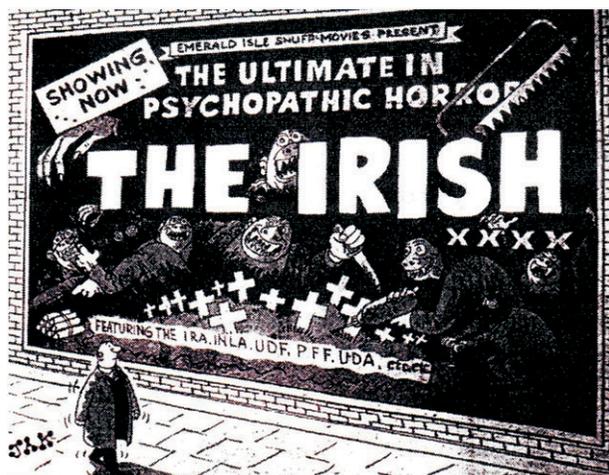
FIGURE 2 Cartoon one: "The Irish" (Jak, 1982).

member, of the IRA. The cartoon reflects the traumatic good-for-a-story projection of the English onto its neighbour in Ireland, with us and them, here and there, good and evil, rather than an acknowledgment of the centuries-long, complex colonial history between the two countries.

The tendency to bestialise the Irish in the British media would intensify when the conflict either escalated in Ireland and/or spilled over onto English soil. As in the case of the Jak cartoon, it was published at a time of political stalemate and heightened conflict, including IRA bombings of London which resulted in multiple deaths. The threat had become too-close-for-comfort and was therefore expressed with this projective fear-inducing demonic imagery.

In cartoon two (Figure 3) from *Dressed to Kill: Cartoonists and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (1983), John Darby discussed L. Perry Curtis's study of the power of Victorian caricature in reinforcing polarising and projective cultural stereotypes. In the 1840s, following the Great Famine in Ireland, Irish nationalism became increasingly militant and with this movement came the escalating demonisation of the Irish, who were generically nicknamed Pat and later Paddy or Mick in the English media. It was suggested that the mild-mannered well-to-do Irish gentleman on the left was an example of an idealised representation in the Irish media as a reaction against the common English interpretation, as parodied on the right, of an Irishman as a simianised monster, half man, half beast, a creature of the lowest order, a menace to civilisation and the colonial status quo of the time.

FIGURE 3 Cartoon two: Images extracted from a cartoon in *Pat*, a Dublin satirical periodical, originally published in 1881. Artist unknown but considered to be sketched by founder John Fergus O'Hea.

This long-standing pattern of media bestialisation of the Irish may help contextualise the Jak cartoon which struck me as a contemporary revival of the gorilla-guerrilla figure in the perodical *"Pat"*. Certainly, when it was published, Jak's "The Irish" was deemed one of the most appalling examples of anti-Irish cartoon racism since the Victorian era.

1.4 | Border Barriers and Borderlands

Closer to home, in a more concrete fashion, border barriers, also known as peace walls/peace lines, separating Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods in Belfast, Derry and Portadown, still potentially polarise and intensify psychological projections between these two communities (Figure 4). The longest wall in Belfast spans three miles, and the highest is over 40 feet. The first peace line was built in 1969 by the British Army to replace the makeshift community barricades, which often utilised burning buses, during the initial riots in Belfast. At the beginning of the Troubles, the main wall divided the Falls and Shankill Roads, the two archetypal signifiers of the conflict. The border barriers still stand at urban interface areas and compression points all over the city today. The first and only one of these 100 or so structures to be demolished was taken down in 2016, almost two decades into the peace process, and was termed our "Berlin Wall moment." This defensive architecture was significantly easier to erect than to tear down. The walls have served the function of respite, protection, and "peace" while acting as practical and psychological defence barriers. The delicate collaborative process of negotiating the dismantling of the remaining walls is anticipated to take more years to come.

It strikes me that the barriers have a parallel with particular psychological defensive infrastructures which can be erected speedily to protect against immediate threat, for example in the case of a traumatic event. The defence acts as a comfort and protection while at the same time potentially closing the person off to new life. Like the walls, it can take a much longer period of delicate and sensitive internal negotiation in order to allow a different form of support or defence to replace the redundant one—peace by piece.

Border barriers between Catholic and Protestant have at times been described projectively as simple divides between us and them, here and there, good and evil, rather than as Anzaldúa suggests, indicators of a psychic, social, and cultural terrain that we inhabit and that inhabits us. The border barrier is part of a fluid and complex borderlands system which reflects the existence of many worlds/dynamics at the same time, with their paradoxes, ambiguities, and Machiavellian complexities. There may be friends in enemies, enemies in friends, ambivalent dynamics to work and cope with between the two polar opposites of a situation presented simplistically as Catholic against Protestant (Figure 5).

FIGURE 4   Peace wall, Belfast, Northern Ireland (Ceyhun, 2016). Artist unknown.

FIGURE 5   Original photo montage: "Nicholas—caught between the worlds" (19 March 2016).

My father Nicholas found himself in such a borderlands situation, caught between the worlds in the complex crossfire between many factions, and actively targeted by these different groups and organisations. He occupied both intense external and psychically compressed landscapes, with ever-charged hypervigilance and danger, and to an extent the family lived there with him. I would like to elaborate on the theme of borderlands by offering anecdotal vignettes which reflect and contain the complex political situation in Northern Ireland from one family's perspective.

2 | VIGNETTE AS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVICE AND CONTAINER

Written vignettes are brief evocative descriptions, accounts, or episodes, fictional or non-fictional, which I have found helpful to work with as a psychological device and container. They can focus on one particular moment or give the impression of an idea, dream, client session, childhood timeline, psychodynamic pattern, or socio-political story. Because of their brevity, the vignettes have the potential to distil and proportionately hold more emotion, since those moments or impressions highlight something of import or complexity—without an overt overlay of theory or analysis. Sometimes the story can simply speak for itself.

I first used this style of writing around 1980 in London, while working on a clinical paper describing play sessions with a distressed three-year-old girl. My supervisor at the time, Craig San Roque, encouraged me to write about what had taken place in the sessions—allowing theory to come through implicitly, rather than risking it overshadowing the material (see Mehra-Slevin, 1996).

At times, it has also been helpful to present a series of vignettes as the prologue and epilogue of a clinical paper. This is in the spirit of the nineteenth-century tradition of marking the title and end pages with drawings of looping vines. Their written equivalent has the potential to offer a similar aesthetic in creating an atmospheric introduction and closure to the main body of the clinical work.

2.1 | Fictionalised Vignette as Safe Storytelling Device

Migrating from London to Sydney in 1989, I felt far enough away to more safely explore the larger political story in relation to my family and others who had, from different perspectives, experienced the Troubles in Northern Ireland. However, I was advised by a leading Irish historian in Australia, that this might not necessarily be a wise thing to do. Mindful of the principles of the academic system which I was adopting, the Emancipatory Collaborative Action Research Model at the University of Western Sydney, this expert insisted (based on his own experience) that approaching certain individuals might not be an emancipatory action, as there were active Irish paramilitary cells here in Australia.

Feeling a little vulnerable and respectfully taking heed, I renegotiated a more self-protective, collaborative project titled *Community as Archetypal Analyst*, which involved writing a series of spontaneous memories from my childhood during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Six trusted friends fictionalised the sensitive material, sending their versions out into the wider community, to be reflected upon in a safe and anonymous fashion for the purposes of archetypal interpretation and analysis. The 30 co-researchers responded with their own very moving parallel stories, poems, drawings, photographs, and paintings. In addition, they gave their analysis, as requested, of the archetypal patterning experienced while reading the material. One of the predominant energies reflected back was that of Hermes—appropriately the god of transitions and borders, moving freely, rather than being caught between the worlds.

One participant, art student Fernando, convinced that the fictionalised story read out to him by his lecturer (co-researcher friend Damien), could not be based on any *actual* situation in the world, instead produced a drawing called *Fantasy Army*, of a Daliesque, medieval Game of Thrones-style battle on horseback. One army was liveried in green and the other in orange—the two emblematic colours of the Northern Irish conflict. This might suggest that a safe fictionalised version of a story has the capacity to elicit an element of instinctive knowing in the person who receives it. During this academic period, I developed a parallel interest in fictionalising clinical cases, and creating composite clients for presentation in groups, with the confidence that colleagues, as with Fernando, would have the capacity to intuit the underlying themes and patterns of the clinical conundrums.

2.2 | Introduction to Family Anecdotes Along the Borderlands Theme

Desmond Tutu (Tutu & Tutu, 2015) wrote in *The Book of Forgiving*:

> It is not the trauma itself that defines us. It is the meaning we make of our experiences that defines us. It is the meaning we make of our experiences that defines both who we are and who we ultimately become. (p. 70)

> Telling the facts of your story is the most important element of this first step, and it is how you begin to take back what has been taken from you. When you tell your story, it is as if you are putting the puzzle pieces back together again, one hesitant memory at a time. (p. 74)

In part three I have written a new series of family vignettes in a rough timeline, not for the sake of biography or narcissistic indulgence, but to elaborate on the theme of borderlands specifically for the purposes of this paper. It is important to say that these experiences have simply been one aspect of what has felt like a relatively normal and happy childhood. The timeline format may help mirror the parallel unfolding of external historical events and, in addition, the use of the vignette style of writing may support Tutu's premise that simply telling the facts of one's story can, in itself, be cathartic. The use of this device, whether written or spoken, is congruent with the trauma training which I undertook while working in Belfast. Finally, I hope that by offering a small glimpse into one family story, it may help to elucidate an aspect of the larger community dynamic which is Northern Ireland.

The night I started writing, I had a dream around the theme of sibling integration. As a natural extension of the internal process, I asked my brothers and sisters—with quite some trepidation—if they would like to contribute a personal memory from the Troubles. I did not relay what my own stories would be. All seven siblings sent their anecdotes over a period of a year and, more recently, agreed to their publication for this article. I have found their contributions to be very moving—particularly as I learnt of some of their experiences for the first time.

In the broader community context, recent academic research from Queen's University in Belfast is showing that people have only recently begun to feel a modicum of safety in order to share their experiences of the conflict. For some time, Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been successfully acting as mediator with former paramilitaries and families of victims in Northern Ireland, with some of these poignant exchanges being shared with the wider community on television. The culturally ingrained "whatever you say—say nothing" appears to be loosening its tyrannical grip on the Northern Ireland of today.

3 | COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ANECDOTES WITH SIBLING CONTRIBUTORS: LILI, FRANCIS, JAMES, HOLLY, EMILY, LOUIS, & LAURA

My mother Angela grew up in County Donegal, in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), and lived adjacent to the border with Northern Ireland and Derry City. Her family were Catholic and Church of Ireland. Although she lived in an English-speaking part of the country, Angela's local headmaster chose isolated segregation by teaching all subjects in the Irish language. Unconstitutional as this was, my mother developed a colloquial knowledge of the Gaelic tongue which she utilised later in life.

My father Nicholas was born into a Catholic family in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. He lived very close to the border with the ROI and Dundalk Town, in what was known as "bandit country". This term was coined by the media of the time, as the nationalist area was seen as a stronghold of support for the IRA. In adolescence Nicholas was sent across this border to boarding school, offered up by his widowed mother as a monk-in-training in exchange for a privileged education. He loathed the seminary and played Gaelic football for County Cork in order to claw some time away. One night Nicholas was found sleepwalking on the dormitory's external window ledge—high above a precipitous cliff. He realised that monkhood wasn't for him.

In the mid-1940s Nicholas applied to the Garda Síochána, the ROI's police force. He was well-versed in the required Classical Greek and written Gaelic but didn't have the spoken Irish language—so was ineligible to join. In a frustrated gesture to secure a position, Nicholas returned to Northern Ireland and was accepted into the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which was ostensibly a Protestant organisation. As a result, he was publicly shamed and vilified by his local *bandito* priest during Sunday's High Mass.

Our first family home was in a vibrant country town near Derry City, where one of the first Civil Rights marches took place at the resurgence of the Troubles in 1968 (Figure 6). However, this was 1956 and I was three years old.
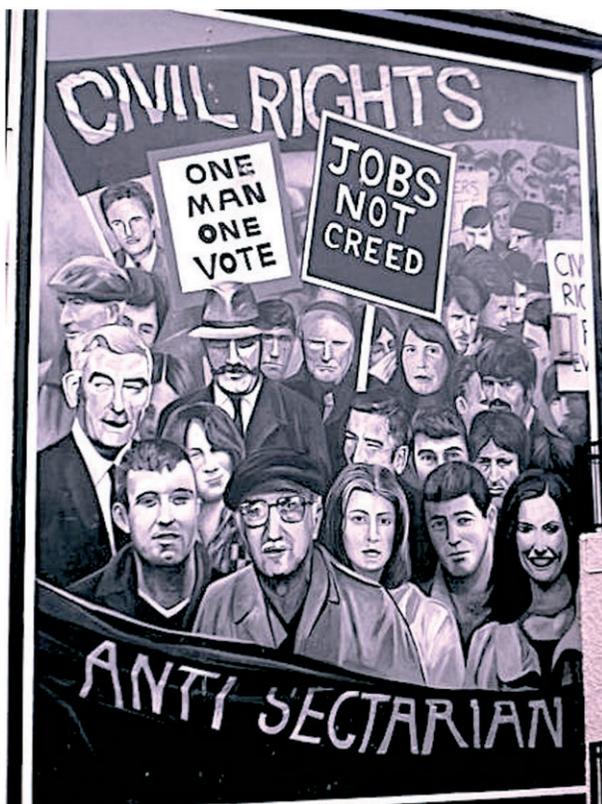

FIGURE 6 Catholic mural "Civil Rights: The Beginning" (The Bogside Artists, 2004).

My father, as a Catholic officer, faced systemic discrimination within the Protestant RUC, and was also targeted by the IRA as a betrayer of the Catholic people—simply by being a career policeman. A bomb was planted on our porch, but was discovered in time and safely defused. The Troubles as we know them, came a little early to our door.

This incident propelled us to the grey cityscape of Belfast where there were lots of children to play with, and I enjoyed many new experiences. At five I started school at the all-Catholic Holy Child, with girls and boys in separate wings, and I learnt about Catholic guilt, and the concept of the Protestant. Older "Proddie" boys routinely menaced me at the school gates, "We'll put a brick through yer face, wee girl!" This was the first time I became rudely aware of "the other" in my world.

Not long after, we bought a house nearby and I had tuition in piano, swimming, and Irish dancing. Additionally, my brother James and I enjoyed tennis lessons at the local club, despite our coach's wooden leg—but also because of it. Although we remained at the most unholy Holy Child, and became deft dodgers of the Protestant gangs, these extra curricular activities greatly compensated.

Our next home in 1963 was in Downpatrick, the reputed burial place of Saint Patrick, ironically located in the grounds of the Protestant cathedral. Catholics were forbidden by Rome to enter a church of "the other," though it was permitted and encouraged to visit the saint at his graveside. Whilst there, we kids would leap back and forth across the church's granite threshold in acts of childish rebellion. Our father led by example when he helped bury a colleague there, despite a dire warning by his priest not to do so. He attended the Protestant ceremony and had the honour and privilege of acting as pall bearer.

With ongoing obstruction within the RUC, the family continued to uproot in order for our father to secure his promotions. In 1967 we settled briefly in a quaint lakeside village in border-country Fermanagh. Social restrictions were imposed on us in relation to certain Catholic friends in the area, as our family was vulnerable to attack from local IRA activists. The convent in Enniskillen called my parents to task, "Why is your daughter associating with Protestant girls when there are plenty of good girls here!?" A little taken aback, my parents stifled a snigger in the presence of a Valkyriesque Mother Assumpta, before politely admonishing her for wasting their time. As the nun billowed off, we caught a veiled remark about my mother's breezy summer dress as "spawned by the divil himself."

It seemed to me that peace, love, and the Sixties had somehow bypassed rural Fermanagh.

This endemic sectarianism in 1967's County Fermanagh is corroborated by a graphic vignette sent by my brother James:

> When I was 13 and a pupil in a Catholic school in Enniskillen, a particular teacher was openly hostile towards me because of my father's occupation: a police officer in the predominantly Protestant RUC. On many occasions, whilst writing at my school desk, he would approach from behind and give me a sharp knuckle blow to the back of my head. It hurt for many reasons. The only thing I could do "in retaliation" was to come first in the class exams. The teacher was a Catholic priest: his subject was religious education!

Newcastle was a picturesque coastal town cradled by the Mountains of Mourne which swept down to the sea. This was our next home in 1968, which marked the official resurgence of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. We were more deeply caught between the worlds than ever, with the IRA on the one hand, and the ever-evolving Protestant paramilitary groups on the other, resenting my father as an intruder and perceived IRA mole in "their" police force.

The night before my sixteenth birthday, I stayed out past the normal curfew. Rather than face the music, I made fleeting eye contact with the trained riflemen guarding the house to the rear, and shimmied up a drainpipe to my sister's bedroom. However, the parents were sensibly alerted to the "intruder," with Dad yanking me through the window, tearing at my black skinny-rib. "Didn't you know you could have been shot!" Instead, I imagined the guards must have been having a good laugh.

Our solid granite house overlooked a deep narrow fishing cove. We kids overheard that one of the paramilitary torture methods was to tie a victim up at high tide in just such a place. The captors would make an incision, pull out a small piece of intestine, and secure it to a buoy. As the strong suction tide retreated, the intestines would slowly unravel, thus causing a long and agonising death. In my mind, I fantasised a plan to protect my father from such an end.

The Troubles escalated, precipitating a return to Belfast in 1969 (Figure 7). We bought a secluded leafy home but unfortunately inherited a Protestant paramilitary enclave nearby. Rocks were thrown through the windows, aimed at my father's head as he watched the news, so we kids helped fashion a substitute dummy—topping it off with a jaunty black wig. Family camaraderie was strong and we had much fun tricking the "enemy" as the rocks hurtled in. Thus life was normalised for us, though my mother was unimpressed with her high-spirited husband and the additionally created mayhem.

My youngest brother, identifiable by his school uniform, was routinely targeted by adolescent Protestant vigilantes. All schools were segregated then, and mostly are even today. Quite by chance one afternoon, my mother and youngest sister came upon him, pinned under a city bus. He had been making a quick getaway from his familiar
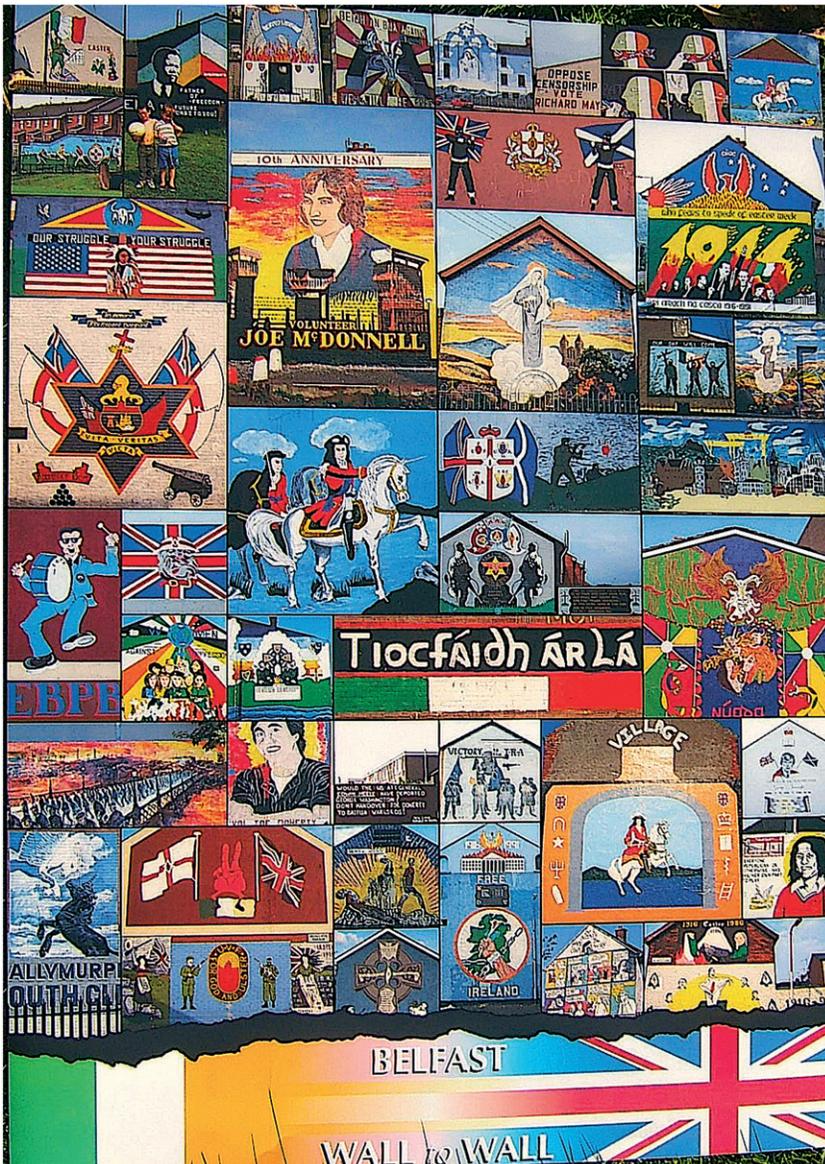

FIGURE 7 "Belfast Wall *to* Wall" (Causeway Press, 1993).

attackers and darted into the oncoming traffic. Louis, who was hospitalised for several months with hip and thigh injuries was nine years old, and Laura four.

Laura wrote movingly of her own brave stance during a sectarian attack:

With many hungry mouths to feed after school and before dinner, I was sent to the shop to get the family staple—a box of cornflakes. Walking back, in my own little world, I was confronted by one of the boys who lived nearby. He threatened me with a big cane stick and then proceeded to attack me; I can't really remember why, but I assume it was because we weren't particularly accepted in the neighbourhood and, at the age of 5 or 6, I must have been like a sitting duck (or duckling!). In self-defence, I held up the only thing I had, the big box of cornflakes, to protect me from the whipping body blows. The box of cornflakes suffered dreadfully; I can remember as they all started to spill over the pavement and the cane started hitting me, I took off down the road with the boy shouting abuse after me. I ran in to Mum crying and shaking but distinctly remember that the thing I felt worst about, was that having been given the "grown-up" task of going to the shop, I had effectively returned home empty-handed and was most upset about the empty box of cornflakes that I was clutching. Mum quizzed me urgently to find out what had happened and off she marched across and down the road to the front door of the perpetrator's house. From a distance, I could see my mum giving off to the boy's mother. I don't know what was said—but I know I was never beaten up again!

Our mother Angela was indeed the protective unsung hero of the family, and confidante and advisor to her husband, as she discreetly managed the political fallout. As usual, fragments of information were picked up by us kids from behind closed doors, including whispers of systematic torture by the British government. Family life continued from day to day, while we were under siege from increasing unseen quarters.

I often wondered about other people's lives and experiences during those times.

Working at Special Branch Headquarters, Nicholas and the team were specifically engaged in counter-terrorism. By day, he lay with his British bedfellows—MI5, MI6 and the army—but it wasn't always a happy union. At night he enjoyed a drink, and from time to time sang traditional Irish songs with my mother. As children, we were instructed in security protocol but otherwise the Troubles weren't discussed very much. We spoke very little with each other, and were tight-lipped outside of the family. This was the culturally ingrained "whatever you say—say nothing."

On occasion, I experienced my father as terrifying. Could he also be terrifying without? According to him, Tip O'Neill (former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives) denounced the RUC as sanctioned terrorism—terrorism with power. Described by my father as an Irish-American pro-nationalist, O'Neill successfully campaigned to block my father's visit to Washington to give briefings. Although initially very upset, Dad was relieved not to attend as he was a poor flyer—though he still had to endure shorter work flights within Europe on a regular basis.

Gunfire, explosions, and low-flying whirring 'copters were the normal auditory backdrop in Belfast. On daily trips through the city centre, I took in the latest devastation. Many people, including family, had stories to tell of a split-second miss with a bomb. I never did get used to the ominous presence of the Humber "Pig" tanks with their hordes of young soldiers leering at the local women. However, I later imagined most were just boys in jobs, looking for adventure and a little light relief.

It was 1971 and the Troubles were in full cry. Brian Faulkner became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in March and declared war on terrorism. In July, internment was introduced, ironically named "Operation Demetrius" after one of Shakespeare's iconic lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In September, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) was formed, which went on to become the largest Protestant paramilitary organisation in the country. The Troubles also came to a head for our family at that time. On a pleasant afternoon on Tuesday, 12th October 1971, Belfast seemed unusually quiet. I was in my last year of school, travelling through the city centre, and relaxing on the approach to the River Lagan. As the double-decker crossed the bridge, I gazed languidly at the glistening mountain of twisted metal in Eastwood's Scrap Yard. It was an ever-morphing and inspiring sight which never failed to transport

me to another realm. Home at last, with Duke the dog peering hangdog from a window. I was greeted in the entrance hall by my younger siblings who urged me to pick up the phone, whilst hurriedly informing me that our mother was taking a call in the bedroom. I picked up the receiver while my brothers and sisters formed a human chain to the landing above.

A male voice introduced himself formally as a soldier with the Irish Republican Army, and as I recall, took great pains to reassure my mother that his organisation didn't condone violence. However, on this occasion he announced that the IRA court had found our father guilty of crimes against Ireland and his sentence was assassination. The caller went on to calmly itemise these crimes from what he called a "declaration of assassination." Mum's repeated response, "You have the wrong number", appeared ineffectual, as each time, the man retorted with pieces of classified family information.

I was kept in touch with her wellbeing from the staircase, "Mum's alright and holding up." The caller continued to read from his document. In addition, the two older sons Francis and James would regretfully be assassinated in accordance with Irish warrior tradition which decreed that, as the senior boys in the family, they would be duty-bound to seek retribution for their father's death. In light of this, they needed to be factored into the sentencing. He sounded quite apologetic . . . The Chain Gang reported that mum had finally broken down and was crying. A surge of protective anger welled up, and as the game was over and, with nothing to lose, I shouted down the mouthpiece, "Fuck off—and get to hell off this line!" Unfortunately, I was unaware that the phone was being tapped with a trace in progress. My mother's delaying tactics only made sense retrospectively. Whilst feeling very bad indeed, I equally feared that I too had been added to the IRA hit list for my serious breach of telephone etiquette.

Earlier that day, there was a related incident vividly recounted by Francis:

> I had just started Queen's University in Belfast and was playing pool at the Students' Union, when I received a visit from a young woman whom I didn't know. She said she wanted "a word" and had been sent by an old school friend of mine from our distant Holy Child days. The woman sidled up to me and whispered in my ear, "Leave the country right away, wee boy –'cause yer gonna git shot," and in what seemed like a nanosecond, she was gone . . . However, I didn't take the warning too seriously and continued with the game at hand. Shortly afterwards, the Chancellor summoned me to his rooms to confirm the death threat. He offered an immediate transfer to an English university of my choice— including hallowed Oxbridge. Though caught on the hop, I picked Manchester with little hesitation, as it was home to my own cherished institution, Man' United Football Club, with its resident superstar— Georgie Best from east Belfast. Go Man!

The next day, sisters Holly, Emily and myself were catapulted off to boarding convent in Bangor, Wales, where we were publicly announced as "refugees" in advance of our arrival. I didn't feel that we had earned this title, as our situation wasn't one of utter loss and displacement. However, I later came to understand and partially accept the term in relation to people fleeing from danger in Northern Ireland. Targeted brothers Francis and James set off for, respectively, Manchester and boarding school in Rugby, their rucksacks bulging with books and compensatory treats. My mother and the two youngest siblings laid low at home for a few more days until the completion of Louis's entrance exams, whilst our father had already been spirited off underground to live in a cluster of customised jail cells.

He took Duke the dog and Coco the doll for company (Figure 8).

Paternal aunts Maxentia and Grace helped orchestrate our exodus from their bases in England. Maxentia was a Sister of Mercy and, at that time, Mother General of England and Wales, hence her capacity to organise schools expediently. Grace was in the English police force and escorted us safely to our new locations. I remember her as a bit of a "tough nut," but this trait served her well as she strongly advocated for women to assume more challenging roles within the historically male constabulary. Though not close to Grace, I admired her passion and tenacity as the first to break the police glass ceiling in England, hence forging a path for her own advancement, and that of her female colleagues.

FIGURE 8 Duke and Coco.

A scenario evocatively written by Louis, was played out at home the following day, Wednesday 13th October 1971. We older five siblings were en route to England and Wales (Figure 9):

When I was 10 years old, my mum, dad, five-year-old sister and I lived in a large, Edwardian house in east Belfast called Firbeck. My other brothers and sisters had been sent to live in England and Wales for security reasons. Our house, which was approached by a long driveway, was set in mature gardens, formally laid out with shrubs, lawns and many trees, some of which were more than 100 years old. As dusk fell one evening in the autumn of 1971, a car drove slowly up the driveway and four men were dropped off. They were in their thirties, all were casually dressed, a couple had beards, and two were carrying submachine guns.

My dad was head of RUC Special Branch, but he was not at home that day. When I got back from school earlier, my mum had explained that some men would be coming to the house that evening to protect us, because the RUC had received intelligence that our house was going to be attacked by the IRA. These men would keep us safe, and I was reassured by this.

One of the men came to the door and spoke to my mum. He then joined the other three who had headed into dense shrubbery which overlooked our front door. I watched from the window with some amusement as one of them struggled to climb a large copper beech tree which gave him, and his submachine gun, a good vantage point over the driveway and front of our house.
Darkness soon descended.

I opened the front door with a little apprehension. The light from the hallway did not penetrate far into the darkness outside. I knew the lay of the land very well however, and I made my way slowly towards the

FIGURE 9 Firbeck: side aspect. (Personal photo, 1970).

large copper beech. I stopped and delivered my message to the tree, "My mum wants to know if you would like a cup of tea." I couldn't see anybody, but the tree replied in a low, rasping voice, "No thanks. Now, get back inside".

There was no attack that night. Our protectors returned for two more nights. Still no attackers came, and the operation was called off.

No tea was served.

Firbeck's evacuation was soon complete, giving way to a free-for-all. The valuable lead was stripped and sold by paramilitaries, all windows broken, and the house set alight—using our furniture as tinder.

Louis settled into prep school at Alton Castle in England, where he became accustomed to his rigid false-collar. Laura started primary school in London and quickly adapted to the local scene. She and my mother lived under the radar whilst still enjoying some of what the dynamic city had to offer.

By the summer of 1972, this high-calibre death threat had lost some of its potency, and so the family returned to Northern Ireland to join our father, who had re-emerged from the underworld. His moniker in paramilitary circles was "Slick Nick—the cat with nine lives." However, having been incarcerated for almost a year, Duke the dog was never quite the same again, and went on to develop a taste for alcohol. It was harder to tell with Coco the doll, who appeared to be her usual "deer in the headlights" self—if a little more dishevelled. Battle-weary Firbeck was sold, razed to the ground and a small retirement village built in its stead.

Emily offered this poignant summary of the time between 1969 and 1972, when her idyllic life in Newcastle fell away to bring a more challenging and fraught time in Belfast. The vignette also includes a reference to our family exodus in 1971 (Figure 10):

At age 11 my family made what was to be my sixth move of house and town. We were leaving Newcastle, a seaside town nestled at the foot of the stunning Mourne Mountains in Co. Down. The one year we had spent there had been an idyllic year for me, an adventure of swimming, friendship, and exploration from start to finish. The next two years were going to require a lot of growing up. "The Troubles" had begun and so, with another promotion under his belt, my dad and family were required to relocate to Belfast. The constant moving had given me a resourcefulness and determination to make the most of any situation, so, within no time I had started a new school, joined the girl guides, become a member of a youth club, fancied my first boy, and joined the church choir. This was great craic, believe it or not, as the aforementioned boy turned up weekly, also thinking he could sing!

Our new house "Firbeck" was stunning. It was a huge house with a long driveway, landscaped gardens, including a giant weeping willow tree, a gardener's cottage, lover's lane and its own ghost! Too good to be

FIGURE 10 Tropicana outdoor heated fun pool: Newcastle, Co. Down. (Personal photo, 1989).

true—as it turned out. Dad had now reached the dizzy heights of Assistant Chief Constable, which was a betrayal in the eyes of the IRA. Death threats were issued and the entire family fled within three days— and with not a word to anyone. For the duration of this year, away from home and separated from family and everything familiar, my constant desire was just to get back home.

Finally, the day came when we flew back to Belfast to be reunited! A couple of days later dad asked me to come in and close the door—never a welcome invitation! He casually handed me a revolver and began to show me how to use it . . . just in case. In the space of two years, life really had changed beyond recognition!

Unlike many of his colleagues, my father chose to remain and continue with his work in Northern Ireland— against all security advice. Our final home in 1973 was in the historic seaside town of Bangor. Predictably, the death threats continued, and Francis had no trouble staying on in Manchester with his beloved Georgie. I looked forward to art college in London, though I still had to follow some security measures while living there. My five younger siblings made the safer transition to local Protestant schools and as each turned 18, were also encouraged to leave the country with only Emily choosing to stay.

Our home's characterful windows were double glazed with thick Makrolon bulletproof sheeting, alarm systems were fitted, and a two-way mirrored security door installed. While most who came to this door checked their appearance, others nodded wisely or made a sarcastic jibe upon greeting.

Laura eloquently elaborated on the "secure lifestyle" to which we had become accustomed:

When I was 7, we moved to the relative safety of Bangor—safe because there was essentially one road in and out of Bangor which made it difficult for terrorists to escape, but also because it was a predominantly Protestant town. Given my dad's very senior position in the police, the house was "enhanced" with safety features. This included bulletproof windows and a mirrored front door which meant we could see who was outside but they could only see a reflection of themselves. This was, of course, for security reasons but came in very useful if mum was busy and didn't want to answer the door to an unwanted visitor! We had a panic button upstairs and down with a direct link to the local police station, an intercom to speak to people outside, an alarm with a high-pitched screech should we wish to scare anyone off and a phone which had a special scramble button for when Dad took calls from work so no one tapping the line could listen in.

Dad told me that should I ever be up out of bed early before him and needing to get milk from the doorstep, then I should look around the outside frame of the front door before opening it, to make sure there were no wires and that it wasn't booby-trapped. I accepted the instructions without question—and always did so.

Settling into Bangor, I was making friends at school. For the first time ever, I was allowed to have some friends to the house for my birthday party (I can hear all my older siblings saying, "you were spoilt rotten!"). We set off round the house to play. Curiosity filled the air with our highly unusual mirrored front door, questions about "what is this thing for?" "It's the intercom", I said, "so we can speak to people outside". "What's this red button for?" "Don't touch that. That's the panic button should we need to call the police here." Next thing the screeching alarm went off. Someone had decided to see what the other white switch did. I don't think I got to have another birthday party at home until I was 16!!

Writing this now at the age of 52, I can see how abnormal this all was—but at the time and for many further years, it was my norm—nothing unusual.

As a student, I returned on a regular basis to stay with the family in Bangor. The IRA, who were reportedly in receipt of Soviet heat-seeking missiles, routinely threatened to launch them at incoming and outgoing planes. It didn't help to lower passenger tensions that the patchwork propeller-engined Vanguards were noisy, vibrating bone-rattlers. However, concerns dissipated and a round of applause was given upon each safe landing on Belfast terra firma, though I don't recall any kissing of the tarmac.

The all-too-familiar spectre of grey insidious energy which permeated the countryside, enveloped me on arrival. At each departure time, with the plane safely in the air and out of missile range, I shrugged this energy off, with feelings of relief and a little guilt at escaping back to a relatively peaceful London.

This dramatic and touching story was written by Holly, who described two consecutive Saturdays at her job in Bangor Town Centre, in March and April of 1974 (Figure 11):

> Situation Vacant: Back in 1974, in my last year of school before university, I had a fantastic Saturday waitressing job in Skandia, the go-to place in Bangor, Co. Down for great food (and great service!). It introduced the local citizens to morning coffee with GATEAU (miles better than your ordinary cake) topped with loads of whipped cream, and to those legendary staples of the 1970s—scampi, chicken Kiev, gammon and pineapple, and pavlova.
>
> The working day was long but tips were good and the staff were well fed too. I was saving up for a plane ticket to Paris that summer as I was going to au-pair for a French family, and I was well on target to cover the cost. However, that all changed on 30 March when the main shopping area of Bangor was subjected to a major incendiary bomb attack. In the mayhem of noise, smoke, and emergency services, staff and customers were evacuated and directed to safety away from the High Street. It was a terrible day for Bangor, but people were stoical and carried on.
>
> However, something extra was waiting for me the next time I turned up for work.
>
> I was taken aside by the manageress who explained that in the light of the awful events of the previous week, a new role had been created within the team and I would be having first dabs at it. Intrigued, then horrified, I was led to the ladies' toilets where the restaurant's new security system was explained to me. My job was to station myself in the loos, enter each toilet cubicle as a customer emerged, lift the lid off the cistern and check thoroughly that no untoward incendiary devices had been planted there. On so many levels I wasn't thrilled and outlined my reluctance to be stuck in the toilets for hours at a stretch, away from the hurly burly of the dining room and tip-earning opportunities. I explained my personal antipathy to public toilets, you can imagine the pleas, all to no avail. No security duty, no job.

FIGURE 11 Bangor town centre: 15 IRA bombs detonated. (Patterson, 1974).

I gave it a good go for at least an hour but the reality of it was staring me in the face. Smells, boredom, awkwardness, danger, they were all there. It wasn't what I had signed up for. I quickly reckoned that I could make the cost of the ticket if I switched to babysitting. Hang the free pavlova, it just wasn't worth it. I quit there and then.

Later that year in the autumn of 1974, our sister Lili, whom we siblings didn't yet know existed, was working in Belfast and staying at the beleaguered Europa, cited as the most bombed hotel in the world—having suffered thirty-three IRA attacks from 1970 to 1994. Despite, or because of its infamy, the hotel received staunch support from many of the world's leading celebrities, politicians, and journalists who made a point of sleeping under its roof during those tumultuous, media-drenched years. Lili wrote this heartrending account, in relation to a personal dilemma and a difficult decision made in the context of the times:

I was adopted as a baby by my family in Dublin. When I was growing up, I thought my parents were dead. Around the age of 12, I discovered they were alive and living in the north of Ireland—probably Belfast. My dad was in the police and there had been no further contact with them since I was a baby, which was what was agreed at the time of my birth.

When I was in my early 20s, I went to work in the RTÉ (Irish television) newsroom and found myself with a group of journalists travelling to Belfast in 1974, where they were covering the British general election for RTÉ. It was my first visit to Belfast and we were based in the Europa Hotel. It was a surreal feeling knowing that my birth parents were possibly close by. I felt it would be too dangerous at that time to make any enquiries, as the early '70s were possibly the most dangerous time of the Northern Ireland Troubles. I did nothing—although that was difficult.

I did eventually make contact with my family in the early '90s. My father had passed away by then—he died in 1983. It was wonderful to finally meet my mother and seven brothers and sisters, three aunts and lots of nieces and nephews. I went from being an "only child" into a very large family.

Laura reflected on how her perception of "family" has changed since her adolescence:

When I was a teenager, I was visiting my best friend, and her aunts were all at the house. I could see how well these three sisters got on and they all lived in our town. Therefore, all their children (cousins to each other), grew up as family and friends. I remember being struck by the oddness of these sisters all living close to each other and seeing plenty of each other and my friend having lots of cousins of a similar age. Years later I realised this wasn't odd at all; in fact, it was our family situation that was bizarrely odd and I still wonder to this day how things might have been if we hadn't all been sent away to the safety of England in 1971, with most of my siblings either never returning or deciding later to make England their permanent home.

To complete our sibling vignettes, James sent a haunting recollection of an incident in 1987:

Remembrance Day is the 11th day of the 11th month to commemorate the War dead. On Remembrance Sunday 1987, 11 died in the Enniskillen bombing. One of these was a twenty-year-old nurse, Marie Wilson. While buried under rubble, Marie held her father's hand and said her last words, "Daddy, I love you very much."

Some hours later, her father spoke to the media: "I bear no ill will; I bear no grudge. I will pray for these men tonight and every night." The IRA issued a statement offering "sincerest apologies for Marie Wilson's death." Despite what many thought was a sham apology, Gordon Wilson met with the IRA to promote peace over succeeding years; many in his community never forgave him for meeting the IRA. In 1994 the IRA declared a ceasefire.

Following the IRA's ceasefire, it took a further four years for peace to be officially declared, with the Good Friday Agreement brokered on 10th April 1998. Four months later—on my return to Northern Ireland for a period of twelve years—the Omagh bombing killed twenty-nine people and injured more than three hundred. Instability reigned for several more years.

In spite of this, significant progress has been made over the past 20 years, allowing the country to catch its breath, pick up the pieces, and begin to develop and blossom once again. There is now a real sense of a vibrant optimism propelling everyone to a safer, happier, and more prosperous future. Amid this exciting rejuvenation, the process for peace and reconciliation continues on its steady path (Figure 12).

MTO (Mateo), is an acclaimed French street artist who attended the "Hit the North" Culture Night in Belfast in 2014. He worked for a few days to produce this striking mural and it remains as his artistic message to the community. The imagery represents the conflict between republicans and loyalists, symbolised by the dead pigeon shot through by two Christian arrows with Knights of Malta and Latin Cross insignias. The title of the piece refers to Protagoras, an early proponent of agnosticism, and which I understand as, "let the people manage your city—and not the elusive gods." MTO took the opportunity of utilising the partially obstructive railing in front of the mural, as a symbol of the one hundred or so border barriers which continue to carve up the neighbourhoods of Belfast today.

4 | REFLECTIONS AND CLINICAL COMMENTARY

4.1 | Borderlands Faculty

Gloria Anzaldúa (2007) suggested that la facultad is a kind of survival tactic that people unknowingly cultivate when they are caught in the borderlands between the worlds. It is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world, for *whatever* reason, are more apt to develop this sense. Anzaldúa went on to say that the senses become so acute and piercing that we can see through things, view events in depth, a piercing that reaches the underworld—the realm of the soul. However, we lose something in this mode of initiation. Something is taken from us: our unknowing ways, our safe and easy innocence.

When I reflect on my family situation during the Troubles, there is no question that we all operated instinctively as individuals, and as an increasingly alert collective organism. No thoughts, words, or constructs were needed at times of overt or covert danger. Anzaldúa proposed that it is an instant sensing, a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning, or what Jerome Bernstein (2008) described as a spectrum of reality that is beyond the rational and bridges the mind–body divide. At these crucial times, I now think of the family as having lived a "shared reality" (Winborn, 2014).

FIGURE 12   *Son of Protagoras* (MTO, 2014). In the yard of the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum.

4.2 | Shared Reality

In the therapeutic setting, we also share conscious and unconscious worlds with our clients, which takes us to deeper shared conscious and unconscious realities. I am thinking of a particular first session with a client, not because of the experience of a shared reality as such, but of the long duration of the detailed, synchronous imagery, which was unusual in my clinical experience.

Gabriel was referred to me at my Sydney practice in the early nineties. His marriage had collapsed, and he was in crisis. He is a non-indigenous Australian who had previously worked interactively in indigenous communities, though this information wasn't communicated at the time of the referral. Gabriel's marital break-up was the sole presenting issue:

> Gabriel clattered noisily up the stairs and burst into the room, physically dangling with all sorts of technology—and he himself psychically jangling. It was the only time, before or since, that I said to myself, "What am I going to do with this person?" Uncharacteristically, I gave a directive that he might off-load and turn off all of his equipment—which he did. Gabriel began the session by expressing his devastation and despair at the loss of his wife, then lay back on the couch and closed his eyes— seemingly spent. We stayed in silence. . . . Almost immediately, in my mind's eye, I saw a thin Aboriginal elder standing to Gabriel's right, holding a carved wooden stick. He informed me that he would be directing the proceedings. Six or seven indigenous women were sitting off to the side, on a mini grandstand, waiting in anticipation. What followed was a long and detailed ritual during which Gabriel shifted into being a woman and was vaginally penetrated by the Elder using the wooden phallus/stick. The female witnesses were highly amused and enjoyed the spectacle immensely, their bodies heaving with supressed laughter. The ceremony ended with the barefooted Elder walking off into a desert landscape.

> At that moment Gabriel sat upright. We hadn't spoken during the forty-minute reverie. He laughed with abandon for some time, releasing a substantial amount of energy. Gabriel then relayed the details of the ritual as they had unfolded for him (and as I too had witnessed), finally describing the barefooted Elder's exit into the desert landscape. He spoke with incredulity of the experience of being a woman, knowing he was a woman, loving and being made love to by a man. Gabriel described the erotic experience of having breasts, having the body of a woman. He was euphoric—and felt that his marriage crisis had somehow gained a helpful perspective in the light of this larger cultural experience.

> It was at this moment that Gabriel shared with me about his work over many years with a group of Aboriginal elders. However, he had needed to diversify into more commercial projects, thus putting this passionate endeavour on hold. Gabriel vowed to get "back on track" and somehow, within his personal relationship challenge, which he wasn't tempted to diminish, he felt strangely enheartened.

Gabriel found that he was able to begin to grieve and mourn for his wife, while simultaneously reconnecting with the same group of elders in their distant desert communities. They worked together for a further period of time, bringing the 20-year cultural project to fruition.

4.3 | Participation: Mystique and Beyond

This session has always stayed with me though I've never particularly felt the need to pin it down or work it out, much like the psychic state of an enigmatic and paradoxical borderlands that resists definition. When it's defined, it becomes undone. However, at the time it was useful to hold in the back of my mind Jung's creative ideas around participation mystique (Jung, 1931).

Jung adopted the term participation mystique from French philosopher Lucien Levy-Bruhl in 1910. Winborn (2014) elucidated Levy-Bruhl's idea, that the so-called "primitives" of the time thought differently to modern people, was a projection on his part. The complex behaviour wasn't understood and didn't fit his Western logical formulation. Bernstein (cited in Winborn, 2014) added that, rather than being supernatural, life is indeed transrational as well as rational. One doesn't trump the other, neither makes sense or doesn't make sense. It is what it is. He felt, like Winborn, that the problem has been that participation mystique has been labelled "prelogical" in order to conveniently fit into the Western *Logos* frame.

Aside from a possible anthropological misreading of Levy-Bruhl, Kalsched (cited in Winborn, 2014) felt that Jung's development of participation mystique as a psychological tool is considered one of his most original ideas, relevant to projective identification of intersubjectivity and to the dynamics of transitional space. However, within the psychological arena Jung (1921/1971) himself appeared ambivalent. On the one hand, he acknowledged that an over-reliance on rational thought could create split-off layers of psychic experience, but, on the other, he felt the need to reduce or get rid of the tendency for participation mystique from fear of its unconscious dominance. However, Rolfe and Goodheart (cited in Winborn, 2014) stressed that participation mystique needs to be consciously worked with in order to avoid a stalemate in the form of unconscious collusion between therapist and patient to circumvent or displace some extremely painful or difficult experiences. Participation mystique allows displaced experiences to emerge, and so become available for analysis.

In the case of Gabriel, his presenting issue was the dissolution of his marriage. However, he didn't know how to grieve and mourn and so was caught in a traumatic stalemate, dangled—jangled—paralysed. During the shared experience, Gabriel opened himself to receiving the necessary erotic penetration in order to release the repressed grief at his abandonment of the indigenous work. He could then recognise and begin to move freely between his two great sorrows—the loss of his wife and the loss of his passionate collaborative project—and work towards healing.

Contemporary writers are revisiting and thinking about participation mystique and expanding in a more differentiated direction, describing a broader class of intersubjective phenomena and, for me, this is a very welcome development. It helps to ground and normalise a subject which can evoke caution or avoidance, even though it is ever-present in our human interactions with others and in relationship with our environment. In addition, this contemporary amplification of participation mystique comfortably embraces Anzaldúa's la facultad, and Bernstein's transrational borderlands.

4.4 | Irish Indigenous Experience

Having spent a decade working clinically in Sydney, I was to some extent cognisant of the indigenous aspects of practising in Australia. Although I had lived in London for a long time before migrating to Australia, I was mindful of the original escape from my own indigenous place of Northern Ireland at the young age of 18. I had left for good, natural, and creative reasons, but I asked myself how I could truly understand what it is to work therapeutically in Australia when I felt I had residual business with my own country, my own story, my own experiences, my own history. I acknowledge Warlpiri/Pintupi artist, Community Policeman, and social activist Andrew Spencer Japaljarri as catalyst for this self-reflection, in conjunction with a series of repetitive dreams which doggedly refused to go away. I understand it is not always necessary to return to the scene of the "trauma" so to speak—but for me, I felt it would offer a final, residual layer of healing, and perhaps contribute to the overall maturational process. However, I was ambivalent about returning to Northern Ireland and had concerns about my established life here in Australia being interrupted for quite some time.

Nonetheless, I left in 1995 for an exploratory year, with a further commitment to go back in 1998 for twelve years—sufficient time to experience my place of origin as an adult, have a practice, work with the broader community within the government sector, and continue with clinical development and research. It was fortuitous that Australian,

English, and Irish colleagues at that time not only understood, but actively supported and helped facilitate this challenging cross-cultural endeavour.

4.5 | Personal/Political Projective Identification

I wondered what would be unique about working therapeutically in Northern Ireland, and in most respects, certainly in the case of private practice, there were few differences. Clients engaged in the process of exploring their lives with its range of human preoccupations, issues, challenges, and interests. However, because of the shared political legacy, and ongoing activity from paramilitary splinter groups, the personal/political transferential/countertransferential dynamics were alive and intense. This informed and expanded on my own narrative and the narratives of my clients. I would like to offer the following two examples.

4.5.1 | Sinéad

Sinéad and I worked together over a long period of time. She had raised a child as a single mother, and was now employed as a researcher, working between Belfast, Derry, and Dublin. Sinéad was brought up in a family that had strong nationalist ideals. She endeavoured to find out why my practice was in its particular location and what my religious and political affiliations were. I understood this to be standard practice in Northern Ireland and many of my clients followed similar lines of enquiry. Although specific information wasn't forthcoming, Sinéad and I were able to speak over time about why these things were vital for her to know. She explained that it was automatic—like asking someone their name. She needed to know "who was who," to know how to position herself in relation to the other person, to feel safe and reassured that they weren't "the unseen enemy."

The catalyst for the following session came from Sinéad's broad awareness that I had clinically trained outside of Northern Ireland:

> Sinéad spoke with rankle about her older brother who had been her protector as a child and had left Northern Ireland during the Troubles to live in London, where he had greatly prospered. Sinéad was left alone at home to care for her severely ill sister. Her cut-and-dried political beliefs kicked in and she postulated over many sessions, using high political rhetoric, about people who had left during the Troubles, people who had deserted Northern Ireland and no longer had the right to call themselves Irish. They had forfeited this right when they left the country. As Sinéad became increasingly angry, I found my own guilt intensifying, as I imagined myself to be one of those "terrible" people who had abandoned her country—managing to escape, relatively unscathed, from danger, destruction, and psychological terror whilst others had been unable—or were still unable—to get away.

> Sinéad's anger appeared to reach its zenith as I visualised the archetypal film scene from "Psycho" with the bloody jab-jab of the glinting knife bearing down on me. We had an opportune moment to wonder about the increasing rage in the room, and this was immediately compounded by a large black crow crashing into the window pane before shakily flapping off again. This incident appeared to jolt my client into expression. Jumping slightly, Sinéad shouted that she wanted her sister dead. She then resolutely clammed up. After a while in silence, I asked, "and . . . ?" I had been wondering for some time whether she would or even could articulate it—but in time Sinéad managed to whisper, "And you . . ."

At the next session, it was clear that Sinéad had returned to that particular dissociative haven.

Thinking about Jung's term *abaissement du niveau mental* (Samuels, Shorter, & Plaut, 1986/2000) adopted from French psychologist Pierre Janet, which is a lowering of concentration and attention to loosen inhibitions in order to facilitate unconscious material, I imagine the presence of Anzaldúa's la facultad would have also come to my aid during this session as a widening and intensification, in addition to a lowering of concentration. Furthermore, Nathan

Schwartz-Salant's idea (1988) that projective identification has the goal of transforming the structure and dynamics of processes in the third area, Mercurius, an imaginal world, a *mundus imaginalis* that has its own processes *and can also transform*. Individuals can partake of its processes.

What had initially presented as a negative personal/political transference with some valuable countertransferential material for me (the revisiting of personal guilt at leaving Northern Ireland) became a dialogue with Sinéad over time about her murderous rage, which gradually shifted into an intense envy and, ultimately, a profound sadness. She spoke of her mother who had died when Sinéad was a child, which had resulted in her becoming the primary carer of her unwell sister. Her brother had managed to escape, and others like myself had escaped. We had all abandoned Sinéad; she felt abandoned. She felt abandoned by her mother, and she felt abandoned by her father who was ineffectual and psychically absent. She felt her sister had to die before she, Sinéad, could emotionally "escape" and be fully herself. In the course of the work, this conviction dissipated somewhat, as Sinéad developed a capacity to understand and empathise with her unwell sister.

From a political perspective, this case extract demonstrates the common dynamic of powerful unconscious intrapsychic egodystonic processes being projected into the external arena as "righteous political rage."

4.5.2 | Robbie

Robbie was establishing himself as an artist, and we worked together for some time. He grew up in a family that may have had ties to a paramilitary organisation. This alone was challenging and confronting for me countertransferentially, because of my childhood experience of paramilitary violence and death threats, but one particular dynamic created an intense participation mystique experience which proved useful, though initially manifesting as the negative constellation of the hermaphrodite (Jung, 1946):

> Robbie was working on an art installation for an upcoming exhibition. The setting was a simple stage with a bentwood chair. He was crafting a rapidly pulsating mechanical heart which would take centre stage. It was to be spot-lit on the chair, and the piece titled "Naked Heart". Robbie spoke of his acute anxiety when handling the heart. His temperature rose, his hands trembled, and his own heart rate accelerated. As I listened, I found myself feeling fearful and vaguely nauseous, with an urge to clutch at my lower stomach. We sat uncomfortably together, and I saw in my mind's eye the enactment at the fishing cove of my young girl's imagination, in which the captive (in fantasy—my father) was being disembowelled by paramilitaries at high tide.
>
> Recalling this evocative scene appeared to alleviate these feelings and bodily sensations, thus enabling me to come out of a possible fusion-like state with my client, in order to help explore his distress more effectively. A memory came to light of when Robbie was 17 or so, overhearing extended family members discuss a secret underground club where men and women from "the other side" were snatched and brought to for weekend stage shows. Without going into detail of the depraved and criminal acts which my client described, the victims were subjected, at the capricious whim of the audience, to perverse sexual violation and torture, disembowelment, heart removal, and death. The relatives appeared to be describing a snuff club.

This is an example of both collective and personal/political participation mystique, from the perspective that political projective identification is the transferential/countertransferential clinical dynamic in the consulting room, which is a specific form of the personal and collective political participation mystique which exists for the entire community. In the case of my client, he learned of family collusion or possible participation in unspeakable acts of torture and murder. At the age of 17, Robbie's healthy protective mechanism was one of dissociation.

He continued with the art installation and decided to make no changes—the only difference being that he was now consciously aware of the source of his inspiration. After much soul-searching, Robbie chose not to bring up the subject of the club within family circles, in the tradition of "whatever you say—say nothing." He was reasonably

confident that this would not be a wise thing to do. However, he felt that the installation *Naked Heart* could safely and eloquently speak on his behalf. Additionally, and most importantly for Robbie, the work would later go on to serve as his own public dedication to *all* of the victims of the Troubles.

4.6 | The Question of Trauma

During these years in Northern Ireland I attended a Jungian conference in Cambridge where I had the opportunity to reconnect with Australian and New Zealand colleagues, and the good fortune to attend a presentation by Renos Papadopoulos. He spoke of his work with refugees in Eastern Europe and I was struck by the apparent simplicity of his approach, which was to be there for the refugees in their own environment—simply be there, be available, be there to listen, be there to bear witness. From my recollection, Papadopoulos offered a short film of a man speaking about his experience of being held captive and tortured over a period of time. I recall the man telling his story calmly, factually and with compassion, saying that, despite everything, he didn't identify as a victim of trauma. I was profoundly moved and struck by this experience.

Papadopoulos (2006) revisited the etymology of the word "trauma" and, rather than the idea of a wound-which-pierces (the skin), he suggested it is perhaps closer to a rub with two connotations, either a rubbing in from an injury or wound or a rubbing off or rubbing away, as in cleaning a surface where there were marks previously—thus allowing for a wider range of experience. It would be reasonable to acknowledge that people exposed to terrifying political ordeals need help and support. However, as Papadopoulos suggested, PTSD is the only category in the psychiatric *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) that is based on the presence of an external event, and so is the diagnostic model commonly used, which focuses exclusively on the category of psychological trauma negatively defined. He felt this certainly wasn't wrong, but not the only outcome in these events. There can be a huge range of responses, varying from the most pathological and disabling to the most positive, resilient, inspiring and even transformational.

I had the opportunity to train in and work with trauma in a social services context in Belfast. I set up critical incident group debriefings for organisations in the ROI and Northern Ireland, and, at a local level, worked therapeutically with individuals and groups who had been exposed to critical incidents and political upheaval. Whilst I recommended a significant number of people for medical support, the majority of individuals did not feel they required this attention, as a great deal of their healthy functioning remained intact and unaffected by the devastation.

4.7 | Family and Political Sensibilities

My father Nicholas died at a relatively young age. There was little or no critical incident support in his day, despite the atrocities that he and his colleagues witnessed. On rare occasions, he would graphically touch on fatal events involving officers who had been our close family friends. In addition, Dad would speak of a heavy burden of guilt, as the person who delegated duties to *any* of his men, which resulted in their death or injury during the Troubles. He acknowledged that the incoming British troops had a role to play, but was adamant that the Westminster government made the *very* grave mistake of militarising the RUC, thus creating a compounded "front-line" situation. He felt this only served to further alienate the local police from its community.

On a personal level, Nicholas hadn't signed up to be a "soldier of war"—in the same way that he hadn't signed up to be a "soldier of god" as a young adolescent. Indeed, he suggested that organised crime was the pivotal player during the Troubles (with involvement from mafia syndicates in America), orchestrating paramilitaries from behind the scenes. My father stated very early on that, "Al Capone has nothing on what's going on here in Northern Ireland." In addition to the need for military support, he felt a more subtle and complex approach was also needed in order to combat organised crime—if peace were ever to become a true reality.

Twenty years later in Sydney, I interviewed a former undercover SAS/RUC counter-terrorism officer who had previously worked in Northern Ireland. He further elaborated by suggesting that top ranking paramilitaries from opposing sides were in fact working together in profitable financial partnership. This officer recalled a surveillance operation which he had attended, involving two "enemy" chiefs—one republican and one loyalist. They were having a discreet rendezvous, in a hideaway pub deep in the countryside. The men swayed in unison while singing the Civil Rights version of the old gospel song, "We Shall Overcome." The 1960's folk anthem includes these phrases throughout the song:

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome, some day

We'll walk hand in hand . . . we shall live in peace . . . we shall all be free, some day

We are not afraid, TODAY . . .

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome, some day . . .

The whole wide world around—some day.

Later that night, on their return to Belfast, the paramilitaries were stopped and searched in their respective vehicles. A substantially large stockpile of weapons was discovered and seized by the RUC. It was a shipment of incoming armaments from Libya which had been split 50/50 between the two men. Continuity in serial numbers appeared to suggest that this was a joint business venture.

Following my father's death, my mother went on to live a long life with good humour and an innate sense of adventure. Just before her death, she had a conversation with us about her own perceptions and experiences of the Troubles—which we siblings weren't aware of until that much later time. While most of the attention had been on our father's dramatic/traumatic situation, my mother kept her own life going and the life of the family, without fuss or fanfare—indeed the calm, unsung hero, in more ways than one.

Regarding my siblings—I understand that they didn't avail themselves of mental health support in relation to the Troubles, and appear to have gone on to lead happy, robust and satisfying lives.

4.8 | The World in the Body — And the Body in the Belfast World

During my mid-20's while living in London, I engaged in clinical development which included a lengthy analysis. The therapist had the capacity to recognise, embrace, and work dynamically, not only with the personal, but with the socio-political complexities of the Irish situation. I later understood this to be unusual for the time—and it was the beginning of a vital healing process.

The therapist sat behind me as I lay on the couch. Following a verbal exchange which was unrelated to politics, I fell into a relaxed state and was taken aback to find myself pinned under a very large, very heavy wooden cross. It ran the length and breadth of my body and intersected over the heart area. The Protestant "Shankill Road" was carved into the longer post and on the transverse bar, the Catholic "Falls Road"—the two archetypal signifiers of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

At the moment of seeing the carvings cross at the intersection, the back of my tongue arched rigid, blocking the windpipe. At the time, it felt to me as dying must feel. The therapist moved in more closely and soothingly talked me through the experience until I somehow managed to unlock my tongue—and was able to gasp for breath again. Immediately upon recovery, I felt heartache over this "religious" conflict, symbolised by the cross, and until that moment, hadn't realised just how heavily the war had been weighing on me. Life was normalised for us in Belfast—a healthy defence mechanism against the rigid, paralysing fear for one's life, and the lives of others.

This session afforded a deeper level of consciousness of the psyche/soma pattern in relation to the internalisation of the effects of the Troubles, or to share thesis supervisor Giles Clark's psychoid phrase, "The world in the body—and the body in the Belfast world" (personal communication, 9 July 2014).

I now think of the cross intersection over my heart, not only as representative of the religious aspects of the war, but as the many intrapsychic compression points, interface areas, contact zones, border barriers of the borderlands world, where the metaphorical energies of the Falls and Shankill were managed and contained.

Anzaldúa (2007) suggested we might move towards living *sin fronteras* (without borders), and actively work at becoming more of an open and fluid *crossroads* in our own lives. Although the experience in this therapy session took me by surprise as a young person, I began over time to feel lighter, freer, and more able to make the transition from crucifix to crossroads—from stasis to movement.

4.9 | Place, Space, and Process

In the spirit of Anzaldúa's philosophical crossroads, it heartens me to know that as a result of so much blood spilled over contested place/territory in Northern Ireland, a new wave of local academics, philosophers, and poets are revisioning their ideas about place in a more consciously fluid way, as opposed to the unconscious or subconscious fluidity and shiftiness of borderlands, which has been the subject of this paper. I feel that "place" can be inclusive of the more contemporary ideas of space and process which encourage a horizontal relationship with other places and ideas, as well as the more traditionally Irish vertical rootedness to "place" in the poetic vein of Yeats, Kavanagh, Heaney, and Montague.

Academic Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (2008), author of *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968–2008*, discussed this shift in thinking about place. He stated that cultural identity has often been interpreted as bound up with place, whether through local culture or national identity. The difficulty in Northern Ireland is that place continues to be a site of division and dispute. The majority of the remaining 100 border barriers and dividing walls in Belfast, were erected *after* the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 when "peace" was officially declared, rather than during the preceding 30 years of the Troubles.

So, place often implies a border of some description, as opposed to space which suggests a poetics and politics of displacement, mobility, openness, and pluralism. Kennedy-Andrews proposed that places are formed not only out of layers of history and tradition which become the bedrock of identity, but out of horizontal connections which are developed with surrounding places. Traditional notions of the continuity and historicity of place-identity come under pressure from newly evolving global cultural influences:

> If the realities of hybridity, diaspora, and nomadism are age-old, it is only recently that a revitalised language of movement and interconnectedness has evolved, including that which informs an exciting new poetics of "home," to deal with these realities in the contemporary context of radical, rapidly accelerating cultural change. (Kennedy-Andrews, 2008, p. 20)

Academic researcher Kevin Robins (1991) described place as a process rather than something to be understood in terms of rootedness, authenticity and ontological security. Philosopher Richard Kearney (cited in Kennedy-Andrews, 2008) proposed the ancient concept of the fifth province, where attachments to the local and global find reciprocal articulation. In diasporic ideas of culture, the connections tend to be more circular rather than linear.

Some of these contemporary ways of thinking about place, which more broadly contextualise us as global citizens, reverberate with my own natural sense of identity. Indeed, we may have the capacity to move in different directions, have many homes, many places, many spaces which resonate with us and teach us about hitherto unknown aspects of ourselves, both intrapsychically and in relationship with the world.

> "The world in the body—and the body in the world."

LIST OF POLITICAL TERMS REFERRED TO IN THE ARTICLE

Nationalist	In the Northern Irish context, a person, commonly identified as a Catholic, who aims to promote a unified Ireland by peaceful means and agreement.

	However, a Catholic is not automatically a nationalist, who is not automatically a republican, as has commonly been portrayed.
Unionist	In the Northern Irish context, a person, commonly identified as a Protestant, who aims to maintain the constitutional Union with Britain by peaceful means and agreement. However, a Protestant is not automatically a unionist, who is not automatically a loyalist, as has commonly been portrayed.
Republican	In the Northern Irish context, a person, usually identified as a Catholic and a nationalist, who, during the Troubles, was committed to promoting a unified Ireland by whichever means were considered most effective. They may possibly have supported an illegal paramilitary organisation such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or been an active member of such an organisation.
Loyalist	In the Northern Irish context, a person, usually identified as a Protestant and a unionist, who, during the Troubles, was committed to maintaining the constitutional Union with Britain by whichever means were considered most effective. They may possibly have supported an illegal paramilitary organisation such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) or been an active member of such an organisation.
Irish Republican Army (IRA)	The largest illegal republican paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland. This was one of many republican paramilitary organisations and splinter groups in operation during the Troubles.
Ulster Defence Association (UDA)	The largest illegal loyalist paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland. This was one of many loyalist paramilitary organisations and splinter groups in operation during the Troubles.
Orange Order	The largest of the "Loyal Orders", a legal politico-religious grouping opposed to Irish nationalism. Its extensive programme of annual marches (often through Catholic areas) culminates on 12th July to commemorate the victory of the Protestant King William III at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Over the years, particularly during the Troubles, these marches have triggered sectarian clashes and violence.
"Green and Orange"	Emblematic colours of the Northern Irish conflict, green the symbolic colour of Ireland and identified as Catholic, and orange symbolising King William III of Orange, identified as Protestant.
The Falls and Shankill	An amalgamated term for the two archetypal signifiers of the Troubles. The meaning of the Falls Road widened over the 20th century to include the many streets of the republican heartland of west Belfast, and the Shankill Road a few hundred yards away, also became a blanket term inclusive of the streets of the loyalist heartland of west Belfast.
Garda Síochána	Meaning keepers of peace in the Irish language, the name of the police force for the Republic of Ireland, more commonly referred to as the Gardaí or in English, the Guards.
Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)	The former police force for Northern Ireland, established at the time of Ireland's partition in 1921, and ostensibly a Protestant organisation. It was revamped in 2001 to become the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), with the proactive intention of recruiting from all sections of the community.

| **The Irish Gaelic language** or **the Gaelic** | A Goidelic language of the Indo-European language family originating in Ireland and historically spoken by the Irish people. |

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Gerri Mehra-Slevin was born in Northern Ireland and at eighteen was encouraged to leave for safety reasons, enabling her to study art in London. After college, she worked as an artist and designer in London and Delhi and travelled extensively. With an inherent interest in psychology, she went on to train and work therapeutically with young families in social services settings, and later with children and adults in psychotherapy practice in Sydney, Australia. Gerri completed a Post Graduate Diploma and Master of Applied Science in Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney, and this period of study marked the beginning of her interest in exploring the theme of borderlands. She is currently a Jungian analyst, living in Sydney and in addition to private practice, she has worked in a number of government, community and charitable organisations throughout her career.