

A teal-colored map of Belfast, Northern Ireland, showing a dense network of streets and rivers. The map is oriented with North at the top. The River Liffey flows through the center of the city, and the River Blackwater is visible on the right side. The title text is overlaid on the map.

# The Belfast Debate on Europe

WITH

## The Tangerine

SPECIAL ISSUE

“

Ireland's border is mostly farmland, fir plantations and bogland. I know this as I have walked every mile of it.

GARRETT CARR PAGE 13

It ties the land to land, dividing space as though it needs dividing.

EVA ISHERWOOD-WALLACE PAGE 50

Just as it has opened divisions across Britain about where our future lies, Brexit will renew the battles over our history. The outcome of these will play a central role in deciding whether we remain together or go our separate ways.

MISHA GLENNY PAGE 12

Lyra McKee did not die for Irish freedom.  
Lyra was Irish freedom.

SUSAN MCKAY PAGE 25

People who live on the border need a say on the nature of that border. Everyone needs to understand the emotional meaning of the border as well as its practical impacts. Don't think just of the borderline, think of the lives on the border.

THE YELLOW MANIFESTO PAGE 34

”

# The Belfast Debate on Europe

WITH

## The Tangerine

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#BELFASTDEBATE

SPECIAL ISSUE

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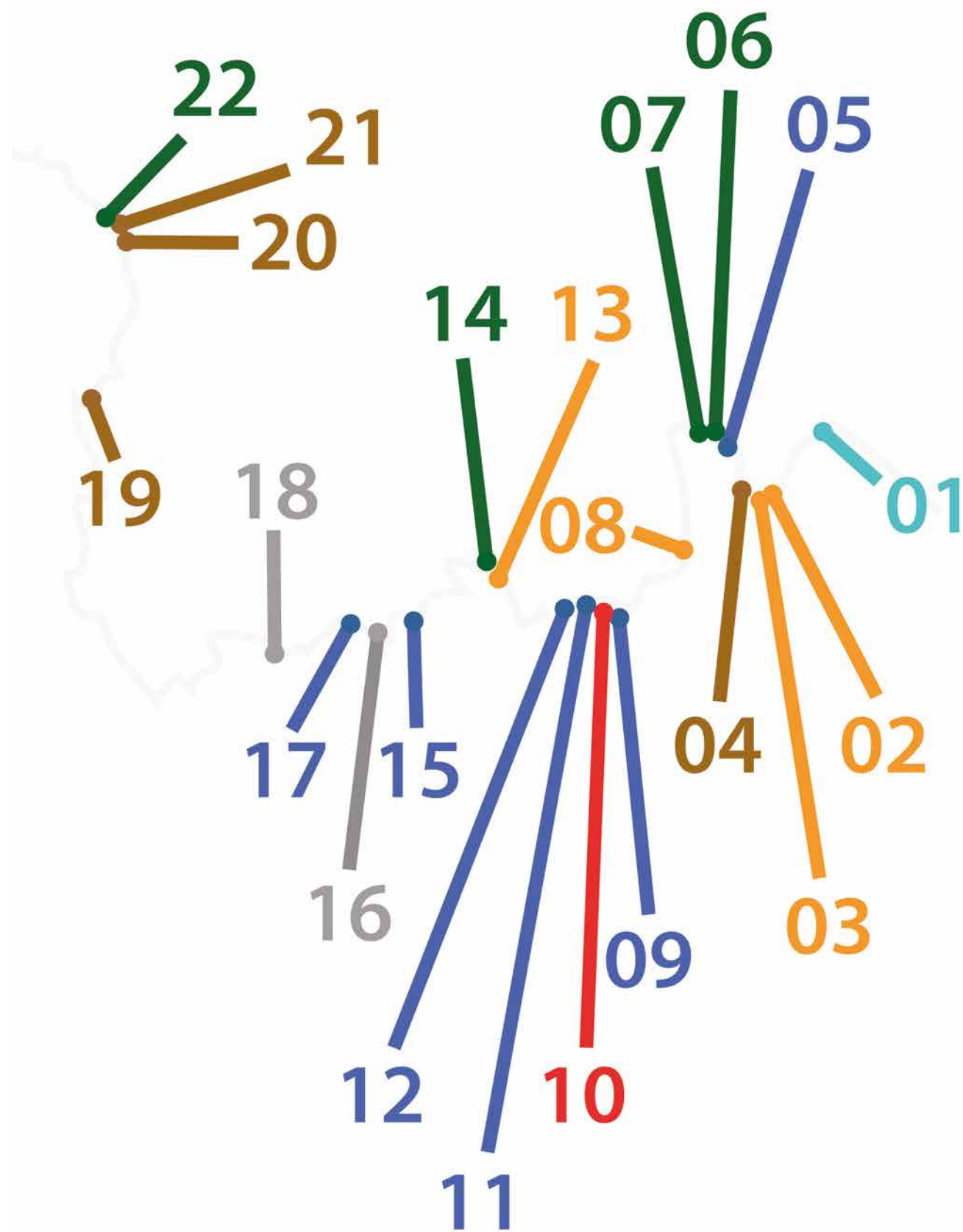
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Detail from Garrett Carr's 'Map of Connections' (see page 13).

## INTRODUCTION

# The Belfast Debate on Europe

After twelve events in Eastern and Southeast Europe, *Debates on Europe* for the first time makes a stop in the West—in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

*Debates on Europe*, a series of discussions organised by the S. Fischer Foundation and the German Academy for Language and Literature in cooperation with local partners across Europe, has since its inception in 2012 been hosted in places where the idea of Europe is at stake—often in places of conflict, where a contested past is made active in the present, weaponizing politics and dividing societies; places where issues of borders and cultural, ethnic and religious identity are at the top of the agenda.

Belfast is in many ways such a city. This northwestern corner of the EU arguably poses one of the biggest challenges to the ideological foundation of 21st-century European politics, namely the idea of post- or transnational political communities as an integral part of preserving peace and stability in Europe.

In the wake of the political drama surrounding Brexit, the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has become headline news. Again. However, while the 'backstop' has been a crucial part of the Brexit negotiations, in the public sphere, the EU demand that the border between North and South must remain 'invisible' was until very recently presented without historical background or context. Meanwhile, the implications of re-introducing border controls have been amply described and debated, but the need to widen the context remains—well beyond the debate on Brexit.

Up until now, Northern Ireland has served as an inspiring example of how deadly nationalism can be neutralised—without anyone having to acknowledge defeat or proclaim victory. ‘Europe’ was a crucial part of this experiment in democracy, and the strength of the idea of EU integration was manifested in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998.

This modern and to a certain extent post-national project is now under threat. Recent developments show that sectarianism and identity politics have never disappeared, but can be reactivated as soon as the political framework of the peace process changes.

By making the European dimension of the Northern Irish issue visible and discuss this regional conflict in the context of similar but unique frictions and clashes elsewhere, for example in the Western Balkans or in Poland, the *Belfast Debate on Europe* aims to bring new perspectives into the local discussion.

The *Belfast Debate on Europe* will gather leading writers, journalists, academics, experts, public intellectuals and representatives of civil society from North and South, from Great Britain as well as mainland Europe, not least from the German-language realm and Central and Eastern Europe. In speeches, panel discussions and debates, themes of borders, conflict and community will be explored from both the local and a broader European perspective. Literary readings will make visible and tangible the cultural engagement with the legacy of ‘the Troubles’ and put words to border experiences.

Partners of the *Belfast Debate on Europe* include the John Hewitt Society, the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen’s University Belfast, as well as numerous individual writers, academics and cultural managers. Though the main focus will be on the direct encounter and exchange between the participants in the discussions, there are also publishing endeavors related to the debate. The 13 September issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* features essays by some of the speakers, including Paul Bew, Jan Carson, Garrett Carr and Dubravka Stojanović.

The special issue you are holding in your hands accompanies the event. It is published in cooperation with the Belfast-based journal *The Tangerine*. Not only have we borrowed the format of the eminent literary magazine, but the *Tangerine* editors have also helped compile a section of new writing, speaking—in various ways—to the themes of the debate: identity, community, conflict... Alongside further articles and art projects included here we hope that this will provide an additional perspective on both the topics up for discussion and the setting in which the event takes place.

Welcome to the *Belfast Debate on Europe*!

**Antje Contius**, director of the S. Fischer Foundation

**Carl Henrik Fredriksson**, programme director of the Belfast Debate on Europe

**Ernst Osterkamp**, president of the German Academy for Language and Literature

NON-FICTION

# Could Brexit Break the Union?

MISHA GLENNY

My A-level history course at school taught me about the English civil war: a feckless crypto-Catholic king denying earthy parliamentarians their natural rights as true sons of England. This interpretation is hopelessly outdated now, as I was reminded on numerous occasions when travelling across the British Isles to research a BBC radio programme on our intertwined histories, *The Invention of Britain*. For a start, the conflict is usually referred to as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms these days—unless you’re English, that is.

Born and brought up in London and Oxford, I absorbed the widely held English conviction that what really matters in our island histories is what happens in England. By contrast, events on the Celtic periphery were at best a curiosity and at worst an annoyance. Such indifference was a source of irritation in Ireland, Scotland and Wales long before the 2016 referendum on membership of the EU. But the Brexit vote has undoubtedly sharpened these resentments, accentuating the conflicts between Britain’s nations and infusing their separate histories with new meaning.

The highly distinct identities that have emerged from our different experiences became clear when both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain with larger majorities (a thumping one in the former) than the margin by which the country as a whole voted to leave. This has created a dynamic tension that is unlikely to disappear once the real nature of Brexit emerges.

At the time of the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement, the Union appeared robust and flexible enough to meet the aspirations of its constituent nations. Devolved assemblies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were preparing to meet for the first time. Support for Tony Blair’s new government stood at dizzying levels across the UK. Nobody could have imagined that just two decades later the Union would be under threat. But it increasingly looks that way—and I wanted to understand why.

I also had a more personal reason for taking on this project: it enabled me to investigate my own unknown family history. This story begins for me in Davos, where in February 1987 my brother Paddy and I arrived after a treacherous eight-hour drive from Vienna. The Swiss ski resort is of course now synonymous with the World Economic Forum, the annual shindig for the Masters of the Universe.

Not for my family: we got there long before the rich and famous. In the first half of the 20th century, this Alpine wilderness was the last station for those hoping to defeat tuberculosis. One of the pilgrims was my grandfather, Arthur Willoughby Falls Glenny. But he never made it out alive, succumbing to TB in 1947, aged just 49. When Paddy and I succeeded in unearthing his grave, buried under a good two feet of Swiss snow, we learnt something else—that Glenny had been born in Newry, County Down.

I had no idea. I knew that our surname was Scottish, but both my parents were born in London and I had never felt anything other than English. I had a Slavic first name and my father, a translator, used to tell us Russian fairy tales. Even as a child I was infinitely better acquainted with Russian culture than I was with my Northern Irish heritage.

If you have a Scottish name in Northern Ireland, that usually means that at some point your family joined the Presbyterian colonisers of western Scotland and the Anglican Protestants of northern England during one of the ‘plantations’ of Ireland. But within two generations, my family had lost any sense of a Northern Irish or unionist identity.



As I set out on my travels, the first thing I sought to understand was why England defines itself apart from its neighbours. It was a Scottish historian, Murray Pittock, who offered me the pithiest explanation as we sat in front of a roaring fire at his house in Stirling.

England emerged as a kingdom as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century. First Mercia and Wessex merged. Then came the absorption of Kent and East Anglia before finally the Vikings were driven from Northumberland. ‘England dominates the best agricultural land,’ said Pittock. ‘And the lack of devolution within England meant it was heavily centralised around London at a very early date and that centralisation was built on its agricultural heartlands.’

This economic superiority translated into military power. Once the Normans conquered England, successive campaigns enabled London to

subordinate Wales and part of Ireland. What it failed to do in Ireland after the break with Rome was to convert the indigenous population. London thereafter regarded Ireland above all else as a threat—a bridgehead for continental Catholic enemies, France and Spain, and the majority of its population a potential fifth column.

My antecedents were part of the Ulster plantation, James I and VI’s first ambitious colonisation programme. Sir David Glenny, ‘a belted knight from Ayrshire’, was granted or appropriated land around Newry. The settlers had a dual purpose: to exploit the considerable economic potential of Ireland, and to establish a paramilitary presence to neutralise any Catholic threat.

When I arrived in County Down, I was astonished to find documents at the Newry and Mourne Museum that made it clear that the Glennys had been a highly influential and wealthy family for over three centuries. A stroll through the graveyard of St Patrick’s Church confirmed this. Close to the entrance stands a large austere oblong stone inscribed ‘The Glennys of Newry’, and behind this lay four generations of my ancestors, ending with my great-grandfather (Arthur’s father).

The family had a country mansion and the elegant Littleton House on the outskirts of town. We owned great tracts of farmland across County Down. And what land! I had no idea how beautiful the undulating, deep green fields of South Down are, lying in the shadow of the Mountains of Mourne. One area of Glenny influence I visited was Warrenpoint, a charming town at the apex of Carlingford Lough, a silky sliver of water just south of Newry that marks the division between Down and County Louth in the Republic.

Border country like this is especially vulnerable in a country with a history of sectarian conflict. Declan Lawn, a Belfast screenwriter, told me how fast matters can escalate. ‘When we hear politicians in Westminster talking about border infrastructure and they say, ‘Oh, it’s just a camera’, well we know that within a week when someone tries to blow that camera up, then you have a manned post,’ he said. ‘Then suddenly that’s attacked and within, say, a month you have to have the army back guarding. Now that sounds like catastrophism. But we know, having lived it, that escalation here is everything, it is what happened.’

It is not just the nationalist community that is appalled by the insensitivity of politicians in London. Unionists are too. They both know that England looks at British history as either domestic politics in which the Celtic periphery occasionally impinges or as how the UK interacts with the outside world. Unspoken in this English worldview is something frequently articulated by foreigners—the conflation of England with Britain.

This is where those separate histories I mentioned earlier start to make themselves felt. The English are usually unaware of them, even though they often play a central role: Bannockburn, the Battle of the Boyne near Drogheda or Edward I’s conquest of Wales. The English barely take note of those events, preferring to reference Agincourt, Waterloo or the two world wars. The difference? These are played out on the international stage, not the domestic. Englishness is

more entwined with an imperial identity and less with the internal relations of the Union. The confrontation with the EU follows that pattern.

It was, of course, empire that underpinned the power and influence of the UK over two centuries. Scotland and Wales bought into it wholeheartedly, as did the unionists in Ireland. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ulster dominated industrial output. It wasn't Catholicism alone that the unionists feared. It was the deadweight of the rural southern Irish economy.

Scotland is the only part of the UK that was never conquered by the English. The Union of 1707 was entered into voluntarily, although there were serious dissenters on both sides—Catholic Jacobite resistance to the Union persisted for almost four decades before it finally collapsed.

In the subsequent years, however, Scotland was transformed beyond recognition. The Scots seized upon the economic opportunities that access to England's colonial markets afforded and from this they built the Scottish enlightenment, one of modern history's most remarkable intellectual and cultural ferments. Scotland continued to grow throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, too. 'Scotland, I would argue, contributed even more to the national wealth than England during the Industrial Revolution,' said Tom Devine, emeritus professor of history at the University of Edinburgh.

Scots also played a disproportionately important role in building the empire. As long as they were benefiting from the arrangement, they were content to let political power reside in London. Edinburgh was a rich city, Glasgow an industrial leviathan and those Scots who so wanted could try their luck in London.

Separatism may be on the rise in Scotland, but Unionism also has deep roots. A Scottish identity is not necessarily incompatible with a British one. As a member of the photography collective Document Scotland, Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert has been keeping a visual record of both the Independence and the Brexit referendums. 'There are so many nuances. Flags have taken on a lot of symbolism here,' he said. 'If you fly a Saltire, you're deemed to be supporting independence. Yet I've been to unionist demonstrations where they fly the Saltire and the Union Jack. The Saltire doesn't mean you're automatically pro-independence.'

It was only after British economic power and influence began to wane after the second world war that a political Scottish nationalism was able to revive. London's response to that was devolution, the theory being that if you allow a modicum of self-government, Edinburgh will not seek full independence. So far that has worked. But can it work after Brexit? If you read Scottish newspapers today much of the domestic coverage is about the Scottish government and events at Holyrood. But what do most in England know of those ins and outs? How many people south of the border can name a minister of the Scots' government apart from Nicola Sturgeon? Do, conversely, the Scots know about events at Westminster? Decidedly, yes.

Along with devolution has come a renewed interest in history. The Scottish government paid more than half of the £9m invested in the impressive Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre that opened five years ago. Here I was able to

join a group of Scottish schoolchildren in a virtual reality game where we revelled in scything down haughty English knights on horseback. Robert the Bruce's computerised humiliation of Edward II's troops in 1314 is now a rite of passage for most young Scots.

'In any film you see, whether *Braveheart* or *Outlaw King*, Bannockburn wins Scotland its independence,' Fiona Watson, a biographer of Robert the Bruce, told me. 'They were intensely proud of their martial identity, that they had seen off the English. At any rugby match you see at Murrayfield, you'll still hear the Scots sing about sending Edward home. Even now, it's the unofficial Scottish anthem.' And one that may well fuel separatist sentiment if Brexit goes badly for the Scots.

The increased identification with Scottish institutions and a distinct historical identity is accentuating the diverging priorities between the English and the Scots. To illustrate this Anthony Barnett, the writer and co-founder of the political website *openDemocracy*, pointed out that Wigan and Paisley have almost identical histories of industrial rise and decline. Their social make-up is similar and in the EU referendum, both had a close to 70 per cent turnout. Wigan voted 64 per cent to leave; Paisley 64 per cent to remain.

Why so different? 'There must be more at work in Brexit than just the rebellion of those left behind,' Barnett concluded. 'And while the slogan "Take back control" appealed to the English, the Scots are already on a project to take back control within the European Union via their national parliament Holyrood.' The EU now delivers to the Scots what the empire no longer can. This is a primary threat to the Union.

Even in Wales, which was absorbed much earlier and more thoroughly into English structures, cultural competition is growing. Personally, I sensed the key date here was Margaret Thatcher's 1980 U-turn to allow a dedicated Welsh-language channel, S4C, alongside other measures to encourage the language that devolution has boosted further.

A coherent Welsh nationalism has struggled much more than in Scotland because of domestic geography. There are no fast transport links between north and south Wales. Instead, the major routes run from west to east, ensuring that the constituent parts of Wales are economically connected not with each other but with Merseyside, the Midlands and the west of England.

Still, in the past 30 years the spread of Welsh has been remarkable. There are now 15 primary schools that use Welsh as the language of instruction in Cardiff alone. If Brexit results in major constitutional revisions in Northern Ireland and Scotland, there will at the very least be a debate about the value of union in Wales (although I suspect the union would win out).



British history is full of examples of how identities can change and allegiances shift with surprising rapidity. The most astonishing fact I discovered about the Glennys of Newry was that they switched from Presbyterianism to Episcopalianism and



back. This took on particular importance for my family during the bloodiest convulsion to affect Ireland before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1798 rebellion of the United Irishmen, the great insurgency that saw Catholics, Presbyterians and Episcopalians combine to challenge London, a young Isaac William Glenny was a sympathiser. It appears that after the rebellion's defeat and the bloody retribution meted out on the rebels by the British, the Glennys quickly returned to the establishment fold by joining the Church of Ireland and turning their back on dissent.

Over the centuries, many in Northern Ireland have switched confessional, national and political allegiance for the sake of expedience or conviction. Today the DUP may dominate discourse about Northern Ireland and Brexit in Westminster but despite its leadership's iron resolve, there are rumblings of unhappiness in their own community. A significant minority of Ulster Protestants, 29 per cent in one recent poll, would vote to remain over a no-deal Brexit.

Just as it has opened divisions across Britain about where our future lies, Brexit will renew the battles over our history. The outcome of these will play a central role in deciding whether we remain together or go our separate ways.

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MAPPING

# The Map of Connections

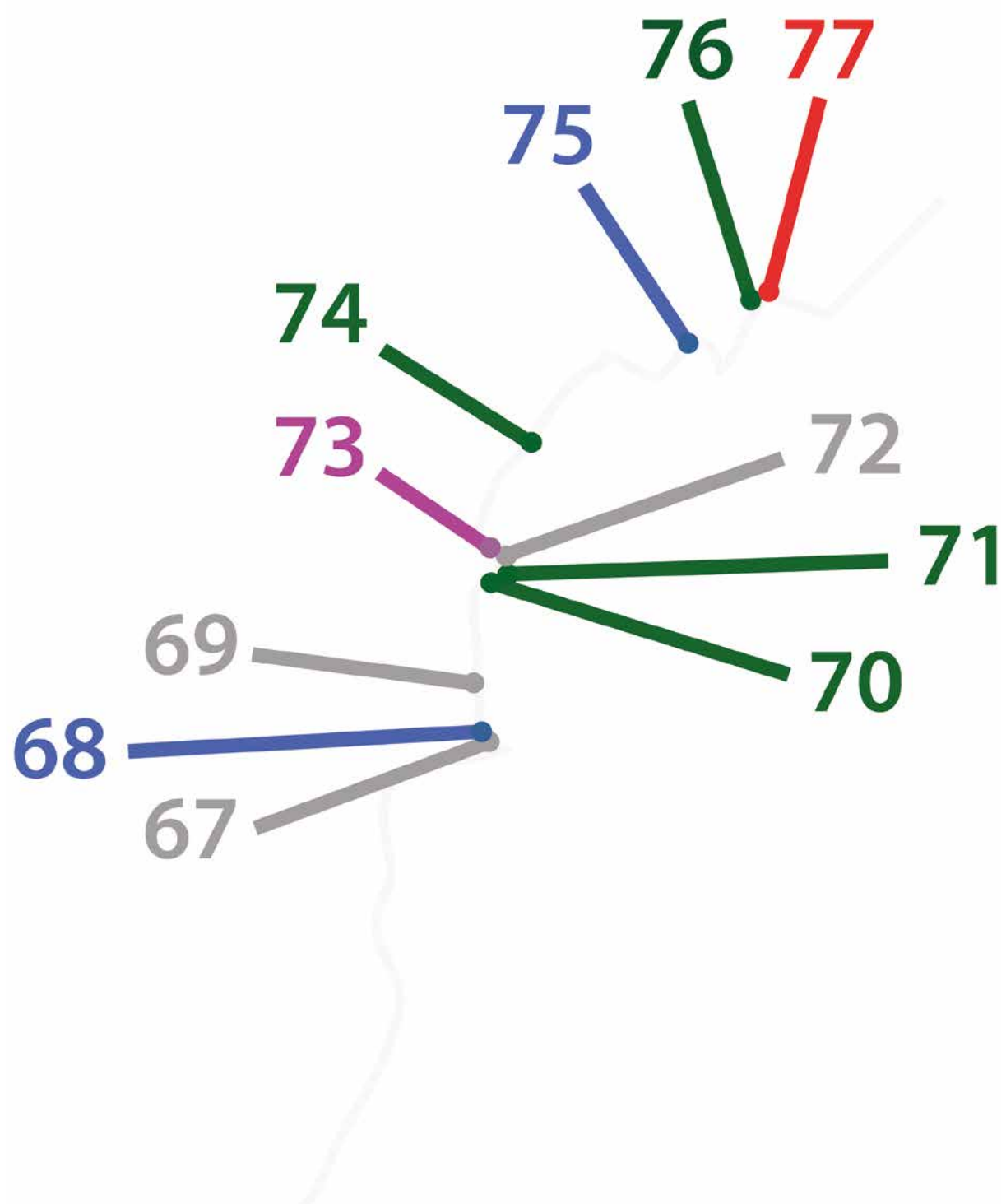
GARRETT CARR

Ireland's border is mostly farmland, fir plantations and bogland. I know this as I have walked every mile of it. The journey was essential for me to make maps of the border and write a book about it. I was interested in various things, including border ecology and in charting defensive structures of the frontier: castles, towers and checkpoints. Unexpected things also caught my eye. A lot of the border follows flowing water and on my very first day I found a set of stepping-stones: a row of four small boulders in a border stream only one foot deep. The route was not marked on any maps, not even in the close-scale maps used by hikers. I photographed the stepping-stones and recorded their coordinates, although I was not entirely sure why I found them so touching. I went on to find dozens more small border crossings and came to realise why I liked them: each is a reminder of our irrepressible urge to move about our localities. The basic, human, daily stuff of life: visiting neighbours, taking short cuts to a shop or herding cattle from one field into another. The fact that they were not marked on published 'official' maps was also part of their appeal. I charted them for a map that I called *The Map of Connections*.

Many of the connections are gates linking northern fields and southern fields; a lot are small bridges, often just a couple of planks. Others are stiles or footpaths. Together, the connections reveal a border that is open and alive. Around the world international boundaries often correspond with mountain ranges or wide rivers but the *Map of Connections* show Ireland's border is different. It is a perfectly tame, easy, interwoven and worked rural environment. It seems unsuited to constriction; it may be impossible to harden.

The current edition of the map shows 77 connections. Recently I have returned and found some more, while at least one set of stepping-stones on the map is now gone. There will have to be another edition of *The Map of Connections* soon, yet more evidence of the living, changing, nature of Ireland's border.





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NON-FICTION

# Red Hands of Hope and History

## *Sexism, Sectarianism, and Women Fighting Back*

SUSAN MCKAY

For Troubles journalists, the term ‘show of strength’ meant a particular spectacle—that of half a dozen or so men trussed up in army surplus fatigues with masks on their faces and guns in their hands. Journalists would get invited to attend these shows, in a hush, hush, sort of way that was supposed to make you feel you’d really made it as a war reporter rather than say a ‘wee girl’ which meant a woman, of any age.

During one of the Drumcree years in the 1990s, when the Orange Order made its last stand against the peace process, I took part in a radio discussion with leading Orangemen about how marching season puts the heads of the young astray. I quoted a Belfast teacher who’d told me it was impossible to get boys to settle to study for their exams. The teacher was concerned—as anyone who looked at statistics on underattainment among working class Protestant boys would be ... I was interrupted by one of the Orangemen.

‘This wee girl in Dublin doesn’t know what she’s talking about,’ he said.

So a show of strength meant you stood watching this group of men strut about with guns—sometimes shots would be fired in the air, almost always a statement was read in which threats of further, greater, more magnificently vengeful than ever seen before acts of violence against the enemy were promised. Because that is what armies do in war—they retaliate, they escalate, they kill more people, kill better. Trump boasted recently he could kill ten million Afghanis, if he wanted.

Nowadays in the North, we mainly see shows of strength celebrated in murals on the gable walls of still impoverished after all these years parts of cities, towns and villages. The self-styled New IRA has such murals on the walls of the house in Derry’s Bogside from which its ‘political’ wing, Saoradh operates. The mural shows cartoon-like figures with masks wielding giant weapons which are ludicrously, obviously, phallic.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April this year, the eve of Good Friday and the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Agreement that bears its name, Lyra McKee went with her friends to watch a riot in Creggan. She was a writer, preoccupied with the long shadow the Troubles had left over her post conflict generation. She had just tweeted: ‘Derry tonight—absolute madness’, along with a photo of police landrovers facing down a small hill towards burning cars and boys throwing petrol bombs—when she was shot. She was not the target. Like so many of the victims of the North’s violence she was ‘in the wrong place at the wrong time’. She was a random victim. She just happened to be in the way of a bullet. It could have been one of the householders who were standing out on their front paths, or one of the babies that some of them had in their arms. It could have been one of the local young people who were filming events on their phones. But it was Lyra. Police put her in the back of a Landrover and sped through a burning barricade to get her to Altnagelvin Hospital on the other side of town, but it was too late. Lyra died.



Saoradh, their name taken from the Irish word for liberty, put out a statement blaming ‘heavily armed crown forces’ for attacking a republican area, and claiming her death was accidental. They promised to ensure they did better next time. Such factions claim to speak for the republican community—and all thrive in the poorest and most marginalised communities, where young people have seen little benefit from peace and are readily seduced by the apparent glamour of armed struggle. They are small groups, breakaway fragments from the old Provisional IRA for the most part. Collectively they are known as dissident republicans. Sinn Féin, which began as the political wing of the IRA and is now the dominant nationalist party, denounces the dissidents as criminal gangs.

Derry’s history is full of conflict, from the Siege of 1689, to the Battle of the Bogside in 1969, to the Troubles that followed. One of the famous Bogside murals shows a young boy wearing a World War Two gas mask, with a petrol bomb in his hand. It is from a press photograph taken in 1969 by Clive Limpkin. A defining image of the start of the Troubles, it is now frequently surrounded by tourists. Derry relies on tourism now. The city has the worst demographics for poverty in the UK. The murals are just around the corner from a derelict shopping centre where dissident republicans kneecap boys they find guilty of anti-social behaviour. The murals are not far from the River Foyle into which despairing young men sometimes throw themselves. The river, it should be said, also brings great joy to the city, with clipper races and fireworks and tall ships and boardwalks.



A silence fell over Derry after Lyra's murder. A silence like the one that fell after Bloody Sunday in 1972. And through the silence of the Derry streets four days after Lyra's death her closest Derry friends walked to the headquarters of Saoradh. Word had got out and press photographers and camera people were waiting. The women had with them a large tub of red gloss paint, a paint tray, and some blue disposable gloves. The Saoradh men came out and stood watching, big men with their arms folded and perplexed, angry faces. The warriors. The women proceeded to dip their gloved hands in the paint and mark their prints on the murals of the men with guns.

This was a show of strength. A feminist show of strength.

A member of those designated by the New IRA as the occupying crown forces knelt beside one of Lyra's friends and told her that if there was a complaint of criminal damages he might be obliged to caution her. He patted her on the shoulder and walked away. Lyra's friends also painted her name on Derry's famous Free Derry wall, along with a heart. They marched with Pride in Belfast with a rainbow banner bearing her name. Lyra was gay and had moved to Derry less than a year before her death to be with the woman she loved, Sara Canning. In Belfast a mural of Lyra with 'It gets better', a line from one of her extraordinary essays, was painted outside the Sunflower Bar. She wrote about the way it has kept its Troubles era steel cage over the door, a reminder of the past. 'It is safe now,' she'd written.

Lyra was a friend of mine. She had many friends. When I heard the New IRA's deeply offensive apology I wrote: 'Let no one say that Lyra died in the name of Irish freedom. Lyra was Irish freedom.' I have become more and more convinced of this in the days, weeks and months since her death. Lyra was waked in her mother's house in Belfast. She had lived with her mother until she moved to Derry and was exceptionally close to her. The people who gathered in that small house to say their last goodbyes to our friend were like a vision of the diversity and equality the Good Friday Agreement was meant to deliver.



The title of this essay, 'Red Hands of Hope and History', invokes Seamus Heaney's wonderful lines from 'The Cure at Troy':

History says, don't hope  
On this side of the grave.  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up,  
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change  
On the far side of revenge.  
Believe that further shore  
Is reachable from here.

Lyra, like Heaney saw hope as something far more active than the feeling of benign optimism the word ordinarily suggests. Hope is an imperative. Hope for a great sea-change, Heaney instructs us. And Lyra did so too. She was preoccupied with the dark shadow the Troubles continue to cast over her generation, the generation she called 'The Ceasefire Babies'. In a TEDx talk she gave in 2017, she talked about suicide rates among young gay people. 'Don't tell me there is no hope,' she said. 'Because for many young LGBTQ people, hope is all there is.'

It was thrilling to see British Labour MPs Stella Creasy and Conor McGinn get their abortion and equal marriage amendments through Westminster this summer, leapfrogging over the stalemated local parties to introduce reproductive freedom for women and the right to marry for same sex couples. This in an act that had been intended to legislate for stasis. Stella Creasy has pointed out that politics is also about the issues that are ignored. She echoed Heaney's choice of words. She said that 'a great sea-change' had taken place. And Sara Canning said that Lyra would have been over the moon. They were to be engaged in New York in May.

The American feminist essayist Rebecca Solnit rejects both optimism and pessimism for their passivity, believing that 'hope navigates a way forward'. She has written that: 'The true impact of activism may not be felt for a generation. That alone is reason to fight, rather than surrender to despair.' In what is probably Lyra's best known piece of writing, her 'Letter to My 14 Year Old Self', she interestingly adopts the language of warfare. She talks about being bullied and says: 'It will be journalism that will help you to soldier on'. And when she comes out to her mother, and her mother asks, 'How could you ever have doubted that I would still love you?' Lyra says, 'You will feel like a prisoner who has been given your freedom.'

The red hand so brilliantly seized on as a symbol by Lyra's friends is, of course, used in the North by loyalists. Its use to show dissident republicans that they had the blood of an innocent woman on their hands was a wonderful act of subversion. These are women who refuse traditional designations, who are willing to appropriate symbols for their own purposes, to redefine Lyra's death as a barbaric murder by men Lyra's partner called a 'scourge' on their community, preying on the young as paedophiles prey on them.

I think one of the challenges for journalists, and in particular I mean editors, is that we still have conventional ideas about what these words mean. I have been surprised to see how little attention has been given in the Irish and Northern Irish media to the great human rights victories won suddenly, after decades of campaigning. The news agenda has not adapted to a post-conflict situation in which non-violent events are momentous. Nor have we appreciated that there are different ways of looking at leadership. Who knows the names of those who led the Black Lives Matter movement in the US? Hardly anyone—that is because they are in fact women who didn't think the most urgent issue was to put their names in lights.

Former Irish President Mary Robinson said the great Northern Irish civil rights campaigner Inez McCormack taught her that sometimes you could be more effective if you didn't feel the need to take the credit. Historian Mary Beard says if women are to be included in history we need to look at leadership as being about

more than just the single charismatic figure. We need to think collaboratively, and about power as the ability to be effective, to make a difference to the world.



In 2014 Lyra wrote about a row which had erupted after a nationalist councillor described himself as an economic unionist. He was reprimanded by his party, the SDLP, and Sinn Féin said he was clearly not a nationalist at all. Lyra wrote that she did not vote for either party, though her background was such that they might have expected her to: ‘The Good Friday Agreement has created a new generation of young people, freed from the cultural constraints and prejudices of the one before.’ She said that in the past being unionist or nationalist ‘was an accident of birth’ and people drew their friends from their ‘own kind’.

Times have changed, she asserted: ‘We have moved on ... the constitutional debate is irrelevant. It doesn’t pay the bills. It doesn’t get new laws passed. It doesn’t improve life in Northern Ireland in any tangible way.’ Her generation had not seen enough of the conflict to make them bitter towards ‘the other side’, she said, and concluded: ‘I don’t want a United Ireland or a stronger Union. I just want a better life.’

Adrienne Rich wrote in the 1970s that ‘the entire history of women’s struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over. One serious cultural obstacle encountered by any feminist writer is that each feminist work has tended to be received as if it emerged from nowhere ... so also is each contemporary feminist theorist attacked as if her politics were simply an outburst of bitterness or rage.’ Rebecca Solnit points out that the traditional models of power and authority create an impossible bind for women. Women who aspire to power can’t be too feminine, she writes, since femininity is not associated with leadership, nor can they be too masculine, since that is not their prerogative. Thus they are forced ‘to be something impossible in order not to be something wrong.’

In these ways, women are obliterated from history. Mary Josephine Ryan lost her partner Seán MacDermott to the Easter Rising in 1916. In a book called *The Irish Rebellion of 1916 and its Martyrs* she described her last meeting with him in Kilmainham jail, hours before he was executed: ‘At four o’clock that Friday morning when the shooting party had done their work, a gentle rain began to fall. I remember feeling that at last there was some harmony in Nature. These were assuredly the tears of my dark Rosaleen over one of her most beloved sons.’

There is something about her language that is self-sacrificing—she obliterated her own feelings as a woman whose lover has just been executed, her hopes and dreams, her pain. She steps aside, handing him over to Ireland. My Dark Rosaleen weeps for another martyr to her cause. The problem for real women of the identification of Ireland as a nation with the female, is something the poet Eavan Boland has explored in the context of trying to find her own authoritative voice as a poet, a poet who is Irish and a woman.

Boland writes about her life as a young woman who came back from America to Dublin as a student in the 1960s. She tries to find a place for her poetic voice but

finds instead ‘a rhetoric of imagery which alienated me, a fusion of the national and the feminine which seemed to me to simplify both’. It represented a political aspiration or a collective fantasy, an archive of defeat and a diagram of victory. Ireland was a woman—Irish poetry was male. Women in the poetry of nationalism were ‘passive, decorative, raised to emblematic status’. These distorted images of women had their roots in real and suffered experience. Boland describes meeting on Achill Island with an old woman in a cardigan who points out to her a beach where people tried to find seaweed to eat during the famine. ‘What happened?’ Boland asks herself. ‘How had the women of our past—the women of a long struggle and a terrible survival—undergone such a transformation? How had they suffered Irish history and rooted themselves in the speech and memory of the Achill woman only to emerge in Irish poetry as fictive queens and national sibyls?’ She came to see the notion of Ireland as a woman—‘My Dark Rosaleen, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, Mother Ireland’—as a dispossession of Irish womanhood, a simplification which negates complex feelings and aspirations: ‘she becomes the passive projection of a national idea.’ Feminist historians like Margaret Ward have been struggling for decades to replace Irish women in the historical canon. It is only in relatively recent years that their books have reached the mainstream.



Lyra wrote, in her ‘Letter to My 14 Year Old Self’: ‘It gets better.’ In a later talk she said, ‘it gets better for those of us who live long enough to see it get better.’ She was 24 when she wrote the letter, 27 when she gave the talk, 29 when she was murdered. This essay started out as a presentation to the 2019 MacGill Summer School in Donegal. Patrick MacGill’s fictional character Moleskin Joe has a saying: ‘There’s a good time coming, although we may never live to see it.’

Young people in the North are constantly told to remember their martyrs—remember 1916, remember the hunger strikes. It is time to remember and to learn from someone who had a radically different idea of freedom. Lyra represented a new generation of political activists who are breaking free of old definitions, and asserting new ways to show leadership. It is our job to recognise that this, too, is revolutionary.

Remember Lyra.

Lyra McKee did not die for Irish freedom. Lyra was Irish freedom.

NON-FICTION

# Suicide of the Ceasefire Babies

LYRA MCKEE

So the answer to your question is yes.  
If you're ever really gonna kill yourself, yes, please,  
Call me.  
—Nora Cooper, 'I Won't Write Your Obituary'

'He's only 17, how can he be dead?'

For once, Big Gay Mick wasn't saying much. 'I don't know. We just seen his stepdad getting out of a taxi at the top of the street and he told us.'

There was no getting any other details out of him; he was in shock. Big Gay Mick was not normally lost for words. Stick-thin, with a baseball cap permanently pulled down over his eyes and a gold chain around his neck, you might have mistaken him for one of the neighbourhood hard men until you heard his voice: shrill, camp and a fair bit higher than what it should have been post puberty. In our little teenage gang, he was the only one brave enough to be openly gay. It wasn't easy.

We grew up just off Murder Mile, a stretch of the Antrim Road so called because of the number of casualties there during the Troubles (the wider area was known as the Murder Triangle for the same reason). On the street where Big Gay Mick lived, beside a 'peace wall' that separated us from the Protestants, loyalist paramilitaries would drive down, single out a target and pull the trigger. Even

though Mick lived just two streets away from me, I wasn't allowed to go to his until I was ten years old, two years after the Good Friday Agreement—a key part of the peace process—was signed. In an area where murder and mayhem created hardened men, it was not easy to be as camp as Christmas. He managed, though, all the while smirking at a member of the local paramilitary who would shout homophobic abuse at us as we walked by.

The swagger was gone today. I was grilling him and he didn't have the answers I wanted.

'How can he be dead?'

'He killed himself. Apparently he escaped from the hospital. They found him in the grounds.'

I don't remember much of what happened after that, other than walking upstairs, kicking something in the bathroom, and cursing Jonny for dying.



The Ceasefire Babies was what they called us. Those too young to remember the worst of the terror because we were either in nappies or just out of them when the Provisional IRA ceasefire was called. I was four, Jonny was three. We were the Good Friday Agreement generation, destined to never witness the horrors of war but to reap the spoils of peace. The spoils just never seemed to reach us.

The first time Jonny tried to kill himself, the ambulance was parked just beyond his front door, as if the paramedics were mindful of drawing attention to the house. Despite the fact that the local papers brought news of suicides every week—for some reason the numbers had rocketed—there was still an element of Catholic shame about it all. When they carted him off to hospital to pump the tablets out of his stomach, his mother didn't go with him.

That night, he was released. We'd formed a 'suicide watch' in preparation: 'You go in for your dinner and I'll stay with him, and then I'll go in for my dinner when you come back.' When he joined us, little was said. We didn't ask him why he'd done it. He was only 16, the rest of us a year or two older. To our teenage brains, suicide was like cancer, an accident of fate. Sometimes people survived it, and sometimes they didn't. The newspapers, bringing reports of more deaths every week, spoke of it like a disease, using words like 'epidemic'. It never occurred to us, as we took turns to keep an eye on Jonny that night, that it didn't matter what we did. He would just keep trying until he managed it.

Jonny was my best mate. We'd met three years before when his family had moved into the street. My house was at one end of the road; his, the other. We matched in several ways: dark hair, dark eyes and glasses. People mistook us for siblings. But one thing that didn't match was our ability to sing. While I could be outdone on a harmony by a choir of alley cats, Jonny had a voice like velvet. Every day, he'd rehearse in front of the mirror, singing along to CDs, trying to reach higher and higher notes. With a tough home life, the thought of being onstage was what got him out of bed every day. When his mother left the house for the

pub, sometimes not returning until the next day, he'd bring us up to his room and practise. Sometimes, you couldn't walk down the street without him bursting into song.

One day we were standing at his end of the street. I had a secret to tell him.

'I'm gay,' I said.

'Guess what? I am too!' he replied.

It was a relief, to find someone else 'not normal'. We were the neighbourhood's resident freaks—or so we thought. Walking through the area, day or night, was a bit like running over hot coals, except instead of trying to avoid being burned, you were trying to avoid the local hoods, hoping they wouldn't spot you.

There were five of us: me, Jonny, Jonny's brother Jimmy, Big Gay Mick and Tanya, a sweet-natured English girl with long fair hair and blue eyes. But, as childhood friends do, we grew apart. Maybe we'd have grown together again if another ambulance hadn't come and taken Jonny away. His brother told me about it afterwards. It happened at a house party. With a few drinks in him, he'd got upset, disappeared and taken another lot of tablets. By this time, his mother had been taken ill and was recovering in a home. Jimmy had been sent to live with his dad. The last I'd heard of Jonny, until Big Gay Mick knocked on my door, was that he was in a mental health hospital. Now he was dead.

I lived in the street for three more years. When I left, Jonny's house had been boarded up, the windows barricaded with sheets of rusted metal. The only window left untouched was the one at the top, the one through which the neighbours used to hear him sing.

When someone dies by suicide, they leave behind questions. Attend a wake or a funeral in such circumstances and you'll hear them, posed by family members tortured by the big 'Why?'. Why did she do it? Why didn't he talk to me? Why didn't she say goodbye?

Those were not the sort of questions that Mike Tomlinson, a professor of sociology at Queen's University Belfast, could answer. What he could do, though, was talk about the broader picture. 'Essentially, the story since 1998, which just so happens to be the [year of the] peace agreement, is that our suicide rate almost doubles in the space of ten years.' From the beginning of the Troubles in 1969 to the historic peace agreement in 1998, over 3,600 people were killed. In the 16 years after that, until the end of 2014, 3,709 people died by suicide. Contrast this with the 32-year gap from 1965 to 1997, when 3,983 deaths by suicide were recorded. Over the last few years, Tomlinson's research has mainly focused on one question—why?

'Now, that trend [the almost doubling of the suicide rate since 1998] is wholly out of line with what happens everywhere else,' says Tomlinson. He describes a presentation he gave at Stormont, the parliament buildings of Northern Ireland, that includes graphs of the trends in suicide in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. 'Of all the presentations I've done in my career,' he says, 'there's an audible gasp from the audience every time I've done that [one].'

It's not that suicide didn't happen before 1998; it did, although researchers caution that it may not have always been recorded as such due to religious norms and relatives' shame. Yet during his research, Tomlinson discovered that of all suicides registered in Northern Ireland between 1965 and 2012 (7,271 in total), 45 per cent were recorded from 1998 onwards. It's the oddest of anomalies: if the official statistics can be taken at face value, more people are killing themselves in peacetime than in war.

In a paper published in 2013, Tomlinson wrote: 'Since 1998 the suicide rate in Northern Ireland has almost doubled, following a decade during which the rate declined from a low level of 10 per 100,000 of the population to 8.6.' The overall rate is now 16.25 per 100,000: 25.24 per 100,000 men and 7.58 per 100,000 women (2012 figures based on three-year rolling averages). In global terms, this places Northern Ireland in the top quarter of the international league table of suicide rates.

Tomlinson identified adults who as children had lived through the worst period of Troubles-related violence (from 1970 to 1977) as the age group that experienced the most rapid rise in suicides in the decade after 1998. It seems obvious that this group, the middle-aged who'd seen the worst of the Troubles, would be affected. But what about teenagers, people like Jonny? We were the Ceasefire Babies.

No matter whether we were old or young, war added new habits to our lives—everyday rituals that wouldn't be so everyday in most countries without war, like not taking your toy gun outside in case a passing army patrol or police jeep mistook it for a real one and fired. Or watching your feet as you walked to school because the police were searching the area for a suspect device. Or getting hit by rocks that came flying over the 'peace wall' that separated us from the 'other side'. Yet those things were minor compared to seeing someone shot in front of you, as people older than us had done.

The Troubles' survivors would taunt us: how much had we really seen, compared to them, even if we had grown up near an 'interface' where Catholic and Protestant areas met? Yet of the 3,709 people who lost their lives to suicide between 1999 and 2014, 676 of them—nearly a fifth—were aged under 25.



31 July 1972. The day three bombs went off in Claudy, a small village in the Faughan Valley, six miles south-east of Derry City. That day, Siobhan O'Neill's mother left her shop in the village, turning left to walk down the street. If she'd turned right, O'Neill may never have been born.

O'Neill never witnessed the carnage of the Troubles directly. But she saw its effects on people's everyday lives: in the fear of her parents when she told them, aged 11, that she wanted to attend secondary school in Derry, not the village. Derry, like Belfast, was a hotspot for murder and bombings.

Today, her job largely involves examining the legacy of that violence.



O'Neill is a professor of mental health sciences at the University of Ulster's School of Psychology. Last year, she led a team of researchers who established that there is a direct link between suicidal behaviour and having experienced a traumatic event, including those related to conflict.

It was confirmation of what many had long suspected. Of the sample interviewed for the study, just 3.8 per cent of those who'd never experienced a traumatic event had seriously considered suicide. If they'd experienced a non-conflict-related traumatic event (like a car crash, for example, or a loved one dying from cancer), that number jumped to 10.5 per cent. And for those who'd experienced conflict-related traumatic events? The number increased further still—to 14.2 per cent.

What shocked O'Neill even more was her discovery that, out of the 28 countries that participated in the World Mental Health Survey Initiative—including Israel and Lebanon, places with ongoing, bloody conflicts—Northern Ireland was the one whose population had the highest rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Some 39 per cent of Northern Ireland's population, she says, have experienced a traumatic event related to the conflict. While suicide rates among the middle-aged could, in part, be explained by the trauma of the Troubles, how could the death of young people who'd never seen the war be accounted for?

There is no single common factor in suicides among young people, according to O'Neill. Many things can be involved: educational underachievement, poverty, poor parenting. But the Ceasefire Babies are also dealing with the added stress of the conflict—even though most of them never witnessed it directly. 'When one person sees something awful, when one person is traumatised, it will affect how they relate to everybody else, including how they relate to their children, their grandchildren,' says O'Neill.

'People who've been affected by the Troubles live in areas where there's high rates of crime and poverty. When you're a child growing up in poverty, being parented by people who've been traumatised and everyone around you has been traumatised, you are going to be affected by that, even if you've never seen anything. Even if they never tell you the stories.'



At the University of Haifa in Israel, students can take a course called Memory of the Holocaust: Psychological aspects. Taught by Professor Hadas Wiseman, it outlines how the traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors have been passed down to their children and grandchildren, a phenomenon known as 'intergenerational transmission of trauma'.

Much research has been published on the subject. In 1980, a husband-and-wife team, Stuart and Perihan Aral Rosenthal, presented their research in the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*. Titled 'Holocaust effect in the third generation: child of another time', it examined how the trauma of Holocaust survivors had

travelled down the generations. It should have been a red flag to governments and policy makers across the globe: the effects of war did not stop with the murdered, the injured and the traumatised.

In 2012, another study that looked at the Holocaust, published by researchers at the University of Haifa, confirmed what many academics had argued for years: that trauma survivors pass their behaviours down to their children. A report in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* said: 'Survivor parents were perceived by some second-generation children as being inaccessible, cold and distant. And even though these second-generation participants described their parents' inaccessibility as being problematic, some of them were perceived by their own children as being remote and cold.'

Researchers, including Professor Rachel Yehuda at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, are exploring how the effects of trauma and stress could be passed down to offspring biologically. Epigenetic changes—alteration of genes in terms of their activity, rather than their DNA sequence—can be inherited, and it's thought these may explain how intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs. In August 2015, Yehuda and colleagues published a study of Holocaust survivors that showed, for the first time in humans, that parental trauma experienced before conception can cause epigenetic changes in both parent and child.

These findings are among the latest in an increasing body of research showing that intergenerational transmission of trauma is not just a sociological or psychological problem, but also a biological one. Could this heritable aspect of trauma explain why so many young people in Northern Ireland, like Jonny, are taking their lives? As the sociologist Mike Tomlinson pointed out to me during an interview, the problem with answering that question is a lack of data. Who are these young people? What are their backgrounds? Where are they from?

Tomlinson recounted a time he was interviewed on the BBC World Service about his research. At the end of the interview, a fellow interviewee from the USA asked him, 'Where is the evidence from other countries?' The problem is, there's very little. In war, the ruling government usually collapses—and with it any form of meaningful record keeping. Northern Ireland was unique: the Troubles was an internal conflict throughout which the state remained strong, even when the mainland was being bombed. To borrow a scientific term, it's the best dataset we have to prove that the problems faced in a war-torn country do not end with the arrival of peace.

Yet the experiences of Northern Irish families in the post-conflict era are playing out in other countries, even if the patterns aren't being recognised. After one presentation at an international conference where he talked about Northern Ireland's soaring suicide rates, Tomlinson was surrounded by people from different countries affected by conflict. 'This is exactly what we see,' they told him. 'But again,' he says, 'it was anecdotal, it wasn't well-documented.'



The Sunflower is a tiny little pub perched on a corner in the alleyways that sit between the edge of north Belfast and the city centre. With bright green paintwork, it's known for attracting a genteel crowd of writers, journalists, poets and musicians, a smattering of post-conflict hipsters who wear tight jeans and tweed jackets and Converse. There are poetry readings and concerts by local indie bands in a smallish room upstairs. A sign outside on the wall says: 'No Topless Sunbathing—Ulster Has Suffered Enough.' For tourists, it's an introduction to the natives' quirky black humour, our way of dealing with all that's happened.

For those of us who grew up in north Belfast and know the area, the sign calls to mind the suffering experienced on those very streets when a loyalist murder gang, the Shankill Butchers, drove around looking for Catholic victims to torture and kill. Yet one night, I end up there, drinking, at a table with my Protestant best friend, at least two republicans and a group of Corbynite socialists. Times have changed. If I'd been born a decade earlier, I wouldn't have dared to venture down those streets, never mind drink there. Now, it's safe.

It was there that I went, one Thursday afternoon, to meet Jonny.

We never figured out why Jonny's stepdad told Big Gay Mick that Jonny was dead. We found out within a day that he was still alive. Now he was sitting in front of me, toned and muscular, with his dark hair swept over his eyes, the glasses replaced by contact lenses. While I'd never really shaken off the unkempt geeky look, he looked like he could have been an extra in a *Baywatch* beach scene.

We'd all grown up together—me, him, Big Gay Mick, Tanya, Little Jimmy—but there was so much he'd kept hidden from us. While we were hanging out, he told me, he would disappear to his room and take a swig of vodka. Drink was easy to get where we lived, even without ID. Between arguments with his stepfather and mother, things had been getting tougher at home. The first time he'd tried to kill himself, he'd walked down to his mum's, picked up a box of pills, swallowed a load and passed out while vomiting.

He'd had depression for a while. 'All I understand it being was sheer despair. It was a despair that you couldn't lift—it stayed with you all day, when you slept, and you woke up and you felt the same way, and you felt the same way when you went to sleep—if you did sleep,' he says. 'It's just a constant ... I call it 'the black dog'. It's a constant sort of feeling hanging over you, of just pure 'anti-ness', hopelessness.'

After a second suicide attempt, he was taken to a mental health facility. Several more attempts followed. 'I was always very opportunistic—it was never planned out,' he says. 'If I saw an opportunity I took it, so I was quite impulsive, so it was quite frightening, I think I was under observation for a while.' Since then, though, his life has changed. With the help of medication to keep him stabilised, he has his own flat and is going back to school. He still sings. Next year, he plans to try out for a televised singing competition.

I was grateful to be there, in that weird hipster bar, drinking with Jonny instead of visiting his grave. Then I thought of all those who should have been sat there with us—friends and acquaintances who never made it into adulthood. We

could have filled The Sunflower with them and still had people spilling out onto the streets. The problem hasn't gone away. On Christmas night in 2015 in Ardoyne—an area in north Belfast that saw 13 young people kill themselves over a six-week period in 2004—a young woman called Colleen Lagan died from suicide. She was the third member of her family to take their own life in the past ten months.

Those who survived the Troubles called us the Ceasefire Babies, as if resentful that we'd grown up unaccustomed to the sound of gunfire, assuming that we didn't have dead to mourn like they did. Yet we did. Sometimes, I count their names on my fingers, quickly running out of digits. Friends, friends of friends, neighbours' relatives, the kids whose faces I knew but whose names I learned only from the obituary column. The tragic irony of life in Northern Ireland today is that peace seems to have claimed more lives than war ever did.

Some names have been changed.

This text was published by *Mosaic* and is available at:  
<https://mosaicscience.com/story/conflict-suicide-northern-ireland>

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# THE YELLOW MANIFESTO

A true account of a border and its people.

1. People who live on the border need a say about the border. Don't think just of the borderline, think of the lives there. Think of the emotional meaning of the border as well as its practical impacts.
2. This is one of the most beautiful places on earth. We need to preserve this for everyone; the night sky, lakes, mountains and bogs. We value the freedom we have to wander in our environment.
3. We value our ability to live and work in either jurisdiction. Many of us cross the border daily. Homesteads, farms and businesses span both sides. We value the borderland's uniqueness. We value family and friends; we have relatives across religious and social borders and love our differences. We value peace and quiet.
4. We know how to resist. We know how to adapt. How to open closed roads. How to quickly evaluate strangers and work out currency exchange rates. How to get along with neighbours, even when our views are opposed. We don't fit the stereotypes.
5. We could teach you about tolerance. Border people have codes; we know how to treat each other in order to keep harmony. The border is where realities can co-exist. Co-existence is essential to the contract we have with each other; it is a higher thing than economics or security.
6. No one was unaffected by our history; the sights we saw, the hurt and fear. Some people lost far too much. For many the border gave safety and protection and preserved identity. We all need to learn history—our own and others. Preserve this knowledge so that the troubles of the past remain in the past.
7. Keep the border invisible and confined to maps. We want no checkpoints. Heightened security doesn't make us feel more safe or more secure. It makes us feel the opposite—angry, anxious, defensive and fearful.
8. The difference between Yes and No can be made into Maybe. The Good Friday Agreement brought peace and stability. We fear the reversal of this good work. We can teach the world about history, respect and forgiveness but we need more time to come to terms with our past. You don't rush border people.
9. Some of us want to grow together without a border. Some of us want the border intact although invisible. Our neighbours are our friends. We all choose peace.

**ACROSS  
AND IN-BETWEEN**

Written by people who live along the border in Ireland during the Border People's Parliament.

Parliament Buildings, Stormont.  
20th October 2018

ARTWORK

## Across and In-Between

SUZANNE LACY

Created in collaboration with communities in Ireland from both sides of the border, almost 100 years since the partition of Ireland, *Across and In-Between* explores the profound impact the border has on the lives of people who live there.

*Across and In-Between* created a mass response by over 300 border residents interrogating a line on a landscape with a collective, metaphorical act of 'drawing and erasing.'

The artwork consists of three elements:

*The Yellow Line*—In five rural areas where the borderline between Northern Ireland and Ireland is indiscernable, residents engaged in the playful construction of unique 'actions' expressing their various sentiments and hopes for the future. The actions were filmed, resulting in a three-screen projection made with farmers, horse-owners, scouts, hikers and villagers from communities across Fermanagh, Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan.

*Border People's Parliament*—At the height of the Brexit crisis, 150 people arrived at Northern Ireland's Parliament Buildings, Stormont, for a *Border People's Parliament*. On 20 October 2018, guests were part of a carefully staged event where their opinions were recorded in Parliamentary committee rooms, their



photographic portraits captured and over dinner they participated in drafting *The Yellow Manifesto—A True Account of a Border and its People* launched on the *Today* programme, BBC Radio 4, 22 October, 2018.

*Across and In-Between: A Documentary* follows the participants' journey from the border to Parliament—featuring interviews, the process behind the artwork and the drafting of a manifesto revealing lessons participants learned from life on the borderlands in Ireland.

Staged and completed at the Belfast International Arts Festival in 2018, the finished artwork will premiere at the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, in Spring 2020.

*Across and In-Between* is a creative collaboration between Suzanne Lacy and Cian Smyth with Helen Sharp.

Collaborating artists include:

**The Yellow Line:** Mark Thomas and Soup Collective

**Border People's Parliament:** Garrett Carr, with Eva Grosman

**Across and In-Between: The Documentary:** Conan McIvor, with Michael Daly and Thayna McLaughlin

**Stills Photography:** Helen Sloan SMPSP, with Ross Mulhall

**Sound:** Pedro Rebelo, with Michael McKnight

*A co-commission by 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions and Belfast International Arts Festival with support from: the National Lottery Heritage Fund; Arts Council England; the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; and the Government of Ireland through the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Reconciliation Fund).*









## INTRODUCTION

# New Writing from the North of Ireland

TARA MCEVOY

[...] I peel and portion

A tangerine and spit the pips and feel

The drunkenness of things being various.

—Louis MacNeice, ‘Snow’

In 2016, myself and Caitlin Newby, Michael Nolan, Padraig Regan, Matthew Morete, and Hannah Greenfield launched *The Tangerine*, a Belfast-based magazine of new writing, with the above lines from one of the city’s most fêted sons. The publication, we hoped, would be a space for a plurality of new voices: for creative work and critical engagement with culture and politics in Belfast and beyond. Published three times annually, the magazine includes poetry, fiction, non-fiction, photography, and illustration.

In the years since *The Tangerine* was established, the publication has grown in ways that vastly exceeded our initial expectations (in the past year, for example, we’ve been delighted to have Sacha White join our team as a contributing editor). We’ve been overwhelmed by the interest our readers have shown in the magazine; by the quality and quantity of submissions we’ve received; by the boldness, nuance, and flair of the work that we’ve been lucky enough to print. The selection of work included in this *Belfast Debate* publication amounts to a mini-*Tangerine*, offering a snapshot, across genres, of the work we’ve published to date, speaking to some of the questions the conference raises about identity, community, and conflict.

We kick off with ‘Thing’, a recurring feature that opens each issue, in which writers and artists discuss an object of some importance to them. Across eight issues, we’ve heard about some ‘things’ from Ciaran Carson, Tess Taylor, Medbh McGuckian, Glenn Patterson, Damian Smyth, Ian Sansom, and Wendy Erskine; here included is Stephen Connolly’s response, a piece about Orbital’s album *III* which expands to encompass a reflection on ‘points at which [...] personal, familial history intersects with the civic.’ This is an animating concern, too, in the work of James Patterson, whose poem ‘May Queens’, and essay ‘Bandit Country’ are included in this selection, informed by the histories and mythologies of his native Newry.

From South Armagh, we jump 100 miles or so to County Donegal—the site of Eva Isherwood-Wallace’s ‘Skeleton of Fanad’, where a fence ‘ties the land to land, dividing space / as though it needs dividing’—and then swerve from the rural to the urban, with Maeve O’Lynn’s ‘The International Language of Space’, set in a dismal Belfast in the midst of the ‘festive’ season. Finally, we have Joe Lines’ ‘Around Again’, returning us to the distant past of the Ulster rising, and the tumultuous life of author and bookseller Richard Head.

These pieces offer a small glimpse of the rich and vibrant work being produced at present in the North of Ireland, work which it has been our great privilege to publish. We hope you enjoy this segment, and that it might encourage you to peel open a tangerine in the future.

# Thing

STEPHEN CONNOLLY

More than a few times in the last three years I have found myself at four or five or six in the morning after a party listening to the same track as the dawn light begins to appear through the bay window of my flat just off the Ormeau Road. Alone, as my partner Manuela has always found her way to bed before me, and close to sleep, I reach for the same sky blue-sleeved record and skip straight to the second side, its third track. The record is *III*, the third release by Orbital. The track is ‘Belfast’. More often than not, I will listen to it over and over: its eight minutes easily becoming an hour, the sun well up before I’m done with it. More than once, I’ve tried to work out why I’m perpetually drawn to this song.

Much like I once had myself believing that MacNeice’s ‘Snow’, from which this magazine takes its name, was written in and of Belfast, I had convinced myself that a piece of music that presented such a prismatic vision of the city so perfectly attuned to Belfast’s most optimistic self must have been titled simultaneously to its composition, if not preceding it. Perhaps this was down to the mythology, repeated often in a haze of nostalgia by musicians and journalists, surrounding its composition: the story goes that the two brothers of Orbital wrote it as a tribute to the city after a weekend spent here in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

But it’s the music that overpowers the myth and recently I found myself at the piano that Manuela and I had been gifted by a family friend trying to work out the key of ‘Belfast’. Its slow, opening drone has a Low C, a

G above it and a C and octave above: there is no third note to make the drone a major or minor chord. To my untrained ear this ambiguity implies the key of C-major but hovers at the verge of resolution. The swirling lead monosynth line that creeps in has something of a passing siren about it, fading in and out of earshot. Its vocal is sampled from a hymn written by 12th-century scholar and mystic Hildegard of Bingen: *in leta via ambulasti* (which could mean ‘you walk in the blessed path’, or at a stretch ‘you’re going in the right direction’).

It’s these elements, I have started to realise—not least because the Ormeau is a major arterial route for ambulances heading south—that lead me back (still late at night or early in the morning) to thoughts that have occupied me consistently since I began to read into the history of the city; two points at which my personal, familial history intersects with the civic on major routes into or out of Belfast. First, my grandfather pouring pints for men who had stepped out to place a bet and were caught up in an attack on the bookie’s shop; the attackers leaving at speed along the Ormeau Road. Further back, my great-grandfather’s account—he was veteran of Passchendaele—of one night of Luftwaffe bombs falling on the city. As bombs fell early one April morning he walked York Street and later said this: *I stood that night in the middle of the tramlines; the colour, the shells, the flares: splashes of scarlet and gold, of black and pink and blue and crimson all merging and drifting under a silver glow; the solitude; the noise; its beauty.*

1            The truth is that it was already well on its way to completion before they had set foot in the city; they left it on a demo tape with their hosts David Holmes and Iain McCready after their first Belfast gig.

JAMES CONOR PATTERSON

# May Queens

There we were at the Barracks Arch near Linenhall Square  
looking, for all we were worth, like a couple of vaudeville performers  
in our Mas’ old Barbara Stanwyck shirtwaists & *Revlon*-red lipsticks.  
Me in my sister’s Peter Pan-collar blouse & *Dance-It-Up* heels.

Fabulous to a fault, we spent the afternoon collecting pennies  
in a washed out soup-can, parading our broom-handle Maypole  
like a banner and readying our mates for placement on the Canal’s  
middle-bank where we’d Morris-dance freely until we were called for tea.

There we’d muddy our knees to set the thing straight, twisting this way  
then the other until we met at its base and the eggshells plucked  
from yesterday’s rubbish cascaded down our hawthorn coronets like rain;  
our folks entreating to good-room Virgins, ‘Mercy, mercy for their sins.’

NON-FICTION

# Bandit Country

JAMES CONOR PATTERSON

Over the graffitied wall on the park’s northern flank is a housing estate called Michael Mallin Park, and over the wall from that is another estate named after James Connolly. A minute’s walk beyond is the local Sinn Féin HQ, and from here, a huge diagonally-placed white flagpole stretches over Dominic Street with a tricolour fluttering against a backdrop of old pubs, dilapidated shops selling Christmas trees and a casino with the words *Call in today!* flashing across a pixelated screen.

This is Bandit Country during peacetime; the place I call home and, after being away for much of my adult life, the place I always come back to. From my perspective, there has rarely been any question about whether the people here consider themselves Irish or British, or if Brexit might have any long-term implications for the city’s identity going forward. The Newry I grew up in has never really gone in for all that John Hewitt stuff about being Ulstermen first and Irishmen second. Growing up here you were as likely to pay for your groceries in Euros as you were in Pounds, road signs were bilingual, and *SNIPER AT WORK* signs adorned more telephone poles than there were wires connecting landlines. These borderlands have long been contentious, and that contentiousness has contributed as much to my sense of self as the books that I’ve read or the music I’ve listened to.





Brexit has changed this dynamic somewhat, though not by much. For to be a border-dweller is to be constantly searching for the answer to life's inevitable in-betweenness; to live in a kind of liminal Twilight Zone where nothing is certain and everything is possible. Half the people here seem to believe that Brexit will never happen, while the other half think that even if it does it might not be as bad as everyone thinks.

I put this to one of the Christmas drinkers sat across from me in a booth in the city's Canal Court hotel bar. *The thing about Brexit*, he says, leaning conspiratorially over the table. *Is that the Brits don't have a fucking clue what they're up against. If May pulls one way, the DUP pull the other, and if she tries to go the other way the Irish Government and the EU will come down on her like a ton of fucking bricks.* He takes a drink from his half-drained glass of Coors. *The Brits are fucked every which way, he says, holding his hands up by way of apology. That I can tell ye.*

He's not wrong, and it's precisely this kind of world-weary, earthy analysis which is missing from most public discourse on the British mainland. Consider that, despite Northern Ireland having received around 58 per cent more public funding than any other UK region, it still has the highest unemployment average at 5.3 per cent (compared with an overall UK average of 4.4 percent). Consider that as of 2013, public sector employment in Northern Ireland is at a whopping 31 per cent while the rest of the UK averages at just below 22 per cent.

If a 'Hard Brexit' were to happen, in other words—meaning an exit from the customs union, single market, and a return to the customs barriers and border controls of the 1970s—then Northern Ireland would have a lot more to lose than any other UK region. It's this awareness that drives border-dwellers like my companion here to pay close attention to the news. It's this awareness that border-dwellers carry with them every day of their lives.



After I leave the hotel, I make my way over to the other side of town. Newry in winter can be pretty, especially with the festive ice-blue & silver of the fairy lights shimmering off the black water of the canal. The same canal which, I am quick to point out, was the first man-made waterway on the British Isles and which at one time boasted the third busiest port on the island of Ireland.

If I seem defensive of Newry, it's only because like all other small settlements our history is always doomed to be denied to us: as if Handel didn't visit in 1741 and complete his *Messiah* oratorio on the grounds of St. Patrick's, for example; or the first manager of Celtic F.C., Willie Maley, wasn't born in Newry in 1868; or as if the last man hanged on the island of Ireland wasn't Robert McGladdery in 1961. As if we don't, after all, fit the bill of somewhere where things *happen*. We're merely born, decisions are made elsewhere, and we exist until we die.

But Newry *is*, of course, like everywhere else: a place where things happen, and right now it's flavour of the month because of what it represents; because of what Brexit might mean for it. Nobody seems very interested in talking about border towns beyond some clichéd desire to use them as a metaphor, and if they receive any empirical acknowledgement at all, it's only as a comparative against *real* civilisation happening elsewhere.

When my family returned here in 1994 following the paramilitary ceasefire, I'd by that point already lived in several places around the UK where *things happened*. Coventry. Aberdeen. A stint in Edinburgh. I was only five, but was already so immersed in the rhythms of normal life that when I saw a soldier for the first time, standing outside my granny's front gate, I thought nothing of going up and asking him if I could hold his rifle. To me it was a game, though a game in which my parents had temporarily forgotten the rules. My da came to hurriedly fetch me back inside, conditioning me, from that point on, to respond with suspicion to anyone who wears a uniform.

Another time, I remember trying to make a Ouija board in my cousin's front yard with some scraps of paper and a lever arch ring binder. We'd just laid the circle out on one of the flagstones and were ready to make contact, when a helicopter suddenly appeared overhead and flew so low that it bent back a neighbour's TV aerial and nearly ripped away the roof of their house. We thought that we'd summoned something terrible and couldn't understand that the two events had nothing at all to do with each other. It was hard not to be superstitious about occupation when stories abounded about helicopters like these being used to abduct the public.

This all comes back to me as I walk along Merchants Quay, up past Sugar Island, and down toward my da's work; which lies between the former grain and animal-feed storage silos on Canal Quay and a housing estate called Mourneview. The reason I'm talking to my da about this is because, as a civic leader with more than 30 years' experience documenting & improving the socio-economic condition of the South Armagh border region, he knows better than most the existential crisis posed by Brexit.

He meets me standing at the gates of WIN Business Park, gesturing to the spot where the IRA launched a mortar attack in 1994, and shaking his head at the marvel of how things have changed. The spot he's pointing to is a multi-storey car park at the back of a Tesco supermarket, once the site of a police station. And WIN (which stands for Work in Newry) is the nerve centre for the Newry and Mourne Co-Operative and Enterprise Agency: a social enterprise and non-profit which, like the Credit Union before it, was set up in 1972 to tackle sectarian unemployment and regional poverty.

Back in the 1980s, my da says, unemployment in Newry was at nearly 30 per cent. Now, it's at just over 5 per cent and reliance on public sector jobs is 3 per cent lower than the Northern Ireland average.

He says this proudly as he takes me around the WIN site; walking and talking his way through the 3-acre industrial estate, and pointing out a few of the 70 odd micro-enterprises who rent the subsidised units for business. He shows me the gym and the comic book store, the radio station, the greasy spoon, the costume shop, and a business that specialises in tinting car windows.

Remember that this is just some of what's at stake, he says. Local companies like First Derivatives, Norbrook, Glen Dimplex, and Autoline are much bigger players who employ about five to six thousand people between them. And what are we supposed to do if home-grown successes like these leave because their profit margins have been chewed away by trade tariffs? What do we do if all this goes away?



My last visit is to the site of an abandoned customs clearing station on the outside of town. This 17-acre site was originally developed in the late 1980s as a way of processing nearly £600 million worth of annual cross-border freight, but was closed in 1993 after the Single European Act made it effectively defunct and smuggling came to a virtual standstill.

For my own curiosity, I'm here to see if there's any way a site like this could be revived in the event of a hard border being imposed, but all I can think about is cracking open a beer and itemising every sad piece of contraband this *customs* has left to offer: a used condom, a smashed car battery, a frost-covered mattress, some broken glass & strewn gravel next to a six-foot ragweed pushing its way up through concrete.

The site itself is almost comically large and consists mainly of dilapidated sheds with graffiti on their loading doors: *IRA*, *Seanie + Niamh*, a giant penis, a dragon with a purple tail. There are rusted coils of barbed wire & sheets of corrugated iron propped against roadblocks. There are lichen-smearred pieces of PVC & ripped shopping bags, bits of old drainpipe, waterlogged car tyres.

Back when the foot and mouth crisis was at its height, they turned the main loading dock into a makeshift abattoir, and locals complained that they could smell the charred flesh of destroyed animals for miles. Though it's hard to see how this could ever be turned back into an organised facility for the processing of tariffed goods, there's a resourcefulness, it seems to me, when the Brits feel their national security is under threat.

Two days before the Brexit vote, my 86 year-old grandda passed away in the ICU of Newry's Daisy Hill Hospital. He'd never have envisaged that the political instability which loomed so large over most of his adult life could return to haunt his grandchildren; and I don't think that if he'd lived to see the vote he'd have allowed something as trivial as illness to stop him from casting his ballot.

Like me, his early adulthood was characterised by being shunted around the UK & Ireland for work and like me, he took pride in what he did: fabricating, smithing, working as a tradesman. If he were standing beside me today, he'd tell me that the best thing I could do for Newry is to write about what's at stake, and right now, with the UK pushing so hard to secure its national sovereignty, the Irish border looks set to become a battleground once again. Let's hope that it remains a diplomatic one, and not as was once the case, a dividing line between our most civilised selves and chaos.

EVA ISHERWOOD-WALLACE

Skeleton of Fanad

North and grey and bright,  
  
the fence runs bent along the edge of beach,  
  
continues over and despite  
  
the gap between two dunes. It tethers each  
  
to incised other, jutting out across an inlet  
  
without water. One bleached post stakes  
  
the air, dangling silver like a flute.  
  
It ties the land to land, dividing space  
  
as though it needs dividing.  
  
Passing fifteen feet  
  
below the fence, we find half-covered  
  
bones spread out in the slack, worn clean.  
  
We think they want collection so we gather  
  
every piece of this: our warm and white machine.  
  
The skull is filled with sand inside the hole  
  
where Sheep had been. Before we leave  
  
we circle her with stones. We see her, known  
  
again and almost surfaced.

SHORT STORY

The International  
Language of Space

MAEVE O’LYNN

Joe’s room was cold.

When they had signed the lease on this first floor flat in May, the clouds of blossom on the tall trees and the soft light of the long South Belfast evenings pouring in the sash windows had made the high ceilings and general air of genteel decay seem bohemian. It was bigger than the other places they’d looked at, and just three of them living there. Not to mention, it wasn’t in the Holylands. By comparison to his last couple of house shares, this place had seemed like paradise.

Then it got to Halloween and the nights drew in. The weather got bitter and they realised the single-glazed glass, and the soaring ceilings and the unused fireplaces meant the flat was, in fact, permanently cold. Even when they remembered to top up the gas card and put the heating on, there was always a faint hint of damp. The chill in the air signified, perhaps, the Victorian red brick’s frosty regard for their uncouth behaviour. The house had a name: Adeline.

Joe awoke—or, more accurately, came to—lying on his stomach: mouth dry, head tight, duvet bunched up down near his feet. He hadn’t closed the curtains before getting into bed; it was dark outside but in December that didn’t give you much to go on. He realised, nonetheless, between the encroaching hangover and the arctic ambient conditions, he was unlikely to be going back to sleep, so he might as well get up. He rummaged around

in what Alice used to wryly refer to as ‘The Floordrobe’ and found his jeans from the night before, phone still in pocket, and a hoodie of dubious origin. Wherever it came from it would do the job; this was not the kind of flat you could wander round letting it all hang out without risking hypothermia.

He surveyed the dismal scene in the kitchen. Nothing in the fridge was his, but he looked anyway. A half price pepperoni pizza from the Spar, a jar of mustard and a few lonely tins of Harp were the sole contents. The pizza wouldn’t be Brendan-the-vegetarian’s, leaving only Padraig. He fished his phone from his pocket and, ignoring the 5 per cent battery warning, gave him a call:

‘Well mate, the dead awaken,’ Padraig said. ‘How’s the form today, you weren’t for saying cheerio earlier anyway.’

‘Aye, well. I’m up now.’

‘Just in time for the main event! Enjoy yourself tomorrow, I’ll be back maybe 27th or 28th, depending how bad the head is after Boxing Day.’

Joe mumbled something like assent.

When he added nothing further, Padraig ventured: ‘What are your plans like over next few days?’

And so, he was forced to admit, grudgingly, in the face of Padraig’s festive cheer, that he had, in fact, forgotten today was Christmas Eve.

‘Here, I was just wondering, is it ok if I eat this pizza in the fridge? I’m hanging lower than—’

‘Houl’ on. Is that you only getting up now after last night? Are you telling me you’re still in the *flat*?’

‘Yea—’

Joe could hear his flatmate’s holiday bonhomie dissipate as he told him to work away at the pizza and the beer in the fridge.

And then he hung up.

The Christmas tree in work had been up since mid-November, trying to entice punters in after work with wee twinkly lights and festive pop hits on a continuous, vertigo-inducing loop. So, it stood to reason that Joe had lost track of time in this never-ending countdown period.

He put the pizza on. The oven’s light made the kitchen a bit merrier as he watched the cheese bubble from white to yellow to gold, and then pulled it out before it got to brown. Some things he had sussed.

He carried the plate of pizza around for a moment, hovering, unsure of where to begin his festive feast before crawling back into bed. He drank a tin of Harp under the duvet, sticking his foot briefly out of the blankets, to switch on the TV propped at the end of the bed with his toe while he rolled a cigarette in his duvet cave. Poking his head out to light it, Joe breakfasted on pizza and nicotine with Sky Sports News on the firestick for company.

He thought, idly, about watching a film. A Christmas treat to himself, it had been ages since he’d seen a good one. He used to always be at the cinema, mainly watching arthouse things with Alice. He’d loved the Europa Cinema ad

before the films with the tinny jazz music. All the names of the cities: Helsinki. Paris. Zagreb. Rome. Istanbul. Never mind that Belfast wasn’t actually on the list. It still made him feel sophisticated, being in one of the 1700 cinemas in 403 cities, going to a cinema which had an entry up an alley and doubled up as a lecture theatre. They had even managed to visit a few of those cities inter-railing one summer: Prague, Budapest.

In fact, now that he thought of it, Alice was living in Dublin these days. He wondered if she ever stopped to realise she was living in one of the cosmopolitan city names from the trailer. Not likely. She had other stuff to think about now; her life probably had its own tinny jazz soundtrack.

Thinking of Alice had successfully managed to diminish any residual warm feelings conjured up by pizza in bed. He decided to phone to top up the gas, try and get the radiators going. If not on Christmas Eve, then when. If Alice could be a functional adult, so—probably—could he.

The number was on the meter in the hall. He’d never done it before but it seemed straightforward enough. Just call 0800 ... Choose Option One ... Ok ... Answer a few automated questions through the Voice Portal.

The Voice Portal.

What lay on the other side?

Key in or say your meter number.

One-six-eight-four-nine-five-oh-eight-nine.

A pause. The Voice Portal was mulling this over.

I’m sorry, I didn’t understand that.

Rejection.

Please repeat or key in your meter number.

He opted to key it in this time. Each number bleeped a discordant note as he did so, the sound of a machine communicating with another machine while Joe sat there feeling like an unwanted eavesdropper to this transaction.

The Voice Portal whirred back into life.

I’m sorry, our systems are currently down. Please try again later. Goodbye.

A click of disconnection.

So much for that.

Still it wasn’t all bad. It reminded him that he was, in fact, supposed to be speaking to a machine every day. An app, to be precise. To make his accent sound better. To improve his diction, one should say. It was a half-baked resolution, but still: there was no time like the present.

Practice enunciating 5 words a day. Somehow make it out from behind the bar and ideally into broadcast journalism. Joe dimly recalled setting himself this resolution one New Year’s before they broke up. Now he’d settle for the quasi-professional veneer of a call centre. There wasn’t much he could do about the lengthy gaps in his CV or some fairly colourful references likely to be supplied from previous employers, but now everyone in the call centres seemed to have a PhD, he needed to up his game.



So, he had an app for that.

*I wish to wish the wish you wish to wish*

He used to sneer at those guys in their suits speaking into headsets all day, but muddling sugar syrup into cocktail strainers at 2 a.m. for drunk teenagers in wide-legged trousers was increasingly less fun. Alice had not, in fact, been wrong about that.

*but if you wish the wish the witch wishes*

The irony that he was reciting tongue twisters into his phone, on a patronising app designed to assist non-native English speakers ‘blend in more seamlessly to a corporate environment’ to get him—born and raised in Belfast—a dead-end tech support job in a call centre, was not exactly lost on him.

*I won’t wish the wish*

Nor was the irony of the fact that he was, according to the app leaderboards, not exactly excelling.

*you wish to wish.*

Fuck that.

He went to exit out, go back to his home screen and up popped his ‘Language Fact of the Day’.

*Russian is the international language of space.*

Still musing on this, Joe rummaged once more through The Floordrobe, this time unearthing black jeans and one of the standard issue novelty Christmas jumper t-shirts they had been made to wear in work, still in its cellophane wrapper. How fun! How quirky! Because nothing says Christ was born to die for your sins like a red t-shirt in December printed with candy canes that he had literally never eaten.

Through his bedroom window the sky was reluctantly shifting from a murky, relentless grey to a frosty, charcoal darkness.

The flashing red warning light on his phone became insistent, so he plugged it in to charge and sat hunched over the socket.

First port of call was Facebook.

A flood of luminescent selfies from bars and parties and family homes filled up his feed. People entering the festive spirit, their faces stretched by smiles. He scrolled past Alice fast. But her hair was new, shorter.

Next, he browsed a local chat message board, looking for memes or some chat about the gig he blearily remembered going to the night before. Somehow, he managed to get himself embroiled in an anomalously sectarian flame war about what the best Chinese takeaway in Belfast for Boxing Day was, which did not cover any participant in glory.

Thoroughly gorged on Wi-Fi, yet feeling curiously empty, Joe decided to go out and stretch his legs, and stock up on some supplies before all the shops shut for the holiday.

The Lisburn Road, for the festive season, was bedecked in blue lighting that seemed to be on around the clock. Not red, green or gold, but blue. All

snowflakes and stars, the alien blue and silver light they shed seemed cold and distant, like a transmission from the furthest reaches of space.

It started to snow. Joe walked through it, past the corner shop that had, apparently, closed already, and on to the supermarket further down the road. On his way back to Adeline—carrying a few ready meals, a bag of tortilla chips, a Mars bar, rolling tobacco, skins and a six-pack which he would enjoy in bed tomorrow, TV on—he saw parents carrying presents from car boots and garden sheds through flurries of snow into their houses, where children slept fitfully, awaiting Christmas day.

Joe thought about the comment he’d tried to scroll past hurriedly beneath the photo of Alice, with her new hair:

*You’re blooming.*

The night-time streets were pockmarked with icy puddles, and Joe idly imagined he was a cosmonaut on a spacewalk, teetering on the edge of the abyss. Tethered, but barely.

When he reached the front door, he decided to finish his smoke before rooting around for his keys. The building itself was wreathed in a sombre gloom. He considered, briefly, calling someone, but the reception on his phone was, habitually, crap, further adding to his sense of being on the periphery of the solar system, lightyears of dead space and radio silence between himself and the rest of the city. Even if this were not the case, he had no one to call and nowhere else to go.

What a sad and unavoidable realisation, right in the mouth of Christmas.

He found himself, then, suddenly, unexpectedly, framed in the glare of headlights as a taxi pulled up. His upstairs neighbour emerged, a stylish older lady, in a red dress and camel overcoat. Joe felt a degree of discomfort, thinking of the loud noise pouring out of their flat late at night, the curtains drawn till noon, the overflowing bin they kept forgetting to leave out. Maybe the lady was Adeline herself; Joe’s presence in her house had been evaluated and found wanting.

The two of them entered the hallway together, and she held the door open for him so he could carry his shopping.

‘Thanks. Happy Christmas,’ he stuttered, as he ascended the stairs with his carrier bags.

‘And you,’ he thought she replied.

JOE LINES

# Around Again

*Richard Head (1637-1686)*

You and Winstanley, thick as thieves  
in a corner of the Three Cup Tavern.  
Your book is licensed by the censors  
so the proceeds will exorcise  
your debts for a while at least.  
Tonight: rhenish and carolling,

demands for something to write on,  
praise of you in couplets  
for the new publication.  
Winstanley will remember the night  
years later in his *Lives of the Poets*,  
where a few pages shed some light

on how the Ulster rising shook  
you from your cradle—your father lost,  
infancy on the road, flight overseas,  
safe harbour in Dorset,  
faint years at college (left without degree),  
then London and the trade in books.

Five years now since the Restoration.  
The lords of court don't pass  
down your alleys; your sphere  
is street market and printing house,  
last year's books rifled for this year's,  
Latin tags and hired translation.

Your reveries of the East Indies  
and Hy Brasil end in cold dawn,  
the wind from the Thames estuary,  
cattle streaming off a raft,  
offal, piss and straw-  
smells rising from a cellar, laughter

and catcalls—names that you elude,  
dowdy starling of Fleet Ditch.  
Things that can be relied on  
to come around again include  
the news, customers, the itch  
for dice, a new leaf, an old song,

debt—and thoughts of Dublin,  
your bolt-hole in the year the shop went under  
and nous was your only resource:  
grass in the belly like hunger,  
hunger in the belly like grass,  
sour herbs from the one physician.

All this refigured  
in the alembic of your head:  
Mauritius, Java and the floating isle  
somewhere off Southend,  
water bailiffs on the river,  
stony roads at night, mile after mile.

PROGRAMME

# Debates on Europe Belfast

13 – 15 SEPTEMBER 2019

## FRIDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER ULSTER MUSEUM

6.00 PM	<p><b>Opening</b></p> <p>Welcome addresses: <b>Ernst Osterkamp</b> and <b>Antje Contius</b></p> <p>Reading: <b>Michael Longley</b></p> <p><b>Perpetual Peace?</b> <i>What Happened to the Idea of the EU as a Peace Project?</i></p> <p>A discussion with <b>Katy Hayward</b> and <b>Basil Kerski</b> Moderator: <b>Misha Glenny</b></p>
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## SATURDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER GREAT HALL, QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY

10.00 AM	<p><b>Managing Conflict, Practicing Diversity</b> <i>A panel discussion in three parts*</i> Moderator: <b>Nenad Šebek</b></p> <p><b>Political Agreements and Transnational Justice</b> <i>Good Friday vs Dayton</i> with <b>Senad Pećanin</b> and <b>Robin Wilson</b></p> <p><b>Telling the Past</b> <i>Cross-Border Historical Narratives</i> with <b>Andy Pollak</b> and <b>Dubravka Stojanović</b></p> <p><b>Identity as Trap and Possibility</b> <i>Shared Space, Divided Communities</i> with <b>Jan Carson</b> and <b>Katri Raik</b></p>
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2.30 PM	<p><b>Borders</b> <i>Between Lived Experience and Political Hotspot</i> <i>A Times Literary Supplement panel</i> Moderator: <b>Adrian Tahourdin</b></p> <p>Featuring <b>Alev Adil</b>, <b>Paul Bew</b>, <b>Garrett Carr</b> and <b>Durs Grünbein</b></p>
8.00 PM	<p><b>Beautiful Babel</b> <i>A Grand Tour Beyond Borders**</i></p> <p>A poetry reading curated and presented by <b>Jan Wagner</b> and <b>Leontia Flynn</b></p> <p>Welcome addresses: <b>Ernst Osterkamp</b> and <b>Glenn Patterson</b></p> <p>Poets include <b>Simon Armitage</b>, <b>Frances Leviston</b>, <b>Michael Longley</b>, <b>Medbh McGuckian</b>, <b>Caitríona O’Reilly</b> and <b>Ana Ristović</b> Music performance by <b>Duke Special</b></p>

## SUNDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER ULSTER MUSEUM

10.00 AM	<p><b>Asking the People</b> <i>Border Polls, Referendums and the Question of Democracy</i> <i>A John Hewitt Society panel</i> Moderator: <b>Peter Osborne</b></p> <p>Introduction: <b>Tony Kennedy</b></p> <p>Featuring <b>Bob Collins</b>, <b>Angelina Kariakina</b>, <b>Naomi Long</b> and <b>Susan McKay</b></p>
12.00 PM	<p><b>A European Autumn?</b> <i>Rethinking the EU After Brexit</i> Moderator: <b>Carl Henrik Fredriksson</b></p> <p>Closing speeches by <b>Marius Ivaškevičius</b> and <b>Fintan O’Toole</b></p>

\* For conference attendees only  
\*\* Funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation



# Speakers & Contributors

**Alev Adil** is a Cypriot academic, literary critic, poet and performance artist. She reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement* and is a co-editor of and contributor to *Nicosia Beyond Barriers: Voices from a Divided City*, published in 2019.

**Simon Armitage** is the UK Poet Laureate and was Oxford Professor of Poetry (2015–2019). His accolades include an Ivor Novello Award and the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. Armitage has published 28 collections of poetry, including his latest *Sandettie Light Vessel Automatic* (2019). His recent television film *The Brink* (2019), meditates on the relationship between Britain and Europe. He is Professor of Poetry at the University of Leeds.

**Paul Bew** is an independent crossbench peer currently serving as chair of the intra-UK allocation review for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He is the author of the Ireland volume in *Oxford History of Modern Europe* (2007) and teaches Irish Politics at Queen's University in Belfast.

**Garrett Carr** is a writer and mapmaker. His work has recently focused on Ireland's border. His book *The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland's Border* was published in 2017. Recently about 150 people who live on or near Ireland's border came together in Belfast for an event called the Border People's Parliament. Garrett took their comments and distilled them into a border manifesto, called *The Yellow Manifesto*. He lives in Belfast and teaches at Queen's University.

**Jan Carson** is a writer and community arts facilitator based in Belfast. Jan Carson's works include a novel, *Malcolm Orange Disappears* (2014), a short story collection, *Children's Children* (2016), and a micro-fiction collection, *Postcard Stories* (2017). Her novel *The Fire Starters*, released this spring, won the EU Prize for Literature for Ireland. In 2018 she was the inaugural Translink/Irish Rail Roaming Writer in Residence on the Trains of Ireland.

**Bob Collins** is former director general of RTÉ, the Republic of Ireland's national broadcaster, as well as

chairman of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) and the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland. He continues his engagements with the improvement of relations within Northern Ireland and between North and South. He is president of the Irish Association for Cultural, Economic and Social Relations and a member of the Executive Committee of the British-Irish Association.

**Stephen Connolly** is a founding editor of The Lifeboat Press. His writing has appeared in *Poetry*, the *New Statesman*, and the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. He is currently working on a writing project about long distance running with support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

**Antje Contius** is the director of the Berlin-based S. Fischer Foundation. Before joining the foundation in 2002, she worked as a manager for the Leipzig Fair in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and China, as well as for several publishing companies in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, with special emphasis on Eastern European literature.

**Duke Special** is a songwriter and performer based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. His albums include *Little Revolutions* (2009), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2010), and *Look Out Machines!* (2015). Duke Special's 2017 album *Hallow* is entirely based on the poetry of the eminent Belfast poet Michael Longley.

**Leontia Flynn** is a Northern Irish writer and has published four collections of poetry with Jonathan Cape. Her most recent, *The Radio* (2017) was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize and won the Irish Times Poetry Prize. She won AWB Vincent Literary Award in 2014. She lectures at the Seamus Heaney Centre.

**Carl Henrik Fredriksson** is a Swedish editor, essayist and translator living in Vienna. Co-founder of *Eurozine*, whose editor in chief and president he was until 2015. He is the programme director of the

*Belfast Debate on Europe* and permanent fellow at the Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationspolitik, Cologne. Former editor in chief of Sweden's oldest cultural journal *Ord&Bild*.

**Misha Glenny** is an award-winning British and Irish journalist and historian. His books include *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and The Great Powers, 1804–2012* (1999) and *McMafia: Seriously Organised Crime* (2008), a non-fiction book which was recently turned into a major BBC Drama series. A visiting professor at the LSE, Columbia University, UCL, Misha is about to take a year-long fellowship at the Berggruen Institute at the University of Southern California.

**Durs Grünbein** is a German poet, essayist and translator, born and bred in Dresden. He has received numerous accolades for his work, including the prestigious Georg Büchner Prize in 1995. Grünbein is considered one of the most distinguished voices of contemporary poetry in the German language. He lives in Berlin and Rome. His most recent publication is titled *Aus der Traum (Kartei)* (2019).

**Katy Hayward** is a political sociologist based in Queen's University Belfast. Recognised to be the leading academic expert on Brexit and the Irish border, she is a Senior Fellow of 'UK in a Changing Europe', a Fellow of the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security & Justice, and an Eisenhower Fellow.

**Eva Isherwood-Wallace** is a PhD student at Durham University and holds an MA from the Seamus Heaney Centre, Belfast. She was a prize-winner in Oxford's Tower Poetry Competition 2013. Her work has been published in *The Tangerine*, *Banshee*, and *Poetry Ireland Review*, and is forthcoming in The Emma Press *Gothic Poems* anthology.

**Marius Ivaškevičius** is a Lithuanian writer, playwright, and film director. His novels have

been published in many foreign languages. His plays have been staged in Lithuania, Russia, Germany, Italy, France, and New Zealand, to name just a few, and directed by directors such as Kirill Serebrennikov, Oskaras Korshunovas, Rimas Tuminas, Mindaugas Karbauskis, Arpad Shilling, and Aleksandar Popovski. His accolades include four Best Lithuanian Play of the Year Awards and one Golden Mask Award for best play in Russia in 2017.

**Angelina Kariakina** is the editor in chief of the Ukrainian internet television station Hromadske TV in Kiev, which rose to prominence during the Maidan protests, when it became one of the country's most noted news outlets. She has covered Oleg Sentsov's and Olexandr Kolchenko's trials in Russia as well as the refugee crisis in Hungary. In 2016, she launched the investigative documentary series *Traces of Revolution* with fellow journalist Anastasia Stanko.

**Tony Kennedy** is the chair of the John Hewitt Society and an OBE. In 2008, he retired from the position as chief executive of Co-operation Ireland, an all-island peace-building charity promoting interaction, dialogue and practical collaboration between the peoples of Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

**Basil Kerski** is a political scientist, author and journalist. Kerski was born in 1969 into a Polish-Iraqi family and grew up in Iraq, Poland and Germany. He has worked for, among others, the FU Berlin, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, the German Parliament and the Aspen Institute Berlin. He has been editor in chief of the German-Polish magazine *Dialog* since 1998. Kerski has been awarded numerous prizes for his contributions to German-Polish relations. Since 2011 he is director of the European Solidarność Centre in Gdańsk.

**Suzanne Lacy** is a visual artist whose prolific career includes performances, video and photographic

installation, critical writing and public practices in communities. She is best known as one of the Los Angeles performance artists who became active in the 1970s and shaped and emergent art of social engagement.

**Frances Leviston** is a British poet. She studied at St Hilda's College in Oxford University, where she read English. Leviston then began an MA in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University. Her first collection, *Public Dream*, was published by Picador in 2007 and shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize. Her second collection, *Disinformation*, also from Picador, was published in February 2015.

**Joe Lines** comes from West Sussex. He is author of *Plot* (2018), and his poems have also appeared in *Ambit*, *The Tangerine*, and *Poetry Ireland Review*. He was a recipient of the SIAP award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2018–2019.

**Naomi Long** is a Northern Irish politician who has been leader of the Alliance Party for two years, after serving as Deputy Leader from 2006–2016. In 2019, she was elected as the Alliance Party candidate for the European Parliament, becoming the first ever Alliance MEP. She served as the second elected female Lord Mayor of Belfast from 2009 to 2010.

**Michael Longley** has published eleven books of poetry. His most recent collection, *Angel Hill*, came out in June 2017, as did *Sidelines: Selected Prose 1962–2015*. In 2001 Longley received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and he has won the Whitbread Prize for Poetry, the Hawthornden Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize. In 2017 he also received the PEN Pinter Prize. Michael Longley was appointed a CBE in 2010, and from 2007 to 2010 he was Ireland Professor of Poetry.

**Tara McEvoy** is editor of *The Tangerine* and a PhD candidate at Queen's University Belfast. Her writing has been published in *Vogue*, *The Observer*, and the *Irish Times*.

**Medbh McGuckian** has an MA from Queen's University Belfast and is a Northern Irish poet. She has published several collections of poetry, including *The Book of the Angel* (2004) and *The Currach Requires No Harbour* (2010). She was awarded the 2002 Forward Poetry Prize for her poem *She is in the Past, She Has This Grace*.

**Susan McKay** is a writer, broadcaster and journalist from Derry. She has been writing about all aspects of Northern Irish politics and society since the 1990s and has won several national media awards. Before that she was a community worker and one of the founders of the Belfast Rape Crisis Centre during the 1980s. Her books include *Bear in Mind These Dead* (2009) and *Northern Protestants—An Unsettled People* (2000). She is currently writing a book on borders.

**Lyra McKee** was a journalist from Northern Ireland who wrote for several publications about the consequences of the Troubles. In 2016 *Forbes* magazine named her as one of its '30 under 30 in media' because of her work as an investigative reporter. McKee was fatally shot during rioting in the Creggan area of Derry in April 2019.

**Maeve O'Lynn** has published work in *Banshee*, the *Stinging Fly*, *Fallow Media*, the *Honest Ulsterman*, *Abridged*, and *The Tangerine*. She was shortlisted for the 2018 Hennessy New Irish Writing Award for Emerging Fiction, longlisted for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing in 2019, and her work was featured as part of the GFA20 curation on the Poetry Jukebox, Belfast.

**Caitríona O'Reilly** is an Irish poet and critic. She was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where she completed a doctoral thesis in Modernist poetry. She is the author of three collections: *The Nowhere Birds* (2001), *The Sea Cabinet* (2006) and *Geis* (2016). She has received many awards, including the Irish Times Poetry Now Prize 2016. Her poetry has been widely translated.

**Peter Osborne** has been involved in political engagement, policy, participation, dispute resolution and reconciliation for over 25 years. He is a director of the Integrated Education Fund; is chair of the regional board of Remembering Srebrenica and a member of its UK Board; and is chair of the ARK Advisory Board, the research and social policy joint initiative of Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast.

**Ernst Osterkamp** is president of the German Academy for Language and Literature since 2017. He was professor of German Literature at Humboldt University in Berlin between 1992 and 2016. As a literary critic he has published extensively on a wide range of subjects, chiefly works on Goethe, Stefan George and Rudolf Borchardt as well as the European Enlightenment and Classical Modernity.

**Fintan O'Toole** is a columnist with the *Irish Times* and Leonard L. Milberg visiting lecturer in Irish Letters at Princeton University. His latest book is *Heroic Failure: Brexit and Politics of Pain* (2018) and he is currently working on the official biography of Seamus Heaney. He is the winner of the 2017 European Press Prize and Orwell Prize and contributes regularly to the *New York Review of Books*.

**Glenn Patterson** is a professor at Queen's University Belfast and the director of the Seamus Heaney Centre. He has written several acclaimed novels and co-wrote the screenplay of the film *Good Vibrations*, based on the Belfast music scene of the 1970s. He also writes for the *Irish Times* and *The Guardian*.

**James Conor Patterson** is originally from Newry, County Down. His writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, the *Irish Times*, *Magma*, the *New Statesman*, and the *Stinging Fly*. In 2019 he was a recipient of the Eric Gregory Award and in 2017 he received an ACES bursary from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.



**Senad Pećanin** is an attorney, publicist and editor. He is one of the founders of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He does research in the field of Human rights and democratisation in Southeast Europe.

**Andy Pollak** is a journalist, editor, writer and expert on cross-border cooperation in Ireland. He was the founding director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, with offices in Armagh and Dublin (1999–2013). He is the author of the blog *2 Irelands together*.

**Katri Raik** is a historian and Estonian politician. Since 1999, she has lived in Narva, on the Estonian-Russian border. From 1999 to 2015, she was the first director of Narva College of the University of Tartu. In 2015–2018, she worked as the Rector of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences. In 2018–2019, she was the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia. Since April 2019, she has been a Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia.

**Ana Ristović** is a Serbian poet and translator. She has published nine collections of poetry and received many accolades, including the German Hubert Burda Prize, the Disova Award, and the Desanka Maksimović Prize. She was a fellow of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme 2018–19. Her books have been translated into many languages.

**Nenad Šebek** is a freelance media and civil society consultant. Previously: Director of the Belgrade office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Spokesperson for the Regional Cooperation Council, executive director of the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe 2002–2014. A journalist for 26 years, 16 of them for the BBC including the posts of Balkans and Moscow correspondent. Visiting core lecturer, postgraduate course in Human rights at Vienna University.

**Cian Smyth** is an artistic advisor and creative producer who has commissioned, made or programmed work by artists worldwide with London 2012, 14–18 NOW, The Space and Hull UK City of Culture 2017.

**Dubravka Stojanović** is an historian and professor at Belgrade University. Her work focuses on democracy in Serbia and the Balkans, the interpretation of history in textbooks, social history, the process of modernisation, and the history of women in Serbia. She is vice-president of the History Education Committee and a consultant to the United Nations, working on issues concerning history, memory, and the misuse of history in education.

**Adrian Tahourdin** is assistant editor at the *Times Literary Supplement* where, among other things, he oversees French and Italian coverage and the Letters page. He is a regular reviewer, mainly of fiction and literature. He reports annually for the paper on the Society of Authors' multi-lingual Translation prizes.

**Jan Wagner** is a German poet, essayist, and translator. His accolades include the Georg Büchner Prize and the Leipzig Book Fair Prize. He is the co-editor of the anthology *Grand Tour. A Journey through Young European Poetry*, published this spring, a compilation of poems from the continent's various regions and languages.

**Robin Wilson** is general editor of *Social Europe* and a longstanding expert advisor to the Council of Europe on intercultural integration. He is the author of *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe: Moving Beyond the Crisis* (2018) and *The Northern Ireland Experience of Conflict and Agreement: A Model for Export?* (2011).

For a list of further participants, please see:  
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