

FORUM KRITIKA: RADICAL THEATRE AND IRELAND (PART 2)

RADICAL REMEMBERING: CONTAMINATING MEMORY IN THE WORKS OF MARTIN LYNCH

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Abstract

Martin Lynch has been prominent in the practice of community theatre in Northern Ireland through works like *The Stone Chair* and *The Wedding Community Play* and his role as founding Chair of Belfast's Community Arts Forum. This essay argues, however, that in his work as a playwright engaged in staging the remembered histories of Belfast's working class, it is possible to regard him as a radical playwright. Locating Lynch in the tradition of John McGrath's popular theatre allows his work to be seen as both recovering working class experience and, crucially, probing mythologies that have justified and perpetuated political violence. The paper is focused particularly on two of Lynch's most recent works: *Holding Hands at Paschendale* (2006) and *The Long Kesh Chronicles* (2009).

Keywords

community theatre, Northern Irish drama, political theatre, social memory

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Belfast-born, writer, director and producer Martin Lynch has been prominent in the practice of community theatre in Northern Ireland through works like *The Stone Chair* (1989)¹ and *The Wedding Community Play* (2000) and his role as founding Chair of the Community Arts Forum in Belfast. However, it is also in his work as a playwright engaged in staging aspects of working class history in fully professional productions that it is possible to regard him as a radical playwright. Focusing on two of Lynch's most

recent works, *Holding Hands at Paschendale* (2006) and *The Chronicles of Long Kesh* (2009), the argument here is that it is in Lynch's contamination both of space and dominant mythologies that his work might exercise radical potential in engaging with the legacy of Northern Ireland's political violence and division.² While "contamination" might ordinarily be regarded as a pejorative term, here it is used to suggest a radical and progressive approach, whereby the promotion and recognition of difference and diversity pollutes ideological orthodoxy, political mythologies and dominant narratives.

Lynch's background is in a politicized Republican and socialist working class Belfast family.³ Without the advantages of either grammar school or university education which other playwrights of his generation enjoyed, he is in many respects a model of the working class autodidact in the same tradition as Sam Thompson before him. A founder member of Turf Lodge Socialist Fellowship, his early work for theatre represented a deliberate political intervention through performance. Following the success of the Lyric Theatre's production of his *Dockers* in 1981, he has gone on to develop a sustained body of work that has consistently drawn on his class background. His theatre works have included: *The Interrogation of Ambrose Fogarty* (1982); *Castles in the Air* (1983); *Welcome to Bladonmore Road* (1988); *Rinty* (1990); *What Did I Know When I Was Nineteen?* as part of Tinderbox's highly acclaimed *Convictions* (2001); *The Belfast Carmen* , which he co-wrote with Mark Dougherty, at the Grand Opera House, Belfast in 2002; and, in 2003, *The History Of The Troubles (accordin' to my Da)*, a collaboration with Alan McKee and Connor Grimes.

Holding Hands ... is based on the real life experiences of Lynch's grandfather and centres around the lives of two soldiers in 1917 during the third battle of Paschendale. The character of Maurice Boris (Mo) Coutts is an ex-vaudeville entertainer who is now a Kitchener volunteer. Mo has been arrested for throwing away his rifle prior to an attack on the German lines. He is being escorted to his Court Martial by Willie Harvey from Greencastle, County Antrim, a gunner who is dragooned in as his guard. The two men end up handcuffed together and are trapped for four days in a farm outbuilding as they await Mo's trial.

Chronicles ... tells the story of Her Majesty's Prison Maze (or Long Kesh) from its opening in August 1971 to its closure in July 2000. While it covers the significant events in the history of the institution, the concentration is on the experiences of ordinary prisoners, prison officers and their families. It centres on Provisional IRA prisoners Oliver "Oscar" Coyle, Eamon Jennings and Anthony "Toot" McGinley; Loyalist paramilitaries Billy "Thumper" McKibben and Hank; McNeely and Freddie Gillespie, a prison warder, who provides much of the framing narration. Each character's experience represents a different

dimension of those involved in the prison, and Lynch was aware of structuring this in quite a schematic way.

Each play is based on the memories of others which Lynch encountered in his everyday life. *Holding Hands...* draws on the story of his grandfather Patrick who found himself an unwitting arresting soldier of one of the young executed soldiers during the war. Patrick Lynch served with the Royal Artillery Regiment as a gunner at Paschendale in 1917. In interview, Lynch describes how,

One young lad, just minutes before he was due to go over the top, cracked up and threw his rifle away. My grandfather and another couple of men near to him were ordered to subdue him and, along the way, my grandfather found himself handcuffed to the lad. De facto, he ended up the arresting soldier and spent four days and nights handcuffed to this guy as they were moved from billet to billet before the boy's court-martial took place.

Chronicles ... connected to Lynch's own upbringing, to hearing the lore of prison tales from within his own family about IRA prisoners of the 1930s and 40s (Lynch, Personal Interview). He was fixated too by the stock of stories which he encountered on a personal level about Long Kesh in bars and clubs, by prison writing such as Behan's *Borstal Boy* and Henri Charriere's *Papillon*, and by the prison writing which had come out of Long Kesh itself.⁴ However, in researching what would become *Chronicles ...* Lynch interviewed over 40 ex-prisoners, prison officers, welfare workers and families affected either directly or indirectly by life in Long Kesh. This was not to be a piece of verbatim theatre, however. Instead, Lynch created a set of fictional characters through whose personal stories the larger narrative of the jail might be told, thereby also honouring the micro-narratives of the individuals who had been his sources. This was a far from easy process, since at an early stage of writing he had produced over three and a half hours of material which had to be heavily edited. During the scripting and rehearsal process, he was given advice and feedback from individuals who had served time in the jail. Concerned with achieving a multi-dimensional perspective (rather than some notional balance), Lynch nonetheless ran into difficulty when he brought the edited script back to his cast.⁵ In particular, he recounted in interview how two of the actors felt that substantial damage had been done to the representation of the perspective of the loyalist prisoners. Lynch acknowledged that this and other omissions remain a substantial issue for him and there was a palpable sense of disappointment from him in interview that he has not achieved his ambition for

the piece yet. He recognized, for example, that the play did not adequately address the experiences of the families and wanted to give greater acknowledgement of the loyalist prisoners' experience.

In neither instance can the process of creation be described as innovative, let alone radical. The reworking of personal narrative into performance has had a long history. Lynch's process of collecting personal memories as a basis of fictionalized presentations which are then played back to the communities from which they had been taken might be placed, for example, within the practices of reminiscence theatre, and the traditions of popular political theatre, visible in the work of John McGrath and UK companies such as Remould in Hull and Open Clasp in Newcastle, for example. Equally in dramaturgical terms, the plays can be fitted within well-established traditions. *Holding Hands ...* is resolutely naturalistic in the conception and realization of the two principal characters and the single-room interior setting. The development of its action is as in a well-made play. The unfolding of the plot can be placed within the cinematic tradition of the buddy movie, as the two characters, who start the play in mutual suspicion and antipathy grow, towards an understanding and affection for each other. *Chronicles ...* is in the tradition of epic theatre that may have begun with Brecht and Piscator, but is now widespread within contemporary theatre, involving short episodic scenes which create the effect of montage, ignoring the unities of time and place, and juxtaposing dramatic modes. In the popular British theatre repertoire including, for example, the work of John Godber, actors play multiple roles, switch styles of performance and mix singing, black comedy, monologue and dramatic action.⁶ Lynch's co-director for the project was Lisa May, whose own company *Bruiser* has exploited such performance modes for adaptations of works as diverse as *Candide* , *Adrian Mole* and *Canterbury Tales* .

The basis for considering these works as radical, then, is neither the process by which they have been created nor the dramaturgical strategies which they implement in performance. Instead, it is because of their effect of contaminating private memories in a public space that they might be viewed as having a radical potential, locating each as what bell hooks has termed a "site of resistance" which is also a "site of radical possibility ... [a] perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (150). The provisionality of this formulation as "potential" is based on a recognition of two factors. The first is that any apparently radical characteristic is subject to the situatedness of the event of the performance, and cannot be assumed as intrinsic. Moreover, even within a single event, reception will be subject to the agency of each spectator and dependent on the ideological disposition of that spectator both at that moment and over time.

The starting point for this consideration of the radical potential of these two performances is Ralph Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* in which he argues that memory

far from being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, is rather an active, shaping force; that it is dynamic—what it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers—and that it is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative other to it. (x)

This echoes the rebuttal by another Belfast playwright, Stewart Parker, of the case for those who, in the interests of peace-making in Northern Ireland, tried to operate outside of history and memory:

Nearly every day now in the North, the plea goes out to “forget the past.” Such advice is both impracticable and pernicious. On the one hand, you can't forget a nightmare while you are still dreaming it. On the other, it is survival through comprehension that is healthy, not survival through amnesia. (qtd. in Richtarik 16)

Thus, I am concerned, as I think Lynch is, with the ways in which memory can be regarded as a form of social knowledge which is activated not only in relation to past events, but also in how we understand and orientate ourselves in relation to the present and future. I am compelled too by De Certeau's argument for memory as a devious type of resistance to which the disenfranchised may resort, “an art of the weak” (37).

A further impetus is what Ricoeur has argued for as “the duty to remember.” The controversy that arose on the publication of the recommendations of the Consultative Group on the Past, co-chaired by Lord Robin Eames and Denis Bradley in early 2009, demonstrated clearly that there are still powerful forces at work in relation to how the legacy of the Troubles might be addressed in Northern Ireland. Ricoeur juxtaposes two forms of memory: those which he regards as abuses and those which might be determined to be ethical. Abuses of memory include memories which are blocked, forced (compulsive repetition) or manipulated (by ideology). By contrast, ethical memory is memory aimed at fulfilling a duty to the victims: justice, without vengeance (56-92). It is in the interplay between such abusive and ethical uses of memory that I suggest Lynch's work might harness a radical potential.

The process at work in each of these productions is captured here through the metaphor of contamination. It involves a strategy to both activate the spectator's processes of remembering and to disrupt those memories which are already held. It operates against tendencies and pressures which seek to erode differences and homogenize personal experience within what Ricoeur identifies as "collective amnesia." One of these is the tendency towards nostalgia, which Raymond Williams calls "Myth functioning as memory." He defines nostalgia as "An idealization, based on a temporary situation, and on a deep desire for stability, [that] served to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time" (45). Allied to this is the tendency identified by Joseph Roach whereby "The present stabilizes the past by representing itself as the inevitable consummation of deliberate steps, but to do this it must smooth over the unbidden eruptions necessary to its own creation" (222). Thus, for example, Republicans have characterized their political violence as an armed struggle which is the continuation of an historical resistance stretching back to the first Norman invasion of Ireland, a position articulated by Eamon Jennings in *Chronicles* ...:

Oscar, Oscar, Oscar you're missin' the point. This is the British imperial establishment. They are tryin' to win the war through the prisons. This is not just about food and prison uniforms and how many letters we can receive. This is about the War. The 800 year-old war between England and Ireland. If we are defeated inside, it will have huge implications for the prosecution of the War outside.

Anyone who has been involved in political struggle will of course recognize the need for internal discipline within any movement. But the imposition of collective discipline on individuals cannot be sustained without having long-lasting and detrimental effects on dialectic processes of change.⁷ Utopian promise is self-defeating since it always postpones its rewards while sacrificing the present. Moreover, fixing positions on the basis of ideology is not an autonomous process: positions can be ascribed and communities ghettoized physically and politically to the advantage of others. This is something of which Lynch was well aware.

The first area in which these performances can be seen as contaminated is in the subject matter that they dramatize and the perspectives which they expose. If, as Ricoeur defines it, "The duty of memory is the duty to do justice, through memories, to another than the self" (89), then here Lynch is seeking to present to his audience subject positions

which engage in a series of dialectical relationships onstage and between the stage and the spectator. In *Holding Hands* ... neither Mo nor Willie are the source for a story of heroism. While he initially maintains that he joined up willingly “to fight for my country because I love my country” as he puts it, in Act Two Mo admits that he only enlisted to try to win the approval of a woman. Following the death of his brother, Mo has become so psychologically damaged that he doesn’t even recognize Willie’s story of how he threw down his rifle. Now he recites the names of those who died before him, and with whom he served, as a reassuring litany to stave off his fears: “Harold the Runner from Stepney, aged 19, loved singing Marie Lloyd songs every bloody night, stepped on a landmine at Givency; Bullface Walker, Silvertown, aged 25, best footballer in the Battalion, killed standing beside me in the trenches at Polygon Wood.” Much of the play is concerned with the debate which these two characters embody, between the demands of duty to an abstract cause of which they know and understand little, and their responsibility to each other as human beings locked together.

The discovery of the other by each of the characters invites the spectator to re-evaluate the meaning they have made (or inherited) of the war. This is not a valorization of martial valour in the ways in which arguably the Royal British Legion’s annual Poppy Appeal and Armistice Day commemorations function. Instead, the production worked with and was supported by organizations representing the families of those who were shot for desertion, including the Shot at Dawn campaign which worked to have those who were shot for cowardice to be pardoned.⁸ Within Northern Ireland, there is a further dimension to this. The decimation of the 36th Ulster Division at the Battle of the Somme has become an icon of Ulster Protestant loyalty to the Crown, in sharp contrast to the perfidy of the Irish nationalists who staged the Easter Rising in 1916. Without directly referencing that battle, the play nonetheless is able to contaminate the narrative of bravery, and the purity of the blood sacrifice of those killed in the war, by focusing on the mixed motives of both men, and the ways in which Mo remembers those who died alongside him. Further, Willie does not fit in with the totalizing narrative of Ulster Protestant loyalty: he is an Ulster Catholic, the offspring of a mixed marriage. Initially he says that he was sent off to war at the insistence of his Protestant mother whom he could not resist, but reveals that it was to escape the brutality of his Catholic father. Theirs is not a fight for abstract freedom but a personally-motivated response to the circumstances of their own lives. These are not, then, the uncomplicated statues of the war memorial, but complex individuals, caught up in events over which they have little control and in which they exercise only limited agency.

Yet, if *Holding Hands ...* mounts a challenge to a nostalgia (in Williams's sense) for World War I, in *Chronicles ...* the challenge is altogether more immediate. The variety of subject positions set in relation to each other creates a complex dynamic, in which ideologies and personal experience are teased apart. These are individuals trying to negotiate complex political, economic and personal circumstances, often in ways which contradict previous positions that they have taken, or which contradict or confound the totalizing narratives of their own and their opponents' propaganda. The theatre programme, for example, included excerpts from Republican and Loyalist prison writings.

Around the original production, there was also a series of artistic commissions and public debates about the legacies of the prison, involving artists, commentators, politicians and former paramilitaries. This interplay of subjectivities was consistent throughout the performance too. A crucial moment in the play is around the Hunger Strikes which would eventually lead to the deaths of ten Republican prisoners. Lynch allows Oscar to give the arguments against the strike in political terms as he tries to persuade Eamon not to put his name forward.

Oscar Look, there's five or six hundred republican prisoners. If we refuse to work the system, there can't *be* any system. We have to use our fuckin' brains for once. Play the bastards at their own game. Eamon nobody has to die ... I'm only sayin', we fight it a different way. A more cunning way. We shouldn't be so fuckin' brave for a start.

Oscar also appeals to Eamon as a friend with whom he shares a deep attachment. While Eamon withdraws his name from the first list of volunteers, when a second hunger strike is called, there is a crucial scene when he is reconciled with his wife who gives him her complete support. Yet Lynch is not content to allow this to sit as an unquestioned endorsement. Freddie, the prison officer, is given a powerful monologue in which he gives his verdict on the Hunger Strike and the events surrounding it:

Freddie It's over then. All over and done. Ten men tatty bread and down the big bury hole. Ten men. Know what I say? Damn everybody. Everybody. Maggie Thatcher, the Irish Government, the IRA, the Governor, yes damn the Governor of the Maze Prison too, cause he coulda done better. And some Prison Officers got away with behavin' like animals. Fuck — can I say that word? — fuck the

hunger-strikers. Fuck everybody who had anything to do with it, for causin' so much pain to so many people, especially to the families of the hunger-strikers. No cause is worth what those people went through.

Having someone shout “fuck the hunger-strikers” in front of an audience drawn largely from Belfast’s Republican communities created a tangible act of transgression and a sense of disquiet on the two nights on which I watched the performance. It was met with a significant silence, with the actor letting it hang before continuing the monologue.

The challenge to the institutionalized identities which the various paramilitary organizations attempted to impose on their own prisoners is articulated through the use of music. Hank, a convicted UVF bomber, is a Bob Dylan fan. Oscar, an IRA Quartermaster, provides his fellow prisoners with their entertainment through his renditions of classic Tamla Motown tracks. His role here confounds the strategy of Gaelicization which prisoners underwent while in Long Kesh. Republican prisoners attended compulsory Irish language classes, earning the prison the soubriquet of “the Jailtacht.” Such a strategy has ongoing echoes in the use of the Irish language as a mechanism of asserting rights for nationalists following the Good Friday Agreement. Yet the insistence on all things Irish by the Republican leadership sat at odds with the experiences and upbringing of those that were inside, as this account of a production of *H-Block Cinderella*, mounted by prisoners “on the blanket,” provided in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* notes,

A special attraction at Prince Charming’s Ball was the appearance of Tommy McGinn as the “Big Cropper” who belted out some rock and roll aided and abetted by his backing group of Paddy McDonald, Jimmy “ould hand” Quinn and Paul McVeigh, otherwise known as “the three choppers” who gave it the Bop showaddyewaddy in the appropriate places. (O’Dearg 2)⁹

Lynch himself recalled in interview how a regular dance night which he attended in the early 1970s at a Republican drinking club was forced to conform to the prescribed Irish musical tastes of the local Provisional leadership, rather than the “foreign” American and British pop which had made it such a success.

Just as in *Holding Hands ...* , Lynch consistently resists the possibility of the heroification of the paramilitaries by developing characters whose motives are removed from the abstract causes they are supposed to be pursuing. While Eamon Jennings begins

as someone caught up in the tide of history, he succumbs over the course of the play to the rhetorical pull of Republicanism, functioning as a fully fledged apparatchik. But the certainty of his position is confounded by the others with whom he shares the experience of the prison. Toot, a well-meaning but naïve accomplice, falls into the Provisionals accidentally and despite his experiences within the jail, never fully understands the politics of the situation in which he finds himself. Oscar is as committed as Eamon at the outset, but by the end of the play he has turned his back on the movement. He is disillusioned and exhausted by the experience of the hunger strikes and the deaths of his comrades. He is the emotional centre of the play and Lynch counterposes his deep engagement with Eamon's analytical politics. Moreover, given that Oscar is the principle source of pleasure for the prisoners and spectators in the music as the lead singer of the Motown songs, there is an added weight to the audience's relationship to him.

Amongst the Loyalists too, Lynch is careful to separate out the individual and personal details from any sense of shared ideologies. Thumper McKibben is a vain misogynist and his involvement is motivated by an unexplained sectarianism and the flaws of his own personality. Hank, by contrast, joins the UVF to defend his community against IRA violence. Amongst the Prison Officers, Freddie has joined the service as a way of earning a steady-enough income to pay for his wife's middle-class aspirations. His humane attitude to the prisoners doesn't preclude him from involvement in brutality against them, but it is the character of Alec Spencer whose violence against Republican prisoners is motivated by a deep-seated hatred. Yet even his hatred is allowed to be justified by reference to the victims of IRA violence:

Spencer Open the fuckin' door! Look. These prisoners are bastards. These fuckers have walked into people's living rooms....

Spencer enters the cell and begins beating the prisoner as he speaks.

Spencer ... and shot fathers in slow motion in front of their wives and children. Left bombs knowing innocent people were goin' to be killed. They are scum, low life scum.

For each of the men too, there are other dimensions illuminated by their personal relationships with their wives, girlfriends and families on the outside. For each, the costs of his ideological choices are exacted from his loved ones as much as from himself, with almost all of their personal relationships breaking down.

I turn now to consider contamination in terms of a specific site of performance for each production. Fischer-Lichte deploys the ideas of liminality and transformation drawn from van Genep to argue that certain performance events create “liminality by collapsing the dichotomies between the aesthetic and the social, between art and politics” (174). Yet if the sites of these performances were some kind of in-between place or liminal space, they were each also a haunted space, redolent with specific histories, neither ideologically neutral nor so ideologically overcoded that they could not serve as a crucible of crisis. As McAuley notes of all theatre spaces, “The space is, of course, not an empty container but an active agent; it shapes what goes on within it, emits signals about it to the community at large, and is itself affected” (41). The venues for each of these productions provided a specific dynamic that contributed to their radical potential.

When *Holding Hands ...* toured to Derry in November 2006, it was performed at the Playhouse. This promotes itself as a multidisciplinary, cross-community educational and arts centre, providing courses, rehearsal and performance space. However, its location within a highly segregated city¹⁰ means that as a space, any claims to neutrality are difficult to sustain. The Playhouse is a former convent, situated on Derry’s overwhelmingly Nationalist/ Republican/ Catholic cityside, separated from the last Unionist/ Loyalist/ Protestant housing estate, The Fountain, by the city’s historic walls and the predominantly Unionist/ Loyalist/ Protestant Waterside by the River Foyle.¹¹ Moreover, when the building was being promoted as a contender on the BBC’s *Restoration* programme through which it competed for funding to undertake substantial refurbishment, they included an interview with a nun who had worked there formerly. On the evening that I attended the performance, what was remarkable was the number of members of the audience who were wearing poppies, an overt marker of identity. Longley, for example, cites Tom Collins’s comment that “some unionists (you can tell them by the size of their poppies) have made the emblem a badge of identity rather than a symbol of humanitarianism” (235). This symbolic unionist incursion into, or contamination of, the venue which might otherwise be regarded as inaccessible or inhospitable brought together diverse sections of the city’s population, otherwise kept literally and symbolically apart.

The choice of venue for *Chronicles ...* , St Kevin’s Hall in Belfast, functioned with a similar dynamic. The hall itself serves as the parochial hall for the nearby St Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church and is situated on the edge of the Republican New Lodge area, close to the city centre. Its centrality to the life and politics of that community are demonstrated in its being chosen to host a community inquiry in 2006 into the deaths of six local men shot by the British Army and Loyalist paramilitaries in 1973. As a venue for

amateur boxing bouts and the Belfast Children's Festival, however, the hall has another history of being accessible irrespective of identities. Moreover, Lynch's production company, Green Shoot Productions, went to great lengths to invite audiences from across the city, particularly from loyalist ex-prisoner groups, to the performance.

On each occasion, then, there was a social drama being played out in which members of different and hitherto opposing communities were brought together into a haunted public space to view together a representation of their society's past. This can be seen as creating an example of what McAuley has termed a "triple awareness" (271) in which the social reality, the presentational and the fictional interact. Thus, the engagement by which individuals and subgroups within the auditorium become a collective subject as audience may be seen to echo the fictional trajectory of the dramas being presented, which led to the discovery of a shared humanity, both onstage and in the auditorium. This might be considered as an example of Dolan's "utopian performatives," "small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking and intersubjectively intense" (5).

Certainly it created in these places an example of how it might be possible for individuals with differing political perspectives and ethno-religious identities to share a public space. However, one must remain suspicious of this idea of the utopian since it can easily slip into a process by which desire for political change can be sublimated within a quasi-therapeutic moment; and the theatre serve as a substitute for actions which need to take place in the fields of politics and law. Moreover, within the space itself, not all individual spectators were subsumed by the performance into an overwhelming "we-feeling." On the opening night of *Chronicles ...* at St Kevin's Hall a group of women from a loyalist ex-prisoners organization walked out following the scenes concerned with the Hunger Strike.

Nonetheless, it is important to see that Lynch's project in each play was not to erase the different experiences and narratives of the spectators. Rather, it is two-fold. Firstly, he was seeking to break down any sense of cohesiveness within each identity bloc, to tease individuals apart from group norms and programmatic ideology and thereby to confront each spectator as an individual with both agency and responsibility. Secondly, these performances contribute to a process of reconciliation as outlined by Kelman: "Changing one's collective identity, by removing the negation of the other from it, implies a degree of acceptance of the other's identity—at least in the sense of acknowledging the validity and

legitimacy of the other's narrative without necessarily fully agreeing with that narrative" (24). Relatedly, one of the recommendations of the Consultative Group on the Past was that the Legacy Commission which they proposed should "through the Reconciliation Forum, support CVSNI in facilitating and encouraging the telling of stories, including by young people, about the impact of the conflict on individuals and communities; and the stories of intra-communal difference" (19). Thus, Lynch was fracturing the sense of a collective identity within a monolithic ethno-political bloc and also creating pathways towards shared identities across such blocs.

What I have started to explore here, then, is the extent to which the theatre as a public forum may offer the necessary distance of its aesthetic frame to allow it efficacy in the manner argued for by Kershaw, and at the same time engage deeply with personal memory within a public forum. In doing so, I am suggesting that the process of remembering to remember is itself a radical act which subjects the past to a careful scrutiny and which cries out for the spectator to rethink the present. Moreover, in bringing diverse individuals into a shared space in which they are confronted with the experience of another's subjectivity, I am suggesting that such works offer the potential for moments of crisis, through which the patterns of the past inscribed in memory might be remapped.

NOTES

- 1 Date references are to the original production.
- 2 I am deeply grateful to Martin Lynch and the staff at Green Shoot Productions for their help in the research from which this essay has emerged. References to and textual quotations from the plays are from unpublished playscripts generously provided by Martin Lynch.
- 3 See Connolly and Maguire for more complete biographical details.
- 4 See Whalen for a discussion of Republican prison writing.
- 5 See Maguire for a further discussion of the problematics of “balance.”
- 6 See Reinelt on the British tradition of epic theatre, for example.
- 7 See Baron Cohen and King for a discussion of the ways in which cultures of resistance erect barricades which are both protective and restrictive.
- 8 Of the 306 soldiers so executed (and who were eventually pardoned by the British government) 10 were from Northern Ireland.
- 9 I am grateful to Lionel Pilkington for providing this article to me.
- 10 See Templegrove Action Research’s report for a discussion of the city’s segregation in the mid 1990s.
- 11 See Maguire for a discussion of the problematics of these politico-ethno-religious categories.

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