Storytelling in 'Post-conflict' Times: Narrative, Subjectivity and Experience in Community-based Peacebuilding

Graham Dawson
(University of Brighton)
September 2019

Writing about the difficulty of establishing 'durable peace' in settings shaped by 'deep-rooted conflict' and 'protracted violence', the theorist of conflict transformation, John Paul Lederach, has noted that peacebuilders 'know more about how to end something painful and damaging … but less about how to build something desired'.[1] While this entails the imagining of 'a new and better future, characterized by social arrangements that differ from those of the past in being free from conflict or in channelling it into non-violent and democratic forms',[2] the fulfilment of any such potential requires 'longer-term … constructive social change over time'.[3] It also requires a more complex understanding of temporality than the 'neat chronological categorizations' configuring a 'single … line in time with an agreement as its product' that underpin conventional peacebuilding discourse[4] and are deployed performatively to institute the ending of conflict, consign it to 'the past', and mark the advent of a new era: 'post-accord' and 'post-conflict'.[5] For Lederach, such temporal constructs 'hide the reality that the conflict has not ended'.[6] But they also obscure the need for 'multiple processes of change'[7] to augment what can be achieved through a negotiated political agreement, by working to transform the 'relational context' – rooted in 'long histories of deeply damaged relationships' – that lies at the 'epicenter' of continuing divisions and antagonisms.[8]

Effecting change at this deeper level is not possible, argues Lederach, without engaging with the experiences, perceptions and feelings of people living in these settings, as they engage with each other in new ways that are enabled by the negotiated political settlement.[9] Observing 'the doubt that many people express about "the promises of peace"'[10] generated by political processes, Lederach suggests that popular caution, suspicion and pessimism are justifiable responses to a 'profound gap of authenticity … between the rhetoric and the actualization of peace';[11] and to transitional processes that set out to shape the future without due regard to the 'grounded realism'[12] of grassroots agency and voice, rooted in the lived experience of a conflict zone. For Lederach, if a peace process is to sustain long-term 'social momentum'[13] and avoid congealing into the orthodoxies of a 'liberal peace',[14] peacebuilders must engage with grounded realism in

order to cultivate 'moral imagination', a stance that benefits from 'a deep rootedness in the reality of what has existed while seeking new ways to move beyond the grip of … historical patterns'.[15] To initiate and sustain long-term practices of peacebuilding on this basis, Lederach advocates the creation of dynamic 'transformative platform(s): ongoing social and relational spaces' of popular participation, engagement and mutual interchange in the public sphere.[16] On such platforms, he argues, effective voice may be constituted and 'meaningful conversation' that 'makes a difference' may feed into and contribute to the shaping of constructive and authentic social change, 'tested in real life relationships … where people have the greatest access and where they perceive they are most directly affected: in their respective communities'.[17]

While the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 established a political framework for peace in Ireland founded on 'partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships',[18] its promise of a 'new beginning'[19] has been stultified in ways consistent with Lederach's critique of peacebuilding orthodoxy. However, public platforms for transformative engagement with the legacies of the Northern Ireland Troubles have emerged outside of formal political arenas, constructed most vigorously by grassroots organisations and institutions of civil society, and promoting voices often in tension or explicit contestation with the rhetoric and performance of State-centred peacebuilding. Among the most widespread and influential of these transformative platforms have been those initiating and supporting practices of experiential storytelling. From the life-writing project, *An Crann*/The Tree, launched a few weeks after the ceasefires of 1994, to the inception of the cultural organisation Healing Through Remembering in 2001, to the launch of the Accounts of the Conflict website in 2014, experiential storytelling derived from personal memory has become a central practice in 'coming to terms with the past' within the Irish peace process. Diverse grassroots projects have promoted storytelling as a mode of social reflection and dialogue on the historical experience of the Troubles and the destructive and polarising effects of the conflict's political violence. This work has impacted on policy-making within the State and the political arena, manifest in the proposal to create an official archive containing oral narratives of conflict experience outlined in the Stormont House Agreement of 2014.

In the development of these practices, arguments have been advanced about the value of storytelling of this kind, and of listening and attending to it, as a means to end the reproduction of cultures of violence, and thereby contribute to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This chapter begins with analysis and critique of key claims made in such arguments. With particular reference to the work of Healing Through Remembering, it traces the evolution of these debates and the emergence of fruitful, complex grassroots practices concerned with experiential storytelling in Northern Ireland. Informed by critical perspectives on storytelling developed in cultural studies, anthropology and oral- and life-history research, the chapter then suggests a number of problems within current thinking and practice which hinder a fuller contribution of this work to the culture of conflict transformation. In addressing these problems, it argues for

deeper conceptual attention to questions of subjectivity including the significance of narrative 'composure' and intersubjectivity in memorywork; to the relation between the storytelling produced in dedicated projects and the wider 'social life of stories'; and to the interpretation and use of recorded stories by various 'interpretive communities' including social historians of the conflict. Such developments call for a closer, and reimagined, collaborative relationship between academic researchers concerned with these issues and the community-based practitioners whose work is central to developments in storytelling practice as a transformative platform in the Northern Ireland conflict.

Storytelling for peacebuilding in theory and practice
Cultural considerations of experience, subjectivity and memory and their role in the politics of peacebuilding and conflict transformation did not feature in the Agreement of 1998, nor in the St Andrews Agreement of 2006 that resolved snagging points hindering its implementation. The problems of understanding and transforming embedded cultures of conflict were raised first not in the political arena where debate centred on the form of the future, devolved Northern Ireland State, but from below, in initiatives taken by civil society and grassroots community activisms. Storytelling as a means of coming to terms with the past in both its individual and its social aspects was advocated from the very beginning of the peace process.[20] The writer, Damian Gorman, first suggested the value of 'gather[ing ...] individual stories of what has happened' to 'the people of Northern Ireland', so that the 'splintered story [... of] the "Troubles" [can] be pieced together from as many of us as possible'.[21] Taking advantage of the new cultural space opened up by the paramilitary ceasefires of 1994, the organisation launched by Gorman in December of that year, *An Crann/*The Tree, aimed to establish a storytelling 'museum' dedicated to the principle that: '[E]verybody's personal history is part of a shared history ... Obviously there are many people who have suffered ... [T]here are an awful lot of things that we need to hear'.[22]

The story-gathering work of *An Crann* and other groupings took place in a so-called 'post-conflict' cultural field which reproduced many of the characteristics of what Daniel Bar-Tal calls 'cultures of violence', shaped by the war and polarised into mutually antagonistic and reinforcing 'collective memories', loyalist and republican, British and Irish.[23] In these narratives, the death and suffering inflicted on 'our' community by the enemy 'Other' is conceived as the principal moral outcome of the conflict, and while the Other is held to bear sole responsibility for initiating and sustaining the society's recourse to violence, 'our' violence is justified as necessarily retaliatory and defensive, and celebrated as heroic. Conflicts centred on the salience of categories such as 'innocent', 'real' and 'forgotten' victims, the exclusive claims made on their terms, and their deployment in sharp contradistinction from the 'perpetrators' of violence, became central to the 'politics of victimhood' which flourished in the period between the 1998 Agreement and the re-establishment on a reasonably secure footing of the devolved Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly and accompanying institutions in 2007.[24]

An Crann contested the terms of this polarisation by collecting and publishing 'largely unedited first-hand stories from *all* sides of our community', including policemen, members of the emergency services, a squaddie and a Chinese boy, but 'above all ... those who have suffered personal loss ... or who have lived with personal involvement, threatened or actual violence, and direct confrontation'; and the value of 'each and every story' is articulated in terms of emotional experience: 'of love and hate, bitterness and recrimination, enmity and suspicion, forgiveness and reconciliation'.[25] A different mode of contestation was adopted by the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, a 'truth-telling' project 'to record and publish testimonies collected from relatives and friends of the ninety-nine residents of Ardoyne [in North Belfast] killed during the armed conflict'.[26] Begun in 1998 partly in response to the absence of any official strategy for 'dealing with the past'[27] in the Agreement, the documentation of these lives and deaths – in a highly militarised area that suffered one of the highest death rates in the conflict – was undertaken by local researchers with wide community participation on the basis of 'sharing authority' over the production and content of the testimonies.[28] The value of this process, as much as its outcome, was thought to lie in its modelling of truth-telling 'from below', its recording of testimony for use as evidence should an official investigative mechanism be established in the future, and its empowering of the agency of local people both to challenge their demonisation as a terrorist community and 'to re-evaluate their own individual and collective past'.[29] In foregrounding the role of State strategies and actors within multifaceted patterns of violence, the project also contested reductive, binary representations of the conflict as entirely intercommunal and sectarian. In 2005, following a period of striking growth, thirty-one 'storytelling' or 'testimony' projects by organisations with aims and methods as diverse as those of *An Crann* The Tree and the Ardoyne Commemoration Project were identified, including a number comprising several different initiatives.[30]

In 2000 the visit to Ireland of Alex Boraine, formerly deputy-chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995–2002), stimulated the creation of Healing Through Remembering (HTR), 'an independent initiative made up of a diverse membership with different political perspectives working on a common goal of how to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland'.[31] HTR undertook a wide-ranging consultation of individuals, organisations and communities on the question: 'How should people remember the events connected with the conflict [...] and in so doing, individually and collectively contribute to the healing of the wounds of society?'[32] With 'storytelling' the predominant suggestion to emerge from the consultation, HTR's *Report* on its findings in 2002 proved highly influential in identifying the variety of associated ideas, purposes and practices, and shaping from them a more cohesive approach to its use in addressing the legacies of the past.[33] The *Report* recommended establishing what it termed

a storytelling process known as 'Testimony'. Stories and narratives will be collected from all who wish to tell their experiences of the conflict ... These stories – collected by those already undertaking this type of work and community groups through a flexible but standard method – would form part of an archive housing the stories of the past and serving as a vehicle to learn the lessons of the future.[34]

These ideas were further developed and grounded through detailed engagement with existing projects and practitioners in HTR's *'Storytelling' Audit* published in September 2005.[35]

Analysing the approaches to community-based, experiential storytelling developed in this body of early work, the debates propelling it and its subsequent influence, four key characteristics may be identified. Firstly, storytelling has been understood from the beginning as a temporal practice. In Healing Through Remembering's early working definition, a 'story' or 'narrative' is a medium for sharing and interpreting experience that 'explain[s] how things are' in a sequential form linking past, present and future.[36] The value of storytelling as a means of 'dealing with the past', an alternative or supplement to any formal processes of truth recovery, has been widely expressed and was emphasised in investigative hearings held by the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in 2005.[37] In its *Report*, HTR noted widespread support for the view that 'it would be important to record the stories of individuals' experiences of the conflict as a historical resource', and concerns that 'unless a wide range of accounts are recorded and archived, a singular, exclusive narrative of the conflict will become dominant over time.'[38] This advocacy for the production of an inclusive plurality of voices speaking about diverse experiences, to establish the basis for historical work in the future and to prevent the emergence of an anticipated – and feared – exclusive or dominant narrative, has been a key theme in subsequent debate. Eleven years later, in December 2013, Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan's 'Proposed Agreement' on parades, commemorations, flags and emblems, and 'contending with the past' made the case for the Northern Ireland Executive to establish 'an archive for conflict-related oral histories, documents, and other relevant materials from individuals of all backgrounds, from Northern Ireland and beyond, who wish to share their experiences connected with the conflict', on these same grounds: 'It will not seek to interpret people's narratives or attempt to create any single narrative of the past. It will, rather, be a collection of individual narratives — a vital primary resource for the future historians, genealogists, and writers who will interpret the myriad histories of Northern Ireland.'[39]

Often entangled with these imaginings about a future moment of interpretation and history-making is an understanding of storytelling as a future-oriented enterprise that contributes to transformations in both the self and the society as these emerge from the violent past. HTR's *Report*, in its recommendations on the purposes of storytelling and archiving, points to the value of 'mak[ing] individual and communal stories – both

positive and negative – available to all sections of our community, thus opening the possibilities of hearing the human and emotional, as well as the factual and forensic, detail of events'.[40] The Report suggests that this would 'affirm our individual and collective experience and in so doing [help us] learn to know ourselves and other people, consequently shaping our identity, emotions, hopes, dreams and desires', and 'lessen[ing] the chances of a return to violent conflict [in the future].'[41]

A second key characteristic of this work has been its principal concern with the cultural production of stories about the conflict, understood in terms of a 'storytelling process' and its enabling conditions. The social relations of production are conceived largely as small-scale interpersonal exchanges involving telling, listening and dialogue, structured in a variety of ways that establish differing roles and relationships, across a range from the formal interview between an interviewer and interviewee to a reciprocity based on interchangeable roles of teller and listener within a small group mediated by a facilitator.[42] Detailed attention has been paid to ethical considerations, most notably the establishment of conditions that afford storytellers a sense of personal safety from psychological or physical harm both for themselves and for others; control over what they tell, how they tell it, and who has access to it; and an experience of being respected, supported and acknowledged in the exchange.[43] While much storytelling production is oral, interpersonal and ephemeral, discussion of the storytelling process has been centrally concerned from the outset with the 'recording of testimony',[44] its social value, and the forms, media and techniques available. The preservation and collection of such recordings has been fundamental to conceptions of the social contribution of storytelling since the HTR's *Report* recommended the establishment of a 'collective storytelling and archiving process'.[45]

A third characteristic is the way that particular kinds of cultural production – and producers – have been identified as contributors to this process. While acknowledging the many kinds of creative activity and the 'vast array' of cultural forms producing stories about 'conflict-related incidents and experiences',[46] HTR restricted its *'Storytelling' Audit* to accounts of personal experience told in the first person by an individual who 'had control over how their story or testimony would be disseminated or presented'.[47] These would be, for the most part, stories produced by 'a project' according to 'a formal storytelling process'.[48] In setting its parameters for inclusion in the *Audit,* then, HTR defined and delimited the field of practice that would be recognisable *as* 'storytelling' and qualify for inclusion in the envisaged future archive. Despite this more circumscribed definition and focus, the projects brought together under the umbrella of HTR's conception of 'storytelling process' have a range of very different motivations and articulate their purpose and value in distinctly different ways. A telling symptom of this is the issue of naming that emerged in discussion about the draft audit, with some projects preferring to describe their activities as 'personal experience narratives' or 'testimony work' rather than 'storytelling'.[49] While this was resolved by describing the 'collective storytelling and archiving process' as 'testimony', and by incorporating all three terms

into the full title of the audit,[50] the different emphases placed upon 'subjective' experience, on one hand, and an 'objective' witnessing of events on the other, have continued to resonate and, as I go on to argue, have implications for how storytelling material of all kinds is conceived and utilised as 'evidence'.

A fourth notable characteristic of this body of work is its engagement with ideas of 'healing', a term which has entered the popular lexicon as a key signifier in debates about storytelling, and the closely associated term, 'reconciliation', a concept with greater theoretical weight and ideological power though lacking in wider resonance.[51] An important, though never consensual, strand in HTR's thinking about future-oriented transformation has used the language of healing, as in its recommendations to 'promote the healing power of story telling and giving of testimony',[52] and to 'strengthen the healing process that comes with accepting the diversity of "truths" that exist in our society'.[53] In a parallel development to HTR's articulation of ideas about storytelling, its researcher, Gráinne Kelly, and consultant, Brandon Hamber, produced their influential definition of reconciliation as 'a *process* of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships' and working towards a 'shared future' on the basis of 'a common vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society' (original emphasis).[54] Hamber and Kelly see this as requiring transformation of the 'social, economic and political structures which gave rise to the conflict', but also '[c]hanges in how people relate to, and their attitudes towards, one another', so that the 'culture of suspicion, fear, mistrust and violence is broken down and opportunities and space opened up in which people can hear and be heard', as 'active participant[s]' in social transformation. Whilst '(a)cknowledging the hurt, losses, truths and suffering of the past' is a necessary aspect of this process, so too is '[r]elationship building or renewal' based on 'accepting commonalities and differences ... and engaging with those who are different to us'.[55]

Hamber and Kelly's understanding of reconciliation meshes with a number of key values articulated by projects involved in the emerging 'storytelling process' and helped to provide a broader context in which to situate thinking about their potential role in 'dealing with the past' and peacebuilding. These connections were articulated explicitly by the Consultative Group on the Past (CGP), an independent investigative group set up by the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in June 2007 'to seek consensus across the community in Northern Ireland on the best way to deal with the legacy of the past'.[56] In its *Report* (2009), the CGP made a comprehensive set of recommendations to the British Government about the 'legacy issues' of truth, justice and memory, situated within an overarching framework of reconciliation.[57] This is defined as the 'goal' of 'a better and shared future that is not overshadowed by the past', with work towards it 'bringing a new measure of common purpose reflected in greater cohesion, sharing and integration in our communities.'[58] Storytelling is advocated in this context. Noting the 'vast amount of work [that] is being done ... to give people the opportunity to share stories of their experiences of the conflict',[59] the Group proposes as the first goal of future initiatives, that 'any storytelling project should involve listening to the stories of

others as well as the telling of our own story. Only by listening to the perspectives of others who were involved in the conflict can we move towards understanding their moral truth and towards some form of reconciliation'.[60]

The CGP also echoed HTR's call to provide opportunities for people 'to place their testimony on record in a permanent archive.'[61] Although the *Report* was not formally adopted by the Government, its ideas have continued to inform official thinking on dealing with the legacies of the past, and its advocacy of storytelling, listening and archiving has fed into the proposals to establish an official Oral History Archive (OHA) of the conflict presented initially by Haass/O'Sullivan and subsequently written into the Stormont House Agreement between Northern Ireland's main political parties and the British and Irish Governments in 2014.[62] In the Agreement, the OHA was conceived as one of four new institutions 'designed to address different aspects of the legacy of Northern Ireland's past',[63] based on the principles of 'acknowledging and addressing the suffering of victims and survivors', of 'promoting reconciliation', of compliance with human rights and the rule of law, and of reliance on practices that are 'balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable'. [64] Following the publication of the Stormont House Agreement Model Implementation Bill in September 2015,[65] progress has been slow. This is due not only to the intrinsic complexity of the issues, but also to the absence of political consensus and will in a context characterised by two interlocking crises: the political quagmire of 'Brexit' following the UK's referendum vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, and the breakdown of power-sharing relations between the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin leading to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly since January 2017. (Both crises remain unresolved at the time of writing, August 2019.)[66] In May 2018, the UK Government initiated a new stage with the publication of a Draft Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill outlining the proposed policy framework for the OHA and the other three institutions, and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) launched a public consultation on these proposals that ran for twenty-one weeks, [67] eliciting 17,000 responses from individuals and over one hundred organisations.[68] In July 2019 the NIO published an analysis of these responses, reiterating its commitment 'to address the legacy of the past in a way that ... command[s] broad support and trust from the community' and 'will contribute to a better future and further reconciliation across society'.[69]

This proposed development of an Oral History Archive has been broadly welcomed by storytelling and oral history practitioners insofar as it represents acknowledgment by the State that the experiential dimensions of peacebuilding (across Ireland and Britain) are important and worthy of statutory support, recognises oral history as a valid methodology, and indicates a willingness to 'draw together and work with existing oral history projects' (albeit whilst eliding the differences between oral history and other storytelling practices).[70] But it has also sparked significant concerns and wide-ranging criticism. This has centred particularly on the accompanying proposal to establish a 'research project [...] led by academics to produce a factual historical timeline and

statistical analysis of the Troubles',[71] the lack of detail about how the OHA would work in practice and its relation to existing community-based organisations and projects, and the threat to its independence from political interference posed by its proposed location in PRONI (the Public Record Office Northern Ireland), an official institution of the State, and the considerable discretionary powers invested solely in PRONI's Director, or 'Deputy Keeper', who is answerable to the Minister for Communities as 'Keeper of the Records'. [72] The larger, underlying concern is about a possible appropriation of storytelling work, and control over the production, acquisition, publication, accessibility and use of experiential stories, exercised by a Department of State in ways that may be inconsistent with the ethos, principles and protocols of community-based practice, and undermining of its continued vitality.[73]

Critique and evolving perspectives
Community-based storytelling practices grounded on the principles identified in the first part of this chapter have made an important contribution to public debate about peacebuilding and the promise of a 'new future' in Northern Ireland. In this second part of this chapter I argue that, if these practices are to develop their full potential for effecting constructive change through cultural engagement with experiences and memories of conflict, division and otherness, further critical reflection is necessary to evolve their conception beyond the thinking that has shaped developments hitherto. A critique of this kind should aim to strengthen arguments about the value of community-based storytelling as a mode of popular knowledge-production grounded in the creation of distinctive social relations that have, and must retain, relative autonomy from political and academic authorities. However, intellectual resources supporting such critique can be found in academic scholarship concerned with oral history and other kinds of experiential storytelling, much of which is deeply sensitive to the demands of shared authority and in tune with popular and community-based history-making 'from below'. In what follows, I identify three inter-related problems or limitations within current thinking and practice, and point to work in cultural studies, cultural anthropology and oral- and life-history research that could contribute to evolving perspectives and ways forward.

Firstly, the founding commitment to hold together a range of very different 'story, narrative and testimony initiatives' under the umbrella of 'storytelling' has tended to blur important distinctions between these practices and to restrict the kinds of claims and arguments that can be made about their multiple contributions to conflict transformation. Significant differences of form and function as well as of purpose and effect distinguish, for example, stories told within a so-called 'therapeutic' framework with the aim of 'narrating one's pain in public', from those produced 'to document the human rights violations perpetrated against [the narrators]',[74] and from those valued for their 'multi-layered' representations that 'demonstrate the complexity and diversity of experiences of conflict'. [75] A traditional distinction remains important (though not absolute) here, between those narrative practices and forms which are primarily interested in

contributing towards the establishment of objective truth about events (what happened, how and why, and with what consequences and effects), and those which are principally concerned with subjective experience (what it has felt like, how it has been understood). The idea of testimony is associated with the former: with eye-witnessing as factual evidence produced with the aim of establishing 'forensic truth' (as distinct from 'personal and narrative truth').[76] While the main value of testimony is held to be its contribution to transitional justice and truth-recovery procedures, this claim tends to colour, by extension and slippage of reference, the evaluation of storytelling *per se.*[77] Although it is increasingly recognised in Northern Ireland that personal storytelling is a 'necessarily subjective process',[78] a comparable case for the value of 'subjective' narrative has not been fully articulated. In its absence, this unavoidable subjectivity provokes anxieties and criticisms, that stories of personal experience are or will become 'entirely individualised',[79] merely therapeutic, 'ever more private, subjective and internal',[80] and thus in some fundamental way are 'not political'.[81]

Such anxieties and criticisms tend to rest on and reproduce binary thinking about 'the individual' and 'the social'. Challenges to such thinking are able to draw on a range of conceptual models for grasping the individual subject as inherently a 'social individual',[82] the product of a historical process which positions the individual person and shapes its sense of self within social relations of class and nation, gender and sexuality, 'race' and ethnicity. Constructed by, and the bearer of, broader collective experiences, articulations and consciousness, the individual subject makes active sense of itself and its world in terms of available cultural discourses. The emotional (or psychic) dimensions of social subjectivity are also collective and cultural as well as individual and personal matters.[83] Personal feelings, values and understandings are, therefore, always produced in relation to broader cultural frameworks which are often in contradiction or contestation with each other. These must be negotiated and may be resisted or transformed in the creation of oppositional or alternative discourses that support new forms of subjectivity.

Usefully complex and nuanced understandings of subjectivity and experiential storytelling can be found in the extensive literature by practitioners of oral history and life history research, whose 'early somewhat naive methodological debates and enthusiasm for testimonies of "how it really was" have matured into [...] a much more subtle appreciation of how every story inextricably intertwines both objective and subjective evidence – of different but equal value.'[84] As the oral historian Alistair Thomson advocates, a life-history interview or narrative may be read 'for information about the [subject's] experience' and 'combin[ed ...] with other historical sources to find out what happened in the past';[85] and it may also be read as evidence 'for exploring issues about memory and subjectivity', such as 'how each [subject] composed and told his [or her] memories', and 'how the process of remembering could be a key to understanding the ways in which certain individual and collective versions of the past are active in the present'.[86] Thinking in these ways about the workings of subjectivity in

storytelling opens up new grounds for construing its contribution to conflict transformation in Northern Ireland.

A second, related problem concerns the way that a (necessary) focus on the 'recording' of stories for posterity and future use has tended towards an over-simplified understanding of narrated experience. This hinders practical recognition of the complexities of temporality in relation to subjectivity within the ordinary life course and its representation in stories; and of the way stories emerge, develop and work in everyday life. The 'recording experiences' model tends to imply that one has one's 'own story', singular, self-contained and waiting ready and prepared for an opportunity to tell it, in a once-and-for-all moment of setting it down or capturing it on record.[87] However, as the Canadian anthropologist, Julie Cruikshank, argues: 'Not only are we born into complex communal narratives, we also experience, understand and order our lives as stories that we are living out' in ways that are 'locally grounded, highly particular, and culturally specific'.[88] In our 'storied lives'[89] the narration of experience is never finished and fixed, nor obvious and transparent to us, but involves affective and emotional currents that we may not fully understand or know how to handle, and an ongoing struggle for the 'subjective composure' of meaning and feeling in a tolerable form.[90] The telling of a life story offers a means, as Thomson puts it, to 'compose a past that [we] can live with'.[91] Composure may shift over time as we revisit and reinterpret our experience, questioning, revising, and reworking the sense we make of it and the way we feel about it, according to changing circumstances of culture, society and politics, and hopes and horizons of the future.[92]

Such thinking invites reflection about the relationship between project-based storytelling and stories in everyday life. Storytelling projects are designed to afford opportunities for telling and listening that do not readily arise otherwise, facilitated by practitioners who have developed nuanced insights into the difficulties faced in narrating conflict experience and the kind of journey that people often have to undertake to evolve their own understandings and feelings about what has happened to them or what they have done.[93] These journeys of the self do not end with the project. However, the recorded story tends to be presented as if it existed in isolation from the stories and storytelling that occurs in other social contexts, with their silences and lacunae. This limits the capacity of storytelling projects to contribute to conflict transformation by effecting changes in the discourses that shape what is 'speakable' and 'hearable' in public culture.[94]

Any story exists in relationship to stories told by others and the shifting parameters of what can and cannot be said, both in the 'intersubjective' and dialogical exchanges facilitated by practitioners in the course of a project,[95] and within the wider contexts of everyday social life where stories are routinely told, circulated and heard. One story may leak into another to produce compound, collective forms, as occurs in the phenomenon of 'shared memory' within a family or a neighbourhood;[96] or a story may be told in awareness of the different, sometimes conflicting stories told by others about the

same events.[97] In what Cruikshank calls 'the social life of stories', their 'meanings shift as tellers address different audiences, situations and historical contexts', distinguished by 'how fully cultural understandings are shared by teller and listener'.[98] For Cruikshank, this 'more complicated and differentiated' concept of narrative 'provides ways of thinking about how human communities continue to hold together, and about how divisions that at one time seem deep recede and are reworked in the process of building alliances at another time'.[99] Such thinking, in identifying the intrinsically relational quality of experiential stories, how they work to connect as well as divide people, and their mutability, points to a useful way of construing their efficacy within the culture of conflict transformation in Northern Ireland.

Lastly, the emphasis placed on processes and social relations of production within project work has pushed into the background fuller and more detailed consideration of what is being said in the stories, and of how their meaning is interpreted, understood and used by those who listen to and engage with them.[100] Ken Plummer, in his 'sociology of stories', argues that investigation of 'the links between stories and the wider social world' necessarily requires attention both to the activity of 'giv[ing] voice to a story at a particular historical moment', and to the various 'interpretive communities that enable stories to be told and heard in different ways'.[101] In Richard Johnson's concept of the 'cultural circuit', 'the structure of [narrative] forms, … their cultural production, [and] their reception and use by variously constituted public audiences' are understood as distinct elements each shaped by specific determining factors, yet inter-related and mutually influencing in variable ways that call for detailed investigation.[102] These 'social processes of producing and consuming stories' establish the motivation or discouragement to communicate that either leads people to undertake what can be an 'immense emotional work' of storytelling – or conversely, silences them.[103]

In Northern Ireland's storytelling culture, consideration of this issue has tended to focus on the cultivation of empathetic listening[104] – usually in the context of a project, or in what Richard Johnson calls a 'local public' cultural circuit, where a cultural text is produced and read within a lived culture common to both audience and producer[105] – as a necessary condition for the telling of experiential stories concerning the conflict. However, when cultural texts produced under local conditions (whether by writing or the recording of oral narratives), become available (in archives or through publication and exhibition) to large, diverse 'general-public' audiences,[106] then the question of interpretation becomes more complex and potentially problematic. The sharpest example of this has been the injunction secured by the Police Service of Northern Ireland to subpoena recordings of interviews with former IRA Volunteers made for the Belfast Project oral history archive at Boston College, USA, in breach of the project's confidentiality agreement with participants, for use as potential evidence in a criminal investigation. The exposure, in this case, of conflict memories to a purpose of reading entirely contrary to that anticipated at the moment of recording, made under compulsion by legal authority and the exercise of political power, has created shockwaves throughout

the world of oral history and storytelling in Ireland and further afield.[107] A further example can be found in the relocation of the Prisons Memory Archive, from a university context where exhibition was restricted to three films and online availability of 20 per cent of its 175 interviews, to PRONI whose capacity for 100 per cent public access is welcome but has also generated concerns about a potential increase in damaging use of the stories by sensationalist journalism which may jeopardise the carefully negotiated participation of some ex-prisoners in the archive.[108] Little work has been undertaken in Northern Ireland, either to consider the question of how a story collection might be read and used, or to investigate how different audiences respond to particular stories.[109] Yet it goes to the heart of claims about the contribution made by storytelling practices to the changing of relationships with and attitudes towards 'others', identified as a key aspect of conflict transformation.

The development of methods of reading and interpretation is also central to any consideration of how the recorded products of experiential storytelling might be used in making new kinds of social history of the conflict. Relatively little attention has been paid to the kinds of sense being made of past events and the textures of lived experience in these collected stories, or to the ways in which meaning is shaped and feelings handled (or not) in the telling. The proposals to establish an official Oral History Archive and historical research project in the Stormont House Agreement have stimulated debate about the role of academic historians and appropriate historical methods in 'dealing with the past'.[110] Yet Sara Dybris McQuaid's call for historians 'to reflect further on historical methodologies and critical source analysis in this context' is a rare intervention in its focus on the problem of 'how to extract, critically evaluate, contextualise and interpret memories and histories as part of peace-building processes'.[111] Focusing on stories produced by the 5 Decades and Border Lives projects, McQuaid considers 'how to move from the micro level of stories to the macro level of histories' in investigating, for example, experiences of sectarian geography and shared space.[112]

In creating methods for the interpretation of experiential stories of the time before, during and after the Troubles, and for their inter-weaving with other sources in the construction of wider social histories, there is again much to learn from oral history and life-writing research. One example is Michael Roper's reconstruction of the emotional cultures which sustained British soldiers on the Western Front during the First World War. In his reading of letters sent by soldiers to their families at home, Roper seeks to identify emotions communicated 'between the lines' of the writing,[113] as the writers attempt to manage and 'contain' emotional expression of fears, horrors, and anxieties through care and concern for the impact on their recipients, while at the same time struggling with their need for social recognition and understanding of those experiences from loved ones.[114] In exploring how different textual forms – the diary, the letter, the memoir – compose their meanings in different temporal relations of proximity to or distance from the event, Roper also identifies the presence of 'emotional residues', or undigested and unthought sensory experience that could not be 'taken in' at the time of

an event, but persist as states of mind with effects that are felt long after and may animate memorywork and acts of reparation many years or decades later.[115] Such work offers interpretative methods for reading and responding critically as well as empathetically to the products of Northern Ireland's storytelling projects, enabling richer engagements with the subjectivities represented and conveyed within particular stories and placing them at the centre of historical understanding of the conflict and its continuing temporal afterlife.

Conclusion

Storytelling has afforded a form of agency to those whose experiences of conflict and social change in Northern Ireland have been marginalised or silenced, and a means to wider social recognition of, and engagement with, such experiences. It also has the potential to illuminate the complexities inherent in subjective re-evaluation and negotiation with past experience and to afford insight into the political, affective and emotional challenges encountered by those living through 'post-conflict' times. In this it carries the promise of deepening social understanding about how difference and otherness may be negotiated, and the ground on which transformations in the subjectivities produced by conflict may be brought about. I have argued here that fuller realisation of this potential will depend, at least in part, on the development of richer and more nuanced understandings: of how stories speak about subjectivity, experience and memory, as these change over time and affect the social meanings of past events; of how the stories produced in the context of formal projects are related to 'storied lives' and the fluid, dialogic existence of stories in everyday lived culture; and of how the form and content of stories is open to diverse readings, responses and interpretations across a range of interpretive communities, from peacebuilders to the police, and requires new methods of subjective source analysis in the making of histories of the conflict from below.

The intention behind this critique is to complement and contribute to extending the valuable achievements of community-based storytelling projects in Northern Ireland as transformative public platforms, enabling further reflection on what are necessarily complex issues, and the development of fresh perspectives and practices. A stronger scaffolding of ideas would, I suggest, enable a recasting and strengthening of the case to be made about the role of experiential storytelling – subjectively oriented narratives as well as testimony – in conflict transformation. In this, there is a particular value in retaining close practical connections in the circuit between cultural production and reception, and between stories as text and as lived culture. While I have argued for an extension of interest towards the encoding of meaning within recorded stories and methods for their interpretation, it is vital to do so with full consideration of the ways in which these stories emerge from and are shaped by the conditions and processes of production secured by community projects, to recognise the primary reception of such stories in the communities involved, and always to be cognisant of the relation between recorded text and 'storied lives'. The continuing evolution of practices for the production, exchange, and archiving of life stories that are rooted in the politics and ethics of

community-based projects remains crucial. So too, opportunities to hear stories especially of unfamiliar experiences from the 'other side(s)', and to tell stories in ways that can be heard across social and political divisions, remain of major importance and sensitivity, and account must be taken of this in the making of any wider, more general readings. These relationships are best secured through local control and influence, and this ought to be a primary consideration in policy debates about the location and constitution of the proposed, state-sponsored Oral History Archive, and point towards the preferability of a more community-based model over the use of PRONI as currently envisaged.

In articulating the value of closer working relationships between academic researchers and community practitioners, the often implicit division of labour within such collaboration is ripe for rethinking. This has a direct bearing on how the critique proposed in this chapter might most productively be addressed. Community practitioners – the coordinators and project managers, facilitators and interviewers of storytelling projects – are themselves particularly well placed to speak and write about these matters. They often have acquired detailed and comprehensive knowledge of the stories collected and recorded by their own project, the personal circumstances of the storytellers, and the relation between the told story and the storied life, as well as deep familiarity with their whole 'set' of stories, whether about a specific historical event or experience, or the history of a particular place or local area. These practitioners are exponents of the 'grounded realism' advocated by Lederach. As local experts in their field, they are also 'organic intellectuals' in Antonio Gramsci's sense, being rooted in and responsive to, as well as mediating, helping to articulate, shape and lead, popular or grassroots understandings.[116] Collaboration between academic and community practitioners, and work by those who combine these roles, has been highly productive of important writing about these issues, much of which is cited in this chapter; but further publication by practitioners reflecting explicitly on their direct knowledge and experience would be immensely valuable. If academic scholarship of the kind advocated here is to become 'really useful knowledge',[117] it will do so in dialogue, on the basis of shared authority, with the understandings and priorities of historically and geographically grounded practitioners, with the aim of supporting and deepening the transformative promise of this community-based peacebuilding activity.[118]

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Johnston Price, director of the 5 Decades Project at Forthspring Inter Community Group, Belfast, who sadly passed away on 27 November 2017.

Notes

[1] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.41.

[2] Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p.5.

[3] Lederach, *Moral Imagination,* p.47.

[4] Ibid., pp.53, 47.

[5] Ibid., pp.43-7. See also See Graham Dawson, 'Memory, the afterlife of emotion, and "post-conflict" temporalities in conflict transformation after the Irish Troubles', in Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Ruud van den Beuken (eds), *Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), pp.257-96.

[6] Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, p.47

[7] Ibid., p.48.

[8] Ibid., p.46.

[9] Ibid., pp. 52, 60.

[10] Ibid., p.43.

[11] Ibid., p.53.

[12] Ibid., p.55.

[13] Ibid., p.48

[14] See Roger Mac Ginty, 'The liberal peace at home and abroad: Northern Ireland and liberal interventionism', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 11 (2009), 690-708. Mac Ginty argues that 'British government peace promotion efforts in Northern Ireland can be described as "liberal peace-lite" or a compromised version of the liberal peace' (p.691).

[15] Lederach, *Moral Imagination,* p.56.

[16] Ibid., p.47. On the public sphere, see pp.59-60.

[17] Ibid., p.56

[18] The Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement), 10 April 1998, section 1: Declaration of Support, in Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke and Fiona Stephen (eds), *A Farewell to Arms? From Long War to Long Peace in Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.301-25 (302).

[19] Ibid.

[20] For a useful history, see Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, 'Practice, power and inertia: Personal narrative, archives and dealing with the past in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* (2016), doi: 10.1093/jhuman/huw001, pp.1–20 (pp.5-11).

[21] Damian Gorman (1994, 1995), quoted in Gráinne Kelly, 'Piecing the diverse narratives of the past together', posted on 19 May 2014 on Accounts of the Conflict website, <http://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/accounts/blog/archiving/piecing-the-diverse-narratives-of-the-past-together/>, accessed 5 April 2017.

[22] Damian Gorman (1996), quoted in Dawson, *Making Peace*, pp.70-1.

[23] Daniel Bar-Tal, 'Collective memory of physical violence: Its contribution to the culture of violence', in Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe (eds.), *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.77-93.

[24] Dawson, *Making Peace*, pp.27, 282-7.

[25] James Ellis, 'Foreword', in *An Crann* The Tree, *Bear in Mind: Stories of the Troubles* (Belfast: Lagan Press/*An Crann* The Tree, 2000), p.viii.

[26] Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, ' "You understand again": Testimony and post-conflict transition in the North of Ireland, in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd ed. (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.531-37 (532).

[27] See Brandon Hamber, *Dealing with Painful Memories and Violent Pasts* (Berlin: Berghof, 2015), <http://image.berghof-foundation.org/fi leadmin/redaktion/

[28] Lundy and McGovern, ' "You understand again", p.534.

[29] Ibid., p.535. See Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne: the Untold Truth* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2002).

[30] Gráinne Kelly, 'Storytelling' Audit: An Audit of Personal Story, Narrative and Testimony Initiatives Related to the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland (Belfast: Healing Through Remembering, 2005), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/victims/docs/kelly0905storytelling.pdf>, accessed 5 April 2017.

[31] <http://healingthroughremembering.org>, accessed 5 April 2017.

[32] Kelly, 'Storytelling', p.3.

[33] Healing Through Remembering (HTR), *The Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project* (June 2002), <http://healingthroughremembering.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/HTR-Report-2002.pdf>, accessed 5 April 2017.

[34] HTR, *Report*, p.41.

[35] Kelly, *'Storytelling'*. See also HTR, *Storytelling as the Vehicle? Conference Report* (Belfast: HTR, November 2005), <http://healingthroughremembering.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Storytelling-as-the-vehicle_2005.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2017.

[36] Kelly, *'Storytelling'*, p.12.

[37] House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past. Interim Report – Victims and Survivors, Tenth Report of Session 2004–05. Volume II: Oral and written evidence (London: Stationery Office, 2005), Evidence Ev 141, Q654. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/victims/docs/british_gov/ni_affairs_ctte_hc/vol_2_060405.pdf>, accessed 5 April 2017.

[38] HTR, *Report*, p.24.

[39] 'Haass Report – Proposed Agreement', 31 December 2013. <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/haass-report-proposed-agreement>, p.36.

[40] HTR, *Report*, p.42.

[41] HTR, *Report*, pp.42, 25.

[42] The practice of the Dúchas Oral History Archive offers an example of the former, and the 5 Decades Project of the latter. For Dúchas see *Living Through the Conflict: Belfast Oral Histories* (Belfast: Dúchas Oral History Archive, 2014), and <www.duchasarchive.com>, accessed 6 April 2017. For 5 Decades see Forthspring 5 Decades Project, *Talking About the Troubles*, ed. Johnston Price (Belfast: Forthspring Inter Community Group, 2014), and <http://www.forthspring.org/5-decades-project.html>, accessed 6 April 2017.

[43] HTR, *Ethical Principles: Storytelling and Narrative Work* (Belfast: Healing Through Remembering, 2009), <http://healingthroughremembering.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Ethical_Principles_for_Storytelling_and_Narrative_Work_HTR_2009.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2017.

[44] Kelly, 'Storytelling', p.4.

[45] HTR, *Report*, p.41.

[46] Kelly, *'Storytelling'*, pp.12-18 (12).

[47] Kelly, 'Storytelling', p.19.

[48] Martin Melaugh, 'Defining "a story" ', posted 11 August 2014 on the Accounts of the Conflict website, <http://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/accounts/blog/defining-a-story/>, accessed 27 March 2015.

[49] Kelly, 'Storytelling', p.10.

[50] HTR, *Report*, p. 41; Kelly, *'Storytelling'*, p.10.

[51] On this point, see Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, *A Place for Reconciliation?: Conflict and Locality in Northern Ireland.* Democratic Dialogue Report No.18 (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, September 2005).

[52] HTR, *Report,* p.42.

[53] Kelly, 'Storytelling', p.6.

[54] Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, *Reconciliation: A Working Definition* (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, September 2004), (no page numbers). See also Gráinne Kelly and Brandon Hamber, *Reconciliation: Rhetoric or Relevant?* Democratic Dialogue Report No.17 (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, February 2005).

[55] Hamber and Kelly, *Reconciliation: A Working Definition*.

[56] 'Consultative Group on the Past, call for submissions', *Guardian*, 6 September 2007.

[57] Consultative Group on the Past (CGP), *Report of the Consultative Group on the Past* (23 January 2009), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/victims/docs/consultative_group/cgp_230109_report.pdf>; accessed 6 April 2017.

[58] CGP, *Report*, p.190.

[59] Ibid., p.97.

[60] Ibid., p.99.

[61] Ibid., p.98.

[62] 'The Stormont House Agreement' (December 2014), p.5, <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390672/Stormont_House_Agreement.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2017.

[63] Northern Ireland Office (NIO), *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past: Analysis of the Consultation Responses* (July 2019), available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814805/Addressing_the_Legacy_of_the_Past_-_Analysis_of_the_consultation_responses.pdf>, p. 6. The other three proposed institutions are The Historical Investigations Unit, The Independent Commission for Information Retrieval, and The Implementation and Reconciliation Group.

[64] 'Stormont House Agreement', p.5.

[65] Stormont House Agreement Model Implementation Bill (September 2015), available at:
<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/caj.org.uk/2017/07/17135210/SHA-Model-Implementation-Bill-September-2015-Final.pdf>; Northern Ireland Office (NIO), *Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill 2015. Summary of measures* (September 2015), <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/462888/Policy_Paper_-_Summary_of_Measures_23_Sept_2015_Final.pdf>, pp.29-32; accessed 6 April 2017.

[66] Both crises have continued since the writing of this draft chapter. On Brexit, the Agreement on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland from the European Union, signed in January 2020, ushered in conflict over the Northern Ireland Protocol and the 'border in the Irish Sea'. January 2020 also saw the restoration of the devolved institutions. For key developments on addressing the legacies of the past since August 2019, see notes 69 and 73 below.

[67] Northern Ireland Office (NIO), *Consultation Paper: Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past* (May 2018); Draft Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill (2018); Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill. Explanatory Notes (2018); all available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/addressing-the-legacy-of-northern-irelands-past>, accessed 31 August 2019.

[68] NIO, *Consultation Responses,* p.8.

[69] Ibid., p.4. For a critical analysis see Brian Rowan, 'Legacy: Trying to avoid a trade-off', posted on EamonnMallie.com, 12 May 2019 <http://eamonnmallie.com/2019/05/legacy-trying-to-avoid-a-trade-off-by-brian-rowan/>, accessed 31 August 2019. In further developments on addressing the legacies of the past since the writing of this draft chapter in August 2019, the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement brokered by the British and Irish Governments, that restored the devolved institutions, established a timetable for the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement; (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf>). This was then superseded by new proposals introduced in July 2021 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past***,** which departed significantly from the Stormont House Agreement in its intention to introduce 'a statute of limitations to apply equally to all Troubles-related [...] criminal investigations and prosecutions'. (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002140/CP_498_Addressing_the_Legacy_of_Northern_Ireland_s_Past.pdf>). Despite provoking universal criticism in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill was laid before parliament in June 2022.

[70] 'Stormont House Agreement', p.5. An inventory of existing storytelling projects, as well as long-term digital storage and access to 'collections of personal accounts, the vast majority of which have been collected by a wide range of community-based organisations and projects across Northern Ireland and beyond', and opportunities for new online deposition, is currently provided by the Accounts of the Conflict website at: <https://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/repo24/index.php>. One important recommendation emerging from the NIO's Consultation identifies a number of ways of deepening the relationship between

the OHA and existing projects, including work to 'enable the long-term preservation of existing collections'; see Model Bill Team, *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past: Response to the NIO Public Consultation* (Belfast: Queens University Belfast Human Rights Centre, 2018), pp. 74-5, available at: <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/files/157360621/MODEL_BILL_TEAM_RESPONSE_TO_NIO_LEGAC Y_CONSULTATION_FINAL_PDF_COPY_THAT_WAS_PRINTED_ON_MONDAY_27_AUG_2018. pdf>, accessed 31 August 2019.

[71] Ibid.

[72] For early responses see *The Stories Network: Briefing Paper on the Oral History Elements of the Stormont House Agreement* (October 2015), <http://webpreviews.com/healingthroughremembering/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/TSN_Briefing_Paper_on_SHA_FINAL_Oct_2015.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2017; Anna Bryson, 'The Stormont House Oral History Archive, PRONI, and the meaning of independence', posted on RightsNI website, 2 October 2015, <http://rightsni.org/2015/10/the-stormont-house-oral-history-archive-proni-and-the-meaning-of-independence-guest-post-by-dr-anna-bryson/>, accessed 6 April 2017; Cillian McGrattan, 'The Stormont House Agreement and the new politics of storytelling in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs* (2015), pp. 1–19, doi:10.1093/pa/gsv065; Hamber and Kelly, 'Practice, power and inertia'. One of the most thorough, detailed critiques of the 2018 Draft Bill, including fifty recommendations for its improvement, is Model Bill Team, *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past.* See also the response from Healing Through Remembering at: <http://healingthroughremembering.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HTR-Response-NIO-Legacy-Consultation-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 1 September 2019.

[73] The new proposals on addressing the legacies of the conflict introduced by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in July 2021 – that reaffirm the commitment in the Stormont House Agreement regarding an official Oral History Archive whilst abandoning its arrangements for truth recovery and justice through criminal investigation with a view to prosecution – have been strongly criticised and firmly rejected by practitioners and advocates of oral history/storytelling in Northern Ireland. See the statement by The Stories Network in November 2021, which 'rejects the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) proposals to legislate against legacy prosecutions' and 'also rejects the suggestion that Oral History/Storytelling should be treated as a principal or primary mechanism for dealing with the past.' Available at <https://healingthroughremembering.org/2021/12/01/stories-network-response-to-nio-proposals-on-dealing-with-the-past-2021/>, accessed 1 July 2022.

[74] Hamber and Kelly, 'Practice, power and inertia', p.4

[75] Ibid., pp.4, 8.

[76] These different categories of truth are derived from *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Volume 1* (1998), pp.110-14.

[77] Hamber and Kelly, for example, pull their wider discussion of diverse storytelling practices back to an emphasis on truth recovery, in 'Practice, power and inertia', p.13.

[78] NIO, Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill 2015, p.29.

[79] Hamber and Kelly, 'Practice, power and inertia', p.14.

[80] Cillian McGrattan, *Memory, Politics and identity: Haunted by History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p.45.

[81] These anxieties, and the contradictory desires and fears concerning historical objectivity and subjectivity, were also evident in the NIO's analysis of responses to its consultation, which noted 'fears that the past might be formally recorded in ways that were not historically accurate, did not reflect the range of experiences that different people had and/or did not capture their own personal experience of the Troubles'. NIO, *Consultation Responses,* p.32.

[82] Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory: Theory, politics, method', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, (London: Hutchinson, 1982), pp.205–52 (234).

[83] See Dawson, *Making Peace*; Graham Dawson, 'The meaning of "moving on": From trauma to the history and memory of emotions in "post-conflict" Northern Ireland', in *Irish University Review* 47:1 (2017), pp.82-102.

[84] Paul Thompson (1989), quoted in Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, 2nd ed. (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2013), p.331. For the evolving debates about oral history, see Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 1st ed. 1998, 2nd ed. 2006, 3rd ed. 2016.

[85] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp.337, 330.

[86] Ibid., pp.331, 337, 330.

[87] The production of such a record may involve the storyteller in editing and revision. See, for example, Laura Aguiar, 'Back to those walls: The women's memory of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison in Northern Ireland', *Memory Studies,* 8:2 (2015), pp.227-41.

[88] Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p.xii.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Dawson, *Making Peace*, pp. 50-1, 63-5; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p.11-15; Penny Summerfield, 'Dis/composing the subject: Intersubjectivities in oral history', in Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (eds), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London and New York: Routledge 2000), pp.91-106; Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and composure: Creating narratives of the gendered self in oral history', *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp.65-93.

[91] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p.249.

[92] See Dawson, 'Memory, the afterlife of emotion, and "post-conflict" temporalities'. 'Fixed' tellings, that remain consistent across temporally different iterations, are also possible, as the case of Percy Bird demonstrates in Thomson, *Anzac Memories*.

[93] See, for example, Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston, 'The burden of memory: Victims, storytelling and resistance in Northern Ireland', *Memory Studies* 2: 3 (2009), pp.355-76; Alistair Little with Ruth Scott, *Give a Boy a Gun: From Killing to Peace-Making* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 2009).

[94] Lucy Newby, 'Troubled generations? (De)constructing narratives of youth experience in the Northern Ireland conflict', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 14:1 (2021), 6-24 (7).

[95] Joanna Bornat, 'Oral history and remembering', in Emily Keighley and Michael Pickering (eds), *Research Methods for Memory Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[96] Dawson, *Making Peace,* pp.139-47.

[97] See, for example, Graham Dawson, 'Masculinities and "the terrorist" in conflict transformation: Representation, identity and reconciliation in "post-conflict" Northern Ireland', in Sue Malvern and Gabriel Koureas (eds), *Terrorist Transgressions: Gender and the Visual Culture of the Terrorist* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp.157–80; Jo Berry, 'I'd find a way to contribute to peace', in Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (eds), *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain (*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp.334-41.

[98] Cruikshank, *Social Life of Stories*, pp.xii, xi, 40.

[99] Ibid., p.2.

[100] Cf. Hamber and Kelly, 'Practice, power and inertia', pp.11, 13.

[101] Ken Plummer, 'An invitation to a sociology of stories', in Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan (eds), *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader* (London and New York, Arnold, 1997), pp. 335-45 (339).

[102] Richard Johnson, 'What is Cultural Studies anyway?' (1983), cited in Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.24.

[103] Plummer, 'An invitation', p.338.

[104] See, for example, HTR, *Report*, p.24; Cathie McKimm, 'Narrative, imagination and a pluralist vision', in James Magowan and Norma Patterson, eds, *Hear and Now... And Then... Developments in Victims and Survivors Work* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, 2001), pp.95-103; Jolene Mairs Dyer, '*Unseen Women: Stories from Armagh Gaol*: Exhibiting contrasting memories of a contested space', in Jenny Kidd and others (eds), *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives* (Ashgate: Farnham, Surrey, 2014), pp.163-74.

[105] Johnson cited in Dawson, *Soldier Heroes,* p.24.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Anthony McIntyre, 'The Belfast Project and the Boston College Subpoena Case', paper presented at the Oral History Network of Ireland Second Annual Conference: Special Session: Oral History and Conflict Resolution, in Ennis, Co. Clare, Republic of Ireland, 29 September 2012 <https://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/2012/10/07/the-belfast-project-and-the-boston-college-subpoena-case/> accessed 5 April 2017. See also Chris Bray, 'The whole story behind the Boston College subpoenas', in *The Chronicle Review,* 5 July 2011, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Whole-Story-Behind-the/128137>; both accessed 5 April 2017. On the implications for the OHA, see Model Bill Team, *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past,* pp.77-8.

[108] I am grateful to Cahal McLaughlin for this information. Similar issues would be faced by the OHA.

[109] But see, for example, Cahal McLaughlin, 'Who tells what to whom and how: The Prisons Memory Archive', *p-e-r-f-o-r-m-a-n-c-e* 1.1 (2014), <http://www.p-e-r-f-o-r-m-a-n-c-e.org/?p=139>, accessed 6 April 2017; Jolene Mairs, 'Audiovisual Storytelling in Postconflict Northern Ireland', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Ulster, 2013; Cahal McLaughlin, 'Memory, place and gender: *Armagh Stories: Voices from the Gaol'*, *Memory Studies*, September 2017, doi:10.1177/1750698017730872.

[110] See 'Historians and the Stormont House Agreement': Report on a Workshop held at Hertford College, Oxford, 19 October 2016, available at: <http://irishhistoriansinbritain.org/?p=321>, accessed 31 August 2019.

[111] Sara Dybris McQuaid, 'Passive archives or storages for action? Storytelling projects in Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies* (2016), doi:10.1080/07907184.2015.1126929, pp.1-23 (p.4).

[112] Ibid., p.4, and see pp.9-10, 14-16. See also McLaughlin, 'Memory, place and gender'. For the 5 Decades project, see note 42. For Border Lives, see <https://vimeo.com/user29748633>, accessed 6 April 2017.

[113] Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.64.

[114] Ibid., pp.24-5, 63-8, 250-2.

[115] Ibid., pp.247, 254.

[116] Antonio Gramsci, 'The intellectuals', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* eds Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp.3-23.

[117] Richard Johnson, ' "Really useful knowledge": Radical education and working class culture, 1790-1848', in John Clarke, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson (eds), *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp.78-9, 84-5.

[118] For an example of such dialogue, see Sara Dybris McQuaid, Henrik Sonne Petersen, and Johnston Price, 'Historical dialogues, collective memory work, and the (dis)continuation of conflicts', *Kritika Kultura*, 33/34 (2019), 702-728 (708-15). doi. 10.13185/3092. Available at: <https://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/kk/article/view/3092/2913>, accessed 31 August 2019.