Transactions of the RHS 28 (2018), pp. 219–239 © Royal Historical Society 2018
doi:10.1017/S0080440118000117

THE TROUBLES WITH A LOWER CASE t: UNDERGRADUATES AND BELFAST'S DIFFICULT HISTORY

By Sean O'Connell

READ 16 SEPTEMBER 2017

AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

ABSTRACT. This paper explores the risks and rewards involved in directing undergraduate students engaged on an oral history project in Belfast. It advocates the role of oral history as a tool through which to encourage students' engagement with research-led teaching to produce reflective assignments on the nature of historical evidence, particularly autobiographical memory. The particular challenges of conducting oral history in a city beset by ethno-sectarian divisions are discussed. This factor has ensured that the historiography of Belfast has focused extensively on conflict and violence. The city's social history is poorly understood, but employing oral history enables the exploration of issues that take undergraduate historians beyond the Troubles as a starting point. This project probed what is called the troubles with a lower case t, via an analysis of deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment in Sailortown (Belfast's dockland district). It provided evidence with which to offer a new assessment on existing historiographical discussions about working-class nostalgic memory and urban social change, one that supports those scholars that problematize attempts to categorise such memory. The testimony also differed in significant ways from previous oral history research on post-war Northern Ireland.

The RHS symposium on teaching difficult histories, held at Queen's University Belfast in September 2017 was the forum for which this paper was prepared. It is not, therefore, a conventional article that dissects a historical research question over the course of 8,000 words. Instead, it explains the problems and opportunities encountered when overseeing a group of second-year undergraduates working on an oral history project in Belfast as part of the module 'Recording History'. Amongst the historical difficulties engendered by that exercise, the most obvious centred on the danger inherent when undergraduates explore life stories in a city beset by ethno-sectarian division. There is always the likelihood that interviewees will receive simple questions about schooling, work, residence or leisure preferences warily, fearing

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that their answers might suggest a 'sectarian' outlook. The opportunity for cultural misunderstandings taking place in the interview encounter is heightened because most Northern Irish students have limited experience of those outside their own 'community' due to cultural, educational and residential segregation. The relatively limited historiography on the social history of post-1945 Belfast limits the extent to which this factor can be minimised by administering a lengthy reading list to students. However, utilising oral history in the tutorial room produces research-led teaching in one of its most dynamic forms. Students face the challenge of assessing the contested historical perspectives that surface in personal and collective memory. As a result, conducting oral history interviews can lead students to question their pre-existing historical assumptions as they encounter the biographical and historical experiences of individual interviewees.[1] Moreover, the testimony collected by the students often provides new evidence through which to reevaluate the historiographical literature in the research area the students focus upon. For this reason, this paper also argues that oral history can play a significant role in writing a more nuanced history of Belfast in the second half of the twentieth century.

In the case-study discussed here, undergraduate students deployed oral history to investigate the dockland district of Sailortown with a focus on deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment. These twinned traumatic processes represented Belfast's second 'troubles': one with a lower case *t*, unlike its capitalised bigger brother: the headline-hogging paramilitary conflict. Visitors to a recent photographic exhibition of Belfast during the Troubles were met by images of a war zone, not only due to the presence of armed troops but because the streets they patrolled had been blitzed.[2] However, these scarred inner-city landscapes were not the result of a bombing campaign but the product of on-going urban redevelopment that disfigured vast swathes of the inner city in the 1970s. Between the 1960s and 1990s, deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment buffeted Belfast's working-class communities. Exploring experiences of and testimony about these processes not only enriches historical understanding of the city's social history, it ultimately enables a deeper understanding of ethno-sectarian cultural politics. For the researcher, whether they are an academic or an undergraduate, oral history often forces reassessment of the assumptions held at the outset of a project. The paper discusses that process, at various levels, by examining how the testimonies collected contribute to the reassessment of a number

[1] For further discussion of this, see Graham Smith, *Historical Insights: Focus on Research – Oral History* (Coventry, [2010]), 4.

[2] 'Photography during the Northern Irish Troubles', Ulster Museum exhibition (June – November 2017).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of historiographical conversations. The first of these involves discussion of oral history and memory in Northern Ireland. The second involves engagement with a broader historiographical argument about nostalgia and working-class social memory. The final one concerns the neighbouring historiographical theme of memory, deindustrialisation and urban change. The paper begins by outlining briefly the historiography on Belfast's social history. It then introduces the utility of oral history as a source in Belfast, outlines the history of Sailortown and explains the preparation that the students undertook before embarking on their oral history project. The final sections of the paper reveal some of the findings uncovered during the research and concludes with a reflection on the extent to which its findings challenged conventional historical knowledge about Belfast and the student's assumptions of that history, as well as their own place in it.

I Refreshing historical narratives of Belfast

In 2011, my colleague Professor Sean Connolly made an offer that could not be refused: to write about Belfast's history from the Great War to the late 1960s for the collection *Belfast 400: People, Place and History*.[3] The task was to craft a fresh historical narrative that did not ignore sectarian conflict whilst introducing other themes central to the city's social history. The task was fascinating, but it became apparent that there were significant lacunae in the historiography on issues such as leisure, work, consumption, housing and urban redevelopment in Belfast. This realisation stirred an ambition to write a more comprehensive account of Belfast, its people and their social history and to foster the enthusiasm for a new generation of history students to contribute to that process. The historical focus on political conflict has left the social history of Belfast sketchily understood. Moreover, with the island of Ireland mid-way through the 'Decade of Centenaries', marking the period from Home Rule through to Partition and its aftermath, renewed scrutiny of Irish political history threatens to re-marginalise less visible histories. It may appear hackneyed to apply to Belfast an oft-repeated E. P. Thompson exhortation, but it is time to rescue from the enormous condescension of posterity the poor carter, the shop steward at the docks, the 'obsolete' linen doffer and even the deluded followers of the 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign. A history of the families on the corporation housing waiting list in 1955 remains unwritten. What were the ambitions of the young woman who was the first of her family to study at Queen's University in the 1960s? What do historians know of the taxi driver who ferries them to and from the airport on the way to conferences to discuss Ireland's tumultuous political history: was

[3] Sean Connolly, *Belfast 400: People, Place and History* (Liverpool, 2012).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he once a young man, with a different future mapped out, when serving his time at the ill-fated DeLorean Motor Company manufacturing enterprise? Without answers to these questions, our historical understanding of Belfast is all the poorer.

Despite the gaps, the social history of modern Belfast is not entirely virgin terrain. Particularly noteworthy is A. C. Hepburn's scrutiny of the city's residential, occupational and sectarian demography in the first half of the twentieth century.[4] His work was innovative thematically but perhaps less so in terms of its source base. Employing oral history would have enriched his analysis, although in 1970s and 1980s Belfast inquisitive outsiders, armed with tape recorders, placed themselves in enough danger to give palpitations to any modern university ethics committee. Despite this, in the same period, sociologists Ronnie Munck and Bill Rolston did employ oral history to explore Belfast.[5] The testimony focused on the political issues of the 1930s, such as the outdoor relief protests of 1932, sectarianism and political activism. Their interests aligned with those of a number of historians who have studied aspects of the city's labour history in the early twentieth century; the most recent output being C. J. V. Loughlin's study of interwar Belfast working-class labour politics.[6] Brian Barton charted a range of social historical themes in a short discussion of the socio-economic landscape of 1930s Belfast, which appears in his study of Belfast during the Second World War.[7] A limited number of historians have tackled Belfast's social history beyond 1945. They include Marianne Elliott's major history of Ulster Catholics. Her assessment of the cultural politics of the minority is enriched by her introduction, recalling her childhood on a religiously mixed Belfast estate. Elliott deals with significant social change, such as the arrival of the welfare state and changing employment patterns: themes she returned to in a recent memoir of the White City housing estate.[8] Edited collections that include treatment of Belfast's social history offer a more tentative analysis once their chronology heads beyond 1945 and into historical periods that are relatively un-harvested.[9]

[4] A. C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast 1850–1950* (Belfast, 1996).

[5] Ronnie Munck and Bill Rolston, *Belfast in the Thirties: An Oral History* (Belfast, 1987).

[6] John Gray, *City in Revolt: James Connolly and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907* (Belfast, 1985); John Lynch, *A Tale of Three Cities: Comparative Studies in Working-Class Life* (Basingstoke, 1998); C. J. V. Loughlin, *Labour and the Politics of Disloyalty in Belfast, 1921–39 – the Moral Economy of Loyalty* (Basingstoke, 2017).

[7] Brian Barton, *The Blitz: Belfast in the War Years* (Belfast, 1990).

[8] Marianne Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster* (2000); Marianne Elliott, *Hearthlands: A Memoir of the White City Housing Estate in Belfast* (Belfast, 2017).

[9] Frederick W. Boal and Steven A. Royle, *Enduring City: Belfast in the Twentieth Century* (Belfast, 2006); W. A. Maguire, *Belfast: A History* (Lancaster, 2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

For example, one of the few essays in an authoritative recent edited collection that does go beyond 1945 – R. J. Morris's survey essay on urban Ulster since 1600 – could not draw upon any recent historical research and relied on work by geographers, planners and older research by historians that is due for reassessment.[10]

Imaginative literature can also inform our historical research on important social issues in the modern city, as is demonstrated by several contributors to Michael Pierse's recent edited study of Irish working-class writing.[11] One of the writers featured therein, John Campbell, can certainly enrich our understanding of Belfast working-class history. Novels such as Campbell's *The Disinherited* and others, such as David Park's *The Big Snow*, demonstrate how historical fiction opens doors to aspects of the past that historians have neglected.[12] In novels set in the 1950s and 1960s, Park offer insights on corruption in corporation housing allocation and Campbell explores labour and community at the docks. Indeed, Campbell's work was an important preparatory source for the undergraduate students who, in 2013, set out to undertake their oral history project with members of Belfast's former dockside community.

Oral history is the method that offers the richest vein of evidence through which to open up Belfast's post-war social history and I have employed it since my arrival in Belfast in 1999. The first interviews in the city explored the theme of credit and debt in working-class communities and the experience was a steep learning curve.[13] Interviews provided much to digest, both in terms of project objectives and in the trials that lay ahead in attempting to understand the city. One early encounter was with ninety-nine-year-old Mrs Rafferty, whose testimony revealed that the origins of one of Belfast's best-known money-lending businesses lay with a compensation claim from a woman shot in the mouth by a ricocheting British army bullet in the early 1920s. Mrs Rafferty shared her belief that, despite being an Ardoyne resident for over sixty years, neighbours viewed her as an 'import': she left her original home, in the North Queen Street area, in 1941 following bombing by the Luftwaffe. The street's proximity to the docks made it a target.[14] Mrs Rafferty's testimony engendered a pause for thought. If

[10] R. J. Morris, 'Urban Ulster since 1600', in Liam Kennedy and Philip Ollerenshaw, *Ulster since 1600: Politics, Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2013), 121–39.

[11] *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, ed. Michael Pierse (Cambridge, 2017).

[12] David Park, *The Big Snow* (2002); John Campbell, *The Disinherited* (Belfast, 2006).

[13] See Sean O'Connell, *Credit, Class and Community: Working-Class Debt in the UK since 1880* (Oxford, 2009).

[14] Interview with Mrs Rafferty (born 1904). Conducted by Sean O'Connell, 10 Oct. 2002. Where full names are used for interviewees, this is their real name. Pseudonyms are employed for interviewees that are still living. There is one exception, John Campbell, who is happy for his identity to be revealed.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

she was an 'import' after six decades, how would inhabitants of Belfast's working-class districts view an interloping oral historian? Moreover, what did her comments reveal about the complex nature of communal identify in Belfast? They certainly indicated that there were issues to consider other than the commonly understood fissures caused by ethno-sectarian identity.

A further instructive interviewee was the ex-docker Terry O'Neill, a working-class autodidact who would have performed brilliantly at university if born in the 1980s rather than the 1930s. He asked to borrow a copy of my first book, a social history of the car, and furnished me with a collection of historical short stories he had published in a local magazine.[15] Terry's advice, when returning the car monograph, was that it was interesting but that I needed to include more jokes. His own narrative was packed full of them, usually to make an important point. Thus, on his childhood neighbour, the future playwright Martin Lynch, he observed 'Martin, there was seventeen of them – two sets of twins – and their father, the only time he worked was when he took his trousers off at night.'[16] Terry's anecdotal style served as a reminder to study form and convention in the act of communication that is each oral history narration. In his darkly humorous pithy sentence, Terry drew the listener's attention to the world of dockside under-employment, overcrowded homes and working-class Catholic sexual relations in mid-twentieth-century Belfast.

II Sailortown, deindustrialisation, urban redevelopment and working-class memory

These are just two of the individuals whose testimony prompted a desire to collect further oral histories of working-class Belfast. Both their testimonies drew attention to the dockland district of the city. Studying this area, known as Sailortown, provides a vehicle through which to address Belfast's experience of deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment. These two phenomena accompanied one another in a package of turbulent social change in this neighbourhood, as they did in many inner-city districts. Exploring Sailortown facilitates the deployment of questions and themes probed in histories of urban change in other working-class communities. Social historians have examined oral histories and autobiographies to debate the impact of these traumatic experiences on working-class social memory. Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson coined the term 'urban pastoral' to identify a motif that

[15] Sean O'Connell, *The Motor Car in British Society, Class, Gender and Motoring 1896–1939* (Manchester, 1998); Terry O'Neill, *Terry O'Neill's Belfast* (Belfast, 1999).

[16] Interview with Terry O'Neill (born 1930). Conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 Apr. 2001.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

they felt was a strong feature of working-class communal memory. Its hallmark was an elegiac tone that surfaced in testimony in which the 'slum' represented 'the symbolic space of the world we have lost'.[17] Joanna Bourke, Chris Waters and Ben Jones made further contributions to this discussion, in their respective analyses of various forms of working-class autobiographical memory in the decades following the 'slum clearances' of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Bourke identifies the strong influence of 'retrospective reconstruction' of the traditional working-class community. Working-class oral histories and autobiographies, she maintains, employ a romantic use of the phrase working-class community in recalling social relations 'through a golden haze'. This ensures that prominence is given to 'doors that are always open', whilst 'the neighbour who was never seen is neglected in favour of the neighbour who always shared'.[18] Waters addressed the process of urban redevelopment more directly in describing the strong nostalgia for a world of mills, cobbled streets and community spirit expunged by urban redevelopment. He detected evidence of melancholic reminiscence in the popularity of L. S. Lowry's paintings of industrial Lancashire and in the working-class autobiographical writing produced by groups such as Brighton's QueenSpark publications. Waters argues that a desire emerged to remember a particular form of working-class past: one centred on place and a landscape of memory. In this respect, there was an intensification of emotion towards the form of built environment that the tower block and council housing estates replaced.[19] However, more recently Jones questioned the ubiquity of nostalgia in working-class memory, describing a variety of storytelling traditions that 'defy simple categorization'. He observes many examples of less than neighbourly relations in the autobiographical sources explored by Bourke, a factor that undermines her central premise. Jones makes parallel observations about Waters's reading of the QueenSpark material. As well as being alert to the role of nostalgia in working-class testimonies, Jones urges that historians deploying these sources pay great attention to factors such as the times and locations from which memories emerge, and to narrators' gender, age and life trajectory.[20]

[17] *The Myths We Live By*, ed. Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (1990), 9.

[18] Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1890–1960: Class, Gender and Ethnicity* (1994).

[19] Chris Waters, 'Representations of Everyday Life: L. S. Lowry and the Landscape of Memory in Post-War Britain', *Representations*, 65 (1999), 121–50; C. Waters, 'Autobiography, Nostalgia and the Changing Practices of Working-Class Self-Hood', in *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture*, ed. G. K. Behlmer *et al.* (Stanford, 2000), 178–95.

[20] Ben Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Post-War England', *Cultural and Social History*, 7 (2010),

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Employing similar research questions in Belfast enables the exploration of the dynamics of working-class social memory in a city with the added complication of ethno-sectarian division and produces some fascinating results. Sailortown, like other Belfast districts such as the Shankill Road, experienced 'slum clearance' in similar mode to UK cities such as Bradford where planners championed a banal urban modernism, featuring soulless urban clearways.[21] Residents of the Shankill reflected subsequently on piecemeal dismemberment, as their homes made way for the Belfast urban motorway during the 1970s and 1980s.[22] Due to redevelopment in the 1980s, the population of the Shankill fell from 76,000 to 27,000.[23] Belfast also experienced poorly regarded new housing developments, such as Divis flats on the Falls Road and the Weetabix flats on the Shankill Road. For Sailortown, however, urban redevelopment was experienced more fundamentally with almost every home in the area demolished as a new urban motorway was driven straight through the tightly packed district. This coincided with significant passages of deindustrialisation. As early as 1952, the closure of the York Street Mill struck a blow to many families. Its closure represented the loss of 15 per cent of all textile jobs in Northern Ireland. The greatest surge of deindustrialisation came between the 1970s and 1990s when Belfast lost 40,000 manufacturing jobs.[24] At the docks, the introduction of containerisation decimated employment in what had been a labour-intensive industry. By 2006, a workforce of just 16 crane and forklift truck drivers had replaced over 2,000 dockers.[25] The experience replicated that in other Sailortowns across the UK. Technology-intensive new ports developed in deep-water locations away from city centres in a process that 'proved brutally complementary to the movement for city-centre clearance'. Urban motorways disfigured districts now classified as slums and created buffer zones between cities and their waterfronts.[26]

By the time a class of Queen's history students arrived there in 2013, Sailortown was a shadow of its former self. Only four terraced houses and a handful of pubs stood as a reminder of a once vibrant community. The district developed during the nineteenth century as Belfast emerged

335–74; Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth-Century England: Community, Identity and Social Memory* (Manchester, 2012).

[21] Simon Gunn, 'The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945–1970', *Urban History*, 49 (2010), 849–69.

[22] Ron Weiner, *The Rape and Plunder of the Shankill: People and Planning* (Belfast, 1976).

[23] Colin Coulter, *Contemporary Northern Irish Society: An Introduction* (1999), 88.

[24] *Ibid.*, 70.

[25] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8024702.stm.

[26] Graeme Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront: Sailortown* (Basingstoke, 2016).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as a thriving commercial and manufacturing hub. As the docks and maritime commerce became more economically significant, terraced housing was erected for workers who serviced the area's industries. The district developed a reputation for political radicalism. The bitterly fought Dockers and Carters strike of 1907, led by James Larkin, was one of a relatively small number of episodes in the city's history where working-class solidarity trumped ethno-sectarian divisions.[27] This strike features heavily in the social memory of Sailortown. The influence of its trade union politics also surfaced in elections in the Dock Ward via the regular return of left-leaning candidates, rather than those representing the standard unionist or nationalist politicians elected routinely elsewhere in the city.[28] It was at other times, however, the cockpit of ethno-sectarian violence. There was significant bloodshed in Sailortown during 1920–2 and 1935.[29] At the outset of the Troubles in 1969, the area's labour history traditions bore fruit, in the form of citizens' patrols designed to stop bloody incursions from one community into another in the dockside's streets.[30] The area was at high risk of descending into violence because it was a relatively 'mixed' area by Belfast standards. In 1933, for example, the Dock Ward had a Roman Catholic population of 43 per cent. The figure for the city was only 24 per cent, the greatest proportion living in segregated districts such as the Falls Road, Short Strand and the Markets. However, demographic analysis of Sailortown residential patterns reveals micro-segregation, with Roman Catholics and Protestants (of various denominations) clustering at opposite ends of the same streets.[31] Clearly, there was the potential for the Queen's students to capture intriguing testimony from ex-residents of the area about everyday life in those streets and to test some of the historiographical questions about working-class social memory.

In advance of the interviews, students examined the many forms in which Sailortown is commemorated. Among the most visible are murals that have appeared in its remaining streets, particularly on Pilot Street where the Dockers Club is located. This street art celebrates the achievements of the labour movement and its anti-sectarian principles. This theme has been pursued most recently by SHIP (Shared History Interpretive Project), founded in 2006 to research and commemorate the history of Belfast's dockers. A few hundred yards past Pilot Street, a series of haunting and evocative over-sized family photographs of former residents sit on the concrete supports holding up the elevated

[27] Lynch, *A Tale of Three Cities*, 35.
[28] Loughlin, *Labour and the Politics of Disloyalty*, 79.
[29] Hepburn, *A Past Apart*.
[30] Interview with Sean H (born 1942). Interviewed 25 Mar. 2013 by Ryan Mallon.
[31] Hepburn, *A Past Apart*, 48–54, 176–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

section of the M3 motorway. The sentiment they project echoes the title of the edited collection *Once There Was a Community Here*, by the ex-docker turned poet/novelist John Campbell. Local history groups and writers' groups, such as North Belfast History Workshop or the Tin Bath Writers Co-op, have added to the extensive collection of stories about the Belfast waterfront.[32] This passage from a local history publication gives a flavour of their sentiment:

> I thought about all the many houses of Sailortown, and felt sad at the slow destruction of a neighbourhood and community. A community of good people, mostly quiet and peaceful, patiently living out their existence never asking for more than three score and ten, always making the best of what life threw at them. Households where the doors were never closed, and one was always made welcome. Welcome to share in all the little things that meant so much – the births, the deaths, the childhood days, the school years, and the times of tears and laughter, the times of departures and homecomings.[33]

The Sailortown Historical and Cultural Society and Sailortown Regeneration group campaigned to commemorate the area's past and to rebuild a community. These efforts were given added impetus, in 2002, by the Roman Catholic church's decision to close St Joseph's chapel. The church had remained open despite dispersal of its parishioners across Belfast. Suspicious that the site's value to the property developers constructing commercial premises and expensive apartments in the gentrifying dockland had motivated the Catholic hierarchy's decision, ex-residents occupied the chapel and began a campaign to save it.

This was the background faced by the thirty-four undergraduate students on the module. They worked in pairs to record seventeen oral history interviews. In preparation, students were encouraged to read work by a range of oral historians. As well as classic texts dealing with all aspects of the interview, the reading list included a number of articles on issues such as interviewing across generations, interviewing as an insider/outsider, as well as the ethics of oral history research.[34] All

[32] Tin Bath Writers Co-op/Sailortown Cultural and Historical Society, *Tin Baths and Mangles* (Belfast, 2006); Denis Smyth, *Sailortown: The Story of a Dockside Community* (Belfast, n.d.).

[33] *Ibid.*, 2.

[34] For those considering a similar module, reading might include Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 2017); Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Lanham, 2015); Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Padstow, 2010); S. Chandler, 'Oral History across Generations: Age, Generational Identity and Oral Testimony', *Oral History*, 33 (2005) 48–56; T. E. K'Myer and A. Glenn Crothers, '"If I See Some of This in Writing I Am Going to Shoot You": Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian', *Oral History Review*, 34 (2007), 71–93; *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (2016); Erin Jessee, 'Managing Danger in Oral History Fieldwork', *Oral History Review*, 44 (2017), 322–47.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

these themes were discussed in tutorials in the weeks running up to the fieldwork taking place. Students listened to and discussed existing oral interviews, read transcripts and worked to prepare interview schedules. The agreed format for the interviews focused on the broad themes of family, work and community and the impact of social change on Sailortown. In the context of interviewing in Northern Ireland, a particularly insightful article is Anna Bryson's 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing', which used oral history to examine memory and identity in the mid-Ulster town Maghera. The article discusses Bryson's experience, as a young Catholic female whose family are from the town, of employing oral history to probe the history of leisure in Maghera between 1945 and 1969. Bryson reached a number of conclusions. The first of these was that memories of Catholic/Protestant social relations prior to 1969 were, inevitably, filtered through the prism of the Troubles and she identified 'two distinct communal narratives, each carefully reinforced with reference to both the distant and recent past'. Most striking in terms of interviews with Protestants was their depiction of the period between 1945 and 1969 as a 'golden age' of community relations, ended only by the onset of the Troubles. In contrast, many Maghera Catholics made clear statements about the discrimination their community experienced. They identified the Second World War as the only phase in which there was a recognisable reduction of communal tension.[35]

How did these findings compare with the Sailortown interviews? An initial point to make is that of the seventeen Sailortown interviewees, only two were with Protestant narrators. A number of factors explain this. It became apparent that despite the area's reputation as a mixed community, the long passage of communal strife in the decades since the dispersal of Sailortown residents had diminished cross-community friendships and associations. Asked to recommend potential Protestant research participants, Catholic interviewees either provided no suggestion or identified John Campbell, who had already agreed to take part. It is also likely that the high-profile campaign by the Sailortown Cultural and Historical Society to save St Joseph's chapel gave a 'green' tinge to the social memory of Sailortown. In hindsight, approaches to Protestant community groups and churches using a different term for the area may have been more productive. Protestant residents of Sailortown tended to cluster close to the main arterial road, York Street, while Catholics lived at the dockside end of the area's streets. Using York Street in the call for participants may have been more productive with the former group. The twelve-week module

[35] Anna Bryson, '"Whatever You Say, Say Nothing": Researching Memory and Identity in Mid-Ulster, 1945–1969', *Oral History*, 45 (2007), 51.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

timetable and looming assessment deadlines meant it was not possible to rectify this issue during the project.

As might have been anticipated, based on Bryson's work, the two Protestant interviewees did not make any unprompted references to sectarianism or discrimination. What was more surprising, however, was that the Catholic interviewees offered testimony that included strong elements of a 'golden age' discourse. A common theme was of cross-community socialising in the dockside bars. John Clancy described the reaction from a group of Catholic drinkers when one of their co-religionists passed sectarian comment on a Protestant who entered a Sailortown pub:

> But one thing I do remember I happened to be down Liam McMahon's one night and I think it was Stanley…[a] Protestant guy. And some guy happened to say something of a sectarian nature to him. And three of the dockers got your man and literally – and I mean literally head first – threw him into Garmoyle Street to the middle of the road. Told him if he ever came back again they would kick him up and down, and that is a fact. Now that is the way I could describe Sailortown, in the small instance that happened in that bar. We had no time for that sort of craic.

Clancy also deployed a well-honed joke to illustrate his belief that the common experience of economic hardship could trump ethno-sectarian division: 'we had a lot in common; it was called poverty, y'know? We were that poor we used to get parcels from the third world and after a while you get fed up of eating bananas.'[36] Female narrators also tendered positive testimony on facets of community relations. Mary H recollected the delight that Catholic children shared with Protestant neighbours when an Orange Lodge's band ceremonially collected the Lodge Master, a Sailortown resident, on the way to a parade. The ritual included benefits for the local children:

> And that was a great day because there was – there was – everybody got buns and everybody got cakes and there was lemonade and there was – I'm sure there was more Catholic children outside the door than there was Protestant ones, ya know what I mean? That sorta thing.[37]

In analysing the testimony, it is necessary to remain alert to the particular circumstances of the interviews. There was a significant generational gap between interviewers and narrators. The former were often still in their teens and the latter mostly beyond retirement age. Unconscious divergence in understanding and interpretation within intergenerational interviews can shape the content of interviews and their subsequent interpretation.[38] In some cases, interviewers and

[36] Interview with John Clancy (born 1943). Interviewed by Tiarnán Ó Muilleoir, 12 Mar. 2013.
[37] Interview with Mary H (born 1941). Interviewed by Francesca Owens, 25 Mar. 2013.
[38] Chandler, 'Oral History across Generations'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

narrators came from different religious backgrounds. Did this mean that some narrators held back from venting about sectarianism? If they did, was this a conscious or unconscious process? To this mixture of conjecture and analysis, we must add the requirement to explore the elements of collective and individual memory that engendered each testimony. Oral historians have debated the extent to which memory is the product of the individual and personal recollection or whether it is processed through 'cultural scripts'.[39] Others have urged the consideration of 'transactive memory', in particular the pooling of memory by individuals remembering within a group context.[40] This is pertinent to this research because two students arrived to find themselves faced with more than one interviewee. Moreover, many interviewees were members of community groups whose rationale was to commemorate Sailortown. A further significant factor, in a number of ways, was gender. For example, Kathleen M could recall no crime taking place in Sailortown. This may have been a result of her gendered experience, whereby exclusion from the docks or dockside pubs left her ignorant of theft from cargo ships or of prostitution. Alternatively, she may have been adhering to a working-class female discourse of respectability, as discussed by historian Judy Giles among others.[41] Dockside prostitution is a topic exposed brutally in John Campbell's two Sailortown novels, *Corner Kingdom* and *The Disinherited*, but he also avoided discussion of the subject when asked about it in interview. The fictionalised docks created in his novels allowed him greater freedom to break from the conventions of respectability, but the fact that his interviewer was a young female also shaped the boundaries of his testimony.[42]

Campbell also writes poems and when another interviewee John Clancy recited one of them, it was a revealing moment. The recording captured a pregnant silence after he appeared ready to commence, the significance of which emerges only when comparing John's recitation with the printed poem. He had chosen Campbell's poem 'Sailortown' to illustrate a vision of a solidly communal district. The pause came as he silently scanned and decided to omit the first two stanzas:

[39] Anna Green, 'Individual Memory and "Collective Memory": Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', *Oral History*, 32 (2004), 35–44.

[40] Graham Smith, 'Beyond Individual/Collective Memory: Women's Transactive Memories of Food, Family and Conflict', *Oral History*, 35 (2007), 75–90.

[41] Interview with Kathy M (born 1933). Interviewed by Anne Donnelly, 26 Mar. 2013; Judy Giles, '"Playing Hard to Get": Working-Class Women, Sexuality and Respectability in Britain, 1918–1940', *Women's History Review*, 1 (1992), 239–55.

[42] Interview with John Campbell (born 1936). Interviewed by Rachel Sloan, 18 Mar. 2013; John Campbell, *Corner Kingdom* (Belfast, 1999); Campbell, *The Disinherited*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In Sailorstown was some good men
and many a punch-up we had then,
but we'd all finish friends again,
in Sailorstown.

In Sailorstown the drink was good
and many men used it for food.
It put them in the fighting mood,
in Sailorstown.[43]

While this example might be interpreted as evidence supporting Bourke's or Waters's position on the power of working-class nostalgic memory and retrospective reconstruction, it is also a reminder to read and listen closely to the language of each narrator. Doing so demonstrates the complex and potentially contradictory memory that surfaces in the majority of narratives. In terms of the earlier observation about the 'golden age' tinge to the accounts by Sailortown's Catholics, most of these interviews contained a 'but', at which point more divisive memories seeped into the testimony. The most commonly remembered annual event in this regard was the 'Twelfth', the highpoint of the Orange Order's marching season and a celebration of Protestant ascendency. Mary H recalled a feeling of isolation during the 'mad month' of July, in which 'even your [Protestant] friends, even ones you'da said was your friends, they didn't really wanna know'.[44] Close attention to the language deployed in the testimony provided insight into the limits of the inclusivity and shared identity that were a hallmark of the more positive elements of testimony. Mary H described the Catholic side of Sailortown as 'our way, at our end'. It is also significant that this detail came in what was her second interview, one where the student arrived to find that Mary, and three other women, had joined the intended interviewee. In the same interview, the group described a Protestant matriarch from their youth; 'Big' Maisy Morton or 'Ulster Mouth', they recollected, 'knew what direction you were [from]'. This offered an indication of an ethno-sectarian undercurrent in post-war Sailortown that was not evident initially in the testimonies.[45]

Shifting our focus from the erasure of community to the experience of deindustrialisation again engenders complex testimony. In part, this is because of the nature of the port economy. In Sailortown, the experience

[43] John Campbell, 'Sailortown', in *The Rose and the Blade: New and Selected Poems* (Belfast, 1997). Note Sailorstown/Sailortown are both used with some claiming that Protestants are more likely to use the former.

[44] Interview with Mary H.

[45] Interview with Mary H, Emily H, Marie S, Briege H, and Annie G. Interviewed by Lindsay Johnston, 27 Mar. 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of male work, particularly that of the docker, has been commemorated in murals and via the organisation SHIP. The significant female experience of work, and deindustrialisation, in the local textile and tobacco factories went largely unremarked upon in interviews. Historical analysis of waterfront masculinity in interwar Liverpool describes how the dockers' inability to achieve breadwinner status, due to the casual labour system that pitted working-class men in direct competition for work with neighbours and relatives, created a particular form of workplace culture. This culture strove to retrieve masculine self-esteem in a number of ways. It embraced anti-authoritarianism, which included pilfering, and an emphasis on physicality and the demanding nature of the work. A celebration of rugged masculinity spilled over into the male sociability and camaraderie that was a feature of dockland pubs.[46] The oral history interviews from Sailortown, plus local history accounts and the novels of John Campbell, all reveal that this form of culture had a strong hold in the Belfast docklands. The degrading and dehumanising aspects of work were offset by notions of masculinity that highlighted the dangerous and challenging labour process. There were also post-work leisure practices that served to build masculine self-esteem. Retired docker Tommy M remembered the casual system:

> The first horn was at five to eight and dockers used to rush to get into the Dockers Corner before five to eight and…it was bedlam. And then, on the final horn, eight o'clock horn, the union representatives and the employers would have been there and would have said, 'Go ahead' and 'Pick up dockers.' And it was bedlam. Especially if there was no work; if there were two or three jobs, they'd be pushing and shoving to get to the front, and it was degrading. It was degrading. And humiliating if you didn't get a job.[47]

As in Liverpool, one element of compensation arose in the numerous pubs of Sailortown that were home to the 'very heavy drinking people' depicted in the novels of John Campbell. Tommy M recognised how masculine identity and communal self-respect was chiselled out of some unlikely sources within the workplace also:

> The camaraderie amongst the dockers was second to none…the camaraderie at the dock was visible. Yes they'd have fought, yes they'd have argued, yes they'd have been nasty, with a capital N, but there was a hyper-dependence upon recognising people who were struggling, and the comedy, and the quick wit comment was so illuminating, it was unbelievable…I can remember some of the comments and the nicknames, and whatever, and you needed to have a skin as thick as a cow, ten cows (laughs) to survive.[48]

[46] Pat Ayers, 'The Making of Men: Masculinities in Interwar Liverpool', in *Working out Gender: Perspectives from Labour History*, ed. Margaret Walsh (Aldershot, 1999), 66–83.
[47] Interview with Tommy M. Interviewed by Hannah McDade, 22 Mar. 2013.
[48] *Ibid.*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

What Tommy's interview did not reveal is that such workplace camaraderie was possible due to a process of ethno-sectarian containment. Whilst some Catholic and Protestant males rubbed shoulders in the shared space of the dockland bars, they did not enter into potentially explosive competition with each other in the dockers' schooling pens. In 1912, a split in the workforce spawned two unions on the Belfast waterfront. Protestants joined the London-based National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL), Catholics favoured the the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITWGU). This was also a division between those who identified as British or Irish and, as such, it was appropriate that the NUDL-affiliated dockers were responsible for cargo heading from and to Britain via the cross-channel docks. Meanwhile, the ITGWU dockers dealt with shipping from further afield, in the deep-sea docks.[49] Similar divisions in Belfast trade unions were commonplace but the casualised nature of work at the docks and the demographic profile of Sailortown made such an arrangement all the more important.[50] This pragmatic management of ethno-sectarian differences prevented outbreaks of violence in the waterfront workplace and helps explains the prevalence of a 'golden age' discourse that featured in parts of the testimony. In this manner, the dockside unions created an element of stability in Belfast's most mixed working-class streets in the decades before the Troubles.

III Conclusion

How do these findings contribute to our initial questions about the nature of working-class nostalgia, oral history and memory in Northern Ireland and the potential of oral history to both reinvigorate the social history of post-war Belfast and challenge students to become active learners? In respect of nostalgic memory, the testimony collected from ex-Sailortown residents exhibited an element of what scholars of deindustrialisation dub 'double erasure'. This is a twin process in which communities lose the workplace around which the local economy revolves as well as the homes in which familial identities are embedded.[51] Moreover, regeneration in Sailortown rubbed salt into the psychological wounds of its former residents. This process included the creation of new commercial premises and waterfront apartments, but an additional factor was the construction of Titanic Belfast. The

[49] Lynch, *A Tale of Three Cities*, 35. For a discussion of the issue of ethno-sectarian relations in the Belfast labour movement, see Loughlin, *Labour and the Politics of Disloyalty*.

[50] Loughlin, *Labour and the Politics of Disloyalty*, 122

[51] *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*, ed. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver, 2017), 6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

impressive hulk of this award-winning visitor centre looms over Sailortown from the opposite side of the River Lagan. Many ex-Sailortown residents feel excluded from the heritage celebrated in Titanic Belfast. Tommy M memorably captured this point in his interview when describing a Belfast wall mural he had scrutinised:

> it was of the Titanic going out of Belfast, fantastic colours, dynamic grasp of the moment. But there's something in the mural that everybody had ignored in talking about Titanic and remembering it. It shows a truck. A truck of two metal wheels, long shafts, like a barrow, and the heave would have been twelve bags on the ship. [It] shows you on the mural the dockers landing the bags…and that's what's been missing. The Titanic has ignored docks. The Titanic festival, the Titanic money, the Titanic image, the movement called 'The Titanic' has not recognised the docks.[52]

We could dismiss this and testimony collected about Sailortown as the product of a loosely defined nostalgic impulse that has limited historical merit. To do so, would be a blunder on two counts. First, it would underplay the complex dynamics behind the deployment of nostalgic narrative. Second, it would fail to account for other forms of sentiment that appeared in these testimonies. The exploration of nostalgic memory enables historians to comprehend how individuals endow past experience with meaning and use historical memory as a starting point for social commentary. It can be 'understood as a critique of dominant stigmatising representations' of working-class neighbourhoods or communities.[53] In the case of Tommy H's comment on Titanic Belfast, his autobiographical memory offered a powerful critique of the industrial heritage/gentrification agendas. The troubles with a lower case t were experienced by Catholics and Protestants alike in the Belfast docklands. John Campbell's testimony on the loss of dockland community and work is strikingly similar to that of Tommy H. As such, the conflicted aspect of the Sailortown memories were not between essentialised communal groups divided by irreconcilable and ethno-sectarian cultural scripts. As a reading of Ben Jones's work on working-class memory suggests, internal conflict was intrinsic to the memory and lives of the individuals encountered by the students. Nostalgia did feature as a trope but it sat alongside other forms of narrative motif making it impossible to apply simple categorisation to the dominant form of memory featuring in transcripts. The interviewees were forced to reflect on the impact of deindustrialisation, the destruction of their former homes and ethno-sectarian divisions. Amidst this complex history and buffeted by the emotions it stirred, John Clancy could both edit a poem to remove the stanzas that disrupted the nostalgic tone he chose to offer at the outset of his interview and, half an hour later, say this:

[52] Interview with Tommy M.
[53] Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia', 358.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> They were a very heavy drinking people, you know, seamen and dockers…Some very sad cases there. It wasn't the first time that – even as a boy – now, it didn't happen in my home – but sometimes you were allowed to observe – especially with some of the dockers maybe when they got paid on a Thursday or Friday night and went…into a bar. You seen the kids coming up to get money from their daddies, so as they could buy maybe a couple of fish suppers and things like that. There were some sad times like that, y'know?

This is not to be dismissed as the confused and contradictory recall of an elderly man. The testimony that Clancy offered represented his own interaction with larger historical narratives, including the causes of the Troubles, the erasure of workplace and community, as well as the legacies of these traumatic events. In the process, elements of nostalgia rubbed shoulders with comic anecdotes and frank commentary on some of the grimmer realities of post-war life in a working-class community. Jones was correct to urge the consideration of time and place, age, gender and life trajectory in each act of narration. In this case-study, the issue of ethno-sectarian identity was a further variable. In terms of time and place, Sailortown provided testimony that differed in key ways from that collected by Bryson in mid-Ulster. Although the Troubles ravaged Belfast and inflamed sectarianism, common experiences of labour history and the shared trauma of the double erasure of community and workplace ensured that interviews with Sailortown produce elements of a golden age discourse from Catholic, as well as Protestant, ex-residents.

In taking on this complex and difficult history, the students engaged on the module produced testimony that contributes importantly to two historical debates. They created the research material through which to add a case-study to historiographical discussions around nostalgia and working-class memory, one that very much supports Jones's arguments about the complexity of that memory. Moreover, the research also provides a new perspective on Belfast's post-war history, one that demonstrates the value of examining the troubles with a lower case t as well as those with a capital T. One question remains, however, and that is what did the students learn from the experience of undertaking oral history interviews? One answer is that it fired historical enthusiasm among many students: four of the thirty-four are now undertaking Ph.D.s, with two working on oral histories of Belfast. One group of students worked subsequently with BBC Radio Ulster to produce a radio documentary that was inspired by the oral history testimony: pitching documentary ideas to the BBC represents the group-work presentation element of the module.[54] More fundamentally, the module produced impressive assignments by causing the students to reflect more deeply on

[54] This documentary was broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio 5 Live. It can be accessed on IPlayer: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05qg06b#play.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their work than is the case with a regular history module; a factor recognised by the external examiner who oversaw this version of the module and those in subsequent years.

This paper will terminate with an illustration of the sophisticated reflection that is encouraged by the nature of the oral history interaction. The example deployed here focuses on a final variable in the interviewing process, one discussed above: the identity of the student carrying out each interview. The students worked in pairs, with one asking the questions and the other taking responsibility for the technical elements of the recording. The pair then shared the task of transcribing their interview before submitting individual critical commentaries on the experience. Extracts from the work of two students reveal a number of further issues around teaching difficult history in this way. The extracts are from Anthony (from a Catholic/Nationalist background) and Duncan (from a Protestant/Unionist background) and their reflections on their interview with Pat (a retired docker in his seventies). Duncan wrote:

> Anthony went on to the next topic, something which he personally has a great interest in, that of sporting tradition. There was an instant bond between the two; this became noticeable throughout the rest of the interview. The two were able to exchange knowledge of Gaelic Football. I noticed a change of atmosphere not only from Pat, but also from Anthony. At one stage, Pat got that excited he jumped from his seat to get a book about his Gaelic team forgetting he was wired to a microphone, though with quick movement we were able to carry the connections with him and save the recording. This strong bond, the two had struck, was a factor throughout the rest of the interview. Although this had positive aspects, such as an in depth analysis of something which obviously meant so much to Pat, it did have negative aspects also in my opinion. This section of the interview seemed to go on for an extremely long time, with the emphasis moving away from Sailortown…As someone who was there to listen in, I could not intervene to recover what I thought was a failing interview, due to it moving fast from its original purpose, the story of Sailortown. Though on hindsight, and from transcriptions, it is clear that the interviewer did move on, and it was perhaps my initial lack of knowledge on the subject, and urge to hear about Sailortown that made it feel so long. This is without doubt a negative aspect of carrying out the interview process in pairs…When the interview was complete and we were engaged in casual small talk with Pat, he showed us a picture of himself and others and stated 'This was taken when we had burned Long Kesh.' When I asked him to repeat, his reply was that he had served a ten-year jail term for blowing up a shop in the Troubles. Personally, I found this very hard to take in as my family's personal experiences during the Troubles came flooding back. The Troubles were obviously something which Pat could relate to in a major way having served time for a terrorist offence. The ten-year jail term also led us to question the dates he had given us for his time in the docks. This was a significant chapter of Pat's life which the interview had not picked up on. Though I do feel he would have been reluctant to tell us about it.[55]

Anthony wrote:

> The momentum of the conversation itself also proved a factor in shaping the course of the interview.

[55] Critical commentary by Duncan (pseudonym), Mar. 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> As it was centred very much on Pat's own personal experiences, the discussion inevitably turned to his love for GAA [Gaelic Athletic Association] and, in particular, his lifelong team Patrick Pearse's. This common sporting ground between interviewer and interviewee was important in the indulgence of 'football talk' that perhaps bogged down the mid-point of the conversation but nonetheless offered a valuable insight into Pat's personal interests and the importance of sport in local life…The relaxed, anecdotal style of narrative employed by Pat, while discussing the main themes, offered an incisive yet somewhat piecemeal understanding of his own life and that of the broader community. Of course, while there is some form of chronological sequencing explained throughout the interview, Pat relied heavily on anecdotes, often deliberately ('there's another cracking story'), which greatly fluctuated any viable timeframe that could have been attached to these ad-hoc tales. However, this style of narrative is not necessarily a limitation: rather, as Ashplant points out, 'transpositions in time and place…are all now seen as potentially revealing'.[56] The shifts and discrepancies in Pat's memory are of worth to understanding the particular motivation behind what he has said, and most potently, what he has not. This is of particular relevance when we examine the end of Pat's tenure in Sailortown. While the 71 year-old's memory in many instances is amazingly sharp (particularly in his rather moving account of the death of his younger brother Gerard, when Pat was only a toddler), other later aspects of his life remain hazy or, to the outsider at least, difficult to clarify. When asked about the opposition to the road works that ultimately saw the demise of Sailortown, Pat is hesitant and rather ill-informed of the various movements established at the time to prevent such construction. The details of when he left Sailortown to live in the New Lodge also failed to be expanded upon…The reason for these discrepancies were answered soon after the tape had stopped running; when displaying a china plate adorned with an image of himself, his elder brother Hugh and a priest, he remarked, entirely at ease, that the photo was taken while they were in Long Kesh, for 'shoplifting' as he coyly described it. While expressed so freely off the record, any mention of the Troubles during the interview itself was confined to light-hearted tales of mischief, a clear indicator that Pat was possibly concerned with the direction any kind of straight, chronological questioning may have led. Perhaps the anecdotal style Pat so masterfully employed was most useful in preventing the narrative escaping from his grasp.[57]

The two extracts indicate the extent to which students embarked on the research with strongly engrained cultural experiences that had the potential to influence the intersubjective interaction within the interview as well as its subsequent interpretation. They reveal the students' different responses to a relatively run-of-the mill aspect of the interviewee's testimony and a revelatory post-interview comment. It would be inaccurate to conclude that their experience of pursuing difficult historical research changed their worldview fundamentally, but both students worked through the challenges thrown up in a contemplative fashion that demonstrates that employing oral history in the curriculum forces students to reflect innovatively about historical evidence. Moreover, this

[56] T. G. Ashplant, 'Anecdote as Narrative Resource in Working-Class Life Stories', in *Narrative and Genre: Contexts and Types of Communication*, ed. M. Chamberlain and P. Thompson (1998), 99.

[57] Critical commentary by Anthony (pseudonym), Mar. 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

example also reiterates the significance of the issues discussed earlier around memory and narrative style. In this case, in the moments after the interview concluded the two young students were made aware of the significant editing of the narrator's life story that had taken place and why that was the case. One student remarks intelligently on the use of anecdote as a means through which Pat subtly imposed his control on the testimony that emerged. In doing so, he built a firewall against the possibility of questions that might yield on the record revelations about his imprisonment during the conflict. Ironically, while Pat removed his role in the Troubles from his recorded testimony, his post-interview postscript provides one last learning outcome from this undergraduate exercise: this time for the lecturer. The example indicates the extent to which any project on Belfast history that attempts to focus solely on the troubles with a lower case t will inevitably face the reality of having to factor in, in one way or another, the Troubles.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440118000117 Published online by Cambridge University Press