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# 'A profound edge':<sup>1</sup> performative negotiations of Belfast

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The lack of an overarching narrative of place for Northern Ireland, and its territorial conflict, have resulted in fragmented, highly localized and strictly bounded senses of place. This is nowhere more evident than in Belfast, a city profoundly shaped by its sectarian geographies. As a result, what theorists have come to characterize as the relative liberty of urban space is overtly compromised, with movement through and within Belfast being restricted by the policing of its internal boundaries. These difficulties, and their gendered effects, are focused here in relation to the particular experience of artist Sandra Johnston. Johnston made two performative pieces in response and resistance to the spatial constraint she had undergone on the Lower Newtownards Road, a loyalist area of East Belfast. Johnston disrupts the performance of order and control evident in Belfast's politico-religious territories, and offers a radically alternative negotiation of space, which I argue is personally, communally and politically significant.

## **'Remembrance-rethinking-recovery':<sup>2</sup> identity in the Northern Irish city**

Until relatively recently, the city has not figured significantly in the dominant discourses of Irish place.<sup>3</sup> Irish nationalisms have traditionally found their deepest source and purpose in rural life, in terms of landscape and of people, although this stance now attracts increasing criticism and revision. Unionisms have left both urban and rural place largely untheorized; nonetheless, Nicholas Allen and Aaron Kelly argue that unionism in some sense depends on the countryside as a nostalgic symbol of unity and harmony, in the face of Protestant class divisions and crumbling power.<sup>4</sup> Outside these discourses the city has been conceived as a place of complex and fascinating meaning in relation to identity. For cultural and social theorists, the import of cities lies in their transience, their simultaneous external homogeneity and internal heterogeneity, all of which have differing impact upon how we understand and relate to place. The relative anonymity and frequent shifts in surroundings and neighbours offered to a city-dweller disrupt traditional understandings of rural place-based identity, dependent upon stable and uniform communities and landscapes. Richard Sennett captures the particular complexity of city life in his definition of urban inhabitants as 'people in the presence of otherness'.<sup>5</sup> Through the encounters offered with various others, the city may free us to imagine the significance of place and identity in different ways, but also channels the anxiety of identity dissolution. Celeste Olalquiaga, for example, observes

the plethora of surface imagery provided in a cityscape, imagery which closely reflects that of other cities, enabling 'a ubiquitous feeling of being in all places while not really being anywhere'.<sup>6</sup>

However, the discomforts and gratifications of dwelling within, and moving around, the city are inflected differently for different groups. It can be a place of limitation and oppression for those who lack the time or resources to take advantage of what the city has to offer, and for those who find the relative lack of stable and extended communities alienating rather than liberating. Further, and importantly in the context of this paper, the figure of the flâneur, the ideal leisured consumer of the city's ideal freedoms and pleasures, 'has by and large been constructed and used as an ideal type to denote men';<sup>7</sup> Gillian Rose emphasizes women's marginalization in the city, pointing out that 'the space available to our movement is a constricted one'.<sup>8</sup> Women's individual spatial experiences are clearly and significantly shaped by their historical subordination to patriarchal power but, under close investigation, reveal subtle negotiations of potential freedoms and alternative meanings within the city. Although Jane Rendell states that 'men own and occupy spaces and women, while women occupy space',<sup>9</sup> Lynne Walker points to women who become 'producers as well as consumers of the built environment'.<sup>10</sup>

There are further complexities to theorizing the Northern Irish city in light of the province's historical and current conditions, and this paper examines negotiations of place and identity for women in the specific context of the city of Belfast.<sup>11</sup> The north-east of Ireland has traditionally been the island's most urbanized and industrialized part, a fact which contributed to ambiguities in a rurally focused southern nationalism concerning the Irishness of the six counties around the time of partition. As Clare O'Halloran indicates, predominantly Protestant Belfast in particular was a symbol of 'unionist supremacy'<sup>12</sup> in the north, and as such was characterized as 'a very un-Irish city in a very Irish setting'.<sup>13</sup> Native Irish, and later Catholic, communities were excluded from, and marginalized within, urban spaces in the north east of Ireland, but despite – or perhaps more accurately – *because of* their disadvantaged position within Belfast and Derry in particular, present-day nationalist communities have established strong senses of belonging in these cities. Equally, the two cities' historic positions as unionist strongholds mean that unionists find in them deep significance for their senses of identity and belonging. Unionists and Protestants have dominated the shaping of Belfast and Derry, economically, politically and socially. However, throughout the gradual breakdown of the former unionist state, these cities are demonstrating their fragility and tendency to elude total control, threatening unionist and nationalist definitions of place and belonging based on territorial ownership, and exposing the need for new definitions.

In seeking out ways in which place and belonging are negotiated differently and more inclusively in Belfast, this paper focuses on two performative pieces by a visual artist, Sandra Johnston. The works are entitled respectively *To kill an impulse* and *Broad daylight*, and concern a woman's physical presence in, and navigation of, factional spaces in Belfast. After examining the particular political, social and cultural stresses to which Belfast's spaces are subjected, I use Johnston's artworks to

concentrate on some resultant issues as they specifically affect women. The work is discussed in connection with constructions of territory in Northern Ireland; the supposed dichotomies between private and public space; the idea of places as containers of memory; the relation of women to place in Belfast, including the relation of women's bodies to cities in general; and the potential of this kind of performative visual art to empower women and to disturb the imagined and actual sectarian geography of the city. I contend that Johnston's work quietly but radically opens out the possibilities of making a place for oneself in a sectarian and oppressive cityscape, providing a model for art practice, for feminist practice, and perhaps even for political practice in Northern Ireland.

## Bigotsborough?<sup>14</sup> The psychogeography of Belfast

The power emanating from the conjunction of community and territory could be argued to rest in the known. In the early stages of European colonialism, 'newly discovered' lands challenged monopoly by remaining unknown, a situation which provoked great unease. Although mapmakers may have been thwarted in the quest for complete information by antagonistic natives or difficult terrain, cartographic practice was still 'relentlessly'<sup>15</sup> exercised over conquered lands in a continuous exhibition of control. Mapping ordered the space into areas known, but also threw into relief how much of it was unknown; it was not a matter of simply and easily transforming uncontrollable space into controlled text, but a constant struggle with shifting supremacies and classifications. Connections may be drawn between this colonial anxiety and the territorial anxiety of contemporary Belfast, and these again relate to cartography. Belfast's official, mapped geographies tell a spatial story that is constantly disrupted and contradicted by any physical exploration of the spaces to which they refer. As Ciarán Carson puts it in the poem 'Turn again',

There is a map of the city  
which shows the bridge  
that was never built.  
A mapping which shows the  
bridge that collapsed, the  
streets that never existed . . .  
Today's plan is already  
yesterday's – the streets  
that were are gone.  
And the shape of the jails  
cannot be shown for security reasons.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the city's physical fluidity is unrepresented textually, and for inhabitants and visitors, an imperfect knowledge of territorial permutations can result in real vulnerability to violence. In Eoin McNamee's novel *Resurrection man*, the protagonist Victor Kelly's belief in his control over the cityscape is based on his knowledge of the

streets and their names.<sup>17</sup> That belief is overtly disrupted by the constant changes in Catholic/Protestant demography and the destruction and construction of streets in the bombed city, but this special situation merely throws into relief the real fragility of geographical knowledge. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, quoting from Brian Friel's play *Translations*, perceives Kelly's confusion as a symptom of necessary political change:

the street names become untrustworthy because they imprison the citizens of Belfast 'in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of . . . fact' (the history of Empire which they tell), and can no longer be relied upon to delineate the contemporary narrative of Belfast: the remapped city no longer corresponds to the deeply etched topography of Victor's racial memory.<sup>18</sup>

Taking into account the escalation of processes of change and flux due to the Troubles, does the opportunity exist to read Belfast as an exemplary postmodern city? Writer Glenn Patterson makes overt reference to this theoretical positioning in his comments on the city's fluidity:

all this (I choose the words deliberately) deconstruction and revision . . . contains within it a certain liberating potential. In particular it resists the closure of traditional interpretations in which one unchanging territory is endlessly contested by two mutually exclusive tribes . . . Identity becomes dynamic rather than birth-given or static. Concepts of flux and exchange replace the language of original states.<sup>19</sup>

Patterson describes the physical condition of the city of Belfast in words closely associated with textual criticism, whether from within philosophy, history or linguistics, evoking the notion of the city as a text. To imagine the city as text, it is suggested here, is to open out its meanings and subtleties. Returning to the motif of mapping, this kind of argument is often used to point to the makeshift nature of maps, with Richard Phillips stating that 'as a text, the map is inherently unstable, its meaning open to challenge and change'.<sup>20</sup> However, the metaphor of city/text tends dangerously towards abstraction in this context, neglecting the significance of bodily practice in constructions of the city. Jacqueline Rose cautions against the postmodern assumption that instability necessarily liberates. She gives this warning in relation to the struggles to belong in place, politicised and (at times) violent struggles which cannot be theorized away with talk of 'belonging everywhere and nowhere'.<sup>21</sup> Hence, she writes, 'loss of confidence may be welcome, especially when it was misplaced, coercive, oppressive . . . but it is far from clear that the mind leaps from here into freedom. Hearts can retrench; the body which feels weak rearms itself.'<sup>22</sup>

The results in Northern Ireland of just such a loss of confidence are evident in Belfast's intercommunal violence, and geographical fragmentation and closure. In *Lost lives*, a chronicle of those who have died as a result of the Troubles, the authors estimate that Belfast has been the most dangerous place in Northern Ireland for civilians; and in terms of the total deaths attributed to the Troubles, the city claims the vast majority.<sup>23</sup> Ciarán de Baróid, in a history of the west Belfast estate of Ballymurphy, points out that in the 1970s Belfast 'was a city stalked by terror, where only fools strayed onto the main roads'.<sup>24</sup> Re-arming is clearly evident, in terms of bodies, hearts, minds and, importantly, spaces. The constant threat of both random and directed aggression

has had marked spatial effects, as areas of the city that once housed Protestants and Catholics together gradually become religiously and politically homogeneous, at least rhetorically. Further, as the city's minority ethnic communities will attest, any kind of difference is unwelcome in certain of these sectarian territories, which are ever more compact and more meticulously defined, down to the scale of individual buildings in some places.<sup>25</sup> As de Baróid claims, this results in extreme levels of restriction of movement around the city, particularly for younger people who have grown up with a psychology of spatial confinement. It is imperative to note that closure and openness coexist in Belfast, as in any other city; the attempt to fix boundaries and territories definitively occurs *because* such a task is impossible. Belfast's sectarian boundaries are still permeable. Nonetheless, efforts at segregation and spatial control have real, and often negative, effects on physical and psychological experiences of the city, and although attempts have been made to mitigate the establishment of segregated spaces through creating mixed housing areas, for example, fear of the unknown and the need for physical safety often instigate retreats from such ambiguous spaces.

Some theorists turn to the arts to find measures of openness and subtlety in understanding and making use of Belfast's sectarian divisions of territory. Echoing Glenn Patterson's positive appropriation of the city's instability, Edna Longley sees optimism in Belfast's state of paradox and incompleteness, suggesting that 'its spiritual, political and social complexity... is capable of testing the imagination to its limits'.<sup>26</sup> She is referring to the potential and existing richness in literature coming out of Belfast, where critical minds struggle with the city's physical and psychological obstacles and discrepancies. Others see a similar engagement within visual art. Brian McAvera contends that visual artists in particular maintain 'a premium on intelligence, on emotional discrimination, on the rejection of bigotry, on the questioning of all the old loyalties'.<sup>27</sup> Belfast's sectarian geographies are clearly marked visually in the landscape, most obviously through flags, and colour coding of kerbstones and lamp posts;<sup>28</sup> the visual nature of these signs can be of special interest to artists. For inhabitants of the city, it is almost impossible not to know where you are (or at least make an educated – or bigoted? – guess), with cultural, political and religious markers ranging from the obvious to the extremely subtle. Nuala Gregory, an artist based in Belfast, believes that the inevitability of these overtly polarized political signs forces artists to 'incorporate' the imagery, or 'find expressive means to combat it'.<sup>29</sup> Daniel Jewesbury concurs, pointing out that 'the city is the venue in which meaning is contested, but it's also the contested meaning itself'.<sup>30</sup> McAvera contends that this has resulted in a way of making art that is 'oblique, layered, subterranean... [Northern Irish artists] juxtapose, collage... they use emblem, symbol, myth'.<sup>31</sup> Sandra Johnston's two pieces, *To kill an impulse* and *Broad daylight*, add further levels of complexity to the analysis of Belfast as a place, not least in their personal, performative nature. This paper argues that these negotiations of sectarianized, bounded, oppressive urban places provide a subtle, thoughtful and radical alternative geography, one with quiet political meaning.

## ***To kill an impulse***

'To kill an impulse' was put together in 1994. During this period Johnston lived on the Lower Newtownards Road, a strongly loyalist and Protestant part of inner East Belfast, notorious for periodic sectarian conflict with the neighbouring Catholic and republican area of the Short Strand. She had been aware for some time of the extreme levels of tension in the area, and the spatial restrictions and risks imposed on her as a woman and as a newcomer to the road.<sup>32</sup> In 1994 she suffered a serious attack on the interface between the Short Strand and the Lower Newtownards Road. Within a few days of this incident, a Protestant woman from West Belfast, Margaret Wright, was murdered on the Donegall Road by members of the Red Hand Commando, a loyalist paramilitary group, apparently because they believed her to be a Catholic.<sup>33</sup> The sense of women's vulnerability to violence, and the tacit community acceptance of violence directed against women, led Johnston to attempt to pay homage to the murdered woman, as well as to express the trauma of her own experience. The first part of the piece that became *To kill an impulse* involved five or six performance sequences which took place in two skips, one in a rural location and one in Belfast. Margaret Wright's body had been taken from the place of her murder in a bin, and for Johnston, these rubbish receptacles were symbolic of a horrifyingly casual attitude to a woman's life and death. She investigated some skip sites and chose two particularly evocative locations, then made and filmed performative responses to them. Johnston stripped naked and climbed into the skips to interact with their contents, which were mainly the detritus of women's and children's lives; old toys, discarded shoes and clothes, domestic rubbish. She describes her movements as 'frenzied';<sup>34</sup> while the actions in themselves may have been random and irrational, they represented a determined effort to draw out the emotive qualities of these unwanted items. The speed and vigour of her gestures echoed the sense of attack, but attempted an opposing meaning, where the objects act as surrogates for the violated female bodies. Rather than brutalizing or ignoring these substitutes, she paid minute and passionate attention to them.

Simultaneously, Johnston had been thinking about women's experiences of paramilitary funerals in the area. Such a funeral on the Lower Newtownards Road was a key event, and Johnston had recently found herself caught up in one. The streets had been lined with people, standing still, the shops were closed and shuttered, and a massive cortège was moving slowly up the road. Johnston was moving down the road, and drawing disapproving attention to herself by her movement; she began to feel an increasing sense of threat, and was relieved to reach a grocer's shop at the end of the road whose shutters were half-up, in which she could shelter while the procession passed. The shop was positioned at the road's interface with the Short Strand, and the female owner was known to serve both communities. Johnston found herself in the back of the shop along with a few frightened women from the Short Strand, where the shopkeeper was attempting to protect them by bringing the shutters down. Subsequently, senses of these funerals began to infuse Johnston's thinking. The pivotal issues arising included how the cortèges dominated the area; how women marked the degree of community grief for the deceased, but were denied an active, mobile role in

the funeral; and how media attention focused on the protective/repressive stance of the men towards the women in such events.<sup>35</sup>

Eventually the two strands came together conceptually and visually for the artist. She connected them through the idea of impulse and the female body; having observed the male impulse to make protective gestures over women's faces and bodies during paramilitary funerals, she related this to the impulse to protect 'your own' at any cost.<sup>36</sup> On the Lower Newtownards Road, as in other parts of Belfast, this can result in inward-directed violence, the oppressive impulse existing in tandem with the protective impulse. Just as women's bodies channel mourning in a funeral context, and require protection, they may channel difference and disruption in a male-dominated, sectarian territory, and also require suppression. *To kill an impulse* was eventually exhibited in Berlin, six weeks or so after the attack on Johnston. It was distilled down to two sets of images on slides, one set of the artist's performative movements in the skips, and one set of media images of women at paramilitary funerals (Figure 1). Each was projected from opposite ends of a darkened room, meeting in the middle on a suspended piece of glass she had found in the gallery, marked with greasy handprints and dust. The marks on the glass focused the details of the images against each other, although they materialized simultaneously and more vaguely on the walls of the room. The slides moved rapidly, and the carousels rocked, creating the impression that the projected images were colliding, and evoking a sense of catharsis.<sup>37</sup>

The question remains of how *To kill an impulse* relates to the imagining and understanding of place in Belfast. Of course, the attack suffered by Johnston was woven intimately into the character of place in Belfast; it could be argued that it happened *because* of place, because of the close proximity of two territories in politico-religious conflict.<sup>38</sup> However, aside from its origins in an actual place, the piece itself shows striking contrast between physical and symbolic spaces. I would argue that through *To kill an impulse* Johnston positions herself, and symbolically positions certain Northern Irish women, on the 'profound edge' of the paper's title, an edge existing on the margins between multiply different spaces. The artwork can be usefully and principally read as a negotiation of the simplistic opposition between public and private space. This does not of course exhaust the possible readings of the piece but, given the historical significance of the public/private opposition for women, seems an appropriate focus. Physically, the public space of the funeral cortège is juxtaposed against the private space of the skip. The definition of public space is problematic in Belfast, if it rests on an understanding of 'public' as open and generally accessible. The city being divided into semi-discrete locales, 'public' space on the Lower Newtownards Road is certainly not 'public' space for the people of the neighbouring Short Strand. Nonetheless, in comparison with the skip sites, and in the context of the local Protestant community, the road functions as public. The physically private space of the skip, while real in relation to the road, is equally contingent. Skips are often to be found between or behind buildings, in deserted streets and back alleys, or on waste ground. Johnston chose secluded sites due to an obvious desire for privacy while carrying out her performances, but the physical rawness and vulnerability of the piece emanates from her inability to guarantee that privacy, and hence the heightened risks she took.





FIGURE 1 Sandra Johnston, *To kill an impulse*, 1994, mixed media installation. (Image courtesy of Sandra Johnston.)

The two spaces function in symbolic fashion also. In the public space of the road, the funeral cortège forms a heavy and unavoidable presence. It moves, but demands stillness from observers. It dominates the space, in other words, as Johnston and the women from the Short Strand discovered. In addition, it reveals an aspect of male spatial control of the area, the female mourners being denied a place in the cortège and subjected to bodily censorship by the men. Suzanna Chan relates the suppression of female grief by men in this public context to the threat posed by emotional display *out of place*—that is, outside the private realm.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the space of the funeral, the space of the skips is symbolically as well as literally edgy, or marginal. These containers are positioned on the borders between private and public space, interior and exterior space. In skips the intimate and personal contents of homes are exposed to loss of meaning and affect in the outer world. Skips absorb what doesn't fit neatly into categories of use and value; they become vessels of excess and superfluity, and in this way relate to understandings of women's bodies. Mary Douglas's famous definition of dirt, as 'matter out of place',<sup>40</sup> is appropriated by Lynda Nead to analyse the reasons for the male desire to contain the female body through art. Nead describes the female nude in art as 'precisely matter contained',<sup>41</sup> the implication being that in its 'natural, unstructured'<sup>42</sup> state, it is excess and superfluity, much like the contents of the skip. To return to the notion of a 'profound edge', Nead further emphasizes the importance of the *margins* of the marginalized female body, which threaten permeability, and therefore become the focus for policing what lies within them; art can 'momentarily [repair] the orifices and tears',<sup>43</sup> but is only ever a temporary solution. Johnston, as a naked woman, performs explicitly and uncomfortably on a spatial margin, and invokes multiple other feminized margins or edges as she does so.

The last comments on the piece concern the final manner of display of the sets of images. The images originate in the structuring of place in a specific part of East Belfast, and their place-based themes persist through the specific structuring of space in the exhibition. Johnston mentioned the rocking of the slide carousels, creating the illusion that the images were jarring against one another in the meeting place of their projections. The difference between the provenances of the images is clear and reinforces the discord; the images of the artist were self-filmed in privacy, whereas the images of the women were filmed by journalists and later broadcast publicly. The complex dichotomy set up between public and private space, between central and marginal places, between male-dominated and female-relegated places, on the Lower Newtownards Road, is eloquently echoed in the exhibition of the work. The image of a lone naked woman frantically working with rubbish in a skip contrasts with the images of static, clothed and protected women, surrounded by men and in a public thoroughfare. The power of the piece lies in the suggestion that these spatial and symbolic dichotomies are fragmentary and permeable, and can be read as such through the linking of the grief of the artist with the grief of the bereaved women. This emotional connection presents us with a difficult double perspective of women's place in the sectarian territories of Belfast, further symbolized in the transparency of the projected-upon surfaces, where the sets of images infused and passed through each other. The protective gesture of the male in the public space is visually transformed into

the trace of his oppression in the private space, and vice versa; thus artificial separations of public from private, with accompanying gendered assumptions, are exposed. The 'profound edge' between public and private, male and female, violence and civility, established through the dissonance of the images, is crossed and blurred.

## **Broad daylight**

The ordeal of her attack led Johnston to leave Belfast, and she did not return until 2000, specifically to make a follow-up piece to *To kill an impulse* which, she hoped, would release her from the trauma associated in her mind and body with the Lower Newtownards Road.<sup>44</sup> That piece was *Broad daylight*. The risk of essentializing local women's experiences of that area, and making an exploitative performance divorced from its context, was present in Johnston's plan. However, the artist worked closely with women's community groups while she lived on the Lower Newtownards Road, and was not operating wholly on an outsider's assumptions; in addition, and importantly, although *Broad daylight* was separated in time from her period of living on the road, Johnston explicitly describes it as personal catharsis, and it is less heavily and less obviously inflected by other women's stories than is *To kill an impulse*. The piece was developed in conversation with two female artists from the Republic of Ireland, Frances Mezzetti and Pauline Cummins. The three women had decided to deal with what they called 'places of the heart',<sup>45</sup> places of such intense personal significance that they had become almost unapproachable. As artists, they also shared an interest in performative techniques, and an ethos that performance work should take place where it has most meaning. Each artist would choose such a site, and the three artists together would create a piece of work there.

Johnston's chosen site was the Lower Newtownards Road. She, Mezzetti and Cummins took time to develop their experience of the area and plan their work. Eventually they set aside five days in which to perform responsively and spontaneously in four places along the entire length of the Newtownards Road, which runs from the Short Strand in the centre of Belfast, south-eastward to the shores of Strangford Lough. Each stage produced 'spontaneous moments of reaction and interaction' which informed the next day's performance. The performances were partially documented, but the piece essentially existed for those brief times in those precise places, and did not have a gallery life; during much of the piece, the women's movements were subtle and understated, and may not have been recognizable as performance to observers, although at times, according to Johnston, movements were 'unrestrained'.<sup>46</sup> Johnston describes the process as the working out of 'an idiosyncratic and deeply personal language that goes in and out of focus according to the environment and circumstances', a bodily language which had been developed among the three artists over the previous year, and which had 'its own internal logic'.<sup>47</sup> The first stage of the work took place over two days on the northern shores of Strangford Lough, involving bodily interaction with the sea, which Johnston represents as a space of innocence and hope, redolent of her childhood, and as a strategic preparation for the difficult

experience that lay ahead. The second stage took place around the lower part of the road. Mezzetti discovered a small derelict garden, a relatively enclosed and sheltered space, which she made the locus of her performance. From there, Cummins moved out on to the road, bringing with her a discarded telephone book they had found in the garden. Her performance involved making random calls from a phone box, using the numbers listed in the directory. Johnston then led them towards the site of her attack, facing the memories of fear and vulnerability associated with that place through a series of small gestures and armed with props signifying familiarity, security and love. At one point, Johnston made use of an old coat belonging to her sister, who also used to live in the area. She had it turned inside out, in front of her body, developing movements around the coat imagined as armour and both bringing it to the body and letting go (Figure 2).<sup>48</sup> The third stage took place at Stormont, the seat of Northern Ireland government and a place heavy with the symbolism of power. The artists responded to the steep hill leading up to Stormont's imposing façade, moving quietly and reflectively; Johnston says that 'in the doing there was... strength, we kept our concentration'.<sup>49</sup> The fourth stage was intended to draw the ideas and experiences of the previous four days together, and was performed before an invited audience at Scrabo Tower, outside Newtownards. There, the women employed the tower's four floors, the physical proximity of the audience, abstract movements, and sounds and voices recorded purposely for the performance, in order to communicate some of the meanings they had gathered and expressed during the whole work.

Johnston's period of living on the Lower Newtownards Road allowed her to observe the gender-based differences in the use of space there. She noticed that women and children tended to move about the area via alleys running between and beyond houses (again, margins), rarely alone, and rarely via the main streets and the road itself, where solitary men could be clearly seen during most of the day and night. The men were operating as a means of territorial surveillance. She also noticed women's frequent use of cars for trips that could easily be made on foot.<sup>50</sup> This combines to reinforce the sense, suggested in *To kill an impulse*, that the space of the Lower Newtownards Road has been made inimical in some ways to women, or that, at the very least, women may experience the space as restrictive and threatening. This is central to the shock of Johnston's assault, and to the meaning of the two pieces arising from it.

Eugene McLaughlin and John Muncie contend that 'the modernist city'<sup>51</sup> has been deliberately constructed to ensure women (among others) are 'restricted, controlled and monitored', resulting in women 'perform[ing], concretized in the flesh, in their very being, the abjected, excluded other of hegemonic masculinist order'.<sup>52</sup> Gillian Rose corroborates the notion that certain spaces can be physically oppressive for women; an intrinsic principle of feminist geography is to uncover all ways in which women are spatially marginalized, from the subtle to the overt. Rose argues:

for feminists, the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women.<sup>53</sup>

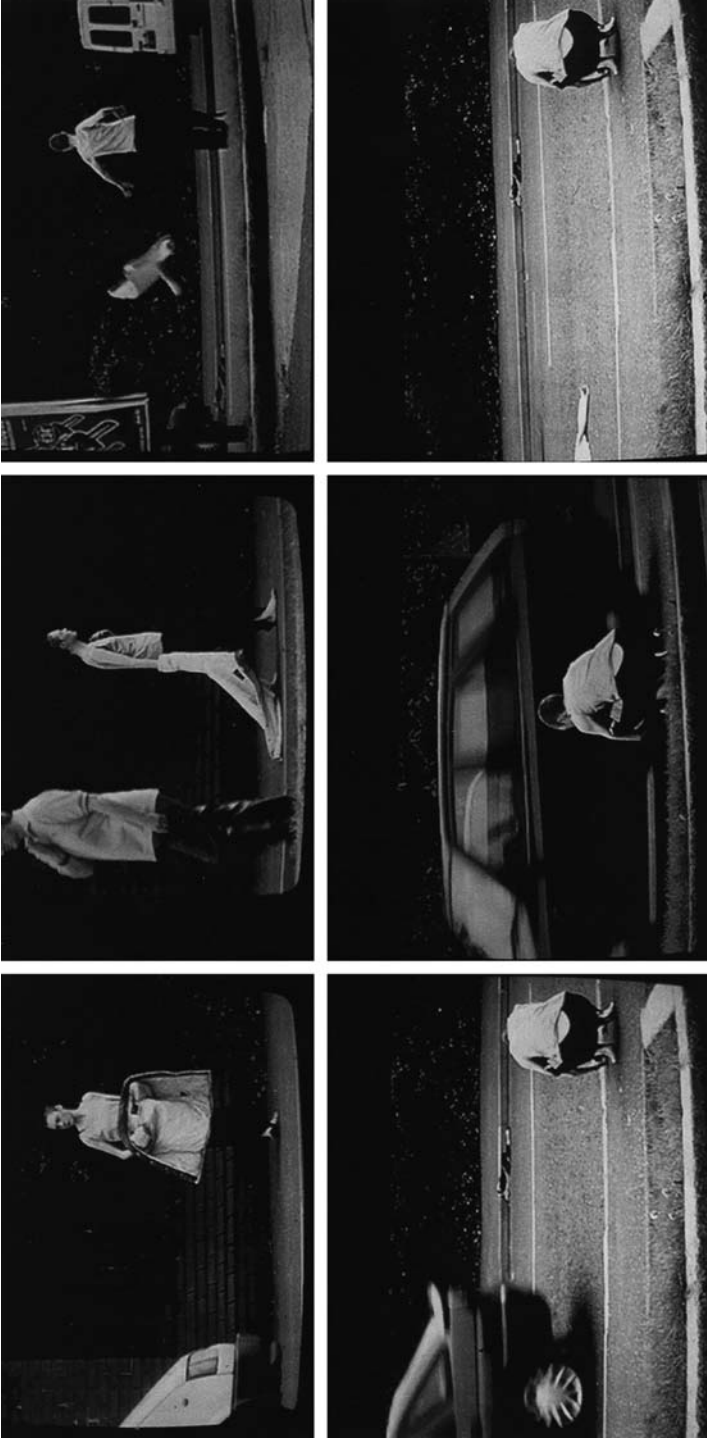


FIGURE 2 Sandra Johnston, *Broad daylight*, 2000, performance. (Image courtesy of Sandra Johnston.)

She goes on to mention the extreme import of the division between private and public space for maintaining the subjugated position of white women. The qualifying adjective 'white' registers recognition of the differing significance of private space for black and coloured women, for whom the home has been able to function as a place of safety and affirmation, in contrast to the threat of indifference, abuse, and hostility in the public space. Black feminist bell hooks advocates a self-positioning between the two:

for me this space of radical openness is a margin – a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a 'safe' place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance.<sup>54</sup>

Johnston clearly follows this strategy in *To kill an impulse*, and indeed is not guaranteed safety, as she wasn't guaranteed safety during day-to-day life in this period. However, existing on this 'profound edge', as a woman in a male-dominated space, and on the border between Protestant and Catholic territory, had damaging emotional repercussions for her. The margin became not only a strategic place of critique and opposition but a place of remembered terror and trauma; in *Broad daylight* she returns to the margin with 'a community of resistance' in the form of Mezzetti and Cummins. The women helped each other to see each place differently, and provided creative and moral support, but could not assure each other total protection. All three were at risk as women; in performing they were acting to draw attention to themselves within a space of wariness and suspicion; and Mezzetti and Cummins, being from the south of Ireland, were exposed to potential hostility in this loyalist stronghold each time they spoke. Johnston acknowledged that each of them was very nervous about being on the Lower Newtownards Road. She herself felt extremely vulnerable in the space, but simultaneously felt the need to protect Mezzetti and Cummins, and the three were determined to maintain the integrity of their relations and the independence of their performance despite their exposure.<sup>55</sup> The performative nature of the artwork ensured confrontation of this vulnerability at its source, in public space, which leads me to define it (provisionally) as 'performative negotiations'; the artists, rather than definitively altering the circumstances of spatial restriction and fear on the Lower Newtownards Road, were using their bodies and minds to navigate possible alternative paths, negotiating with the space and its inhabitants for their own safety and successful completion of the work. The 'community of resistance' which partnered Johnston in the exploration of *her* place within sectarian city spaces facilitated her recuperation of the 'profound edge' as a place of action and resistance rather than passivity and acceptance.

The expression of these women's experiences of the Newtownards Road through performance also holds gendered significance. The use of bodily performance by women artists has occasionally attracted controversy. As Ellen Rooney points out, 'the body is of course essentialism's great text',<sup>56</sup> white Western males' Others being categorized and described through bodily difference. Given the history of women's bodies having been 'folded into the patriarchal regime as fundamentally objectified and alienated from the women's "self",<sup>57</sup> feminists have struggled to assert women's ability to make visual use of their bodies without necessarily objectifying themselves. Despite the risks of being misinterpreted as having offered their bodies to the sexualized male gaze, many women artists consider performance has the potential to

upset phallogocentric attempts at essentializing and disarming the female body. In postcolonial theory, the bodies and voices of the West's Others are sometimes employed to unsettle the 'Eurocentric and logocentric'<sup>58</sup> reliance on textual meaning, within which those bodies and voices can be seen only as absence. Performance in visual art and in theatre affirms the existence of diverse and individual bodies, and their validity as sites of agency and meaning. Helen Gilbert believes the transgressive power of these kinds of performance for women particularly to reside in the activity of the body, 'a moving subject that actually looks back at the spectator, eluding the kind of appropriation that the "male gaze" theories of cinema outline'.<sup>59</sup> In addition, a woman performer's appearance and its coding constantly shift, as she moves and assumes poses and roles, asserting human mutability and denying the desire for a single, static, and coherent representation of 'Woman'. Johnston, Mezzetti and Cummins refuse the traditionally passive and invisible roles assigned to women in these spaces, confronting both the relative defencelessness of their bodies and their power to act differently and disruptively within the spaces. More generally, performativity is suggested by Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to be a means of evading an unhelpful choice between falsely polarized mind and flesh, in this case in understanding place. Its combination of thoughtfulness and bodily practice enables 'a more nuanced understanding of what might have been blandly, confidently distinguished as "text" and "context";<sup>60</sup> performance, it could be argued, was one means of avoiding a merely intellectual and logocentric revision of the meaning of the Lower Newtownards Road, a revision which would have had no presence in the space itself.

The artist's statement which accompanied this piece mentions the importance of memory in the construction of places, linking body, mind and space, the poet echoing Ciarán Carson's concerns with the discrepancy between memories, imaginings and actualities of the city apparent in his poem 'Turn again' discussed earlier. Johnston writes:

witnessing change is a persistent challenge in Northern Ireland, in order to rethink environments disfigured by paramilitary boundaries. Within the processes of regeneration, there is an internal mental geography, which lags behind the physical transformation, a reluctance to acknowledge the facelifts. In areas of deep division where street names are still synonymous with death and terrorism, how can memory be reconfigured [?]<sup>61</sup>

The work attempted this reconfiguration of memory, performatively and personally excising the trauma associated with the place for Johnston. Joseph Roach highlights the 'interdependence of performance and collective memory',<sup>62</sup> defining performance as "restored behavior" or "twice-behaved behavior".<sup>63</sup> Although performance depends on repetition of remembered actions, no action may be performed in precisely the same way twice; thus, Roach contends, 'in this improvisatory behavioral space, memory reveals itself as imagination'.<sup>64</sup> This is extremely important for Johnston's asserted personal purpose in performing *Broad daylight*. In addition, she suggests that the piece symbolically performed a partial and provisional release of the place itself from the tyranny of its sectarian associations, which affect many people other than Johnston. This notion echoes that of 'rememory', occurring in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*: in

the context of African-American slave history, remembering is a thoroughly fragmented and painful process, and Morrison develops the idea that memories root themselves in places and recur there, independently of those to whom they originally belonged.<sup>65</sup> A similar understanding of the effects of memory on place can be seen in *Broad daylight*, applied to the history of terrorism and violence in Belfast. Edward Soja, unfolding his concept of 'Thirdspace', or the spaces between the binaries of history and geography, ponders the potential of a 'remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost',<sup>66</sup> bringing to light the potential of memory and imagination to transform space. In line with these theories, Johnston struggled to break the hold of individual and collective memories on Belfast's spaces and to imagine places differently through art practice, with both personal and communal implications.

As the city's physical geography shifts, so eventually must its mental geography, and the idea of movement is central to *Broad daylight* and central to any challenge of the spatial stasis and flux of Belfast. Suzanna Chan, for example, notes the symbolic power of movement in this artwork in a city where 'arbitrary wandering has not been an option'.<sup>67</sup> The control of territory in Belfast is enacted obsessively and anxiously *because* territories alter shape and shift hands; like colonial mapping, it is a performance of order in heterogeneous and elusive space. The physical implications of this use of space are clear. Areas of control are marked out, borders are defended, defined routes develop within and through the city, which allow people of any community to avoid spaces in which they feel threatened. The symbolism of stasis and flux is also important here. Stasis, for example, is often made to connote masculinity and flux femininity within feminist discourses; of course, in masculinist world-views, woman has traditionally been associated with the static immanent and man with the mutable transcendent. In geographical terms this has been translated into the conception of home as an unchanging feminine realm, and the conception of the outer world as an unpredictable masculine realm. However, French theorist Hélène Cixous identifies a 'masculine' economy (philosophical, linguistic and actual), which is predicated on rationality, singularity, unity, transparency, categories and borders, ownership, anxiety and stasis. She names this economy 'the Empire of the Selfsame',<sup>68</sup> and against it contrasts what she believes to be a feminine economy, expressing the 'wonder' of 'being several and turmoil'.<sup>69</sup>

This facilitates a reading of *Broad daylight* as a strategic mapping out of 'feminine' geographies inside a 'masculine' space, both literally, in that the three women operated within a male-controlled area, and metaphorically.<sup>70</sup> Johnston, Mezzetti and Cummins moved through the length of the Newtownards Road. Their use of its entire length emphasizes its linkage of a variety of spaces, from the rural to the inner city, and from the official spatial symbols of the former unionist state (governmental buildings at Stormont) to the intimate and troubled underside of that state (Short Strand and the Lower Newtownards Road). They negotiated boundaries between the private and the public, the urban and the rural, working-class space and governmental space, and in this way explicitly performed the real permeability and contingency of these categories. They made unorthodox movements within the spaces of Stormont and the Lower Newtownards Road, movements which enact the deeply personal against the



indifference or even hostility of the public domain. The radical potential of women's movements is highlighted by Jane Rendell, who points to the little-mentioned 19th-century figure of the cyprian, or peripatetic urban prostitute. She identifies the cyprian as 'the only female to move through the streets and public spaces of [the city]', and goes on to reveal that:

while the rambler [a 19-century male archetype] is celebrated as an urban explorer, actively engaged in the constant pursuit of pleasure, the figure of the mobile cyprian is a cause of concern. Her movement represents the blurring of public and private boundaries, the uncontrollability of women in the city.<sup>71</sup>

According to Rendell, women may still move around the city, but the historical context for such movement positions mobile women as potentially illicit, and certainly on the edge of acceptability. Indeed, for the cyprian, 'her mobility, her link to the street, to the public places of the city, is represented as the cause of her eventual destruction'.<sup>72</sup> *Broad daylight*, then, performed two distinct facets of the transgressive potential of movement. First, the accidental or unknowing transgression of spatial codes and restrictions, which could result in attack, and second, the deliberate transgression of spatial codes and restrictions in order to assert an alternative and liberating geography. This Other geography is imagined as overtly female by Elizabeth Wilson:

the city is 'masculine' in its triumphal scale, its towers and vistas and arid industrial regions; it is 'feminine' in its enclosing embrace, in its indeterminacy and labyrinthine uncenteredness. We might even go so far as to claim that urban life is actually based on this perpetual struggle between rigid routinized order and pleasurable anarchy, the male–female dichotomy.<sup>73</sup>

Wilson slips into essentialism in her definitions, but importantly recognizes that 'masculine' and 'feminine' spaces within the city – that is, multiple and different spaces and uses of space – coexist, overlap and mesh together, as demonstrated by Johnston, Mezzetti and Cummins.

These myriad versions of space are tied together in part by the use of the women's bodies, which can be read as a feminist strategy also. In negotiating the spaces personally, through their unmediated bodies, they exposed themselves to bodily risk, but also challenged the politics that result in women shielding themselves in cars in order to move about a space. The editors of *The unknown city* commend the attention to bodily practice in revealing the layered meanings of place:

the body is particularly useful for thinking about the triad of the perceived, conceived and lived... this body is practical and fleshy. Contemplating space with the whole body and all senses, not just with the eyes and intellect, allows more awareness of conflict and so of a space that is other.<sup>74</sup>

*Broad daylight* exemplified this notion of space, in its weaving together of bodily vulnerability and resistance, and of experience, emotion and understanding. It is its grounding in bodily experience which provides some of the power and the feminist significance of the work. Women have been instrumental in refiguring spatial awareness through the instatement of the body as 'the geography closest in'.<sup>75</sup> This is Adrienne Rich's phrase, and she uses it to demonstrate the need to avoid abstraction when discussing space and place. In order to be able to speak and act politically with some authority, women need to locate themselves, which in Rich's mind means

location within the 'particular, living . . . individual'<sup>76</sup> body. She negates the possibility of transcending the body, asserting rather that power comes from the ability to 'reconnect our thinking and speaking'<sup>77</sup> with our physical bodies. This practice attests to the multiplicity of experiences of space. In the case of *Broad daylight*, the space negotiated through the three women's bodies, and those bodies themselves, facilitated a more complex and fluid understanding of the apparently closed and static territories of Belfast. Through bodily and 'potentially emancipatory praxis'<sup>78</sup> Johnston, Mezzetti and Cummins achieved a critique of:

the dominance of the visual [and the textual . . . which] allows us to understand the city and the female as more than objects of the male gaze, opening up possibilities both of self-representation for women and of new ways to comprehend the experiential qualities of the city.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

*To kill an impulse* starkly depicts the difficulty and vulnerability of women's spatial experiences in Belfast. This artwork is followed by *Broad daylight*, which enables the imagining of Belfast as a more permeable and fragmented space than it appears, not through theory alone, but through the interpretation and reworking of bodily experiences. The willingness of Johnston, and later the three artists together, to be bodily and emotionally exposed in a potentially hostile space gives each work a radical edge. Johnston's body actually suffered a random attack, but she confronts that sense of helplessness through the subsequent deliberate choice to put herself in marginal, unpredictable and insecure places as a strategy of recovery and spatial refiguration. The performative enactment of this particular woman's mental and physical geography draws attention to the threats, restrictions and closures which many women negotiate in these territories as a matter of course. The act of performance itself asserts agency and disrupts the attempts to control difference and movement within Belfast's disturbed locales, and accrues further significance in a city and province where collective memories of the painful cost of standing out are strong. The artists' uses of their bodies, and those bodies' particular encounters with particular spaces, effectively ground the attempt to challenge the city's sectarian geographies within the actual oppressions and restrictions of those geographies, but also expose alternatives within them, and reach beyond them. As noted by Hilary Robinson, 'art . . . feeds back into its context and thus is co-productive of its future context';<sup>80</sup> Johnston's long-term and intimate engagement with the Lower Newtownards Road prior to making her artworks goes some way towards ensuring that such a use of context is neither shallow nor exploitative. I contend that the most profound relevance of Johnston's work to the political and religious contexts within which it was conceived and carried out lies in its public and personal nature. It is rare to find such a resolute exposure of the private and painful consequences of publicly manifested sectarianism in the spaces in Northern Ireland which most nearly approach politico-religious neutrality, let alone in one of the most troubled spaces of its troubled principal city; this kind of personal honesty and courage should resonate beyond the art world, especially in a province where the cultural

imperative towards pragmatic silence persists in strength across communities. Johnston has made an important contribution to a fragile precedent in Northern Ireland for telling stories as a means of overcoming mutual fear and suspicion;<sup>81</sup> she bore witness to her own harsh experience, and invoked that of others, and managed to do so publicly but subtly. The political significance of these works, while understated, should not be underestimated.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> B. Hooks, *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics* (London, Turnaround Press, 1991), p. 149.
- <sup>2</sup> E. Soja, *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1996), p. 81.
- <sup>3</sup> This has been changing through the 20th and into the 21st centuries, with increasing attention paid to Irish identity in Dublin (importantly through James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and more recently, through Roddy Doyle's works, among others). It is a necessary response to the rising proportion of Ireland's population living in urban centres.
- <sup>4</sup> N. Allen and A. Kelly, 'Introduction', in N. Allen and A. Kelly, eds, *The cities of Belfast* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003), p. 8.
- <sup>5</sup> R. Sennett, quoted in J. M. Jacobs and R. Fincher, 'Introduction', in J. M. Jacobs and R. Fincher, eds, *Cities of difference* (New York, Guilford Press, 1998), p. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> C. Olalquiaga, *Megalopolis: contemporary cultural sensibilities* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 2.
- <sup>7</sup> L. Harman, quoted in J. Wolff, *Resident alien: feminist cultural criticism* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), p. 7.
- <sup>8</sup> G. Rose, *Feminism and geography: the limits of geographic knowledge* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993), p. 144.
- <sup>9</sup> J. Rendell, "'Bazaar beauties" or "pleasure is our pursuit": a spatial story of exchange', in I. Borden, J. Rendell, J. Kerr, and A. Pivaro, eds, *The unknown city: contesting architecture and social space* (London, MIT Press, 2001), p. 109.
- <sup>10</sup> L. Walker, 'Home and away: the feminist remapping of public and private space in Victorian London', in Borden *et al.*, *The unknown city*, p. 298.
- <sup>11</sup> Myriad relations have existed, and still exist, between Ireland and the island of Britain. However, the specific relations arising from the plantation or settlement of Ireland, principally by Scots and English, as an official strategy of conquest in the 16th and 17th centuries, has had the most apparent and long-lasting consequences. This is at least partly because this period of

settlement happened post-Reformation, which inhibited the wholesale integration of the (substantially Protestant) English and Scots planters with the (substantially Catholic) native Irish population. Ireland was predominantly rural before plantation, and indeed for a long time afterwards, with significant alteration in the demographic balance between town and country only happening in the past few decades. Hence, towns and cities have been seen historically as bastions of planter power, which is significant for this discussion of the spaces of Belfast. Centuries of mutual suspicion, fear, frequent intercommunal violence, and subsequent segregation and oppression eventually led to the partition of Ireland into the (mainly Catholic) south and west and the (mainly Protestant) north and east in the early 1920s. Northern Ireland was created for, and for a long time controlled by, unionists, but still contained a substantial proportion of Catholics and Irish nationalists, many of whom were deeply unhappy with their inclusion in a specifically Protestant and British statelet. In addition, they were subjected to varied injustices by the unionist government in the north on the grounds of religion and politics. Thus, after sporadic and relatively ineffective periods of nationalist resistance in the decades since 1920, the phase of conflict now known as the Troubles broke out in the late 1960s. These years saw the beginning of peaceful agitation for civil rights for Catholics, and the intercommunal tensions arising from such a challenge to the status quo soon escalated, with provocation from all sides – unionist and nationalist communities in the north, the Northern Irish, Irish and British governments, the Northern Irish police and British military, and established and emerging paramilitary movements. Although the Troubles have been officially superseded by a peace process, since paramilitary ceasefires in the mid-1990s, many communities remain deeply affected by sectarianism, paramilitary control, violence and poverty. In this paper, at the most simple levels, in references to 'nationalists' the term means those on the island of Ireland who want the whole island to be under Irish governance, and who consider themselves to be Irish first and foremost; references to 'unionists' mean those on the island of Ireland who want to remain under British jurisdiction, and who maintain a British identity on the island. The terms 'loyalist' and 'republican' are commonly used to represent the extremes of unionist and nationalist politics respectively, although those who identify themselves with either term by no means necessarily support political violence.

- <sup>12</sup> C. O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism: an ideology under stress* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1987), p. 10.
- <sup>13</sup> H. MacCartan, in *The Tribune* (20 June 1926), quoted in O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism*, p. 9.
- <sup>14</sup> E. Longley, 'The writer and Belfast', in M. Harmon, ed., *The Irish writer and the city* (Gerrards Cross, UK, Colin Smythe, 1984), p. 65.
- <sup>15</sup> D. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in renaissance Ireland', in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield and W. Maley, eds, *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict 1534–1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 77.
- <sup>16</sup> C. Carson, quoted in W. Chadwick, 'Introduction', in W. Chadwick and C. Raciti, eds, *Crossing boundaries: Belfast: contemporary art from Northern Ireland* (exhibition catalogue) (San Francisco, San Francisco State University, 1996), p. 6.
- <sup>17</sup> E. McNamee, *Resurrection man* (London, Picador, 1998), pp. 10–11, 26, 34, 46, 99, 100.
- <sup>18</sup> E. Kennedy-Andrews, *(De-)constructing the north: fiction and the Northern Ireland Troubles since 1969* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2003), p. 126.
- <sup>19</sup> G. Patterson, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 106.
- <sup>20</sup> R. Phillips, *Mapping men and empire: a geography of adventure* (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 19.

- <sup>21</sup> J. Rose, *States of fantasy: the Clarendon lectures in English literature, 1994* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 2.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> D. McKittrick, S. Kelters, B. Feeney and C. Thornton, *Lost lives: the stories of the men, women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh, Mainstream Publishing, 2001).
- <sup>24</sup> C. de Baróid, *Ballymurphy and the Irish war* (London, Pluto Press, 2000), p. 188.
- <sup>25</sup> J. Anderson and I. Shuttleworth, 'Sectarian demography, territoriality and political development in Northern Ireland', *Political geography* **17** (1998), pp. 187–208.
- <sup>26</sup> Longley, 'The writer and Belfast', p. 69.
- <sup>27</sup> B. McAvera, 'Directions out', in *Directions out* (exhibition catalogue) (Dublin, Douglas Hyde Gallery, n.d.), no page numbers.
- <sup>28</sup> Unionist areas will make use of the colours of the United Kingdom 'Union Jack' flag (red, white and blue), while nationalist areas will make use of the colours of the Irish Republic's Tricolour (green, white and gold).
- <sup>29</sup> N. Gregory, quoted in J. Smyth, 'Art beyond conflict', in *Art beyond conflict: an exhibition of work by eight Belfast artists* (exhibition catalogue) (Belfast, Crescent Arts Centre, 1996), no page numbers.
- <sup>30</sup> D. Jewesbury, 'Aperto Belfast', *Flashart* **34** (2001), pp. 61–3.
- <sup>31</sup> McAvera, 'Directions out'.
- <sup>32</sup> The Lower Newtownards Road houses a largely Protestant and unionist community, and historically has been the site of violent conflict between Protestant and Catholic due to its proximity to the largely Catholic and nationalist community of the Short Strand. The road is one of the heartlands of loyalist politics and paramilitarism in Belfast.
- <sup>33</sup> McKittrick *et al.*, *Lost lives*. The circumstances of Margaret Wright's murder echoed those of other Protestant women beaten to death by loyalists, including Lorraine McCausland in 1987 and Ann Ogilby in 1974.
- <sup>34</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston, 13 Nov. 2003.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 Apr. 2003.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 Nov. 2003.
- <sup>37</sup> The description of the exhibition of *To kill an impulse* was drawn from conversation with Johnston, 13 Nov. 2003. The piece has never been shown in Northern Ireland.
- <sup>38</sup> Johnston was caught on the border between the two territories, at the edges of each, a vulnerable position because uncertain. The murders of Protestant women Margaret Wright, Lorraine McCausland and Ann Ogilby, perpetrated by other Protestants within Protestant territories, demonstrate both the return of violence, generally directed geographically outwards, and the palpable vulnerability of women in spaces within which they nominally belong. This is an important issue for Johnston, who observed and experienced it while living on the Lower Newtownards Road, and worked it out in more personal force in 'Broad daylight'.
- <sup>39</sup> S. Chan, 'Women and cities: selected artworks from Belfast', in N. Allen and A. Kelly, eds, *The cities of Belfast* (Dublin, Four Courts, Press, 2003), p. 221.
- <sup>40</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 35.
- <sup>41</sup> L. Nead, *The female nude: art, obscenity and sexuality* (London, Routledge, 1992), p. 29.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- <sup>44</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston, 24 Apr. 2003.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 Nov. 2003.

<sup>46</sup> Again, this description of the piece is drawn from conversations with Johnston on both the above dates, and from communication via e-mail on 6 Feb. 2005, since it was not documented in its entirety.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston by e-mail, 6 Feb. 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston, 13 Nov. 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston by e-mail, 17 May 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston, 24 Apr. 2003.

<sup>51</sup> E. McLaughlin and J. Muncie, 'Walled cities: surveillance, regulation and segregation', in S. Pile, C. Brook and G. Mooney, eds, *Unruly cities? Order/disorder* (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 110.

<sup>52</sup> B. Hooper, quoted in McLaughlin and Muncie, *Walled cities*, p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> Rose, *Feminism and geography*, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> hooks, *Yearning*, p. 149.

<sup>55</sup> Personal communication from Sandra Johnston, 13 Nov. 2003.

<sup>56</sup> E. Rooney, 'In a word (interview with Gayatri Spivak)', in L. Nicholson, ed., *The second wave: a reader in feminist theory* (New York, Routledge, 1997), p. 357.

<sup>57</sup> A. Jones, *Body art: performing the subject* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 152.

<sup>58</sup> B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, eds, *The postcolonial studies reader* (London, Routledge, 1995), p. 321.

<sup>59</sup> H. Gilbert, 'Dance, movement and resistance politics', in Ashcroft *et al.*, *The postcolonial studies reader*, p. 345.

<sup>60</sup> A. Parker and E. Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Introduction: performativity and performance', in A. Parker and E. Kosofsky Sedgwick, eds, *Performativity and performance* (New York, Routledge, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> This statement is recorded on a CD which documents *Broad daylight* through text and image, given to me by Sandra Johnston. The notion of space as a vessel of memory is a fraught one in relation to Belfast, where sites of violence proliferate largely uncommemorated. On a day later known as 'Bloody Friday', in July 1972, the IRA detonated a bomb at the bus station on Oxford Street in the city centre, in conjunction with 19 other devices, all of which exploded within one hour. The bus station has now disappeared, to be replaced by the Waterfront Hall, the Hilton Hotel, the BT Tower, and a newly landscaped riverside area. The six deaths caused by the bomb are not marked in any way on the site, although they are certainly not forgotten. In conversation with Philip Orr of the New Ireland Forum on 28 Oct. 2003, this site was mentioned as being of particular interest in its juxtaposition of traumatic violence and 'high' culture. Orr believes that this still-raw conjunction between Belfast's bloody conflict and its current regeneration provides unparalleled opportunities to analyse the connections between brutality and the expressions of 'civilized' culture to be found in cosmopolitan cities throughout the world. The opera houses, theatres and concert halls in Great Britain's cities can be read as being metaphorically founded on violence, the violence necessary in colonies and slave plantations to create the wealth that gave rise to these houses of culture. Belfast's Waterfront Hall has its physical foundations on a site of extreme violence, and its position offers an opening for the interrogation of the connections between the culture and the cruelty of so-called civilized societies.

<sup>62</sup> J. Roach, 'Culture and performance in the circum-Atlantic world', in Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity and performance*, p. 45.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> T. Morrison, *Beloved* (London, Picador, 1987), pp. 35–36.
- <sup>66</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 81.
- <sup>67</sup> Chan, 'Women and cities', p. 217.
- <sup>68</sup> H. Cixous and C. Clément, *The newly born woman* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 80.
- <sup>69</sup> H. Cixous, quoted in S. Sellers, ed., *The Hélène Cixous reader* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 45.
- <sup>70</sup> In an interesting aside to the idea of transgressive movement, Johnston relates that after making *Broad daylight*, she returned to the Lower Newtownards Road to perform a final cathartic act. Positioning herself on the site of her attack, she simply stood still, her residual anger enabling her to stand her ground and overcome the desire to flee the space. After a very short time, people began to react overwhelmingly negatively to her stillness. She was commented upon, aggressively questioned and even physically jostled. Evidently discomfort may be created in this space through stillness or movement, when either way of inhabiting the space differs from the norm (pers. comm. from Sandra Johnston, 13 Nov. 2003).
- <sup>71</sup> Rendell, 'Bazaar beauties', p. 117.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>73</sup> E. Wilson, quoted in L. Lippard, *The lure of the local: senses of place in a multicentered society* (New York, New Press, 1997), p. 197.
- <sup>74</sup> I. Borden, J. Rendell, J. Kerr and A. Pivaro, 'Things, flows, filters, tactics', in Borden *et al.*, *The unknown city*, pp. 11–12.
- <sup>75</sup> A. Rich, *Blood, bread and poetry: selected prose 1979–1985* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1986), p. 213.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>78</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 68.
- <sup>79</sup> Borden *et al.*, 'Things, flows, filters, tactics', p. 12.
- <sup>80</sup> H. Robinson, 'Fragments and speculations towards a context for "crossing borders"', in Chadwick and Raciti, *Crossing boundaries*, p. 8.
- <sup>81</sup> A belief in the reconciliatory power of simply telling people's stories is becoming increasingly evident in Northern Ireland, probably inspired at least in part by the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa; see e.g. B. Rolston, *Turning the page without closing the book: the right to truth in the Irish context* (Dublin, Irish Reporter Publications, 1996) and B. Hamber, ed., *Past imperfect: dealing with the past in Northern Ireland and societies in transition* (Derry, INCORE, 1998). While truth-telling without judgement is not clearly apparent at official political levels and remains a problematic process for communities, the arts-based charitable organization An Crann (The Tree) explicitly makes use of storytelling to open up dialogue. It states:

we are dedicated to providing a space in which people can tell and hear the splintered, complex, often contradictory stories of the 'Troubles' as part of a process which contributes not only to the ethos of peace, healing and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, but also to building a more inclusive, rounded story of the conflict. It is An Crann's belief that only by embracing all perspectives of the 'Troubles' can we, as a society, break through prejudice and suspicion to rediscover our similarities, respect our differences, and chart a fresh course for our future together.

(<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/heritage/heritagedatabase/HeritageDetails.asp?id=82>).