

Producing Inventive Transgressions in Belfast: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Peacelines

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Abstract
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This paper explores the ways in which de Certeau's concepts of consumption and production inform rhetorical reception and invention. These notions are used to investigate the effects of the peacelines of Belfast, Northern Ireland. The peacelines are 50-foot tall concrete and barbed wire walls that separate Protestant and Catholic communities in Belfast. I argue that the peacelines are a representative place that provide grounds for the invention of rhetorical acts that develop and reinforce dialectically produced communal identities through stories of memory, ritual and territoriality.

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According to British Army General Sir Ian Freeland, on September 10, 1969, “The peaceline will be a very, very temporary affair...we will not have a Berlin Wall or anything like that in this city”.¹ Over thirty-five years later, peacelines still stand throughout Belfast, continuing to grow in number, height and length. The peacelines are 50-foot tall concrete walls that snake throughout Belfast in contemporary Northern Ireland. At present, there are 13 separate walls, referred to individually as a peaceline and collectively as the peacelines.² Each peaceline is typically modified by the name of the two communities it separates (e.g., The Falls/Shankill peaceline) or by the name of the road on which the peaceline is built (e.g., the Springfield Road peaceline). These names may be used interchangeably.³

The peacelines are built at interfaces or flashpoints, which are locations of extreme and/or regular violence between two communities, one Catholic and one Protestant.⁴ According to the *Belfast Telegraph* special report, “Peace On The

¹ Quinn, *Interface Images*, 8.

² McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 56.

³ McGuckin, “Peace on the Peacelines?,” 1.

⁴ The terms Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland do not necessarily correlate with regular church attendance. Rather, these titles indicate a political identity with mutually exclusive goals. Catholics are otherwise referred to herein as Nationalists or Republicans and they wish to see a united Ireland, with the 6 counties of Northern Ireland joining with the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland. The Protestants, on

Peacelines,” “The first peaceline was made up of a human chain of soldiers from the Third Battalion of the Light Infantry, who took up position between Protestant and Catholic crowds on Friday, August 15, 1969-- the day the Army was sent onto the streets of Belfast”.⁵ A month later, British Army General Sir Ian Freeland ordered his troops to begin the erection of defense structures in flashpoint areas. A temporary barrier was erected between Catholic Falls Road and Protestant Shankill Road. As the Troubles⁶ continued the barrier was reified by concrete and barbed wire. This peaceline still stands today.⁷ Following the North Belfast rioting of July 1970, the Army built a second wall on Crumlin Road. Since that time the Army has constructed eleven other permanent structures.

There are two primary functions of a peaceline. First, the wall is meant to prevent individuals of one community from damaging property in the other with petrol bombs, bricks, golf balls, etc.⁸ The second function is to block escape routes from one community into the next. Before the peacelines, a Protestant or Catholic “para”⁹ could

the other hand, also referred to as Loyalists or Unionists, wish to keep Northern Ireland independent of the South and remain in the United Kingdom.

⁵ McGuckin, “Peace on the Peacelines?,” 1.

⁶ The period of violent civil conflict between the late 1960’s, 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s in Northern Ireland is referred to as the Troubles. For an excellent overview of this period, please see McKittrick, D. and D. McVea. 2002. *Making sense of the Troubles: The story of the conflict in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: New Amsterdam Books.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ McDonald, “The Fountain,” 18.

⁹ Short for paramilitary member

enter the enemy neighborhood, carry out a hit, and then melt back into his¹⁰ own community without detection. The peacelines physically blocked these escape routes.¹¹ Additionally, the peacelines are equipped with security cameras manned by the state police, known in the communities as “spy cameras,” which are meant to dissuade individuals from penetrating the boundaries of the opposition community.¹² The peacelines are a site of contradictions: it is a wall demanded by citizens to protect their lives and property from those same citizens, erected by an impotent army that was stoned while building it by the people who requested it and outfitted with panoptic security devices that are destroyed by the people paying for their maintenance. The wall keeps people in and out simultaneously and appears to be the one thing that materially bonds these two communities together. It serves as a fulcrum, or stasis point, in the dichotomy of perspectives the two communities hold.

While there are many newspaper stories addressing the building and development of the peacelines in Northern Irish newspapers, there is little scholarly writing on the

¹⁰ Women were significantly involved in paramilitaries during the Troubles, particularly in the Republican organizations. A majority of the violent acts were indeed performed by men, but women, such as the members of Cumann na mban, “The League of Women,” were involved in committing violence against the English and Loyalists. Many of these Republican women were interned in the H-Blocks and commenced the initial dirty protest, though this fact is rarely acknowledged. A majority of the discourse on the association of paramilitaries with the peacelines focuses on the activities of male paramilitary members (see Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 31). When I refer to “his” or “him” in this paper, I in no way intend to diminish the role that women played in these organizations. I simply intend to remain consistent with the narratives of local communities and the explicated interaction of paramilitaries and the peacelines.

¹¹ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 43.

¹² Bailie, “Removing Barrier,” 12.

subject. The peacelines are mentioned in several texts on Northern Ireland,¹³ but they are not the focus of these works. “The walls are subordinated to the larger themes and are mentioned mostly as scenery--background for the comings-and-goings of the communities under study.”¹⁴ This is a structure that warrants focused examination for both pragmatic and theoretical reasons. Pragmatically, a study of the peacelines may add to an understanding of the factions involved in the Northern Irish conflict. While the conflict is extraordinarily complex in nature, many scholars agree that identity disputes lie at its heart.¹⁵

While there has been significant research into the way that protests,¹⁶ sexuality,¹⁷ and postcolonialism¹⁸ have influenced the identity production of the people of Northern Ireland, there has been little rhetorical analysis of the way that the physical landscape has contributed to the development of these identities.¹⁹ Sites of material rhetoric, such as the peacelines, do call for examination. Communities that border the peacelines must negotiate their everyday movement by the confines of this 50-foot wall that demarcates

¹³ E.g. Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 31; McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 56.

¹⁴ Lauber, *Belfast's Peacelines*

¹⁵ E.g. Kelleher, *The Troubles in Ballybogoin*; Taylor, *Loyalists*.

¹⁶ Aretxaga, “Dirty Protest”

¹⁷ Conrad, “Queer Treasons”

¹⁸ Lloyd, *Regarding Ireland*

¹⁹ There is a significant body of literature in geography, urban and regional planning, history and sociology on the way that physical landscape figures into the Northern Irish conflict. However, much of this literature was written during the Troubles and does not consider the rhetorical aspects of landscape. Therefore, while useful for many projects, it does not greatly inform my analysis of the present representative and inventive work that is done on and around the peacelines.

their border. This is bound to have certain effects on how they perceive their own community's identity, particularly in relation to the community that lives on the other side of the peaceline. The pragmatic consequences of such study include the ability to offer information to those who are planning, funding and building the environment in which these factions live. If the environment does affect the way that communities build identity and relate to the other, then an alteration of this environment might provide productive results. This alteration must first begin with information and understanding, which I hope to provide. Toward this pragmatic end I am pursuing the following research question: what are the effects of the peacelines, particularly with regard to the mutually informing identity production processes of the Catholic and Protestant communities that border it?

This project has important theoretical implications as well. Material texts are quite different from written or spoken texts. Blair identifies the two initial challenges to developing a heuristic for rhetorically analyzing material artifacts: the tendency to focus exclusively on a text's symbolicity and the liberal humanist insistence on the control and intentionality of the rhetor as essential. The first step toward meeting these challenges is to recognize that "no text is a text, nor does it have meaning, influence, political stance, or legibility, in the absence of material form."²⁰ When examining a material text, the critic must use a heuristic that permits her to attend to both the symbolicity and materiality of the artifact. Blair argues that to respond to the second challenge, "we must

²⁰ Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites," 18.

ask not just what a text means but, more generally, what it does: and we must not understand what it does as adhering strictly to what it was supposed to do.”²¹

I will attend to the two requirements that Blair posits when developing a heuristic to study the peacelines. There are two primary reasons why I must develop an independent heuristic rather than using a theoretical perspective already in existence. First, most of the rhetorical scholarship on material texts before Blair’s 1999 article fell into the traps that Blair identified, limiting the use of their heuristics. Some of the rhetorical work that follows Blair’s article takes heed of her arguments and attempts to expand their focus accordingly.²² However, a majority of this scholarship is about commemorative works,²³ which is the second reason for being unable to use these heuristics.

Commemorative and non-commemorative sites serve different purposes and therefore are likely to have different effects.²⁴ Because a majority of the work after Blair’s article focuses on commemorative sites, and commemorative sites have different effects than non-commemorative sites, a heuristic drawn from this work may not be appropriate for studying a non-commemorative site such as the peacelines. However, it is not just lack of research that provides the imperative to study non-commemorative

²¹ Ibid., 23

²² E.g. Atwater and Herndon, “Cultural Space and Race”

²³ E.g. Biesecker, “Remembering World War II”; Mandziuk, “Commemorating Sojourner Truth”

²⁴ The distinction between commemorative and non-commemorative sites is a difficult one to distinguish. Both are functional and both are commemorative to some degree. Part of the distinction may lie in the issue of temporality. Commemorative sites tend to mark contained, past events. Non-commemorative sites tend to be characterized by less temporally confined speech acts.

sites. When these sites, such as the peacelines, influence behavior and attitudes in the midst of a violence-ridden society, it is crucial that we engage these artifacts critically to discover what effects these non-commemorative sites produce and how they produce them. If some of these effects contribute to the perpetuation of violence or the segregation of portions of the population, then discovering this and offering information to facilitate an alteration of the situation is vital. Furthermore, continuing the emergent discussion on non-commemorative sites²⁵ may provide further insight (via juxtaposition) into the way that commemorative texts function rhetorically. I will continue this discussion on a theoretical level with the following questions: how does one rhetorically approach the non-commemorative, material site of the peacelines? How does this heuristic permit the critic to explore the peacelines' effects?

In order to attend to these questions and consider the two challenges Blair has posed, I turn to the work of two primary theorists: Michael de Certeau and Kenneth Burke. The latter will be supplemented with Clark's work on representative place. The heuristic begins with de Certeau because he clearly meets both of Blair's requirements. First, de Certeau argues that urban space is a fact, but that a city comes into being when this fact is linked with the concept of the city. A city is not constituted exclusively by its materiality. Nor is it constituted entirely by the symbols associated with the perception of the city (e.g. overdetermined ideas of a city's available cosmopolitan lifestyle, cut-throat competition, culture, wealth, opulence, poverty, etc). Rather it is *both* the materiality and the symbolicity, meeting Blair's primary condition.

²⁵ Corey, "Performing Sexualities"; Marback, "Detroit and the Closed Fist"; Procter, "Placing Lincoln"

Second, de Certeau focuses on consumption as a new means of production. One may subvert a system by using its products in a way quite different than the dominant force had in mind. So while the Army may have erected the peacelines, the effects will depend largely on the “consuming” communities. The movement from consumption to production may be also thought of as the move from reception to invention. In other words, the individual or community will transform from audience to rhetor in the process of identity constitution. This allows the critic to step out of the liberal humanist perspective that Blair identifies that focuses exclusively on the rhetor’s intended effects.

This heuristic will be developed primarily out of the section “Marking Out Boundaries” from de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In this section he argues, “it is the partition of space that structures it”.²⁶ He claims that stories mark out spaces and “everyday they [stories] traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out the them.”²⁷ When de Certeau tells the critic to read boundaries as stories, this does not mean to consider only those stories discovered in spoken language that are imparted by one individual to another. Stories for de Certeau are also found in the movements of people, the ways that they walk through space and don’t walk through other spaces. Even when de Certeau reads footsteps as metaphors through speech act theory, he still does not lose track of the material existence of walking. He attends to the stories’ symbolic effects as well as their existence as real people’s footsteps on the ground of a city.

²⁶ 123

²⁷ *Grammar*, 115

The need to work with stories leads one to the primary dramatistic theorist, Kenneth Burke. Indeed, the interaction between the peacelines and their effects in the surrounding communities compose enacted drama. In *A Grammar of Motives* Burke introduces his conception of the relationship between the dramatic and the dialectic.²⁸ Burke states, “by dialectics in the most general sense we mean the employment of the possibilities of linguistic transformation. Or we may mean the study of such possibilities. Though we have often used ‘dialectic’ and ‘dramatistic’ as synonymous, dialectic in the general sense is a word of broader scope, since it includes idioms that are non-dramatistic.”²⁹

Dialectics are an appropriate choice for this study not just because of their association with the dramatistic, their narrative character, and their heuristic possibilities for material texts, but also because dialectics give us a very specific way of analyzing drama. To analyze dialectics, Burke argues, one should “look for key terms, one seeks to decide which terms are ancestral and which derivative; and one expects to find terms possessing ambiguities that will bridge the gulf between other terms or otherwise serve as developmental functions.”³⁰ Burke proposes a cluster analysis with particular attention to terms of merger or division.

The way that these stories are able to merge and divide communities is through the process of identification. Identification is “compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for a rhetorician to proclaim their

²⁸ Ibid., 340

²⁹ Ibid., 402

³⁰ Ibid., 402

unity.”³¹ Burke further argues, “you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his.”³² Identification occurs on an individual level, but through narrative or story becomes something that creates communal identity. Burke would argue, however, that this does not happen with just any story, but rather with “some representative public enactment, to which all members of a given social body variously but communally subscribe.”³³ This “representative anecdote” will offer an outline for communal identity and individual action.³⁴ A representative anecdote has to be sufficiently large in scope to represent the constituted community but clear and specific enough to be critically manageable.

Clark expands the idea of representative anecdote to one of representative place, arguing that New York is one such representative place for Americans. “Adapting Burke’s concept of ‘representative anecdote,’ we might describe as a ‘representative place’ one where people experience themselves as identified with the particular characteristics of the community that the place has come to symbolize.”³⁵ Clark contends that, while Burke places representative anecdotes in language, we can situate them in public experience or “representative place.” This movement back to the material, completed by the conceptual or symbolic, is precisely the move to make to satisfy a Burkean reading of the peacelines of Belfast. The material existence of a community

³¹ Burke, *Rhetoric*, 22

³² *Ibid.*, 55

³³ Burke, *Grammar*, 328

³⁴ Burke, *Rhetoric*, 435

³⁵ *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*, 39

member's habitat will affect motive and identity.³⁶ In this paper I will argue that the peacelines are a representative place that provides grounds for the invention of rhetorical acts that develop and reinforce dialectically positioned communal identities through stories of memory, ritual and territoriality.

Dialectical Communal Identities

Protestant and Catholic identities exist in a dialectical relationship to one another.³⁷ The history of the Irish conflict demonstrates just how entrenched this dialectical relationship is in the identity of the modern Catholic and Protestant populations. Since at least 1100, England has considered Ireland to be an island of enduring conflict to which God has burdened England with the responsibility of bringing peace. These sentiments became especially pronounced in the 1540s when England moved toward Protestantism and viewed Catholic Ireland as a security threat at its "back door."³⁸ Thus, in the 1600s England provided Scottish and English Protestants with great tracts of land in Ireland to develop plantations in an effort to diffuse Irish Catholicism. Though Ireland up to this point had a rich history of diversity in religion and nationality, the arrival of the planters caused the Irish Catholics to turn inwards and fiercely defend a "native" Irish identity.³⁹ Planters found themselves outnumbered and surrounded by a seemingly hostile Catholic population, causing a "nervous defensiveness amongst the settlers" (Smith 2002, 27).

³⁶ Burke, *Grammar*, 3

³⁷ Balthrop, "British Thugs," 20

³⁸ Smith, *Making the Peace*, 25

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27

The dialectic at this point was framed in terms of planter/native and Protestant/Catholic. Sectarian violence broke out with increasing frequency, as native Irish turned on the planters “in a violent attempt to reclaim their land.”⁴⁰ Protestant planters developed an understanding of Catholics as “treacherous, vengeful, covetous of Protestant land and eager to reclaim Ireland for the Pope. A Catholic stereotype entered the Protestant/settler mind-set that has helped to shape Protestant attitudes and define their own identity ever since.”⁴¹ The Catholic Irish responded to these stereotypes by maintaining narratives of Irish history that proved them to be anything but crude, unlearned and cowardly. “It was the English insistence that Ireland was a barbarous country which drove the Irish to construct, so as to sustain their own pride, a romantic and consoling counter-image, in which ancient Ireland was displayed as a land of saints and scholars, warlike but chivalrous Celtic heroes, and monks of great learning and Christian zeal, the whole island a light in a dark world.”⁴² Importantly, the counter image driven by Catholic articulations of Irish history was created *in response* to Protestant images of Catholic identity.

These stories of Irish virtue were articulated around the implicit notion that it was the English Protestants who were oppressing this culture and were therefore uncivilized and uncouth. These myths developed into a very explicit political agenda: “nationalism came to Ireland and found within the Catholic culture a rich seam of ancient myths and folk memories that could be galvanized into an historic right for Ireland to rule itself.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² O’Farrell, *England and Ireland*, 4

⁴³ Smith, *Making the Peace*, 31

These myths are still deployed to argue for continued Irish resistance to Protestant influence in government and society. Thus, the dialectical construction of identity was extended into mutually exclusive, dialectical agendas for political action. Though the terms “Unionist” and “Republican” were not solidified at this historical juncture, these are the political titles that the communities eventually developed for themselves. The dialectical terms were therefore planter/native, Protestant/Catholic and Unionist/Republican.

The Catholic communal identity was developed in opposition to the Protestant identity.⁴⁴ The Catholic identity was also developed strategically to divide the community from the stereotype that Protestants imposed on their population. Simultaneously, the Protestant identity developed in opposition to the understanding of Catholic identity that Protestants had developed. These communities continue to engage in this process of internal merging and conscious division from the opposition’s identity. Ironically, however, the very process of communal merging required identification and cooperation with the opposition. In order for the Catholic identity to develop around the idea of a self-ruled Ireland, Ireland had to be not self-ruled. Protestants provided (or imposed) the lack of self-rule for the Irish and thus cooperated in the merging of the Catholic community.

The event that served as the Protestant identity’s touchstone occurred in 1689, when the Protestant city of Derry, which was surrounded by high walls, endured a 105-day siege by Catholic King James II.⁴⁵ “This furnished the Protestant/settler identity with

⁴⁴ Balthrop, “British Thugs”, 20

⁴⁵ McBride, *The Siege of Derry*, 19

a triumphalism, a steely fortitude and a sense of mission about resisting the Catholic hordes.”⁴⁶ The Protestants divided themselves from the perceived Catholic oppressor and identified with the refusal of the people of Derry to surrender to a Catholic king. However, this took the cooperation of the Catholic army that cordoned Derry to develop the siege mentality that remains with the population today.

In 1690 King William of Orange triumphed over King James the II at the Battle of the Boyne and brought Ireland under the control of the Protestant British crown. Both of these events are celebrated in Protestant stories and yearly rituals such as the 12th of July parades to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne. In 1801, the Westminster Parliament shut down the Irish based government, signed the Act of Union and took direct control of Ireland’s affairs. Violence and upheaval continued and, in December of 1920, the signing of the Partition Act created two home rule parliaments. One parliament was located in the 26 counties in the southern region of Ireland known as the “free state.” The other was located in the predominantly Protestant northern 6 counties. In 1949 the South became the Republic of Ireland.⁴⁷

Northern Ireland remained about two-thirds Protestant. Although Northern Irish Protestants had an unstable relationship with England, Protestants “emphatically regarded themselves as British and not Irish. They not only treasured the link with Britain but dreaded the alternative, which they envisaged as a united Ireland in which Irish nationalists would attack their political, religious and economic interests.”⁴⁸ The

⁴⁶ Smith, *Making the Peace*, 28

⁴⁷ McKittrick and McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, 243

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2

dialectic has expanded to include terms of British/Irish along with Unionist/Republican, Protestant/Catholic and planter/native. The history that I have reduced to just paragraphs here can be further encapsulated into two slogans, one to represent each of the communities. These slogans are deployed by the Republican/Unionist communities in a variety of settings to accomplish present political goals that contribute to the larger goal of a united Ireland or a British Ulster.⁴⁹

Protestants use the phrase “No Surrender!” in a variety of settings, including political rallies, religious meetings and on consumer products.⁵⁰ The phrase references the refusal of the people of Derry to negotiate with King James during his siege of Derry. The governor at the time, Lundy, encouraged negotiation and was driven out of the city in shame. Being called a “Lundy” remains a serious insult to a Protestant in modern Northern Ireland. The phrase “No Surrender!” is repeated in many Protestant songs that are played and sung at the annual twelfth of July parades. For example, in the song “Hands Across the Water” the Protestants sing the following chorus:

And it's hands across the water
Reaching out for you and me
For Queen, For Ulster and For Scotland
Helps to keep our Loyal people free
Let the cry be "No Surrender"
Let no-one doubt this Loyalty
Reaching out to the Brave Red Hand of Ulster
Is the hand across the sea⁵¹

⁴⁹ For a more in-depth analysis of these two phrases as representative anecdote, please see Balthrop, V.W. (1978).

⁵⁰ I spent three weeks in Northern Ireland conducting research in the summer of 2005. Most of this time was spent in Belfast on the divide of the Falls and the Shankill. The number of times I saw or heard these phrases is innumerable.

⁵¹ Orange Pages, “Hands Across the Water”

This song encourages the Protestant listeners to shout the phrase as a rallying cry to arms. While the notion of surrender does serve as a metaphor and is fitted into a variety of situations, it is inextricable from the historical reference to Derry, as demonstrated by the chorus of the song “Derry’s Walls”:

The cry is “No Surrender!”
And come when duty calls,
With heart and hand and sword and shield,
we’ll guard old Derry’s Walls.⁵²

In an interesting extension of this historical referent, the Loyalists use the phrase “No Surrender” liberally on their murals, which are painted on communal walls. For example, the “Ulster’s Bravehearts” mural in Edgarstown Estate, Portadown, County Armagh depict two fallen Loyalist Volunteer Force (Loyalist paramilitary) volunteers with the phrase “No Surrender!” marking them as “true” Loyalists who will be immortalized in Unionist memory (see Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1 Mural on a gable of Edgarstown housing estate, Portadown, County Armagh.
Photograph by Jonathan McCormick for the CAIN mural archives.*

⁵² Orange Pages, “Derry’s Walls”

The phrase is written on an adjunct wall to the gable, presumably so that that writing could be large enough to read from far away without making the neighboring picture any smaller. The use of a second palate reinforces the connection between the phrase and walls. The phrase is not painted on the house gable, but on a wall that protects the homes on the other side of it. These walls, like Derry's, will not be surrendered by the Loyalist paramilitaries who fight in the legacy of the Apprentice Boys of Derry, or such at least is the implication.

Not all visual uses of this phrase take place on murals. Sometimes the phrase is simply scrawled as graffiti on walls or painted on walls that mark territory (see Fig. 2). The phrase is extremely salient and represents the Protestant sense of siege. It embodies the Protestant historical legacy and subsequent responsibility to refuse to surrender.



*Fig. 2 Mural on the wall of a Cluan Place home, Belfast
Photograph by Jonathan McCormick for the CAIN mural archives.*



*Fig. 3 Mural on a wall on Hawkin Street, Londonderry
Photograph by Jonathan McCormick for the CAIN mural archives.*

As Protestants merge around this phrase they divide themselves from the Catholic population. Yet, again, it takes the cooperation of the Catholic population, both historically by the forces of King James the II, and contemporarily by the Catholic population that continues to grow in size, economic development and property needs, to be defined as those placing the Protestants “under siege.” However, the Protestants do not have exclusive claim to the identity of victim. Catholics too claim to be under siege and refuse to negotiate. The Catholics use the phrase “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace” as a communal rallying cry.

This phrase was originally authored by Padraig Pearse who led the Easter Rising of 1916. He was the commander-in-chief of the Irish Republic and closed the funeral oration of Fenian Jeremiah O’Donnovan Rossa with the words:

Our foes are strong and wise and wary; but, strong and wise and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of '65 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening today. Rulers and Defenders of the Realm had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes. Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but, the fools, the fools, the fools! — They have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.⁵³

⁵³ Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, 134

The last sentence has been immortalized through repetition in Catholic publications, songs, shirts, and murals. For example, in the Beechmount Avenue mural on the Falls in Belfast, the phrase is similarly positioned to the Loyalist phrase described above (see Fig. 4).



*Fig. 4 Mural on the wall of a Beechmount Avenue, Falls, Belfast
Photograph by Danny Morrison.*

The phrase is salient in the Catholic population and creates communal merger. The phrase also serves as a rallying cry and a call to action, specifically that of disturbing the “peace” until Ireland is free. “Peace” is a God-term in many violent conflicts. In the Northern Irish conflict this phrase is deployed as an ultimatum: bring about freedom through unification with the Republic and then peace may prevail. The merger that occurs around this phrase for the Catholics and the division from the oppressors, again

requires the cooperation of the Protestant population. The Protestants must oppress and support an “unfree” Ireland in order for this phrase to be salient.

These two slogans cannot be viewed in isolation. They function dialectically, as do the identity making consequences of their deployment. The Protestants refuse to surrender. They continue to feel as though their rights, territory and very existence are under siege. They are correct. The Catholics place them under siege in the sense that they refuse to support peace until Ireland is free. The Catholics will lay Protestant territory to violent siege until Ireland is united. Of course, the Protestants refuse to surrender Ireland. Keeping Ireland “unfree” constitutes “No Surrender.” Thus, there will never be peace. The dialectic that these communal narratives operate within indicates a bleak future for those who find these phrases salient.

Not all Catholic and Protestant communities continue to identify with the dialectical identities constructed by these slogans. However, the communities that border the peacelines in Belfast demonstrate a significant degree of identification with these narratives. Peaceline communities are known as “terrorist communities” that provide the majority of paramilitary volunteers.⁵⁴ These slogans are often scrawled on the peacelines or painted on houses that border the peacelines (see Fig. 4). People from these two communities commit to a violent refusal to surrender or permit peace. As paramilitary members, they continue to put their bodies on the line in an extreme representation of their commitment to their communal identity as articulated through these slogans.

The peacelines are a place where these communal identities of siege and oppression come to material fruition. It is a “place where people experience themselves

⁵⁴ Springfield Inter-Community Development Project, *Life on the Interface*, 18

as identified with the particular characteristics of the community that the place has come to symbolize.”⁵⁵ As such, the peacelines are a representative place.

Peacelines as Representative Place

Clark argues that “The ‘scene’ of that shared situation (of the representative anecdote) is itself a representative place where those people can encounter for themselves the experiences that enable them to imagine themselves, despite their differences, contributing to a community there.”⁵⁶ The peacelines are the scene where the Protestants identify with the salient narrative of the siege of Derry and the refusal to surrender. This is not surprising given the preeminence of walls in the narrative. The song “Derry’s Walls” highlights in the title and chorus the specific material structure that the people of Derry refused to surrender to Catholic breach. The murals with the slogan “No Surrender” are painted on walls of houses or walls protecting houses. Even more blatantly, the phrase “No Surrender” appears written in many places on and around the peacelines.

Protestants living beside this wall embrace an identity that supports a stance of “No Surrender” through the writing of the slogan and through the production of paramilitary volunteers who defend the Protestant side from the Catholic paramilitaries. Protestants feel closed in and under siege by their Catholic neighbors. The wall provides a visual site remarkably similar to the walls of Derry that inform the communal slogan.

⁵⁵ Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*, 39

⁵⁶ Ibid., 39

Catholics cooperate in the merger around the sense of siege through the IRA volunteers,⁵⁷ political momentum and speech acts discussed below.

The peacelines serve as a representative place for the Catholic narrative of “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.” One of the most salient moments in Republican history was the internment of Catholics in the H-Blocks during the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁸ During this period, Republicans in the prisons commenced a Gaelic revival to relearn the Irish language and culture, developed and executed plans to kill guards off duty with help from outside paramilitary members, began and ended a hunger strike in which ten men died, and engaged a dirty protest during which they smeared the walls of their cells with urine and feces.⁵⁹ Every one of these acts was meant to forward the revolution and interrupt any peace that might settle on the divided island. The ten hunger strikers are immortalized on many Republican murals, the Republic of Ireland requires children to learn Irish in school, and ex-internees are treated with a great deal of respect in their communities.

All of these moments of identification figure into the Republican narrative of “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.” The Gaelic revival, killing of guards, hunger

⁵⁷ Or, depending on the area of the city, some of the IRA splinter groups such as the Continuity IRA (CIRA) or the Real IRA (RIRA). These groups control different areas of Catholic territory in Belfast. Each group is committed to the unification of Northern Ireland and the Republic. However, some of these splinter groups accept the ceasefire agreement that ensures this unification will be achieved peacefully, while other groups deny the legitimacy of the agreement and still possess and use arms to forward their political aims.

⁵⁸ The H-blocks are so-named because the prison was built in the shape of an H.

⁵⁹ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 181

strike, and dirty protest are profoundly associated with the material space of the H-block cells. The walls of the H-blocks were physical sites of protest. For example, the walls were covered with feces from the dirty protests and only one sacred place was left open for the Irish language.⁶⁰ In prisons, Republicans who were learning the Irish Gaelic language would write new words on their prison walls to share their knowledge with the prisoner who would move in after them. The language then moved from the walls to the people. The language was freed when the prisoner was released. The prisoner came to embody the identity on the wall.

Murals that commemorate the prisoners and the hunger strikers are often drawn around the central image of the H-Blocks. For example, the image in Fig. 5 is sold by the Sinn Fein store online to raise money for the Republican cause.

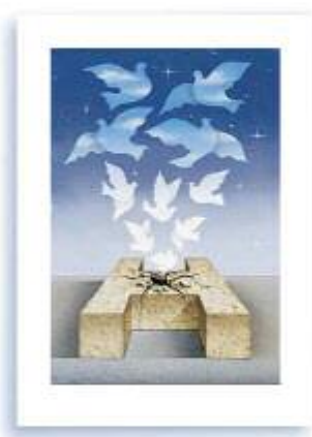


Fig. 5 Sinn Fein print in honor of the 25th anniversary of the hunger strikes

The H-Blocks and the revolutionary acts that took place within their walls are strong narratives that function in the identification with “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 211

The peacelines are a representative place for Catholics that ascribe to this identity rooted in H-block imprisonment. The cold, concrete visual of the walls serves to figuratively and literally imprison contemporary Catholics. The walls are daily reminders of the narrative of the H-blocks and the men who martyred themselves trying to bring peace through a free Ireland. The walls also literally imprison the Catholic. Though the Catholic community has outgrown many of the housing estates on the Republican side of the peacelines, they are unable to expand territorially, even into empty houses, because those houses are located on the Loyalist side of the peacelines. The Loyalists participate in this narrative through their very presence. As long as Loyalists live on the side of the peacelines opposite to Catholics, Catholics will not move to occupy those houses. Thus the Loyalist presence imprisons the Catholics.

This dialectical site of identity production partitions space. This partition is what structures the space.⁶¹ The wall encloses the Catholic narrative of the H-Blocks by defining the other side as “Protestant.” Many more Catholics were imprisoned than Protestants during internment, and guards and police officers were predominantly Protestant.⁶² The police officer who imprisons and the guards who watch the prisoner are located on the other side of the peacelines. The partition structures a space for the other, dialectical, Protestant.

The Protestants see the partition as a modernization of Derry’s walls. The peacelines are meant to keep out the invading, rabid, Catholic army. Catholic participation in this initial raid and its contemporary manifestations induce a degree of

⁶¹ de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 123

⁶² Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 191

identification between the two communities in this narrative. Thus the peacelines structure a space on the other side of the wall that is other, dialectical and Catholic.

The peaceline narratives also create identification through a mutual sense of victimhood. In the Protestant story, they are victims of Catholic aggression, but will still not surrender regardless of the price. In the Catholic narrative, they are an oppressed, imprisoned people who continue to fight for peace. Both narratives require cooperation of the opposition to be the enemy/oppressor. The narratives also lead to a merging of the two communities around the common notion of victimhood.

Creating a salient image of victim does not have only symbolic impacts on identity. If a community is able to demonstrate that they are victims of injustice and violence that they do not perpetrate, then this community is clearly more likely to receive governmental grants.⁶³ Communities apply for these grants to support community projects such as after school programs, cultural centers and cross-community dialogue. These programs employ people in the peaceline communities that have the highest rates of unemployment in the country. The grants bring money into the economically deprived area. Of course, these funds are limited, and competition for them is fierce. The government does not want to appear to be funding terrorists. Thus, the voice and construction of communal identity as victimized has impacts on the ability of people in the community to pay bills, feed mouths and move out of poverty.

With the stakes so high, both communities have become adept at developing and deploying the narrative of victimhood external to their communities. For example, in 2004 Sinn Fein released a pamphlet to the community that detailed steps to be taken if

⁶³ Connolly, "Violence Breaks Out," 1

interface violence takes place. In this template, there is an emphasis on the preparation of stories for the media. One is instructed to call a Sinn Fein representative before calling the police in order that a report may be compiled and a press statement released. The template emphasizes the importance of holding the Protestants accountable to the public and not to the police.⁶⁴

Metaphors are often used to distribute these narratives of victimhood to the press. Many community members will argue that they are victims of ethnic cleansing.⁶⁵ This evokes salient images of the Holocaust and the phrase “never again.” Tapping into this cultural metaphor transforms the communal struggle beyond the peaceline-bound communities into one of international political obligation to help the victims of such ethnic cleansing. The merging of the victim identity with those peoples who history has legitimated as victims will transfer some of that moral authority to the peaceline community’s cause. This merger with the Holocaust victims divides the opposition’s identity while merging that identity with the Holocaust’s Nazi perpetrators.

This metaphor is often accompanied in newspapers by photographs of the peacelines. The images of the walls are internally identified with stories of the H-Blocks and Derry. However, the image of the wall is deployed externally to identify peacelines with the high concrete walls and barbed wire that enclosed the Nazi death camps. Often these photos will show a young child or an elderly woman standing at the wall touching its cold stone, looking longingly into the other side.⁶⁶ The child or elderly woman

⁶⁴ Sinn Fein, *Template for Interface Intervention*, 2-3

⁶⁵ E.g. Robinson, *Victims*, 14; The Catholic, *Children Scream and Cry*, 1

⁶⁶ E.g. Quinn, *Interface Images*, 8; Gallagher, *A Photographic Exploration*, 10

embodies the traditional image of the innocent victim. These images support the Holocaust narrative of communities trapped inside impenetrable walls, awaiting ethnic cleansing.

The deftly deployed image of victim is not a complete fabrication, however. Peaceline communities do consist of the socio-economic victims of Northern Irish society. “If you live in a peaceline community--compared to Northern Ireland averages--you are much more likely to be on low income, a third more likely to be in poverty, twice as likely to be unemployed, and six times less likely to have A-level standard education.”⁶⁷ The peaceline communities are isolated from the parts of Northern Ireland that are experiencing great economic growth. This isolation leads to a profound “sense of powerlessness.”⁶⁸ Residents of a peaceline community experience a growing sense of “class polarization and spatial apartheid,”⁶⁹ which increases the feeling of being treated as “outsiders.”⁷⁰ These communities “experience strongly held views that they are dispossessed and forgotten by the state.”⁷¹

This sense of isolation only increases the tendency of peaceline communities to turn inward. The sense of being abandoned and left to fend for themselves is performed in the erection of many self-sustaining social institutions such as the IRA functioning as communal police with legitimate restorative justice measures, private Catholic schools for children to attend and shops owned and run by Catholics for Catholics. In this

⁶⁷ Springfield Interface Project, *Impact of the Shankill/Falls/Springfield*, 5

⁶⁸ Springfield Inter-Community Development Project, *Life on the Interface*, 18

⁶⁹ Lauber, *Belfast's Peacelines*, 38

⁷⁰ Springfield Inter-Community Development Project, *Life on the Interface*, 18

⁷¹ Murtagh, *The Role of Security*, 24

fashion Catholics created a new sense of being the in-group, defending against the immediate attackers and greater social inequality. The Protestants also have their own shops, paramilitary restorative justice tribunals and state-run (effectively Protestant) schools. However, these are diminishing in number as more Catholics move into the traditionally Protestant territories and young Protestant people move out of interface areas.⁷² The young Protestant population argues that they move out of their communities because they don't like the sense of being trapped. They say "they're not 'peacelines' to us, they're barriers. They stop us going where we like, and they keep us in our own areas, especially at night."⁷³ Catholic housing wards surround Protestants in many situations. Protestants sense the Catholic population enclosing them in a siege to which they will not surrender.

The isolation that these communities experience is annihilating them economically. When both communities deploy images of victimhood in order to gain funds, the media becomes inundated with images of peaceline violence. The dialectical communities cooperate in the development of the victim identity, which brings about government grants. However, this cooperation is also causing mutual destruction as businesses and industries refuse to move to peaceline areas.

Communal annihilation is also materialized in ritual acts of violence that occur at the representative place of the peaceline. Violence is a profound way of performing identity difference and division.⁷⁴ During the Troubles of the late 1960s, 1970s, 1980s

⁷² Turner, *Unionist Fears*, 1

⁷³ Belfast Interface Project, *Young People*, 21

⁷⁴ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 19

and early 1990s violence took on the scale of a national civil war. While widespread violence has since decreased, studies show that violence in interface areas is increasing.⁷⁵ What these isolated communities have done is to “concentrate violence in manageable but exchangeable forms” over the peacelines.⁷⁶

Peaceline violence is synecdochical. Bricks thrown at houses are representations of property and communal destruction. Efforts to fight back against these attacks on localized micro-identities (e.g. Shankill Protestant) represent efforts to fight the threat to the national political macro-identity (e.g. British, Protestant, planter, Unionist, Loyalist) of the communities. The communities that border the peacelines are representative in their own narratives of broader dialectical identities of British/Irish, planter/native, Protestant/Catholic and Unionist/Republican. The Catholic fight to take over the other side of the peacelines is a representative attempt to unite the two partitioned halves of Ireland. The Protestant fight to retain their half of the peacelines is representative of their desire for a British Ulster. The peacelines’ partition structures representative space of a Protestant Northern Ireland and a Catholic United Ireland.

Many scholars and researchers argue that the peacelines are simply a materialization of the walls that exist in people’s minds.⁷⁷ The trope of the peacelines goes something like this: “The current peacelines follow, almost without exception, the unofficial boundaries of religious segregation in Belfast which only became fault lines

⁷⁵ Henderson, *Belfast More Divided*, 1

⁷⁶ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 37

⁷⁷ E.g. Savaric, *Materialisation of the Relationship*, 1; Springfield Interface Project, *Impact of the Shankill/Falls/Springfield*, 13

once more in this recent phase of communal conflict.”⁷⁸ Most academics who address the peacelines have argued that they are “merely a formalization of what was already there”⁷⁹ and that they enforce “already existing psychological and instinctive boundaries.”⁸⁰

This notion is supported by politicians as well. For example: “Former Belfast Lord Mayor Fred Cobain is firmly of the view that above all else, the peacelines represent physical symbols of the hidden problems facing the communities. ‘The real challenge is to overcome and remove the mental barriers...Even if you knocked down all the peacelines tomorrow, you would still have these neighborhoods living separate existences’.”⁸¹

While this may be true, the tendency to stop at this intellectual juncture grossly minimizes the work that the peacelines do to create, reinforce and exacerbate these dialectical identities. It is the peacelines’ ability to structure space through its partitioning function that makes it more than *just* a materialization of communal prejudice. The state similarly does not fully understand the rhetorical work that these peacelines do. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is also painfully aware of the presence of the peacelines. For many years the tourist literature tried to avoid discussion of the peacelines and ignore the civil conflict altogether.⁸² However, when this was no longer a viable option due to international press coverage, the NITB started capitalizing on the peacelines, locating

⁷⁸ Lauber, *Belfast’s Peacelines*, 14

⁷⁹ Conroy, 1987, 111 as cited in Lauber, *Belfast’s Peacelines*, 14

⁸⁰ Quinn, *Interface Images*, 4

⁸¹ McGuckin, “Peace on the Peacelines?,” 2

⁸² Rolston, “Selling Tourism,” 27

them as sites on city tours. Black cab tours now drive along the peacelines where tourists from a variety of countries can write such patronizing statements as “Just like in Berlin: simply another wall that must be pulled down. Let’s hope real soon.”⁸³ Residents welcome these tourists into their public areas. Residents point out that the tours bring money into the community, as the visitors will stop by the local shops to buy pictures or support the communities that they have romanticized in their interactions with the wall.⁸⁴

The state is not satisfied with the tourist interest, however. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is the branch of government that controls funding and building of the peacelines, has engaged in several attempts to beautify the peacelines. It has paid millions of pounds to have the walls reified with brick, planted shrubs and trees next to the peacelines and considered creating a grassy space on either side of the peacelines.⁸⁵ Eventually these plans, which are not well documented or discussed, fell by the wayside as communities continued to tag graffiti on the peacelines, and trees provided a method for climbing to the top of the wall to throw paint and petrol bombs. Perhaps one reason

⁸³ Biggins, “Visitors Sign Up,” 1

⁸⁴ Personal communication; I admit to being quite surprised that the residents of peaceline communities would be flattered at the tourist interest rather than insulted. I found the statements written on the peacelines profoundly ignorant of the local situation. There are vast differences between the peacelines and the Berlin wall, though tourists make the comparison often. Additionally, I found the quick, prescriptive nature of the tourist writing quite patronizing, as though the local conflicts had no important political stakes. Perhaps one reason that the residents welcome this sort of comparison is because of the political benefits of such an association. For more on this, see previous section on global metaphor.

⁸⁵ Murtagh, “The Role of Security,” 27

that the state does not talk much about the plan to beautify the peacelines is that it does not understand why it has failed.

The beautification process failed because the state failed to recognize that the peacelines are a site for rhetorical invention. When the state provided trees to beautify the peacelines, residents did not consume their aesthetic worth. Rather, residents altered the expected reception by inventing unexpected uses for these trees. They were made into ladders by youths to destroy the opposition communities. The trees were used as mechanisms to transgress the peacelines. Bricks that were placed in the peacelines were dislodged and used as missiles. The brick addition to the peacelines was used to dismantle the peacelines' function. These are two small examples of the ways that the peacelines function as sites of rhetorical invention.

Peacelines as Sites of Rhetorical Invention

The peacelines were erected to protect property and prevent paramilitary violence. The structure was meant to function as a dividing boundary to keep Protestant and Catholic communities apart. Interestingly, the peacelines have become a site of cooperative invention, where the two sides use each other to transgress the boundary. de Certeau argues that cooperation is a fundamental function of a boundary. He contends that "By considering the role of stories in delimitation, one can see that the primary function is to *authorize* the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits, and as a consequence, to set in opposition, within the closed field of discourse, two movements that intersect (setting and transgressing limits)."⁸⁶ Cooperation takes place in the form of

⁸⁶ *Practice of Everyday Life*, 123

speech acts that intersect and merge identities through the inevitable transgression of the boundary.

The peacelines were produced to prevent the communities from interacting, since interaction had historically been exclusively violent. The state expected the peacelines to be consumed in a fashion that would support this divisive but peaceable function. However, accepting this model of passive reception accounts for neither the rhetorical agency of the communities that border the wall nor the inevitable function of a boundary as a site for transgression. Protestant and Catholic peaceline communities engage in a vast array of transgressive, cooperative, inventive speech acts. I will focus here on three categories of speech acts that are used to contest and reorder the representative place of the peacelines: speech acts of memory, ritual and territoriality. These three categories are not discrete. They inform one another in a very fluid manner. Acts of ritual are inevitably acts of memory. However, I have tried to highlight the primary quality of the speech act in question and then place it in the appropriate category for clarity of analysis. Because the peacelines are a representative place that signifies the identities of bordering communities, these speech acts that transgress this place contribute materially to the reordering and development of peaceline communal identities.

Memory

The peacelines were produced to materially shift the communities back to a previous time. “Walls...serve to reinstate a prior order.”⁸⁷ The state tried to produce a mnemonic material speech act to order interaction between the two communities. The peacelines were produced to return Catholics to the 800-year-old memory of feeling

⁸⁷ Lauber, *Belfast's Peacelines*, 47

secure in Ireland before the planters arrived. The peacelines were produced to return Protestants to the 300-year-old memory of feeling security within the privileged city walls while Catholic peasants worked outside the walls in the fields. However, the memories of these times are not salient in the Protestant and Catholic communities. They do not order communal identity the way that Derry's siege and the H-block imprisonment do. These two communities produce memories around the peacelines that function very differently from the way that the state intended.

The slogans of the Protestant and Catholic communities demonstrate the primacy of different memories in the identity construction of these two communities.⁸⁸ These memories function in different ways because of their different constructions of temporality.⁸⁹ The Catholic slogan moves the community forward toward a particular future moment when the struggle may end. That moment is when Ireland is free.⁹⁰ The Catholics interpellate their present form of peace disruption into an 800-year history of struggle against England colonialism and Protestantism.⁹¹ For Catholics, then, another 100 years of disruption of the peace is relatively manageable.

This communal narrative is a very effective ideology for supporting military operations. When a community expects to be at war for a significant period of time, then there is less of a chance for waning support or reduction in the volunteer force. A long war would simply meet communal expectations. Of course, this support is predicated on

⁸⁸ Balthrop, "British Thugs," 84

⁸⁹ Ibid., 141

⁹⁰ Ibid., 119

⁹¹ Ibid., 141

communal identification with the narrative of 800-years of struggle.⁹² The Protestant speech acts that transgress the boundaries are interpreted within this 800-year narrative for Catholics. They do not consume the present brick throwing and petrol bombing in modern temporality, but reorder those transgressions into the narrative of an unfree Ireland. These attacks meet the expectations of the Catholic community, which has been prepared to endure such injustice through memories of violent H-block guards, the division of the counties of Ireland by England and the planter confiscation of land. This is not to say that individual Catholic families do not suffer or that it is acceptable to burn people out of their homes. However, on a communal level, with identity merged around this sense of temporality and with the cooperation of the attacking Protestant identity, the violence does meet expectations and reinforce communal identity.

The Protestant sense of temporality functions very differently.⁹³ The Protestant slogan looks backwards to Derry rather than forward to a particular goal. The Protestant identity must endure indefinite siege. There is no end to the Catholic attack.⁹⁴ Even if they can triumph over a particular siege such as Derry, there are more sieges to come in the form of increasing Catholic populations at the ballot boxes, increasing Catholic demand for housing surrounding the shrinking Protestant housing enclaves and equalizing Catholic economic and social rights which chip away at Protestant social domination. This becomes an increasingly difficult mentality for the community to support. With no set future date of victory, the only thing the Protestants have to support

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 139

⁹⁴ Ibid., 340

their endurance is looking backwards to their forefathers' stalwart stance.⁹⁵ Protestant youth are already diminishing their identification with the siege mentality and are moving out of the peaceline communities in droves.

These two temporalities transgress the peacelines' physical existence in modernity. The Catholics do not consume the peacelines in its present form as a site of division and protection. Rather, they produce it as one particular moment of struggle within 800 years of moments. The needs to claim the peacelines and to endure attacks are important, but so are gaining equal rights, making sure the youths have an education and other moments of progress. The peacelines are a site of contestation, not the only one, but a representative one. When the peacelines function as a physical reincarnation of the H-Block walls, Catholics are reminded of the martyrdom of the hunger-strikers for the future goal of a free Ireland. The endurance of the peacelines allows Catholics to take part in this seminal moment of Irish identity construction and accept the responsibility passed to them by the hunger-striker's death. Every day that they endure the attacks and fight to remove the Protestant opposition is a day that they have forwarded the memory and the goals of the martyrs.

Memory is produced not just around the peacelines, but also on the peacelines. Peacelines are used as 50-foot palates for artists to express communal values. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Republicans began painting slogans on building walls. These slogans typically reflected the politics of "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace." Until this time there was no "popular tradition of visual representation of nationalist symbols and historic events. Most noticeably, there was no working-class tradition of mural

⁹⁵ Ibid., 329

painting such as existed at the time in the unionist areas.”⁹⁶ This is not surprising in light of the fact that the resistance was an underground movement, which functioned best when it remained invisible to the state policed streets. In August of 1971, 300 nationalists were interned. In these locations the prisoners began to create political art for many reasons, not the least of which was a perceived need to create solidarity and express a national heritage. These pieces of art seeped from the prisons into the communities and began to be reproduced on walls of all kinds.⁹⁷

In 1980, the hunger strikes began and communities began to seek different ways to draw attention and support to the prisoners. One such method was the rudimentary development of murals. After the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands, the mural form of memorializing erupted with popularity. The media followed the story of the hunger strikers, depicting them as tools of the IRA who would be forced by the violent paramilitary to die for the cause.⁹⁸ In the process of forwarding this story, the media picked up on the mural commemorations, helping to disseminate the form throughout the country. Murals began to overtly reproduce the political art that originated in the prisons.⁹⁹ Loyalists also used murals, though less often than Republicans. The most popular subject for a loyalist mural was King Billy and his historic triumph at the battle of the Boyne. Many Loyalist paramilitary murals exist throughout Belfast presently and are big tourist attractions.

⁹⁶ Rolston, *Politics and Painting*, 71

⁹⁷ Ibid., 74

⁹⁸ Curtis, *The Propaganda War*, 138

⁹⁹ Rolston, *Politics and Painting*, 74

The memory of this tradition is performed on the peacelines. The peacelines are not a viable location for murals that take extended amounts of time to create, given the physical danger of standing on the peacelines. However, graffiti and paramilitary sayings can be put up quickly on the peacelines. These are literal speech acts used to produce the peacelines in the tradition of mural painting. For example, names of the dead are written in the tradition of the commemorative murals. Often these will be the names of individuals killed by the opposition community. Thus this speech act performs not only the name of the dead, but implies the name of the dialectical killers as well as the community that supports the paramilitary of which he is a part (see Fig. 6).



fig. 6 peaceline photograph by author

Paramilitary letters are written to mark territory in the tradition of the militant murals (see Fig. 7). These letters imply the dialectically opposite paramilitaries as well. For example, the UVF may mark the Protestant side of the peacelines. That surface indicates the beginning of not-IRA territory.



fig. 7 peaceline photograph by author

Political statements in support for or against legislative measures are written in the tradition of the political prison murals (see Fig. 8). These statements are meant to encourage the community to vote a particular way and to express to the local representative, who often lives in the area, the community's sentiment on issues.



fig. 8 peaceline gates photograph by author

The state removes these sayings by paying anti-graffiti squads to paint over them. This obviously does little for the beautification process, given that the paint is blue, white, red, orange, and generally any color except the walls' color (see Fig. 9).



fig. 9 peaceline photograph by author

The attempt to remove these sayings by the state demonstrates once again the misunderstanding of the peacelines. The graffiti is not exclusively recreational vandalism. Rather, it is a performance of memory and the production of identity through the invention of traditional speech acts. This graffiti transgresses the peacelines by altering its intended consumption. The sayings concretize the narratives of the communities. The Catholics perform the prisoner tradition of writing Irish Gaelic on the walls to pass on cultural knowledge. The Loyalists perform the marking of the territory of the group who lives inside the city walls, protected and enduring siege. Though the state continues to wipe away the graffiti, the graffiti keeps going up. Graffiti is ritualized resistance against the state produced meaning of the peacelines. It transgresses the modern physicality of the peacelines by refiguring it into traditions of mural painting and territory marking. The peaceline communities perform many other ritual speech acts of transgression and invention.

Ritual

Rituals are events with “clearly delineated beginnings and endings that mark them as distinct events in the flow of social action.”¹⁰⁰ “Ritual is action, not just thought.”¹⁰¹ Ritual is performed *for* someone and is “never invented in the moment of action, it is always according to pre-existing conceptions.”¹⁰² It is conscious and voluntary.¹⁰³ “Ritual is called arational or nonrational to the extent that it is not useful for specifically technical purposes.”¹⁰⁴ Rituals are collective events, which express social relationships through symbols and behavior.¹⁰⁵ The Protestant community’s twelfth of July parades are nonrational, social, voluntary events that express through symbol and action the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Protestants transgress the peacelines with their yearly parades. On the twelfth of July Protestants parade in celebration of the triumph of Protestant King William (Billy) over Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Protestants gather in most Northern Irish cities to march through the streets in pipe and drum bands. The largest of these parades is in Belfast where several thousand people march. This is always a violent time of year and the locals say that generally over 60% of the Catholic population leaves Belfast for holiday to avoid the trouble.¹⁰⁶ The stories of King Billy, the Protestant

¹⁰⁰ Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication*, 4

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 7

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 9

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-20

¹⁰⁶ Personal Communication

triumph and the success of the “No Surrender!” tactic are “remembered through ritual marches and public ceremony...[these rituals] reconfigure social space.”¹⁰⁷ The Protestants insist on their right to march what they demarcate as the original parade routes. Most years the Belfast Parade Council grants them permission to do so. The Belfast parade route runs through streets now blocked by peacelines. However, the twelfth becomes the one day out of the year when the peaceline gates are unlocked and opened so that the Protestants may continue their traditional route through entirely Catholic housing wards, including lower Falls Road, which is known as the home of the IRA.

The ritual is the literal performance of walking in the footsteps of their Protestant forefathers whose pictures they paint on large banners that they carry in the parades (see Fig. 10). Strict temporal borders bind this penetration of the peacelines. At any other time of year one would be shot for being on the wrong side of the peacelines. Indeed, in 2002, a teenaged boy was shot and killed simply for being misidentified as a Catholic on the Protestant side of the peacelines.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Kelleher, *The Troubles in Ballybogoin*, 113

¹⁰⁸ Fitzgerald, “Terror Group,” 1



*fig. 10 banner of Protestant band marching in the 12th of July parades.
photograph by the author*

The speech act of marching performs the narrative of Protestant planter colonization of Catholic Ireland. The communities that are designated as Catholic every other day of the year are taken over and reconfigured as Protestant during the marches. These performances occur throughout Northern Ireland. However, in the Belfast peaceline communities these marches are particularly transgressive because they literally breach the Catholic communal space. On July 12th Protestants are permitted by the state to dematerialize the wall so that the space performs the narrative of the remembered, ritual parade routes.

The state participates in this alteration of space in two ways. First, it permits the opening of the peaceline gates. Second, for several years the police erected makeshift barriers made of chain link fence and barbed wire to protect the parade as it moved through Catholic areas. The police barricaded Catholics inside their homes when the

Protestants moved through the wall and into their streets. The police physically created a makeshift peacelines with these barriers and gates.

The Catholic ritual response to the parade transgression of the peacelines is rioting. This response alters the intent of the makeshift peacelines that the police erect. The barriers are meant to keep the two sides separated and prevent them from inducing the other side to violence. Instead, these barriers induce riots because of the encroachment on Catholic space and the commitment of the Republican community—through violence-- to resist this precise oppression of freedom. The parading and shrinking of Catholic space through these fences is interpreted within the narrative of Irish oppression in the 1500s. It was this oppression that gave rise to the violent ideology of resistance. The barricading of the Catholics inside enclosed spaces in which they have no control over their movement though surrounded by other Catholics performs the precise spatial narrative of the H-Block internment. Violence is a predictable answer for a community that identifies with “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.”

The Protestants exacerbate the effects of the parading speech act even further through their use of sound. The pipe and flute bands that play in these parades provide music that transgresses even these makeshift barriers. Thus even if the Catholic community chose to stay indoors all day, away from the sight of the parades marching past their homes on the other side of the chain link fence, the noise of anti-Catholic songs such as “No Pope of Rome” would still reach them. One song played in these parades is “Orange Wings.” The crowds sometimes sing the words of the song as the bands march by. The words are:

They've an Ulster badge upon their breast
These are the men of the U.V.F

Men who mean these words he'd say
 To fight against the I.R.A
 Now big Trevor was our number one
 Swore to fight the rebel scum
 To all his men these words he'd say
 Death to all the I.R.A
 These fighting men from far and wide
 Hell towards they fought and died
 Now their sons let their fathers rest
 To guard the badge of the U.V.F
 Now watch these men they dress in black
 And when they move they never turn back
 And when the scums reduced to tears
 It's one more victory for the Volunteers
 So on your feet and toast with me
 To the U.V.F and victory
 For we'll win and do our best
 For we are the men of the U.V.F¹⁰⁹

The UVF is a Protestant paramilitary organization. Some bands have allegiances to this paramilitary and even paint the letters UVF on their drums. Sometimes these bands are dressed in all black or British military-type uniforms. These bands explicitly display their allegiance to paramilitaries that have shot members of the Catholic community through which they are marching. This performance is in dialectical opposition to the intention of the peacelines' function, which was to keep paramilitaries out of the opposition community.

The drummers in these bands further reconfigure space by writing the name of the street that the band is from on their drums. Almost all of the members of that band will be from the named street and will have come from families that were in the band and lived on the street before them. The band members have to know a person and his (or occasionally her) family before an invitation to join the band is extended.¹¹⁰ For example, there is a "Pride of the Raven" band from Ravenhill Road and a "Protestant

¹⁰⁹ Orange Pages, "Orange Wings"

¹¹⁰ Personal Communication

Boys” band from Omagh. Writing the names of the streets on the drums extends the street into Catholic space. The bands re-map Belfast and the peaceline communities with this ritual.

Protestants try to extend the temporal boundaries of this ritual through the use of the songs that the bands play. Youths from the Protestant community have been known to take these traditional Protestant tunes and blare them over loud speakers into the Catholic community during other times of year. The youths play the techno or rave versions of the songs, which is a stark metaphor for the presentness of the past in the identities of these community members.¹¹¹ Catholics do not consume this breach of the peacelines as intended, however. Because the peacelines block all visual lines to the opposite community, Catholics produce the noise of these techno Orange songs as warning signs of a physical attack to come. The techno songs generally indicate youths are drunk and ready to fight. Thus the sound of the songs prepares the Catholics to withstand attack and to retaliate.

The peacelines’ function as representative place is profound during these ritual transgressions. “The centrality of macroterritorial concepts such as a ‘United Ireland’ or a ‘British Ulster’ and their complex interplay with microterritorial constructs such as the community, the neighborhood, the street, and the parade route reinforces the manner in which geography serves to posit history as a cultural object.”¹¹² The Protestants will not surrender the “Protestant state for the Protestant people.” Nor will Catholics give up

¹¹¹ For more on the way that the past is alive in the present identities of Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants, see Balthrop, “British Thugs,” 84

¹¹² Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 27

fighting the unjust partitioning of land. The local community and ritual parade routes must be protected because they represent the national, political goals for land ownership. The insistence on the performance of physical control over territory, especially territory usually made unavailable by the peacelines, and the ritual, violent response to this encroachment demonstrates the importance of territoriality to the peaceline communities.

Territoriality

Territoriality is “a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people by controlling area.”¹¹³ There are three requirements to constitute territoriality: there must be “a sense of spatial identity--this space belongs to us and we belong to this space,” “a sense of exclusiveness,” and “the compartmentalization or channeling of human interaction in space.”¹¹⁴ Territoriality serves three purposes: “group cultural preservation, group physical defense and group enhancement through attack.”¹¹⁵ The peaceline communities marked out their territory and then the peacelines were built to reify then existing speech acts of where walking took place and where it did not.

The peacelines permits the preservation of community cultures and prevents the dilution of these cultures by the other side.¹¹⁶ The division is reified by the perceived need to defend lives and property from the other. Boal argues that merging occurs through the osmotic process of living in the same community and merging around commonly held narratives. Boal also argues that communal merging is accomplished by attacking the opposition. The erection of the peacelines has significantly reduced the

¹¹³ Boal, “Between Too Much and Me,” 7

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 8

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Murtagh, *Ethnic Space*, 18

occurrence of tit-for-tat murders that occurred between neighboring communities during the Troubles. The resident youths have found ways to invent new forms of violence and territorial transgression through stone throwing and “yelling verbal abuse.”¹¹⁷ Stones are light enough to be thrown over the 50 foot tall peacelines but strong enough to damage the other side. Sometimes these stones are pulled from sections of the peacelines, literally tearing them apart to reinvent their function.

The peacelines are only able to prevent physical attack to a certain degree and does not prevent sound from transgressing territory. Thus yelling, shooting the wall, popping balloons, playing loyalist tunes or other forms of violent noise transgress this boundary without putting bodies in danger. This permits violence to still serve a community identity function while remaining in a “manageable form.”¹¹⁸ In no way do I intend to diminish the psychological, physical and property damage that these attacks cause. I simply note a shift and a perceived manageability of that violence.

The forms of violence that constitute attack on the opposite community are not the only level of violence that exists, however. “The maintenance of a territory involves the operation of control by the occupants of territory of itself.”¹¹⁹ The origin of paramilitaries is inextricable from the space of the peacelines and the control over the territorial boundaries. Paramilitaries were originally formed in Belfast as vigilante groups that walked the peacelines to keep the other side out and their own members in.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Doyle, “Loyalists Youths,” 1

¹¹⁸ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 37

¹¹⁹ Boal, “Between Too Much and Me,” 9

¹²⁰ Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 31; Certainly paramilitaries existed far before the 1970’s in Northern Ireland. However, the form and function of these paramilitaries was markedly different from the

For many years these groups enjoyed widespread overt support from many communities in Belfast, particularly in Catholic Falls and Protestant Shankill, the site of the first peaceline. While the support may be less overt presently it is certainly still palpable.

The role of paramilitaries has shifted since the early days of vigilante patrols. Paramilitaries still walk the peacelines to insure its fortitude, but they also walk the outskirts of communities that are not bordered by walls. These walking speech acts set up boundaries as well. These boundaries indicate where the territory of the paramilitary's community ends and wasteland begins.¹²¹ Paramilitaries not only keep the community protected from outsiders, but they also police the internal territory of the community. The policing of this space is acted out through the policing of community members.

Paramilitaries conduct investigations if a community member's property is stolen and will engage in restorative justice when the culprit is apprehended. Restorative justice generally will consist of being beaten or 'kneecapped,' a ritual wherein the culprit (usually a young male) will be shot in or beaten with a bludgeon on the knees. Culprits enter talks with the paramilitaries and determine a time and place to be kneecapped in order to arrange for an ambulance to be on the scene within five minutes of the punishment so that the culprit does not bleed to death.¹²² If a murder or similar crime is committed, paramilitaries will shoot the men (usually) responsible. Both the IRA and the UVF have publicly offered to shoot men responsible for the death of a community

paramilitaries that arose in urban Belfast in the 1970's. The latter were far more localized, though they did claim lineage from earlier paramilitary organizations.

¹²¹ Belfast Interface Project, *Young People*, 8

¹²² Springfield Interface Project, *Impact of the Shankill/Falls/Springfield*, 16

member if the bereaved family wishes.¹²³ Communities generally comply with this regime because it maintains the narrative of the communal identity.¹²⁴ The way that communities comply is by turning in youth who have engaged in anti-social behavior to the paramilitaries, not complaining to the state police force if a violent retribution is required and answering questions that the paramilitaries pose in their investigations. These actions perform Protestant autonomy and lack of need to rely on help outside the (Derry) walls. For Catholics, paramilitary actions perform a refusal to acknowledge the authority, in the form of the police force or soldiers, of a state government that created an unfree Ireland.

Identification occurs with the narrative performed by these paramilitary actions. Paramilitaries have transformed the peacelines' function of keeping the opposition out of their territory into a boundary that keeps their community within a certain amount of territory. Their movements have also marked extensions of the peacelines laterally, marking out boundaries that create a completely enclosed territory. Territory is limited and therefore easily patrolled. Paramilitaries do not become overstretched and are able to maintain their control over communities. Residents tell positive narratives of the paramilitaries. For example, residents claim that they do a much better job than police would in limiting the hard drugs that come into the community.¹²⁵

The opposition communities alter this narrative of paramilitary effectiveness. They claim that paramilitaries do not keep the peace and that part of their authority to

¹²³ Gerlin, "Band of Sisters," 40; Fitzgerald, "Terror Group," 1

¹²⁴ Buckley and Kenney, "Urban Space"

¹²⁵ Springfield Interface Project, *Impact of the Shankill/Falls/Springfield*, 18

control order on their side of the peacelines comes from their violent transgressions of the territorial boundaries. For example, Protestants argue that the IRA could stop all of the violence in North Belfast, but that they don't because externalizing the communal violence prevents the communities from becoming inwardly violent.¹²⁶

The paramilitaries' movements around the physical and the narrated, extended peacelines provide communal isolation and "preservation of valued cultural characteristics--language, religion, moral codes and so on. In particular it offers the possibility for the effective transmission of these values to the younger generation."¹²⁷ The peacelines keep the young people isolated from integrated schools and cross-community initiatives. This re-entrenches narratives of cultural separation. This demarcation of territorial boundaries "expedites internal control, vital for the maintenance of social order."¹²⁸ When the community is contained, those who dominate the community (paramilitaries) tend to reinforce a cultural identity that resists any cultural change that would depose them.

The young Protestant people are not consuming these communal narratives like they once were. This results in a depopulation of Protestant areas.¹²⁹ Young people are increasingly rejecting the "No Surrender!" identity and moving to parts of Belfast that are more cosmopolitan.¹³⁰ These young people would rather not maintain a communal identity that results in businesses refusing to come to their part of the city, causing

¹²⁶ Cowan, "Neighbors Caught Up," 1

¹²⁷ Boal, "Between Too Much and Me," 8

¹²⁸ Ibid., 10

¹²⁹ Ibid., 9

¹³⁰ Turner, "Unionist Fears," 1

economic deprivation and social stigma. As a result, many homes on the Protestant side of the peacelines are left empty. Since the government owns and rents out these homes, the government then loses money.¹³¹ The Catholic population continues to rise, and the demand for housing increases. Protestants fear that if Catholics are permitted over the peacelines into some of the vacant houses on the Protestant side that their ability to police the community and identity will totally dissipate. Thus, the desperation to keep young people in the houses for Protestants is inextricable from issues of territory and control. If all of the young people move away then the communal identity dies.

The Catholics are already symbolically transgressing the peacelines, as are the Protestants. Many homes that directly neighbor the wall will fly flags 5-10 feet higher than the peacelines on tall poles erected on the highest portion of their homes. The Irish tricolors are flown by Catholic homes and either the Red-hand flag of Ulster or a paramilitary flag is flown by Protestant homes. In this manner the residents use the peacelines as a site of rhetorical invention to extend their territory into the opposition community. Flags encourage the reification of territory through the attack of the opposite community. The use of flags in Northern Ireland has increased while the political violence is decreasing.¹³² The more challenged groups have felt, the more these groups use flags to assert their cultural identity.¹³³ These attacks, while symbolically weighty, maintain violence at manageable levels.

¹³¹ Murtagh, *Ethnic Space*, 27

¹³² Bryson and McCartney, *Clashing Symbols*, 5

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 6

The use of flags to transgress the peacelines and assert cultural domination has its foundation in the Protestant-dominated factories of the early to mid-1900s. Protestants used to erect flags and bunting in their factories to celebrate the almost exclusive employment of Protestants and the subsequent exclusive economic stability that resulted. In the mid-1900s the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Irish, predominantly Protestant police force) erected chain link fences around the Protestant factories to keep Catholics from ostensibly breaking into the grounds and defacing them. RUC manned the gates, and Protestants had to be able to give the password or be recognized by face to get into a factory. Protestants flew flags and bunting on these fences, especially during July, to celebrate their exclusion and control over space.¹³⁴

While the Protestants perform this narrative on the peacelines, the boundary provides a much more complicated space for flag display. The peacelines do not provide for the clear in-out distinction that the factory gates did because every out is also an in and every in an out. One is in the protestant community, identifying with the culture, and simultaneously out of the Catholic community and dividing oneself from it. When the Protestant Ulster or paramilitary flag is flown so that the other community may view it, the Catholics may now respond by flying their tricolor flag as well over the same structure, in a way that the Protestant factory fence did not allow for. The Catholics have embraced the tradition and in their consumption have produced new meanings for its narrative.

Protestant communities respond to this production of narrative with an Irish tricolor narrative of their own. At midnight of the eleventh of July, communities light a

¹³⁴ Ibid., 8

bonfire that youth spend weeks gathering wood for and building. These bonfires are built higher than the peacelines. Communities encourage competition between the Protestant territories so that they all will be motivated to build higher bonfires. Protestants put a tricolor Irish flag at the top of the bonfire. The bonfires are built tall enough so that the Catholics on the other side of the peacelines are able to see their flag burning.



*Fig. 11 Bonfire on Shankill Road looking over onto the falls
Photograph taken by the author*

These Protestants use the peacelines not as a barrier, but as a height marker that measures the success of their community to resist surrender and preserve cultural narrative.

Not all members of the community believe that territoriality must necessarily be violently policed and preserved, however. A community group in North Belfast started a mobile phone network to use technology to traverse the peacelines in a productive fashion. This group handed out phones to community workers on either side of the peacelines. These community workers would then call the other side to check on rumored attacks, warn of violence to come, diffuse tense situations and generally create

dialogue between the two sides. Each group claimed a significant degree of success with this method of communication and argued that it could not have taken place in person.¹³⁵

However, the mobile phone network broke down for two reasons. First, funding ran out. The group claims that funding is a major issue and that its irregularity greatly impacts the success of the program. The second reason that the mobile phone network fell apart was that community workers were met with resistance from individuals in their own neighborhoods. Communities did not want to forge connections with communities on the other side of the peacelines and felt that creating a connection between the two sides was a threat to the communal identity and control over territory.¹³⁶ These community workers were policed and controlled internally to prevent the introduction of external narratives. Those diluting narratives that are kept outside of the territory are both the opposition community narratives and the external narratives of peace and reconciliation. The narratives of peace are only salient for the Catholics if that peace is a result of Irish unification. The narratives of peace are not acceptable to the Protestant community's narratives at all. To accept peace and reconciliation would be to surrender.

Conclusion

The peacelines are a representative place for the communities that border it. The peacelines perform the Protestant narrative of Derry's walls and the Catholic narrative of the H-block cell. Both communities use mnemonic, ritual and territorial speech acts to transgress the peacelines and use it as a site for rhetorical invention. These findings have both practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the Northern Irish state must

¹³⁵ Hall, *Its Good To Talk*, 5

¹³⁶ Ibid., 6

recognize that these walls are more than just a materialization of hatred. The peacelines reify isolation for their bordering communities. Economic possibilities must be offered to these two communities that are not predicated on an acceptance of victimhood and violence. Community workers must refuse to consume this narrative and engage in their own inventive agency. Community workers should not look to bring external factors, values and identities into the peaceline communities. Rather, community workers should examine what possibilities exist for reinvention of already present narratives. Ultimately, the resolution will need to come from within these communities. The state has no legitimacy in these areas. The Catholics claim it has oppressed them for 800 years, and the Protestants claim it has abandoned them. It has no credibility and therefore has little rhetorical agency. Of course, until the “No Surrender” and “Ireland unfree shall never be at peace” narratives are abandoned or altered, there is little hope for resolution.

This paper also has theoretical implications. This paper has demonstrated the ways that a representative place may serve as a site for rhetorical invention. The connection between production and invention, consumption and reception, provide academics with a new way to analyze rhetorical processes. This thesis expands Clark’s work on representative place and shows interesting intersections with de Certeau’s work with speech act theory. These intersections highlight the political impacts of altering or abandoning a representative place. The thesis supports the use of Burke to read material space and the effects space has on communal identity production. This paper demonstrates that place may be studied from a dramatistic perspective without focusing on the scene nodal at the expense of the rest of the pentad. Future research may attend to the way that such factors as gender, race, sexual orientation and socio-economic status

influence who may create and tell salient communal stories, traverse space and engage in material rhetorical invention.

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