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THE MURALS OF NORTHERN IRELAND
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INTRODUCTION

Political violence often erupts outside of the prescribed boundaries of the battlefield and spills into city streets. Seeing themselves as defenders of a less powerful population, politically motivated groups resort to violence to bring about their terrorist objectives. The actions they take range from rocks thrown at military personnel or civilian "enemies" to commandeering passenger planes and crashing them into huge, densely populated buildings. These acts cause devastation to property, large numbers of deaths and injuries, and inflict overwhelming fear upon anyone in the vicinity of such occurrences. The targets of terrorist groups have frequently been civilians and not just the military or police forces. Quite often, the victims of this form of warfare are not even aware that someone is at war with them. Such is the case in the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City and the attacks of September 11.

Living with the possibility of gunfire suddenly erupting in a crowded area or knowing that the bus in which one is riding may explode takes a heavy emotional toll on the people in the area of constant conflict. For these communities, dealing with the aftermath or the continuous barrage of violence is a daunting task. After such upheaval in a society, means of recovery or coping must be created. Several ways that people respond to these situations are by increasing security, hardening targets, or by the government or people themselves imposing travel restrictions. Many, though, feel the need to "speak out" against the injustices by creating memorials for the victims of the attacks.

For Northern Ireland, the response to the many years of conflict has manifested itself in a manner unique to its history and circumstances: specifically there has evolved in Northern Ireland the use of wall murals, not only for memorialization but for propaganda and demarcation as well. This has become a nonviolent form of
expression in reaction to the trauma of the conflict, their way of speaking out. But why
would this form of expression be more appropriate for this group of people than
another? What do these murals stand for? What are the symbols and stories
represented in them? Does the placement of a mural have any significance? Who are
the people painting these images? And, have they changed in appearance over time?
These are some of the questions answer in this paper.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT

In the 1960s, the success of the civil rights movement in America was witnessed
the world over. Northern Ireland's Catholic community was particularly heartened by its
success. While violent animosity between Protestants and Catholics was not a frequent
occurrence at that time, it was certainly true that Protestants were the controlling force
of the economy, education and government. Catholics were afforded few opportunities
in any of these areas. Encouraged by the tactics used in civil rights demonstrations in
America, Catholic citizens began exerting pressure on the British ruled Northern Irish
government for improvement in housing, education and economic opportunities.
Beginning in 1968 peaceful demonstrations were frequently used to draw attention to
the problems of the Catholic citizens (Coogan, 2001; Devlin, 1969),

At the center of the civil rights movement was the city of Derry (or Londonderry
as it is called by British authorities). The Derry Housing Association, a group of Catholic
activists concerned with fair housing, organized a number of demonstrations there. The
Royal Ulster Constabulary (the Northern Ireland police) were called in by the local
authorities, supposedly to keep things peaceful. Unfortunately, 93% of the force is
Protestant (Garvaghy, 1997). One such demonstration in Derry was planned on
October 5, 1968. According to accounts by participants and television news crews
filming, the police violently attacked the crowd before they had even started (Devlin,
1969; CAIN: History, 2001 ). Two days of rioting ensued, marking what many believe to
be the start of the period known as "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland. Violence broke out throughout Northern Ireland after this episode. Skirmishes between the rivaling sides and police often turned into riots. One of the worst riots in Derry occurred in August 1969, and is referred to as the "Battle of the Bogside." With rioting taking place in Belfast as well, British troops were sent into the major cities of Northern Ireland to quell the ever-increasing violence by August 14 (Coogan, 2002). Troops are still present in many areas.

The violence that erupted during the demonstration on October 5, 1968, continued for the next 30 years, turning Northern Ireland into a traumatized country. The initial riots left neighborhoods looking like war zones. From 1968 to 1998 a total of 3,480 people (men, women, children, Catholic, Protestant, British, and otherwise) died in the conflict (CAIN: Database of Deaths, 1999; Sutton, 1994).

The Irish Republican Army had been relatively dormant since the 1920s. With the violent confrontations between Catholic protesters, RUC, British troops, and Loyalist paramilitary groups, they quickly reorganized and resumed their activities with a vengeance (Coogan, 2002). The actions of the Irish Republican Army has been well documented over the years. This terrorist/paramilitary group claimed responsibility for the bomb that killed Lord Mountbatten on August 27, 1979. An attempt to kill Margaret Thatcher on October 12, 1984, was not successful, but did kill four others and wounded several people when the IRA exploded a bomb at the Grand Hotel in Brighton, England. They have used such tactics as car bombings, shooting raids in crowded pubs, and assassinations of political or military figures. What many people don't realize is the existence of similar groups on the opposing side. Organizations such as the Ulster Defense League and the Ulster Volunteer Force are comprised of Loyalists using the same sort of terrorist actions against Catholic communities. The history of these groups go back as far as that of the IRA. There have been secret Protestant assassination squads aided by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as well, who
have lists of key people to kill. Often the murder victims of these assassination squads were not involved with political activity or had left service years before. One especially horrible assassination was that of Kathleen O’Hagan, the pregnant wife of a former IRA member and mother of five children (McPhilemy, 1998, pg. 382). Some of the allegations are still under investigation, but the revelation of such activities has added to the call for an overhaul in the police forces. Frequent raids by the police and British military to capture IRA members in Catholic neighborhoods have left these communities feeling vulnerable, defenseless and traumatized. The memories of this violence remain strong in the neighborhoods, both Catholic and Protestant.

Although the frequency and intensity of the violence has subsided since the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement and the recent disarmament of the IRA, the potential for violence is always lurking. These communities are, in a sense, symptomatic of post traumatic stress. There are three major categories of traumatic stress disorder. They are hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. (Herman, 1997). While the condition of the neighborhoods does not follow the aspect of constriction, it can be seen as representative of hyperarousal and intrusion. The constant expectation of danger exists and the memory of terrorist acts stays present. These situations keep emotions high and easily ignited. The threat never seems to leave for very long.

Starting in June of 2001, there has been considerable violent conflict in the Belfast neighborhood of Ardoyne concerning the route that Catholic children take through a Protestant neighborhood to get to school. Tensions began to rise as the Marching Season approached with frequent violent clashes between the two communities. It could be surmised that one reason the Good Friday Agreement passed was because the communities were "battle weary" and wanted the fighting to stop. The tensions of living with such potential dangers and the memories of bombings, shootings, and beatings coupled with a sense of impending doom or continued suppression has been overwhelming for the populations there. The Loyalists fear that their entire way of life is
about to be lost and the Republicans feel that they have little or no representation in
government nor do they have economic opportunities while living in their own
homeland.

III. FINDING WAYS TO SPEAK OUT

Many other communities have had similar incidences of traumatic events; the
ongoing fighting in Israel and Palestine, the years of conflict in Lebanon, and political
upheavals in Central America, to name a few. These communities have sought to
memorialize and propagandize their surroundings with murals and wall sections
covered with banners, leaflets and posters. Some other countries have received
sudden, violent attacks, with little or no warning, such as the bombing of the Murrah
Building in Oklahoma City or the attacks of September 11

The Oklahoma City bombing is an example of critical terrorist activity. The
sudden and unexpected attack was a single incident. The community had a chance to
recoup and recover. But in Northern Ireland, the situation is chronic in nature because
has been ongoing for 30 years. In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, one of
the ways that people sought to heal or make sense of the traumatic event was to
memorialize the dead and injured, and to create a space that was the antithesis to the
violence that occurred there. The building of a memorial became a part of the healing
process for the community. It gave a public statement about what had occurred and
defied the intent of the perpetrators. Immediately after the attacks of September 11, talk
began as to what sort of memorial would be erected in the areas of attack.
Memorializing has become part of a recovery process that many people expect. Some
of the the ways people make this attempt is impromptu memorials. An example is
people placing flowers, pictures, teddy bears, or candles near or at the place of a
tragedy. Temporary memorials take more planning but are not as extensive as a
permanent memorial. The blue lights placed at the Twin Towers site on the six month
anniversary of the attacks of September 2001, were removed one month later.

Sometimes what starts as an impromptu memorial shifts into a temporary memorial and then becomes permanent. This was what happened in Oklahoma City after the bombing with the fence. Impromptu memorials were left on a fence near the bomb site within days of the blast. When the debris was later cleared from the site, and while waiting for a permanent memorial to be constructed, the chainlink fence surrounding the site was again decorated with memorial tokens. With urging of many people in the area, the fence was then incorporated as a permanent part of the memorial. To some extent, that has been the progression of the murals.

In 1908, Loyalist murals first appeared in Protestant neighborhoods and business areas of Belfast. They were part of the celebrations in the month of July commemorating the Battle of the Boyne, a pivotal event in Irish history that still bears consequences for Northern Ireland. The murals were not meant to be permanent. The painting of curbsides in the Union Jack colors of red, white and blue, and the hanging of bunting and banners in the same colors are in preparation for parades to honor King William III of Orange. It became an even more important tradition for Protestants to celebrate their connection to England after the partitioning of Ireland in the 1920s creating Northern Ireland. Protestants represented loyalty to the Crown and Commonwealth. Catholics represented the rebellious Republic of Ireland. Catholics did not paint murals. What graffiti or decorations of Irish nature that was put up was quickly painted over by authorities. Any Catholic caught trying to put up such decorations was arrested and fined. At least one person has been killed trying to paint an impromptu mural (Jarman, 1998).

When the civil rights movement and the attendant violence gained momentum in the late 1970s, many Catholic neighborhoods were encased by barricades. These barricades were placed there by the communities themselves and by the police during riots. Not only did this contain the Catholics, but it kept the authorities out of the
communities as well. Political graffiti began appearing as a defiant statement of ownership of place. Shortly thereafter the protest by imprisoned IRA members seeking political prisoner status was carried into the neighborhoods as a show of support. The graffiti grew into murals when the protest turned into a hunger strike in 1981. Although the barricades had been removed, the symbolic ownership of the community by Catholics remained (Jarman, 1998). Many of the early murals were not meant to be permanent and indeed were not. Some have been either painted over or allowed to fade.

Often, in an effort to rebalance the community, attempts are made to give public attention to the injuries suffered by the citizens. As psychologist Judith Herman puts it, recovery “requires a public forum where victims can speak their truths and their suffering can be formally acknowledged.” (Judith Herman, 1997, p. 242). Murals afford this public forum. Art is often employed as a means of gaining a public forum and murals are commonly used for this purpose. While murals usually serve to beautify an area or to discourage graffiti, they can also be used as a means of memorializing. Other functions that murals can serve are to reflect public feelings or to promote propaganda and can be used as markers of territory. The need that victims have to publicly declare their beliefs and show their pain is especially satisfied with murals. Everyone who comes near sees the results of what has been felt. One of the interesting aspects of Northern Irish murals is that they were originated by one social group as a means of conveying superiority over another social group. As the political and social climate changed so did the use of murals. They became representative of the minority’s growing autonomy and sense of self determination.

II. FUNCTIONS OF MURALS

A. MEMORIALIZATION

In first viewing murals as a means of memorialization we should look at why memorialization has value. As stated previously, Northern Ireland has been in a
struggle for many years. There have been traumatic incidences, lives lost, countless injuries and tremendous emotional damage. In an effort to rationalize, or give meaning to these incidences and to honor those who have suffered, the people in Northern Ireland, like other societies, looked for ways to give physical representation to their feelings about what had happened. There appears to be a need for people to "tell the story" of the injuries they have suffered. Edward J. Linenthal in his book The Unfinished Bombing (2002) describes three ways, or "narratives," that people use to express their feelings after a horrendous event.

The first manner is described as the "progressive narrative" where people relate acts of kindness and bravery. These can be acts of defenders or of others that helped the victims get through the times of trouble. This narrative includes stories of good will assistance from surprising sources and actions of extreme caring from people they would not have previously expected such behavior from. This narrative includes aspects of collective personality traits of the people or community affected. Reflected in this narrative is often the positive qualities that are to proof their worthiness of memorialization, such as perseverance, the ability to survive, and having pride in their heritage. This narrative seeks what can be built out of the ashes and ruins of the conflict and looks forward to a new day or era dawning from the conflict.

The next narrative is what Linenthal calls the "redemptive narrative" with its religious connotations. Humankind searches for meaning when bad things happen. By attaching the suffering of those afflicted to the sufferings of Christ Himself, they are elevated to a higher standard and are deemed deserving of memorialization. And by imagining that God or Christ is with those who have suffered, solace is to be taken in this expression.

Next Linenthal describes a "toxic narrative;" a narrative of insconsolable grief, anger and pain. Some the persons affected focus so much on the tragic loss and anger at such an event that little else is felt in this narrative. This particular form of
memorializing does little to allow for healing or resolution. It is almost as if the mourner has become stuck in the pain and is never moving forward.

The participants in the Northern Ireland struggle have been heroes as well as villains. But there seems to be a universal need for humans to honor the heroic and the innocent affected by tragedy, especially when it is for a cause greater than themselves. The causes represented in the Northern Ireland conflict are to either maintain the six counties of Northern Ireland as they were designated in 1921 or to reunite with the Republic of Ireland. The success of each cause would have great impact on all sides. Kenneth E. Foote in Shadowed Ground (1997) discusses the sanctification of a cause through physical memorial representation of those who sacrificed for this cause. And the struggle of minority groups to overcome oppression is certainly a cause that is among those to be remembered. The martyrs of any cause are also deserving of public deification. Those wishing to honor them want them to not be forgotten and the phrase "Lest we forget" is frequently seen in the memorial murals.

B. PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is an important tool in warfare of any kind but it is particularly effective in an urbanized conflict. What better place to constantly be promoting propaganda in support of the group's ideology and its campaign than on the very walls of the communities in which the conflict is ongoing? This allows the group to have a ready-made audience, because propaganda requires an audience in order to succeed. Joanne Wright (1990) in Terrorist Propaganda defines the three audiences as: the uncommitted, the sympathetic, and the active.

The main goal of propaganda is to enable the propagandist to achieve his goals and one of his goals is to tell his story. The uncommitted audience needs to be provoked into action so to assist the propagandist in achieving these goals. Not only is the uncommitted audience urged to take action, but propaganda can instruct individuals
as to what they can actually do to assist the cause. Propaganda utilizes long held beliefs, whether they be those of oppression or the right for retaliation. The messages are specifically directed to those not only of the local community, but to communities outside of the conflict area as a means of justifying actions. These audiences are also presented with "evidence" by the propagandist that lays blame on the enemy for deaths and injustices. They also question the credibility of the opposing forces or government.

Wright refers to "propaganda by deed"-action that serves to change a situation that is usually viewed as safe into one that is not safe (Wright, pg. 79, 1990). In setting up situations that will cause further crackdowns on the community in question, this can cause the population to come to rely on the terrorist group as their "protectors" from the security forces. The propagandists portray their own actions as reactive only, implying that they must always be on guard. This sense of danger can help to sway the uncommitted to either look for a protector or to act as a protector. The murals also offer a venue for constant reminders of the discrimination and abuses that have befallen the community and of unexpected tragic incidences.

Propaganda directed at the sympathetic audience is geared to maintain the fervor that will urge the participants to offer support in various ways to the organization. The very images that could sway a person into acting can also serve as reminders to continue the cause. Propaganda directed at the sympathetic audience reminds those participants what their role is to be in the community, to offer support and aid in times of need. One of the means of doing this is to remind them of all the past and present grievances that must be addressed. By maintaining a sympathetic audience, the group has a pool from which to draw from for active participants, which is the next audience group.

The active audience is maintained by propaganda that reinforces the ideologies of the terrorist group. To keep the morale high among the volunteer forces and the people who support them, there is a need for frequent, visible reminders. The enemy
must be vilified in portrayals of their misdeeds. Murals facilitate the need also to eliminate as many outside sources of alternative propaganda, especially in regard to the volunteer forces who function mostly within their own neighborhoods. Because there have been many prisoners as a result of the conflict, there needed to be a reminder to all participants that, even if they were captured, they would still be supported by the people and viewed as integral components of the struggle.

C. DEMARCATION

In quarrels over space, people need to have lines drawn, figuratively and literally. By designating the boundaries of a space that belongs to a particular group, that group can develop an identity connected to the place. This helps maintain a cohesiveness within the community. The identification of a particular area in a certain manner brings with it information that denotes the ideologies, cultural norms, and practices within that area. In an attempt to keep an area politically homogenous these communities have prominently placed signs and symbols on the walls to leave no doubt as to what that area stands for and who should be there (Kuusisto, 1999).

The very strong connection that people have to a place is evident in this situation. The Catholics in this area have a very strong sense of place in Northern Ireland. They have a very long history connected to the land with a language and culture born out of it. The Protestants, on the other hand, can be seen as newcomers. Their identity is not as tied to the land itself. Northern Irish Protestants identify themselves more as British than as Irish. Yet they make a claim to the land itself and the right to rule it, which is the source of much of the conflict. The demarcation of neighborhoods as Protestant or Catholic extends this idea in a physical way (Smyth, 1995). What started out as a means of establishing British identity, has now been adopted and adapted by Catholics to establish their Irish identity and space.
v. THE MURALS

These murals represent the political ideologies of the opposing sides, who can be divided as Loyalists and Republicans. Loyalists are those who wish to remain loyal to the crown and are almost always Protestant. The Republicans are generally Catholic and wish to be re-united with the Republic of Ireland.

Both groups of murals can be broken down into six categories concerning theme (Rolston, 1992). For the Loyalists the categories are: (1) King Billy murals; (2) symbols; (3) historical events; (4) military; (5) memorials; and (6) humorous. The six categories for the Republicans are: (1) blanket protests and hunger strikers; (2) military images with memorialization; (3) elections (which includes humorous images); (4) historical or mythological; (5) repression; and (6) international commonalities.

King Billy murals were originally the main theme of murals. As other political issues became more important, this theme has diminished. To accommodate this shifting focus, inanimate symbols such as flags and crests of England and Scotland were incorporated into the murals. The Red Hand of Ulster is symbolic for both sides. Other than the Battle of the Boyne, historical events such as the Siege of Derry and the founding of the Ulster Volunteer forces figure prominently in Protestant murals. Military images are also quite common and the memorials are usually military figures as opposed to civilian casualties. One interesting aspect of loyalist murals is their use of humour, particularly when painting murals for the marching season. These often involve the name of a local pipe and drum band and a humorous image.

For the Republicans, the murals have their foundation in protest, so many are focused on the hunger strikers and prisoners. These were replaced with election murals, which were often rather humorous. Using murals to memorialize is employed by Republicans as well. While military figures are memorialized, there are many more that memorialize civilians as well. Historical and mythological figures are used frequently in the newer murals. Along with these are examples of the repressive
The struggle of the Republicans shares a theme with other conflicts the world over and are depicted in international themes. While these descriptions are necessary in explaining the murals, this paper will be more concerned with showing how the murals are used for memorialization, propaganda and demarcation.

King William III is an important figure in the conflict. The Protestant King William defeated Catholic King James II in 1690 at the Boyne River in the northern province called Ulster (this is the name commonly used to refer to the six counties now comprising Northern Ireland). "The Marching Season" begins in late June and culminates on July 12 with great celebrations and bonfires. During these two weeks Protestants belonging to the Orange Order (an organization made up of Protestants honoring King William) take their parades not only through Protestant areas but into Catholic neighborhoods as well. These actions could be viewed as analogous to the Ku Klux Klan marching through a Black neighborhood in America. It is extremely offensive to the Catholics and there is nothing that they do that is tantamount to this action.

Over the years members of Catholic communities have tried to seek legal ways to prevent Orange parades from marching through their neighborhoods. In the city of Portadown, where the Orange Order was formed in the late 1700s, the marches have been particularly confrontational. The military as well as police have been called in on more than one occasion. After years of petitioning to the government by the Catholic residents prevent to marching through their neighborhoods, a decision was made the authorities in 1997 to reroute the parades. But violence was not averted; the Orange Order marched through the Catholic neighborhood anyway with assistance from the military (Garvaghy, 1999). Figure 1 shows how these conflicts combined with the murals can create quite an image. The mural depicts a lark (used as a symbol for Northern Ireland) underneath the word "peace" making an ironic backdrop for the row of soldiers in riot gear.
"King Billy" murals generally depict King William on a white horse triumphantly crossing the River Boyne (Figure 2). In recent renditions of King William, he has taken on a threatening air. Michael Stone, a Protestant who murdered three mourners at a Republican funeral in 1988, is depicted as a modern-day version of the king. Not only does this venerate King William but Stone as well. This mural definitely defines that area as a Protestant neighborhood (Figure 3).

There is very little effort in any of the murals to truly separate memorialization from propaganda. Even demarcation is generally a means of propaganda. Examples of Protestant memorials are most definitely militaristic, with symbols of nationalism. Figure 4 is a memorial to an officer of a Protestant paramilitary group who was killed in action.

A mourning military figure with the flag of the Ulster Volunteers and the flag of St. Andrew (a Scottish Presbyterian symbol) along with the motto of the Volunteers "For God and Ulster" gives a strong sense of a government sanctioned memorial. Most interesting is the wreath of poppies surrounding the portrait of the deceased. The poppy is usually used to memorialize WWI veterans and is a common symbol denoting connection to the Commonwealth. Its use here seems to elevate the status of the lieutenant colonel of the paramilitary unit to a level equal to other war heroes. Figure 5 shows similar militaristic style memorialization. The painted curbs in front of the mural are further evidence that this is a Protestant neighborhood.

Although not militaristic, one can see propaganda at work in the memorialization of 14 year old Julie Livingstone (Figure 6). Young Julie was shot and killed by rubber bullets used by British military forces. While memorializing the young girl, the mural also reminds the community that even children are not safe from the opposing side.

Figure 7 is an interesting mural. William Wright was known as an assassin for an underground Protestant group thought to work in connection with the RUG. Although suspected in numerous deaths of Catholics, he always managed to escape arrest on such charges. He was known by many as King Rat and worked with another hitman,
Figure 2. Mural of King William on Donegall Road, Belfast. This mural was originally painted in the late 1920s and refurbished yearly. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1984. Drawing Support, 1992.

Figure 3. Depiction of Michael Stone as King William in the Fountain area, Derry. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1993. Drawing Support 2, 1998.

Figure 5. This mural commemorates the Ulster Volunteer Force of 1912. This photo shows curb painting done for the Protestant marching season. Derrycoole Way, Rathcoole, Newtownabbey, near Belfast. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1994, from Drawing Support 2, 1998.
Robin Jackson, known as the Jackal. Wright was murdered by a “Republican splinter group” (McPhilemy, pg. 386, 2001) while in prison for threatening to kill a woman. His dying at the hands of IRA men apparently was reason to memorialize him as a hero and to show the support of the Protestant neighborhood.

Figure 8 is less militaristic in nature while memorializing eight members of the IRA killed in action. Although the deceased are portrayed in military garb, the background and symbols have a different connotation. The scenery of the hills and rivers of Ireland denotes the historical connection of the North to all of Ireland and the claim that Catholics have there. Depicting the shield from the four provinces denotes a reconnection of Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland. The Celtic cross bears an image of a lark wrapped in barbed wire, the symbol of Northern Ireland under British rule. The memorialization of these IRA members definitely qualifies not only as a propaganda but a demarcation statement, as well. It can be interpreted as showing these men sacrificing for the re-unification of the nation and defines the neighborhood as Catholic.

As stated earlier, Republican mural painting did not occur until 1981 during the time of the hunger strike protests building up from the increase in Republican political graffiti started in the 1970s. Because of the huge following of supporters of the hunger strikers and a growing sense of autonomy, Republicans began to “mark” their territory with their own murals. One of the concessions that had been won at the early stages of the conflict was the elimination of the Northern Irish government’s ban on Catholic mural painting allowing for some sense of autonomy. This came at a time when their need to express extreme defiance was growing as other needs were denied.

The hunger strikes of 1981 were a huge rallying point for the IRA and the Catholic constituency. Ten IRA prisoners began a hunger strike to try to regain their status as political prisoners. The status of political prisoner had been removed a few years earlier and reduced them to the same treatments and punishments as regular
Figure 6. Memorial mural for 14 year old Julie Livingstone, killed by plastic bullets used by British forces on May 13, 1981. Glenveagh Road, Belfast. Photo by Dr. John McCormick, August 2001. CAIN Mural Directory, Album 30, Photo 1002.

Figure 7. This memorial to Billy Wright, also know as "King Rat" is located at Hopewell Crescent, Lower Shankill, Belfast. Photo by Dr. John McCormick, May 2000. CAIN Mural Directory, Album 14, Photo 482.
Figure 8. Eight members of the Irish Republican Army are memorialized in a mural on Springhill Avenue, Belfast. Photo Bill Rolston, 1987. Drawing Support, 1992.

Figure 9. In an early example of Republican murals, the words to a then popular song, "The H-Block Song" are written on a hastily erected mural in support of the hunger strikers in 1981. Whiterock Road, Belfast. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1981. Drawing Support, 1992.
criminals, yet they had less rights than did the other prisoners. Graffiti-like murals advocating support of the hunger strikers were some of the first to appear (Figure 9). In May of that year, Bobby Sands, the young leader of the hunger strikers died. He and other strikers and protesters of the prison systems are the subject of numerous murals (Figure 10.) An example of memorialization in the context of a cause can be seen in Figure 11. The redemptive features of Linenthal's narrative might be seen in the religious images depicted: the Virgin Mary watches over a dying hunger striker as he says the rosary. The "H" in the background represents the name of the prison sections where the hunger strikers were held. While there have not been as many prisoners on the Loyalist side they have often been the subject of murals as well.

The commonality of some of the symbols is an interesting aspect of the murals. Some of the imagery used in the murals goes back to mythological roots, in particular the use of the Red Hand of Ulster and the mythological hero Cuchulain. The story of the Red Hand of Ulster tells of two chieftains in Ulster (the northern province or territory) arguing over the rights to the land there. They agreed to race across a body of water and that the first man to touch the shore would claim the kingdom. As their ships were racing toward the final stretch before reaching shore, the king in the losing boat cut off his hand and threw it on shore, thereby laying claim to the kingdom. Interestingly, the Red Hand of Ulster, while part of the family seal of the O'Neill's (traditionally a Catholic family), it is used as a symbol by both Protestants and Catholics. It is most commonly associated with Protestant paramilitary groups in the form of a clenched fist, often holding a weapon.

Another shared symbol from Celtic mythology that appears in both sides' murals is that of the character Cuchulain. There are many stories of the great Cuchulain defending his northern territory of Ulster from invaders and marauders, but it is his death that is used as a symbol on both sides. He is usually depicted as dying standing upright and tied to a pillar having been defeated by Queen Maeve's armies from
Figure 10. Memorial of hunger striker Bobby Sands who died in 1981. This 1995 mural is a redesigned version of the original mural painted in 1990. Sevastopol Street, Belfast, 1995, by Bill Rolston. Drawing Support 2, 1998.

Figure 11. H-block hunger strikers are supported in this mural painted in 1981 on Rockmount Street, Belfast. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1981. Drawing Support, 1992.
Figure 12. Protestant interpretation of Cuchulain as protector of Northern Ireland. Highland Drive, Belfast, May 2000. Photo by Dr. Jonathan McCormick, CAIN Mural Directory, Album 20, Photo 667.
Connaught in the west of Ireland, a symbol of being willing to die to protect Ulster. One example is that of a recent Loyalist mural with Cuchulain designated as "Ancient Defender of Ulster from Gael Attacks," in his customary pose. He is placed under a poppy, as well as banners commemorating past and present members of the Ulster Defense Association and the Ulster Freedom Fighters. A very interesting interpretation in this particular mural is the red draping of the figure of the Celtic hero. (Figure 12).

Compare this image to the Republican mural also claiming Cuchulain as one of their own. In this example Cuchulain is painted golden as is the drape and is surrounded by names of local Republican volunteers, the shields of the four provinces (signifying unity) and a declaration of never bending or being broken (Figure 13).

An example of the evolution of the murals is the work of the Bogside artists. The Bogside Artists are Tom Kelly, Kevin Hasson and William Kelly, three men trained in the fine arts. These residents of Derry use their talents to give the people of their community a voice. In a statement from the artists they explain, "What confers a unique provenance on our work is the fact that we feel obligated to tell. The story of the Bogside is our story and vice versa." (CAIN: Bogside Artists The Artists' Statement, 2000). Since all three of these artists also work with groups that promote better relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities, it would not seem that their work is of an antagonist nature. Rather, the artists see it as a more "curative" nature for those of the beleaguered community. They have depicted recent events in Derry history in compelling and arresting manners such as in this image from the Battle of the Bogside conflict (Figure 14).

January 30, 1972, is another day often memorialized by the Republicans in the murals; this is the day known as "Bloody Sunday." Thirteen men were killed by a parachute regiment from Britain during a civil rights march. There persists a great deal of contention concerning what really occurred that day. It was claimed by the Paratrooper unit patrolling the area that they were fired upon first by the protesters. But
it has been contended by the victims and other witnesses that none of the killed had weapons and that some were not even involved in the protest march. This incident only served to further escalate tensions and violence. There were reprisal bombings and killings by all sides (British, Protestant Irish and Catholic Irish). The issue is still under investigation as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of this incident, large puppet soldiers were hung on the walls of Derry (Figure 15). These are the same walls that the soldiers were positioned on. Examples of possible retaliation or further brutalization by government forces is easily depicted "larger than life" on these outdoor exhibits. They reiterate strongly "what this is all about" in a concise and symbolic manner which makes the use of wall murals very effective. Other uses of "street art" as an extension of the murals has been the installation of thirteen large black and white panels of the faces of the thirteen killed on Bloody Sunday. These also were installed on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the shootings, placed on top of a hill that overlooked the route taken by the protest march.

The use of trained artists is a shift from early mural painters who were usually house or sign painters. Some painters are self trained persons from the neighborhood, since one of the main aspects of murals is that it is art from the people. One such artist is Gerard Kelly, who was a former IRA member. He learned to paint while serving time in prison for his involvement in the IRA (Rolston, 1998). This trend of using professional artists represents a legitimization of the murals within the communities of both the Loyalist and the Republican communities as a way of expressing their sense of self and place (Woods, 1995). There seems to be a shift also of the murals to be more commemorative and less propagandist. For a while the murals had an extremely militarist, threatening air to them, but that does seem to be lessening in many of the newer murals. There are even some, while still in the propaganda category, that are also humorous. The murals urged people to get out and vote Sinn Fein (Figure 16).
Figure 14. "Battle of the Bogside (2)" is the title of this mural. It is part of a series painted in the Catholic Bogside neighborhood of Derry, painted by the Bogside Artists. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1994. *Drawing Support 2*, 1998.

Figure 15. The Bogside Artists and persons who helped with its installation stand in front of this street art exhibit entitled "Bloody Sunday Protest (2)." *Bogside Artists*, 2001.
Figure 16. There is a bit of humor in the drawing of this otherwise serious issue of voting in support of Sinn Fein candidates. Rossville Street, Belfast. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1992. 
*Drawing Support 2, 1998.*

Figure 17. Mural on New Lodge Road, Belfast (a Catholic neighborhood), questioning the peace process. Photo by Bill Rolston, 1995. *Drawing Support 2, 1998.*
Figure 18. When entering the Catholic Bogside neighborhood, one is greeted by this statement. The gunman inside the triangle indicates that an IRA sniper is on duty in that areas. Photo by Dr. Jonathan McCormick, CAIN Mural Directory, Album 20, number 667, 2001.

Figure 19. A Loyalist version of the Free Derry mural on Linfield Road, Sandy Row, Belfast. Photo by John McCormick, August 2001. CAIN Mural Directory, Album 28, number 946.
and gained much attention. But there are others that question the entire peace process, which an example of employing propaganda to question the validity of the opposing forces. Figure 7 shows a mural that questions who it really is that is keeping peace from happening in Northern Ireland. Since this mural is in a Catholic neighborhood, it is easy to tell who the muralist blames.

The placement of the murals is an important factor. Sometimes their use as a marker of territory can be easily recognized. An example would be the mural located at the entrance of Derry's Catholic Bogside area (Figure 18). The triangle at the top indicating "Sniper on duty" would cause an unwelcome outsider to thinking twice about coming into this neighborhood. As you enter the area there are a number of related murals for the people of Bogside, meant as a memorial and as a voice for the people. The same is true for many of the Loyalist murals that signify the territory of different paramilitary groups that are headquartered in their respective vicinities (Figure 19).

VI. DISCUSSION

When murals first appeared in 1908, it was to identify to Catholics that Protestants or Loyalists were in control. They made public declaration of allegiance to the English crown, extolled their great history and reminded Catholics of their lower position in Northern Irish society. As the communities that had been somewhat segregated before the Troubles, once again became segregated, the need to "mark" their territory became even greater. While much more sophisticated in manner, this sort of behavior can be seen as similar to that of gangs that paint graffiti on walls in their neighborhood to indicate territorial claims.

One of the difficulties in overcoming the conflict is the need for desegregation, but when the people are segregating themselves by choice, it is much harder to break those barriers. Both sides believe in safety in numbers. At one time only the Protestants were allowed to paint murals, and these were usually representative of a
past British victory over the Irish. But as the Catholics gained more strength and
experienced more autonomy the need to declare their ownership over the land they
lived on became a very great issue. Once again, this is the need to make a statement
publicly of what the people are feeling privately or collectively.

The measure of psychological trauma suffered by the people of Northern Ireland
on both sides of the walls is huge. The constant threat of continuing and/or escalating
violence makes the community feel that it must keep the victims or martyrs
remembered in some fashion to not forget their sacrifice. And although there are many
groups trying to help the victims and their families, there is so much to overcome. One
of the traditional ways of dealing with a tragedy is to simply endure. Others believe in
getting revenge, thinking that will appease the awful feeling inside; an eye for an eye
has traditionally been the Irish way of dealing with their hurts. But when you have an
entire country functioning in this manner, eventually you wind up with a blind nation. In
looking at the long and troubled history of Northern Ireland, one can only hope that the
use of murals as a vehicle of political expression will bring a new era of reconciliation.
Both sides of the conflict are obviously very proud of their history and the
accomplishments of their people. Perhaps their shared use of symbols in murals is one
avenue of bridging the gap between the two groups. They seem to be using the murals
in much the same fashion, so perhaps they are on the right track and can some day
"see" and not be blind to peace.
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