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# THE TIME OF IRISH ART

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**ABSTRACT**

How might an understanding of the temporal help us to engage with the visual? To what extent is this mediated by a sense of location – in this case within (or about) Ireland? This thesis takes the form of an enquiry into the meanings of time in relation to Irish art over a period of approximately one hundred years from 1910 onwards. Rather than a focus on the production of meaning within artworks themselves, however, the thesis is concerned with art historiography – an investigation into the wider discursive content of a selection of my published work between 2013-2018. In doing so it establishes a critical and distinctive position for the importance of time and temporality not just in relation to the broader field of art history, but within a wider understanding of the historical formations of Irish visualities. To achieve this, I focus on the deconstruction of selected notions of temporality within the discourses of art history (the role of linear histories, canons and contemporaneity) in conjunction with an analysis of the specificity of Irish temporalities. This takes two forms: evidencing the uneven experience of modernity and the active presences of traumatic memory, both legacies of colonialism, as a means of undoing the progressive drive of linear history, and an accompanying analysis of the complex temporalities of post-conflict Northern Ireland, as a means of more specifically situating how art historical writing can produce the meanings of its artworks in both locations. Finally, in

conjunction with a return to the written work submitted to accompany this thesis, I map out further directions this can take, as a means of understanding the crucial role of past modes of temporalities in an engagement with the present and an attempt to shape the future.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This investigation started with a desire to find out how notions of time figure in some of my published work over the last few years (2013-2018). I see my writing as both situated at and situat*ing* a dynamic interface between art history and the critical dimension of Irish studies. As a result my investigations of temporality draw on a selective reading of the ways that time has figured as a structuring element within constructions of both art history and irishness, combined at the place where they meet, in my own practice.

The writing covers a period of approximately one hundred years since 1910 and takes different forms: from a survey history of Irish art to a six thousand word essay examining the social and political issues emerging from a close reading of one painting, and from an analysis of how Ireland and irishness are positioned in relation to a major European art movement to an engagement with the contemporary, and post-conflict art in Northern Ireland in particular. So this is not an inquiry into the role of time in Irish art, but in relation to art historiography, although ultimately of quite a personal kind. A closer unravelling of the discursive means whereby art over the last century has been represented, however, should help to reveal how history structures an engagement with the past both through identifying what is significant and, conversely, what it excludes. And if the knowledge of the past can trace a path into the future, this process has enabled me to envisage productive ways

of continuing this investigation through my on-going work as a critically

engaged, and hopefully more self-aware, historian of Irish art.

## THE SHIFTING FIELD OF IRISH ART HISTORY

As Niamh NicGhabhan suggested recently (2013:1), Irish art historiography is at a pivotal moment, signifying a move to

> assess the directions of art historical enquiry and scholarship, to
> critically question the terms of the discipline as it has developed, and to
> begin to imagine and to investigate the critical landscape of the future.

My own writing has been concentrated on the production of art historical narratives, including, in *Art in Ireland since 1910,* (2013) a major, critically positioned survey history. As a result my focus here will mostly be on a range of survey accounts or edited collections against which I see my own work as positioned.

At the outset, the main survey texts addressing the majority of the period eventually covered in *Art in Ireland* were S.B. Kennedy's *Irish Art and Modernism 1880-1950* (1991) and Dorothy Walker's *Modern Art in Ireland* (1997), in addition to a trilogy covering art specifically from Northern Ireland throughout the twentieth century: John Hewitt and Theo Snoddy's *Art in Ulster 1* (1977), and its successors Mike Catto *Art in Ulster 2* (1977) and Liam Kelly's *Thinking Long: Contemporary Art from the North of Ireland* (1996). My

introduction to *Art in Ireland* has already addressed the construction of Irish art history in Kennedy and Walker as formalist and essentialist respectively (Barber 2013: 10); Kennedy's text reappears in the present discussion in conjunction with a further significant survey, Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin *The Painters of Ireland c.1660-1920* (2002) in relation to the formation of an Irish canon. Similar to the *Art in Ulster* trilogy (and as I explore further in Chapter 5) these are empirically written histories providing much valuable information but little of the materialist methodology that I wanted to develop as a means of framing my own investigation of Irish art over this period.

A further area that emerged significantly while I was working on the texts included here can be identified as representing a broadly archival turn in Irish art history. My own practice represented in this submission has focused around the writing of narrative art history, and it is the features of this, rather than the taxonomic practices represented by the archive, that I focus on in this inquiry. *Art and Architecture of Ireland vol.5: Twentieth Century*, edited by Catherine Marshall and Peter Murray (2014) was the culminating volume in a major research project initiated by two art historians from University College Dublin, Paula Murphy and Nicola Figgis, to mark the centenary of the publication generally recognised as the founding work of Irish art history, Walter Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Strickland 1969) and funded through the Royal Irish Academy (RIA). Rather than presenting a continuous unified historical narrative, in keeping with its companion volumes *The Twentieth Century* represents a large-scale encyclopediac expansion of the

dictionary format originally used by Strickland, including fifty-seven thematic essays and almost two hundred artists' biographies.

However a critical interest in archival tendencies as a feature of visual culture rather than the writing of art history emerged some years previously, in the context of the changed temporalities of post-conflict Northern Ireland. Colin Graham's essay 'Every Passer-by a Culprit? Archive Fever, Photography and Peace in Northern Ireland' (2005) was included in a special issue of the journal *Third Text* on Ireland, which in turn provided a valuable range of different perspectives for the development of my own project (eg Jewesbury 2005, Kennedy 2005), both with regard to *Art in Ireland* and the two essays 'Visual Tectonics' and 'Bordering the Visible'. The archival turn, and indeed a greater concern for issues of temporality mainly focused around the representation of trauma, also features heavily in a recent publication on post-conflict art from Northern Ireland, Declan Long's *Ghost-Haunted Land: Contemporary Art and post-Troubles Northern Ireland* (2017).

An important context for my writing is in the expanding field of Irish Studies at present. In the introduction to *Art in Ireland* I mapped out the relevance of this area of study for Irish art history (Barber 2013: 11) noting in particular the significance of the early work of Luke Gibbons (1996) in addition to Fintan Cullen's *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland 1750 to 1930* (1997). To some extent, both art history and the politics of the visual are becoming increasingly recognised in turn within Irish Studies, Yet this is often only partial, with the tokenistic inclusion of a chapter on Irish art in edited

collections that otherwise are almost exclusively concerned with literature e.g. Róisín Kennedy's essay (2009) on the White Stag group in Edwina Keown and Carol Taafe's *Irish Modernism: Origins, Contexts, Publics* (2009). In other instances, however, where the inclusion of the visual does play a more central role, this can work to the exclusion of women artists, despite their increasing visibility through the publication of edited collections such as Éimear O'Connor's *Irish Women Artists 1800-2009: Familiar but Unknown* (2010). One key example is Nicholas Allen's *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War,* (2009) which, despite its innovative approach, still focuses on the normative male pantheon of Joyce, Beckett, W.B. and Jack Yeats. It was partly my frustration at the absence of women other than as a kind of Greek chorus brought on to react to key events that prompted my own investigation of race and femininity in the early years of the Free State, in the essay 'Race, Irishness and Art History' (2017) included here. This is also in contrast to one publication where women as artists were more fully visible, and where the intertextual potential of a relationship between art history and the critical power of Irish studies was more fully apparent. *The Moderns: The Arts in Ireland from the 1900s to the 1970s* (Junquosa and Kennedy eds 2011), a major publication that accompanied an exhibition of the same name, positioned the history of Irish modernist art in relation to a range of other forms of cultural production including not only film, photography and architecture, but poetry and modern music, and in many instances suggesting a considerable degree of cosmopolitanism and interdisciplinarity, as for example in Luke Gibbons' 'Peripheral Visions: Revisiting Irish Modernism' (2011). This was to prove particularly helpful in framing the questions around

Ireland's relationship to Surrealism in my essay 'Surrealist Ireland' (Barber 2018a).

## 3. THE SUBMISSION

1. *Art in Ireland since 1910* (2013a) London: Reaktion Books

2. 'At Vision's Edge: Post-Conflict Memory and Art Practice in Northern Ireland' (2013b), in *Memory Ireland vol.3: The Famine and the Troubles* edited by Oona Frawley, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 232-246

3. 'Visual Tectonics: Post-Millennial Art in Ireland', (2014) in *The Crossings of Art in Ireland* edited by Charles Armstrong, Brynhildur Boyce and Ruben Moi, Bern: Peter Lang, 97-114

4. 'Surrealist Ireland: the Archaic, the Modern and the Marvellous' in *A Companion to Modern Art* (2018a) edited by Pam Meecham, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 109-124

5. "Race, Irishness and Art History: Margaret Clarke's *Bath Time at the Crèche,* Motherhood and the Matter of Whiteness" (2017) in *Narratives Unfolding: National Art Histories in an Unfinished World* edited by Martha Langford, Montreal: McGill University Press, 62-80

## Unpacking The Submission

The five pieces of writing that make up the submission are now all in the public domain, although this was not the case when I started this PhD project. The first submission stands alone, due not only to its size (75000 word monograph) and scope, but also because it was the main focus of my writing over a sustained period of time. The other texts I divide into two pairings, both because of when they were written and also because of their related themes. In this section I briefly summarise their main concerns as a means of an initial framing of the way that my thinking was beginning to develop and move on over this period.

### 1. *Art in Ireland since 1910*

The central submission is my monograph *Art in Ireland since 1910,* commissioned by Reaktion Books as part of a series focused on art in a range of locations 'overlooked' within the more familiar narratives of art history focused around centres of innovation. As requested by the publishers, *Art in Ireland* is a narrative history covering the span of approximately one hundred years of art throughout Ireland, both North and South of the border, in addition to discussion of diasporic Irish art. Following an initial introduction that indicates both the methodology and scope of the book, ten of its eleven chapters each situate the discussion of roughly a decade of the development of art in Ireland within the wider context of political, social and other cultural factors. The fundamental aim of *Art in Ireland since 1910* was to examine the

shifting relationship between artistic practice and the formations of nation over a period that begins with Ireland as still under British rule and ends a century later with the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement in the North, and the consequences of unexpected economic prosperity in the South.  The historical account starts with the painters Paul and Grace Henry's visit to Achill in 1910, which I position as a foundational moment of Irish modernism analogous to (and indeed informed by) Gauguin's visits to Brittany in the 1880s, and concludes in 2011 with a range of expanded art practices throughout Ireland and beyond. The one exception (ch. 6 'Irish Art and Diaspora in the 1950s') focuses on the work of Irish artists mainly in Britain during this decade (eg Francis Bacon, Louis Le Brocquy, Gerard Dillon), a discussion situated in relation to more nuanced processes of identity formation within diaspora posited by postcolonial writers such as Paul Gilroy (1990-1991) and Homi Bhabha (1994).

*Art in Ireland* is thus the first ever survey of Irish art in the long twentieth century. Embarking on an extensive history of this kind was not my first choice for a major publication at this stage of my career. Yet this was soon overweighed by the recognition of the opportunity this afforded – to write the type of account of Irish art that I'd always wanted to read, but had never been able to find. I also soon realised that this would end up as a canonical text, so if this was inevitably going to be the case it was also going to be canonical on my terms as far as possible.  I discuss canonicity and (Irish) art history in more detail below, so at this stage it is perhaps sufficient to note that the chronological momentum of *Art in Ireland* is deliberately fuelled by theoretical

underpinnings deriving from my training and practice as a materialist and feminist art historian. More specifically this involves the development of a dialectical relationship between nation and modernity as the key factors determining art practice within a given geopolitical location and across shifting historical conditions. However there were further factors involved in the development of *Art in Ireland*'s methodology. It was important that the book should also be an explicitly *gendered* history, situating both female and male practitioners in relation to changing historical constructions of femininity and masculinity in Ireland during this period.

## 2. 'Visual Tectonics: Post-Millennial Art in Ireland' and 'At Vision's Edge: Post-Conflict Memory and Art Practice in Northern Ireland'

The chronological and methodological focus of *Art in Ireland since 1910* forms the basis for the development of the other texts included here. These two essays were written concurrently while *Art in Ireland* was in press and both engage with a range of issues in contemporary Irish art. They also develop issues implicit in the latter stages of the book in a more detailed format not possible within the monograph's narrative drive, but which I had begun to envisage while writing the book's final chapters. As a consequence both texts also engage with theoretical perspectives beyond what I'd considered to be the scope of *Art in Ireland* to support their investigation of specific issues within a given location.

Both 'Visual Tectonics' and 'At Vision's Edge' are set in roughly the same time frame of twenty years – the decade preceding and following the millennium.

'Visual Tectonics' was included in *The Crossings of Art in Ireland,* a collection focused around areas of interconnection between different forms of Irish cultural practice as part of the *Re-Imagining Ireland* series published by Peter Lang. As such, it allowed me to continue my aim of situating the discussion of aspects of recent Irish art as part of an expanding field of Irish Studies, rather than solely within art history. The essay develops aspects of *Art in Ireland*'s last two chapters in a further excavation of the nuanced relationship between postnationalism and visual practice during the period 1998-2010, the dates of the earliest and latest works discussed in the essay. The work discussed is framed in relation to the radical changes experienced throughout Ireland as a result of the Peace Process and Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement (1998) in the North, and the massive upsurge in economic prosperity of the 'Celtic Tiger' boom years in the Republic.

'Visual Tectonics' therefore focuses on the work of four artists, Gerard Byrne, Willie Doherty, Rita Duffy and Anne Tallentire to examine the nuanced relationship between art practice and the re-alignment of underlying forces throughout Ireland, the 'tensions in the tectonic plates of Irish identity' (Barber 2013b: 98). Organised around the issues of temporality and location, the essay reveals its continuity from the underlying structure of *Art in Ireland'* s unifying dialectic of space and time. In order to account for the shifts in art practice over this period, however, its methodology draws both on both Nicos Papastergiadis' reading of cosmopolitanism in contemporary art practice (2012) and Hayden White's critique of the representation of the modernist event (1996). This is used to frame an investigation of the uncertain past

within two artist's films: Doherty's *Ghost Story* (2007) and Byrne's *Why It's Time for Imperial, Again* (1998-2002). The outcome is a focus on both the persistence of memories of cataclysmic occurrences in Northern Ireland's new and apparently optimistic political settlement, and the concurrent instability of the Celtic Tiger's rampant consumerism. The second pairing of Tallentire's interactive video projection *Nowhere Else* (2010) and Duffy's textile-based installation *Sleech* (2009) was also framed by an awareness of the 'productive tension between a globally oriented approach and locally grounded practices' highlighted by Papastergiadis (Barber 2013b: 112).  In the context of the country's emergent postnationalism in the years after the millennium, I read Tallentire's work to suggest the ability of art practice to facilitate a critical engagement with Ireland's position within globalised networks. Duffy's installation, by comparison, is interpreted as suggestive of the conditions of an atavistic nostalgia experienced by (loyalist) communities in Belfast unable to adapt to the more expansive conditions of post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

 'At Vision's Edge', although situated within roughly the same timeframe as 'Visual Tectonics', is concerned solely with aspects of art practice in Northern Ireland, and its engagement with post-conflict memory and trauma in particular, both of which are factors of considerable significance in post-Agreement Northern Ireland.  'At Vision's Edge' was published in a collection edited by Oona Frawley focused around two moments of perceived historical trauma that are a key focus in Irish cultural memory: the Famine (1845-1849) and the Troubles (1969-1998). Like 'Visual Tectonics' it therefore is situated within the wider context of Irish Studies, but also more specifically within the

developing discourse around Irish cultural memory, as indicated by the book's full title, *Memory Ireland volume 3: The Famine and the Troubles* (Frawley 2014a)*.* More specifically, however, writing this piece also allowed me to return to issues raised by some of the artworks within an exhibition I'd co-curated in 2009, *Archiving Place and Time: Contemporary Art from Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement* (Barber and Johnston 2009)*.*

The essay discusses the work of five artists from Northern Ireland, each of whose practice is concerned with post-conflict memory in different ways: Willie Doherty, Sandra Johnston, Mary McIntyre, Aisling O'Beirn and Paul Seawright, all of whom had previously been included in *Archiving Place and Time*. Their work is addressed through a critical engagement with selected literature around affect and trauma (Caruth 1996; Bennett 2005; Guerin and Hallas 2007). As a result, Willie Doherty's installation *30th January 1972,* (1993) the date of Bloody Sunday[1], is considered as a formative moment in the development of the artist's concern with issues of witnessing and traumatic memory that were also central to the later project *Ghost Story*. 'At Vision's Edge' positioned Doherty's earlier *30th January 1972* as focused around the accounts of witnesses as partial and often contradictory in their construction of the past. In a similar vein the essay also suggests Sandra Johnston's video *Interview* (2011) as indicative of the 'impossibility of visuality ever providing a complete account of trauma' (Barber 2014: 240), just as it

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[1] 'Bloody Sunday' refers to the killing of thirteen unarmed men and boys by British paratroopers at a Civil Rights March in Derry on 30 January 1972.

points towards the unfinished nature of the conflicted past in Northern Ireland,
concerns also underpinning Paul Seawright's photograph simply entitled
*Memory* (2009).  In the last section of 'At Vision's Edge' issues of location as
bound up with memory – particularly significant also for the works by Doherty
and Johnson considered here  - resurface in a discussion of post-conflict
amnesia and storytelling in Aisling O'Beirn's interactive installation *Some
Things About Belfast (Or So I'm Told)* (2006). A final work, the photograph
*Mound I* (2009) by Mary McIntyre shifts the focus from the urban to the rural
as a means of highlighting the role of landscape conventions, particularly that
of the sublime, as also particularly apposite to the signification of trauma.

Both essays, albeit in different ways, reflect on the processes of representing
the past, whether through the problematisation of authoritative historical
accounts of key events or through a focus on traumatic memory's refusal to
allow a reconciliation with the present. These two essays, then, indicate a shift
in my work towards a more critical interrogation of processes of accounting for
the past, a position that also informs the very different chronological focus of
the next and final pairing of essays.

3. 'Surrealist Ireland: the Archaic, the Modern and the Marvellous' (2018):
'Race, Irishness and Art History: Margaret Clarke's *Bath Time at the Crèche,
Motherhood and the Matter of Whiteness*' (2017)
The final pairing of essays here marks a shift away from the paradigm of
nation constructed in *Art in Ireland since 1910* and which still informed 'Visual
Tectonics' and to a lesser degree 'At Vision's Edge'. By 2013, when both of

these two final pieces were begun, I was starting to think more directly about the positioning of Irish art in a global context. Significantly, both 'Surrealist Ireland' and ' Race, Irishness and Art History' were published in collections concerned much more explicitly with world art history in comparison with the Irish Studies focus of the volumes that included 'Visual Tectonics' and 'At Vision's Edge'.

A key theme of "Surrealist Ireland" is the repositioning of both Irish art and constructs of Irishness in relation to a key movement within global modernism. This essay has a dual focus: the representation *of* Ireland in Surrealism and the significance of Surrealism *for* Irish artists, both of which are read through Sinéad Garrigan Mattar's (2004) construction of the Irish primitive in order to reposition both Irishness and Irish art within a hybridised modernity. The essay argues that Irishness functioned for Surrealists as a further instance of their more extensive fascination with the primitive, a positioning partly constructed through the Surrealist reading of the relationship between the archaic, the modern and the marvellous embedded within the early Irish modernism of the Celtic Revival.  This is discussed through an initial consideration of the redrawn Surrealist map of the world, published in the Belgian journal *Varietés* in 1929 and in which Ireland is given a much more prominent position than Britain. Irish writers such as Swift, Maturin and Synge, meanwhile, played an important role in André Breton's development of 'the marvellous' as an aesthetic category. The role of primitivism – including irishness - within the Surrealist pantheon of the marvellous also played an

important role in their revolutionary political aim of the overthrow of European capitalism and imperialism.

Yet, as I argue in this essay, this position produced within the competing avant-gardes of 1920s Paris was very different from the gaze back from the edge of the map. The remainder of the essay comprises of two pairs of case studies, one historical and one contemporary, to examine the appropriation of Surrealism *by* Irish artists and in ways that are either distanced from or actively subvert the construction of irishness within Surrealism. In the first pairing, Colin Middleton's use of the lexicon of Surrealism to articulate the relatively localised trauma of the Belfast Blitz during the Second World War is compared with Leonora Carrington's Surrealist incorporation of irishness into a diasporic hybridised modernism, initially in Paris in the 1930s and subsequently within the cosmopolitan avant-garde in Mexico City. Secondly the deployment of Surrealist vocabulary and subject matter are read as part of two very different deconstructions of gender stability, temporality and the modern in the more recent work of Alice Maher or Gerard Byrne. All of these case studies, however, focus on not just a disjuncture of notions of the archaic and the modern, but also foreground the construction of sexuality as deeply embedded within the formation of Surrealism itself.

In comparison with the broad historical span of moments of Irish surreality suggested in the first essay in this pairing, "Race, Irishness and Art History" takes as its focus a specific painting, Margaret Clarke's *Bathtime at the Crèche* (1925). Despite its inclusion in a survey catalogue of the collection of

the National Gallery of Ireland (Bhreathnach Lynch and Bourke1999: 178),

this painting remained largely unknown and under-researched, due at least in

part to its disquieting subject matter. Depicting a group of children

accompanied by two young women, what might have appeared as a depiction

of socialised childcare alone is however disrupted by the presence of a black

baby at the centre of a grouping of figures who otherwise are entirely white.

What is more, the central dyad of woman with this child on her lap is

disturbingly dysfunctional, in its suggestion of little emotional connection

between the two figures. Spurred on by the catalogue's representation of this

painting as little more than a curious anomaly, my essay attempts to construct

an alternative scenario in which this work could become meaningful within the

context of its moment of production, three years after much of Ireland became

independent of British rule.  In order to do so, the essay foregrounds the

significance of both the construction of femininity and race in the discursive

formation of the Irish Free State. The awareness of cultural difference thus

becomes allied to an interrogation of the role of art practice in building the

Irish nation.

In comparison with the isolationist and reductive ethnicity identified within the

rhetoric of post-independence Ireland, my account attempts to indicate a

reconfiguration of Irish art of the 1920s in relation to factors of race, gender

and modernity. It draws on a range of sources including accounts of racial

difference primarily in Irish writing (Brannigan 2009), the construction of

whiteness (Dyer 1997), and the work of Irish feminist historians ( Luddy 2011,

Valiulis 2009). Ireland of the 1920s was largely a white monoculture, yet this

was also a time when attitudes to women became increasingly repressive, including both the stigmatisation of extra-marital pregnancy and illegitimacy itself.  Ultimately I argue that a key source of the affective unease of Clarke's painting is generated by the threat of miscegenation. However the extent to which this imaginative scenario might have corresponded to real life is difficult to assess, given the silencing around female transgressive behaviour and the invisibility of blackness within the cultural record of the time. Painting itself thus becomes the means of articulating what otherwise might remain unacknowledged: 'what cannot be said can sometimes be painted' (Barber 2017: 80).

 These essays represent a return in my practice to the writing *of* history rather than reflecting on its processes; they also suggested an important focus of research that I have begun to undertake subsequently, and which I shall discuss further in the final section of this thesis.

## 4. THE SHIFT FROM SPACE TO TIME

Before settling on a concern with temporality in Irish art of the twentieth –
early twenty-first centuries I initially thought that this project's focus was going
to be much more explicitly *spatial* – attempting to situate Irish art within a
global context. All of the work represented in the submission positions Irish art
in one way or another in relation to Ireland as a specific location. My intention
was to expand this sense of locatedness. I wanted to situate Irish art since the
start of the twentieth century much more firmly within a relationship with other
art cultures that had evolved through a process of decolonisation - and which
also had been considered as peripheral to both the sites of and discourses
around modernist innovation.

In doing so I hoped to position examples of my own writing on Irish art as a
series of strategic interventions that would, I hoped, be a small corrective to
what I saw as the blindness of global art histories. Emerging in the context of
post-colonialism and post-nationalism, global art history has foregrounded
locations that have been positioned as culturally peripheral and questioned
the underpinning political dynamics that have established these unequal
relationships of power and influence. Postcolonial accounts of art history tend
not to include material on Irish art, possibly because of a perception that
Ireland is too firmly identified with Europe. The moves from West to East or
from North to South result in the entirely appropriate shift of focus towards the

art of former colonised territories and peoples that include India, Africa or indigenous Australia. Yet on the whole, Ireland, formerly Britain's oldest colony, has been overlooked in this process.

One example has a particular significance in relation to my research project, which was initially entitled 'Irish Art in the Wider World'. This was a direct take on Paul Wood's recent survey (2014) history of Western art in a global context, and for which I had been asked by the publishers (Wiley Blackwell) to provide an endorsement for the back cover. Beginning with the Renaissance, *Western Art in the Wider World* involves a roughly chronological survey that ends in 2012, raising significant questions about the formation of a Western tradition of art practice, and its more problematic survival within present-day conditions of a globalised art world. Yet despite its erudition and attention to detail of the wider patterns of influence that have informed the construction of a Western canon the book manages to almost completely ignore Ireland, other than a brief discussion of the Surrealist map of the world, where, in Wood's account, Ireland is mentioned only as a foil to the miniscule dot of England (2014: 201-202).

A significant problem here is in how 'the West' is defined.  For much of the book 'the Western tradition of art and art history ' is identical with Europe (Wood 2014: 6). Wood's construction of 'westness' (my term) is one that situates art practice within a range of social, political and economic factors, initially the development of trade and colonialism that helped to engender cultural changes both within Europe and the different societies who

encountered Europeans in this way. Conflated with this notion of 'the West' is therefore the idea of Europe as a site of power and hegemony. There is little that is unusual about this position, but it is a geopolitical scenario that fails to recognise the ambivalent status of Ireland.

There are two main consequences for Irish art, or the representation of irishness. Until very recently, with the years of Celtic Tiger prosperity and an increased role within the EU, Ireland has not in any way been recognisable as approaching equal terms with the rest of Europe. When applied to art history, this degree of marginalisation has the further consequence that the work of Irish artists – such as the Orientalist painter Aloysius O'Kelly [2] - is not recognisable as playing a role within European engagements with the world beyond. Yet a further consequence of the conflation of the West with European hegemony is that Ireland, although geographically within the West and a part of Europe, cannot be recognised as itself a former colony [3]. A more complex and nuanced notion of 'the West' could, for example, have expanded the book's discussion of representations of colonised peoples in the Americas (themselves, incidentally, located even further 'West'), by reference also to

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[2] Aloysius O'Kelly (1853-1936), although known as a landscape and genre painter mainly of Irish subjects, visited the Sudan and Cairo during the 1880s where his Orientalist paintings and drawings also offered a critique of British imperial campaigns in North Africa (O'Sullivan 2010).

[3] Lucy Cotter's essay 'Art Stars and Plasters on the Wounds', the introduction to the special Irish issue of *Third Text* (2005) also edited by Cotter, addresses a related concern. Cotter argues that the failure to recognise Ireland's postcolonial status is a factor that has also affected how Irish art is perceived, not just in the wider world but in Ireland itself, suggesting that 'the potential for any institution to radically advance Irish art rests on its willingness to grapple with Ireland's colonial past and confront some of the most crucial questions underpinning Irish art history and contemporary practice' (2005: 588). Cotter's essay also builds on and develops similar concerns as Joan Fowler's earlier 'Art and Independence: an Aspect of Twentieth Century Irish Art' (Fowler 1984) another essay that was important for the development of my own position in *Art in Ireland since 1910* (2013).

hegemonic role of visual depictions of the Irish during the Elizabethan campaigns that helped to subjugate Ireland in the sixteenth century (Carey 1999). These in fact represent a contemporaneous instance of the relationship between art and the operations of colonialism, but one that would have seriously disturbed the construction of 'the West' at work here.

And it was precisely the desire to explore alternatives to exclusionary art historical writing that to a degree self-consciously motivated one of my essays included here, 'Surrealist Ireland: the Archaic, the Modern and the Marvellous'. I saw this as an opportunity to make a strategic intervention by making Ireland and irishness visible in a prestigious collection with an international and pluralistic focus – an aim that was also followed through by the publication of my essay on Margaret Clarke in *Narratives Unfolding.* There is still a case to be made for a systematic attempt to ground Irish art more firmly within the context of global art history. I have come to realise, though, that this is a much more ambitious project than can be attempted here, probably requiring a monograph ('Irish Art in the Wider World'?). However the crucial factor in deciding the shift to a focus on temporality was when I looked at how my work has developed since the selection of writing discussed here, and in much of which I have found myself drawn to issues of the representation of temporal change in Irish art. And so this current enquiry becomes one of *time* rather than *space* – although the two factors can never really be prised apart. And hence my initial aim to reconstitute the relationship between Irish art and global art histories through the development of an appropriate methodological format has mutated into something a bit different.

Yet these two factors of time and space really are inseparable, as I noted in the introduction to *Art in Ireland since 1910,* where a central part of the book's methodology attempts to trace the relationships between art practice and the dialectic of nation and modernity. The meanings of nation involve a temporal register, 'subject to change in relation to the wider network of social, cultural, economic and political forces brought into being within modernity', while modernity itself is also experienced differently within different locations, 'in areas that are not just geographically peripheral to centres of power, but are themselves subject to jurisdiction from the centre through colonial rule' (Barber 2013: 12). On one level, this re-invokes the bigger picture of the relationship between Irish art and the global as perceived through a broadly post-colonialist perspective. And hence my earlier aim, of situating Irish art more fully within the global, is still present but has become less dominant; the spatial co-ordinates of Irish art survive as the second term of a dialectic that helps to define the temporal.

I want to focus on the *time* of Irish art as embedded within a particular location, where it is produced, consumed and experienced in relation to a range of specific factors. To some degree this is underpinned by a distinction between urban and rural that has been characteristic of all industrialised societies. Landscape painting's depiction of the rural, such as Paul Henry's depictions of Achill (1910-c.1930) for example, has historically been constructed to invoke a recognition of pre-industrial notions of the temporal, prior to the commodification of time that Marx identified as essential to the

production of surplus value (1973:140). Yet despite its geographical bounds and material existence as an island, Ireland is far from homogenous; I would argue that the different histories and social and political conditions of North and South of the border mean that Irish temporalities have been experienced differently. One of my essays, 'At Vision's Edge' (Barber 2014) investigates this more specifically through a focus on the envisioning of the temporality of trauma in post-conflict Northern Ireland, which is something I discuss more fully at the end of the next chapter.

## 5. FROM TIME TO TEMPORALITY

In their common concern either with the historical past or the near-contemporary present all of these examples of my writing are in some way situated in relation to issues of time. They also came into being over quite a long duration. I started researching *Art in Ireland* in 1999, finishing the manuscript late in 2011; publication was two years later. The final pairing included here, 'Race, Irishness and Art History' and 'Surrealist Ireland' had to wait until 2017 for publication, although I completed both of them in 2015. To single out time, then, as a factor in their production may appear self-evident – yet to some extent this degree of *obviousness* is precisely the point. As Russell West-Pavlov suggests, time itself is 'one of the great "natural" givens of our culture' (2013: 5), and that what appears to be such an integral and unquestioned part of our lives actually performs a range of hegemonic functions. This is also connected to the undermining of the notion of a single 'universal time' in favour of 'multiple, temporal regimes' (2013: 3).

In the broadest sense, 'temporality' means 'the state of existing within or having some relationship with time' (Oxford English Dictionary: online). We live our lives regulated by the measured units of clock time, but in fact this co-exists with other temporalities: biological time in the regular, rhythmic pulses of a heartbeat, or the inexorable journey from birth to death: the commodification of time as experienced in the work relations of contemporary capitalism: or planetary time marked out by periodisations, the latest of which,

the anthropocene, may the last one of which we are conscious. My focus here is on selective aspects of an understanding of time focused around key areas – the role of linear time and the work of memory, particularly the experience of trauma. In the sections that follow this initial discussion of temporality I then consider how this might inform the writing of art history and the discursive construction of Irishness, as a means towards a better understanding of the role of time within my own writing.

## The Measure of Time and its Undoing

Writing at a time when the technology of clockwork was beginning to structure social and economic life to an unprecedented extent, for Isaac Newton time was something that can be quantified, broken down into measurable units of duration. This empirical notion of temporality, however, exists within a further notion of time as something absolute and mathematical and that is not subject to change in the same way. As he wrote in his major work on time, *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica,* also known as *The Principia* (1687, cited in Adam 2004: 30)

> Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything eternal (...) All motions may be accelerated or retarded, but the flowing of absolute time is not subject to change.

As Barbara Adam (2004: 30) points out, Newton's physics therefore involves a measuring of

> the motions of things only *in* time, on the one hand, and absolute time within which motion and change are thought to take place, on the other.

Time therefore becomes seen as not only something quantifiable and capable of being divided into measurable units, but also an absolute quality that surrounds this empirical version of time, and whose nature is fundamentally unchanged. Newton's theories therefore represent a significant moment at which time becomes increasingly abstracted, separated from the world of nature, and which was to have significant and long-lasting consequences for the way that time and space would be separated in future [4].

The measure of time as a linear progression bound up with the working day, meanwhile, was subsequently identified by E. P. Thompson in his important essay 'Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism' (1967) as a

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[4] One consequence of this division is addressed by Doreen Massey in terms that also have particular significance for my investigation of Irish art and temporality. In her essay 'Politics and Space/Time' (1994), written at a moment when notions of the spatial were beginning to proliferate within cultural theory, she convincingly warns against the separation of space from an awareness of temporality. Not only does this rupture lead to depoliticized readings of spatiality, but the prising apart of these two axes also re-invokes deeply embedded gender dichotomies whereby space is encoded as female and time as male. As Massey argues, 'the dichotomous characterization of space and time, along with a whole range of other dualisms (…) may both reflect and be part of the constitution of, among other things, the masculinity and femininity of the sexist society in which we live' (1994: 259). The realignment of these two terms (space and time) as mutually determining, therefore, also informs my own insistence on the situated histories of Irish art as themselves explicitly acknowledging and incorporating the knowledge of gender difference and significance of women artists as active producers of history and culture.

prerequisite for the development of both industrialised capitalism and the modern state. Thompson's arguments around the production of unified notions of time as embedded within the formation of modernity, have, however also been subject to question. As Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift (1996) have shown, the development of modern notions of time has itself been something that has been experienced as piecemeal and contingent, rather than as a universally experienced transition from a sense of the temporal linked to the natural world. Linear time, its sense of a progression from start to finish, is part of a range of temporalities that also includes ideas of universality, the quantifiable and a sense of the modern, and which as West-Pavlov argues work synchronically to 'structure human existence according to the restrictive but profitable mechanisms of late capitalism' (2013: 5). It also, as I shall consider in relation to the temporalities of canon formation, has an important role to play within the operation of art history. Nevertheless, the value of criticisms such as that of Glennie and Thrift is that they open up the potential for thinking through the co-existence of different modes of time that do not necessarily reinforce but contradict one another. One of these is in the work of memory, and the experience of trauma in particular.

Linear time provides a hegemonic means whereby the majority of people negotiate everyday life yet there are forms of temporality that disrupt this, making it difficult if not impossible for the normative process of time and the assimilation of events to proceed as before. This is one of the main characteristics of trauma, both in terms of the experience of cataclysmic

events and their recall subsequently within memory. As the literature of trauma itself had now become so extensive within the continued proliferation of memory studies, here I provide an overview of its main features with respect particularly to issues of temporality.

Originally used in medical terms to denote a physiological wounding, the notion of trauma shifted from the body to the mind to become additionally applied to a sense of psychological damage. Much of the understanding of trauma, however, is underpinned by a psychoanalytic reading of memory as occupying a different register of temporality within the unconscious, where its non-linear narratives are produced through the revisionary processes of condensation and displacement. Trauma, on the other hand, suggests an experience too overwhelming or difficult to comprehend, provoking a 'shutdown in normal processes of assimilating or 'digesting' experience' (Radstone 2000: 89), and in consequence resisting processes of language formation or representation.

 For writers such as Cathy Caruth, whose *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996) had a major effect on the study of trauma within cultural forms such as art or literature, it is the *belated* character of trauma that is particularly significant, insistently re-emerging into consciousness with devastating consequences after a period of latency. Drawing on a reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)*,* Caruth emphasises the degree of repetition of traumatic experience by the subject who has experienced it, a cyclical temporality that interrupts into and threatens to undo the production of

linear narratives of normative temporality. This is also reinforced by Charlotte Delbo's autobiographical account of her survival of the Holocaust, the trilogy *Auschwitz and After,* (1995) where the horrific experience of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck returns retrospectively and repeatedly as a continual present that undermines the engagement with the contemporary. Other writers such as Jill Bennett, who has traced its presence within recent art practice, have also stressed the *affective* nature of trauma's resistance to verbal narrativity, articulated instead through 'real-time somatic experience' (2005: 23) – an embodied imprinting of trauma, rather than telling its story.

It is important to note though, that an understanding of trauma extends beyond the experience of the individual and into a sense of the social. Jenny Edkins' notion of ' trauma time' (2003: xiv) stresses its unmaking of apparently homogenous linear time as a disruption also of the continuum of the nation-state. This takes place not just individually, but at a collective level, as in the experience of the people who witnessed the events of 9/11.  The legacy of trauma, moreover, can also show on an inter-generational level, as in Marianne Hirsch's discussion of 'post-memory', in which, for example, the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors have the sense of recalling traumatic events that 'preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right' (2008: 103 online).

The questions raised by the relationship of linear temporality and the disruptive force of trauma are those that I shall return to in a discussion of

Irish temporalities later in this inquiry, but, before that, we need to consider how temporal modes work within the writing of art history as a form of representation.

## The Time of (Irish) Art History

In this section I focus on the role of history as a representation of temporality – not just as something that passively transmits a pre-constituted notion of time, but as a discursive site whereby different temporalities are actively produced and circulated. In doing so, however, I want to narrow the focus down first of all to the work of art history, and secondly to the characteristics of *Irish* art history as a means of framing issues within my own practice as a writer. In her discussion of the relationship between art history and modernism, Elizabeth Mansfield (2002: 11) argues for the specificity of art history as a distinctive post-Enlightenment discipline that combines

> the authentic and valuating mission of the connoisseur, the
> hagiographic indulgences of the biographer, the cataloguing impulse of
> the botanist, the alternately reflective and reflexive tendencies of the
> historian, and the philosopher's willingness to calibrate aesthetic
> transcendence.

Yet art history is not just a hybridised combination of a range of other disciplines. Fundamentally predicated on a relationship with the visual, it

offers a discursive framework for the interpretation of encounters with artworks themselves, even though the nature of this relationship has become increasingly problematised (Belting 2003). In this section I focus on two modes of temporality that both inform and structure the performative role of art history, and which have particular relevance to my own writing: firstly the role of the canon and canonicity in art history, and secondly the issue of contemporaneity.

<u>The canon and canonicity</u>

The writing of history provides a means of representing the passage of time, according to specific conventions, and within which linear narrativity generally functions as a means of organising and sequencing events and establishing causality (Büthe 2002). In art history the writing of a linear narrative that establishes qualitative distinctions is the main function of the *canon.* Ever since the first publication in 1550 of Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* the art-historical canon has existed to promote claims to universally recognised assessments of quality, creating a hierarchy of great artists and artworks recognised as of prime importance. This has tended to focus around the creation of a highly selective 'Western tradition' of painting and sculpture extending onwards from the Italian Renaissance, and against which all other forms of artistic production are judged.

The emergence of the New Art History in the 1980s offered a politicised critique of then-dominant forms of art historical practice driven by a combination of connoisseurship and formalism; as its radical potential

increasingly permeated the wider practice of art history the value judgements of the Western canon themselves became subject to deconstruction. This could take different forms whether through a focus on aspects of its historical formation, as in Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham's edited volume for the Open University, *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art* (1999) or as the subject of politicised feminist critique (Pollock 1999). Yet despite the apparent desirability of abandoning notions of canonicity and their implicit value judgements, art history's role in 'establishing or confirming selections of symbolic objects' (Locher 2012: 40), means that they continue to play a major role within the discipline. Anna Brzyski (2007: 3) further identifies canonical formations as

> discursive structures that organise information within a particular field according to a hierarchical order, which engenders cultural meanings, confers and withholds value, and ultimately participates in production of knowledge.

And rather than the single, unitary canon defended by Ernst Gombrich (1979), it is increasingly recognised that there are a multiplicity of canons, 'initially empty structures' (Brzyski 2007: 4) whose contents represent individual attempts at imposing value and meaning through the production of a coherent historical narrative. This allows the production of more specific canons, such as those that function on a national level (including the Irish canon), although the value of these will always be relative to the overarching master narrative of Western art.

Canons can also be oppositional, such as the feminist canon implicit in Pollock's critique, and can as a result take on a political role, as an 'effective strategy of resistance and empowerment' (Brzyski 2007:4). One example here is Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s discussion of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997), where the creation of a collected body of writing serves to actively and visibly construct a tradition. A further consequence, however, is to take ownership of the process of canon formation as a means of determining how that tradition is encountered. As Gates argues, 'our task will be to bring together the 'essential' texts of the canon, the 'crucial central authors,' those who we feel to be indispensable to an understanding of a shape, and shaping of tradition' (Gates 1995 cited in Brzyski 2007:4).

I was attempting to construct an alternative canon of Irish art in *Art in Ireland since 1910* that I now see as to a degree similar to that proposed by Gates*.* Having recognised early on that the book was going to be explicitly canonical, my aim was similarly politically informed, from both a postcolonial and a feminist perspective. I wanted to write from the *situated* position of an awareness of art in twentieth century Ireland as shaped through the forces of colonialism and expropriation, experiences that also resulted in uneven distributions of power throughout Ireland, particularly in the North between Protestants and Catholics. And threaded through this was also an awareness of the problematic and historically contingent positioning of women as both artists and subject matter. This was something that I attempted to make particularly visible throughout – not just in the generally recognised canonical

status of Mainie Jellett as the innovator of abstract painting in Ireland in the 1920s, but, for example, the slightly earlier example of Estella Solomon. A painter who was also a member of Cumann na m'Ban [5] during the War of Independence, Solomon negotiated her role within the Dublin Jewish bourgeoisie with the development of a politicised art practice (Barber 2013: 35).

The Irish Canon

My desire to write a radicalised canon of Irish art was also in opposition to existing formulations of Irish canonicity, as represented in two main texts: Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin's *Painters of Ireland 1600-1940* (2002) and S.B. Kennedy *Irish Art and Modernism 1880-1950* (1991). Both are fundamentally positivist accounts (D'Alleva 2005: 10), empirically recording the 'facts' of Irish art - the description of artworks, their provenance, or the provision of artists' biographies – within the linear narrative of a survey history. Yet in both cases the apparent objectivity of this approach is underpinned by a further position linked to a set of wider values: connoisseurship in the case of *Painters of Ireland* and modernism in the case of Kennedy.

*Ireland's Painters 1600-1940* was a chronologically extended and expanded revision of the authors' earlier work, *The Painters of Ireland c.1660-1920*

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[5] Cumann na m'Ban was an Irish women's paramilitary organization founded in 1914. After participating in the Easter Rising (mainly but certainly not exclusively in non-combatant roles), they continued to be active during the War of Independence, hiding arms and providing hiding places for fighters on the run – as did Estella Solomon in her studio.

(1978). The revised version was published during the period of Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' prosperity that resulted in an increased market for Irish art within Ireland itself, with the emergence of new monied collectors, who the book's two authors had very much in mind (Crookshank and the Knight of Glin 2002: 1). The notion of Irish art as a saleable commodity is embedded within this historical account reinforced by practices of connoisseurship ultimately deriving from its origins in the eighteenth century (Perry and Cunningham 1999: 7) as an activity linked to both wealth and class. Rather than any concern with theoretical issues in art history, connoisseurship focuses on the empirical features of artworks, such as appearance or its traceable provenance, in order to establish authorship, frequently as a means of translating into monetary value in the salesroom (Hatt and Klonk 2006: 40). The identity of one of the authors of *Ireland's Painters,* in particular, corresponds to this model. The Knight of Glin (Desmond FitzGerald) was an Anglo-Irish hereditary peer whose title went back to the fourteenth century: from 1975 onwards he applied his already extensive knowledge of Irish architecture and the decorative arts to his role as the Irish representative for Christie's auctioneers (The Telegraph 2011: online). Anne Crookshank, meanwhile, as Professor of Art History at Trinity College Dublin from 1965 onwards, played a significant role in ensuring that the teaching of art history in Ireland for much of the latter part of the twentieth century continued to proceed along connoisseurial lines.

The canonical imperative of S.B. Kennedy's *Irish Art and Modernism 1880-1950,* by comparison is one derived from formalist readings of Irish art. As I

have already noted in *Art in Ireland* (Barber 2013:10) a significant guarantee of quality for Kennedy is the extent to which the formal qualities of modernist innovation in European cosmopolitan centres filtered out to peripheral Ireland. Similar to Charles Harrison's earlier *English Art and Modernism* (1981), its title explicitly echoed in Kennedy's publication, modernist theorisations however remain largely implicit, contained within a clearly defined taxonomic structure that meticulously details changes in artistic production during the book's chronology. Yet the creation of an apparently objective narrative is itself far from value-free, and hence reinforces the conservative values of the Western tradition underpinning the formation of the Irish canon. One example is the way in which the work of women artists is addressed within the book. On one hand, Kennedy's empirical approach *is* valuable in that it brings to light the role of Irish women painters and sculptors in the development of twentieth century painting. Yet, similar to the work of previously overlooked male artists discussed by Kennedy (such as Romeo Toogood) this becomes part of the body of knowledge out of which the canon develops: with the notable exception of Jellett, it is still the recognisable male pantheon of Henry, Yeats and le Brocquy as modernist innovators that emerges.

My own project of devising an alternative radical canon of Irish art, then, emerged in opposition to practices of connoisseurship and formalism represented by both of these texts that, in slightly different ways, defined a dominant Irish canon. As a survey history, *Art in Ireland* still contains elements of positivism. Assembling facts and descriptions to tell its story, its underpinning methodology was one, however, that was hybridised from

feminism, Marxism and post-colonial approaches, and with the aim of producing very different readings of twentieth century Irish art as a result. But one of the problems that was particularly difficult to resolve in the writing of historical narrative was the question of how to deal with the recent past.

Contemporaneity and art history

Where does the contemporary begin? It cannot always be 'now', because as soon as that moment of instantaneity is consciously articulated it has already been superseded and become  'past'. Contemporaneity therefore also needs to involve a sense of the recent past in addition to 'now', the present and the immediate. Discussions of contemporaneity in art history, meanwhile, often tend to begin with attempts to define where contemporary art begins, since this will be the main frame of reference for historians (Karlholm 2009; Smith 2010). Starting points vary considerably. Amelia Jones' (2006) edited anthology of essays on contemporary art began in 1945. The back cover of Matthew Collings' survey of British art at the turn of the millennium *Art Crazy Nation: the post*-Blimey! *Art world* (2001) limited its 'slice of the contemporary art zeitgeist' to the previous five years. My own co-curated exhibition *Archiving Place and Time; contemporary art from Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement* (2009) started with 1998.  All of these diverse examples represent attempts to define the contemporary; to select art that Dan Karlholm has identified as marked by a 'dual logic of exclusion' (2009: 214). This is both *diachronic* in that it differs historically from that which has preceded it, and *synchronic* in articulating an 'aesthetic' difference with other art of its time, its

qualitative value as bound up with being recognised as having a privileged relationship to the present.

Contemporary art thus implies a plural: it must be contemporan*eous* with something else. This in turn opens up the possibility of co-existing temporalities in different locations – or even within the same location - that provide a different sense of what is contemporary, and what is important (Smith 2010: 373). One example of this heterogeneity is in the 'Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art' project run by the Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast between 2005 and 2015. A series of twelve exhibitions selected by guest curators with accompanying catalogues, 'Collective Histories' was intended, as suggested by the gallery's director Peter Richards, to 'embrace the overlapping and sometimes contradictory versions of history' (2009: 7). A brief comparison of catalogues for two exhibitions, *The Visual Force* curated by Slavka Sverakova (2009) and Máirtín Ó Muilleior's *Tears in Rain / Dheora San Fhearhainn* (2011)*,* indicates very different engagements with the temporalities of post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Sverarkova's selection of artists' work was on the basis that it did not overtly include the 'given socio-political context as their given subject-matter' but by comparison, could 'emanate contexts that ought to be' (2009: 11). Underpinned by a post-Kantian notion of freedom in which art becomes indicative of an ideal – 'a reality that ought to be better than what we experience now' (2009: 19) – Sverakova's starting point for the exhibition was Joseph Beuys' visit to Belfast in 1974, an event that had a significant effect on

subsequent art practice in Northern Ireland. Yet her espousal of a particular view of artistic freedom might also be informed by Sverakova's own engagement with the forces of history. A former academic living in Northern Ireland since 1975, she was one of the many intellectuals leaving Czechoslovakia after the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968 ended the liberalisation of the Prague Spring reforms (Mathews n.d: online). By comparison, Ó Muilleior's exhibition two years later was explicitly rooted in his personal and political history as a member of the republican movement, selecting work that was specifically engaged with the conflict and its aftermath. As then Sinn Féin MLA[6] for a constituency in South Belfast, Ó Muilleior's curatorial stance was also indicative of his investment in the politics of post-conflict reconstruction, which I discuss more fully in the next section. The dual-language (English and Irish) catalogue is steeped in the rhetoric of power-sharing; on one level there is the awkwardly stated admiration of former political enemies such as Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Ian Paisley (2011: 18) , while on the other the inclusion of an Irish language version of the essay also points to a post-Agreement insistence on the recognition of the culture of both 'traditions' in Northern Ireland (2011: 27-38).

As part of the next section I want to consider the nature of post-conflict temporalities in Northern Ireland as a means of situating a reading of art practice in this context. There are, meanwhile, further questions that arise around the role of the art historian in dealing with contemporaneity in art practice. Firstly, what is the distinction between contemporary art history and

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[6] Member of the Local Assembly

art criticism? This is an issue raised – and neatly sidestepped - by Terry Smith

in his essay 'The State of Art History: Contemporary Art', although it otherwise

provides a useful map of the ways in which the contemporary has figured

within the practice of art history. (Smith 2010:366). [7] In relation to the

contemporary, however, the distinction between the two categories can be

less certain, given the interpretative role of both criticism and history. Both are

concerned with an artwork's synchronic relationship with other art of its time,

yet the writing of history involves a retrospective element, situating the work in

a relationship with art before and after. [8] And it is also in retrospect that the

defining features of a temporality – its political and social characteristics – in

which an artwork is situated become more apparent than the often vague and

intuitive awareness of the link between art and the present. One example from

*Art in Ireland* that draws on the recognition of different modes of temporality

(contemporaneity and nostalgia) is the book's opening discussion of Dorothy

Cross's *Ghost Ship* installation (1999), which I read retrospectively in terms of

the currency of millennial reflections on the end of a century where Ireland

'became an independent, modern nation' (Barber 2013: 9).

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[7] This essay in turn develops from the proceedings of a symposium on the contemporary in art historical practice held the previous year at the Clark institute, (although not published by Smith until 2011) and also represents a body of ideas formulated in relation to his publication of an authoritative survey book on contemporary art (2009).

[8] Smith's assertion of a radical break between contemporary art and the concerns of preceding art practices has been the subject of a sustained critique by Paul Wood (2014: 235, 272-281). Wood's politically informed critique is mainly directed towards the processes of valorization that he identifies in the polarities of Smith's account of the locational ('universality / multiplicity; totality / diversity; linear / multi-temporal; centre/ network; global / transnational' (2014: 272). However Wood's argument also focuses on the temporal rejection of modernism and modernity implied by Smith's position and which, in art historical terms, also fails to address issues of change and continuity such as the power relations embedded in the survival of 'the Western canon of art' (2914: 273).

This also raises the related question of how to engage with contemporaneity in the past. Baudelaire's often-cited definition of modernity as 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable' (1982: 23) both prefigures later identifications of the contemporary's relationship between diachronic and synchronic, and suggests a degree continuity between an earlier moment of modernity and our more recent experience. Significantly, Baudelaire's formulation suggests modernity – in this case synonymous with the contemporary – as elusive, something to be glimpsed or encountered obliquely rather than to be perceived directly, yet firmly rooted within its own temporality; a mode of engagement also that Walter Benjamin was later to adopt in the 'sidelong scrutiny' (Mansfield 2002: 16) of the unfinished *Arcades Project*. I would suggest that this is similar to the sense of what I am terming *retrospective contemporaneity* evoked within the work of art history, in which the historian can attempt to reconstruct aspects of the meaning of an artwork in such a way as to situate it within an awareness of the wider historical conditions of its production. Such a reading is allusive and inevitably speculative. One example, however, is what I was attempting to do in the reading of Margaret Clarke's painting *Bathtime at the Crèche* (1925) at the heart of my essay 'Race, Irishness and Art History' (Barber 2017). The lack of engagement between the central dyad of white woman and black baby, I suggest, obliquely asks awkward questions about the contemporary experience of both race and femininity in 1920s post-Independence Ireland that circle around the scandal of illegitimacy and, in this case, the suggestion of miscegenation (2017: 80).

The starting point, meanwhile, for my two essays dealing with the contemporary, 'At Vision's Edge' and 'Visual Tectonics' was 1991. This was a point at which I identified art practice in Ireland both North and South of the border as taking place in a context of shifting political and social temporalities discussed in the last two chapters of *Art in Ireland':* the beginnings of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, and the concomitant erosion of the nationalist ideal in the Republic. I think it is significant that much of the work I considered in these two essays was from Northern Ireland, and that it can be seen as articulating the beginnings of a different sense of engagement with the modalities of time – history, tradition, memory in particular. In the next section I discuss the specific nature of post-conflict temporality in Northern Ireland,

**<u>Irish temporalities</u>**

In recent years the past has become remarkably visible in contemporary Ireland. The 'Decade of Commemorations' is currently in progress, celebrating the centenaries of a sequence of momentous events mainly focused around the struggles for independence, beginning with the Dublin Lockout of 1913 and concluding with the end of the Civil War in 1923. Yet at the same time there has also been an increasing awareness of the erasure of Irish women's history that has become visible through the traumatic revelations around the Magdalene Laundries and other repressive measures throughout the twentieth century taken by the church and state against

women who had illegitimate children, or otherwise transgressed societal expectations. [9] In Northern Ireland, by comparison, processes of commemoration have focused more specifically around First World War centenaries, such as the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme (1916) that plays such an important role in the mythologies of loyalist identity (Beiner 2007). Indeed processes of commemoration and memorialisation are deeply embedded in the cultural traditions of both loyalism and nationalism in Northern Ireland; the Orange Order's annual commemorations of the Battle of the Boyne, for example, began in 1796 (Smyth 1995: online). Meanwhile, in the broader context of an expanded growth of memory studies across the humanities, the academic study of Irish memory 'has continued to grow exponentially' (Corporaal et al. 2017: 3). This is evidenced by the formation of the Irish Memory Studies Research Network in 2013 and in publications such as Oona Frawley's *Memory Ireland* series, the third volume of which (2014a) included my essay 'At Vision's Edge: Post-Conflict Memory and Art Practice in Northern Ireland'.

I begin with this broad overview because in this section I want to focus more on two iterations of Irish temporality that are more specifically relevant to the body of writing submitted for the PhD. – although the trauma surrounding the marginalisation of transgressive women and the legacy of church-sanctioned institutional abuse was beginning to inform my thinking around art practice in

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[9] The Magdalene Laundries were founded in the mid eighteenth century as church-run institutions to incarcerate 'fallen' women. The last laundry closed in 1996, and in 2013 a government Commission found that over 11,000 women had entered the laundries since the founding of the Irish Free State in 1922 (Department of Justice and Equality 2013: online).

the latter stages of writing 'Race, Irishness and Art History', and will feature more fully in my future work. Here, however, my concern is more with the temporalities arising from colonialism, and with post-conflict temporalities in Northern Ireland in order to more closely frame how my own work has engaged in deconstructing the visual. Initially I focus on texts by two writers, David Lloyd and Luke Gibbons, both of whom identify time, and more specifically the spectral memory of the Famine, as having particular significance in relation to Irish culture, notably in the context of Ireland's historical trajectory as also shaped by the uneven experience of modernity and processes of modernisation under colonialism (Cleary 2005: 1-24). However, given that I am also arguing for a notion of *situated* temporalities, I additionally consider specific modalities of the temporal operative in Northern Ireland as an outcome of the Peace Process. Yet common to both situations is a sense in which, as Chris Lorenz suggests, the role of catastrophe destabilises linear notions of history, as the past refuses to stay past, but erupts into the present (2010).

The temporal legacy of colonialism

Out of a pre-Famine Irish population of eight million, it is generally recognised that approximately one million people died and a similar number emigrated. The Famine, therefore, is not just an occurrence of significance within the development of a linear narrative of Irish history, but a prime example of what Oona Frawley has termed 'memory cruxes', (2014b: 2) a means of marking out

traumatic historical spaces that pose questions and offer conflicting,

oppositional and sometimes intensely problematic answers about the

way that a culture considers its past, and that are crucial in the shaping

of social identities.

Lloyd's *Irish Times* takes a similar approach in situating the Famine in relation

to the ways that notions of the temporal can inform an understanding of the

processes of historical change in Ireland during the nineteenth century and

the early years of the twentieth. His construction of temporality is as a process

that is socially and politically determined; rather than being monolithic, it is

heterogeneous and subject to change. The dominant mode of temporality in

Ireland over this period is identified as determined by the exigencies of

capitalism in that the drive to produce surplus value was central to the British

colonial project (2008: 15). This aim therefore underpins the ruthlessness of

the policy of depopulation and neglect in response to the Famine (1845-

1849), a major factor in addition to the repeated failure of the potato crop that

produced such cataclysmic loss of life and scale of emigration.

Yet despite both the scale of the Famine and the role of colonial policies in

multiplying its effects in wiping out an entire way of life, as Lloyd argues,

aspects of pre-capitalist social relations that also evoke pre-Famine economic

and ecological practices still survive. The essays included in *Irish Times,* then,

in addition to trying to suggest 'an alternative conception of historical time'

(Lloyd 2008: 4) also take

the view that the temporality of modernisation in nineteenth- and early twentieth- century Ireland is rifted with formations that live on as the altered shape of practices which, rendered unviable by the inroads of colonial capitalist rationalisation, find new and resistant ways to persist.

The large-scale eradication of pre-capitalist modes of being that predominated in Ireland's largely rural society, specifically forms of social organisation in small villages or agricultural practices such as seasonal transhumance in the form of the rundale system, was one of the most disastrous outcomes of the Famine and have in turn shaped Ireland's engagement with modernity. However, as Lloyd posits, they survive in both the culture of memory through tropes of nostalgia and romanticism that figure within oral narratives, and within the physical environment in the ruins of mud-built cottages that collapse into and merge into a landscape repurposed for sheep farming, and whose former inhabitants have been expropriated. In both cases, however, the form in which they re-emerge – and the meanings thereby associated with these individual locations through the stories that are told of them - is one that is *damaged* by the forces they have encountered, the cataclysm of the Famine, in a process that Lloyd sees as similar to the workings of repression within the unconscious (Lloyd 2008: 17).

Lloyd's identification of a contradictory yet mutually dependent relationship between two temporal modes, modernisation's relentless push into the future and the lingering presence of traumatic elements of the past, is explicitly derived from a reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

(1947). Despite the critical and empowering role of enlightenment rationality, this also culminated in the systematic domination of both humans and nature. Yet once again ideas of *place* also become a key factor in developing temporal meaning. As Lloyd points out, Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis was written in a particular context, in response to their experience of advanced industrial capitalism development in both Germany and the United States (2008: 3). Lloyd's appropriation of their argument is situated differently, within a postcolonial context, which, in the case of Ireland, inflects the significance of the terms of the post-Enlightenment dialectic. The 'domination of humans and nature' takes on particular meanings in relation to the experience of the Famine.

Lloyd's arguments around the survival of the archaic and pre-capitalist within post-Famine culture, albeit in severely altered form, are valuable for my deeper understanding of how I attempted to engage with the forces at work in the development of art in the modernising Irish nation throughout much of the twentieth century. They also help to shed new light on how the role of the past might figure within the final pairing of essays (on Surrealism and Margaret Clarke), or the discussion of Rita Duffy's work in 'Visual Tectonics', which is where the significance of place becomes particularly apparent in this context. One crucial area, however, where Lloyd's approach becomes less useful is in the way that the visual actually figures within his work. [10] *Irish Times'* opening

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[10] Although in a subsequent monograph *Beckett's Thing: Painting and Theatre* (2016) Lloyd does address issues of the visual more fully in an investigation of Beckett's visual imagination and the significance of painters such as Jack B. Yeats, Bram van Velde and Avigdor Arikha for the development of a 'painterly' sensibility in his drama.

essay 'Overture: Ruins / Runes' (Lloyd 2008b) is illustrated throughout by stills from Alanna O'Kelly's video installation *No Colouring Can Deepen the Darkness of Truth* (1992-1995), involving a striking range of images of body and landscape to convey the dualities of loss and survival of pre-Famine culture. In Lloyd's account these images punctuate the density of the text at regular intervals, but it is only towards the end of the essay that they actually figure in the discussion, and only in terms of their *content;* a massive memorial cairn on a beach in Mayo whose stones commemorate the unburied dead of the Famine, or the final image of an earth encrusted pair of hands turned out towards the viewer. The danger here is that any sense of the photographs themselves as cultural artefacts has been lost; as subject to conventions of representation, and part of a currency of images circulating within contemporary art practice of the 1990s, particularly during a period of widespread re-evaluation of the Famine one hundred and fifty years previously.[11]

A different mode of engagement with the visual informs the historical analysis of Irish temporalities in Luke Gibbons' essay 'Spaces of Time Through Times of Space: Joyce, Ireland and Colonial Modernity' (2005). Unlike Lloyd, whose engagement with Irish themes emerges within a wider concern with postcolonial criticism mediated through the Frankfurt School, Gibbons' engagement with postcolonialism is more closely bound up with the critical dimension of Irish Studies. Moreover, since the 1980s, he was one of the first

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[11] See for example Margaret Kelleher's discussion of the politics of commemoration of the Famine in her essay 'Hunger and history: monuments to the Great Irish Famine' (2002)

to extend Irish Studies' literary focus to an analysis of the visual – Irish cinema, photography and art. Despite the essay's focus on temporality in Joyce's *Ulysses,* its choice of epigraph (the painter Frank Budgens' characterisation of Joyce) [12] indicates a different significance accorded to the visual here – a connection taken up more fully in the full length study in which Gibbons' essay was subsequently reprinted: *Joyce's Ghosts: Ireland, Modernism, and Memory* (2015).

As Anthony Giddens observed, 'the control of time as a resource in structures of domination' (1993: 184) has been an important function of modern nation-states; its application to Ireland under British rule is a case in point.  Similar to Lloyd, Gibbons' essay is underpinned by a postcolonial awareness of the uneven development of centre and periphery within modernity in its focus on disruptive consequences of the different temporalities operative in Ireland under British rule. These included both Greenwich Mean Time and Irish Mean Time, a delay of twenty-five minutes and twenty-one seconds derived from the longitude of the Dunsink Observatory in North Dublin where this was calculated. 'Dunsink Time', established in 1880, remained in operation until 1916 when it was abolished by a British Act of Parliament shortly after the Easter Rising (McNally 2016: online). The Time (Ireland) Bill was ostensibly intended to unite the two islands more firmly within the same time zone, although the situation was complicated even further by the use of both Greenwich and Dunsink summer time – with the result that at any one given

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[12] 'Joyce with his own material can do what no painter can within the limits of colour and flat surface. He can build up his picture of many superimposed planes of time' (Budgen 1934 cited in Gibbons: 71).

point the clocks throughout Ireland could be showing four different times. The political implications of different regimes of temporality were also noted by Ernie O'Malley during his role as training officer for rural IRA units during the War of Independence (1919-1921) from Britain - the 'difficulty of three different times for councils and classes' frequently caused problems in the synchronisation of military operations (O'Malley in McNally 2013: online).

The difficulties around the operation of Dunsink time also reveal flaws in the progressive assimilation of modernity, undermining the assumption that recent technological developments operative at the turn of the twentieth century, including the expansion of the railways and increasingly accurate timepieces, would result in the erosion of traditional practices through a transformation of the combined experience of space and time. It is within this context that Gibbons posits Joyce's method in *Ulysses* as suggesting an alternative engagement with temporality, both through the development of Joyce's writing in the text itself, and through what this reveals about the lived experience of conflicting notions of time in Dublin as a modernising city still under colonial rule. In Joyce's writing distinctions between public and private life are blurred; yet rather than further problematising the lived experience of public and private, inconsistencies in time are an inherent part of the writing of *Ulysses*. Bloom's journey through Dublin on 16 June 1904 is thus mapped out through a process of 'opening up the city to competing, unresolved temporalities, the experience of disjunctive or 'allochronic' time' (Gibbons 2005: 71).

Yet the overlapping planes of time in Joyce's writing also suggest both the spatial dimensions of early twentieth century modernist painting that breaks with one-point perspective, or the layout of a newspaper that challenges linear narrative. Both textual and visual modes, then, are a means of evoking the *simultaneity* of modern culture. Any implicit evocation of a continuous present within the contemporary, however, is also challenged by the unexpected re-appearance of elements from the past, such as the ghostly presence of Mary Rochfort (Countess of Belvedere) in the 'Wandering Rocks' section of *Ulysses.* [13] Gibbons' characterises these phenomena in relation to the early cinematic device of the flashback, itself identified by Jo Anne Isaak as a means whereby in Joyce's writing 'segments of the past (or the future) overlap upon the present' (1986, cited in Gibbons 2005: 85). There are similarities here with Lloyd's evocation of the damaged survival of pre-capitalist modes of being in post-Famine cultural memory; although not identified explicitly in 'Spaces of Time through Times of Space' there is an implicit catastrophe haunting the present (Gibbons 2015: xiv). Again this is an interpretation that hinges on the role of trauma, and ultimately the *time* of trauma, as an implicit factor within Irish temporalities. As Gibbons' concludes (2005: 85):

> the true measure of psychic dislocation under colonial modernity is that both public and private are permeable, and that the unrequited past comes across with the lived intensity of personal experience.

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[13] The 'Wandering Rocks' section of *Ulysses* is interlaced with other highly nuanced frames of reference that are disrupted by the ghostly appearance of the Anglo-Irish aristocrat Lady Mary Rochfort (1720-1790). The first countess of Belvedere, the family's property near Mullingar (where Bloom's daughter Milly is living at this point), was imprisoned by her husband for alleged adultery with his brother. The countess's son was in turn the founder of Belvedere College in Dublin that Joyce attended between1893 and 1897.

There is only a slight chronological overlap between my research (beginning in 1910) and the period addressed by both these writers. Yet the picture they reveal of dissonant and troubling temporalities, whose legacies still thrive after the material and political conditions have gone, has been particularly valuable in developing an analysis of the role of time in my writing about twentieth century Irish art. The next chapter, 'Reading Temporality in the Submission', addresses some aspects of this. At this stage, however, I consider a further moment of complex relationships of the temporal that comes right at the conclusion of the period covered by my research represented here: post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Northern Irish Post-Conflict Temporalities

Unlike the Free State established after Ireland's partition in 1922, Northern Ireland did not undergo the same processes of decolonisation but remained a part of the United Kingdom.  Lived experience in Northern Ireland has been on very different terms, with endemic sectarian divisions erupting into the full-scale conflict of the Troubles in 1968, lasting until their apparent conclusion was ratified by the signing of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998, some thirty years later. This period is a further 'memory crux' identified by Frawley  (2014b: 2), the subject of contested memory, not least because of the persistent presence of on-going trauma for many of its survivors. Although my book *Art in Ireland* includes an account of art in Northern Ireland throughout the period since 1910, two of the essays in this submission ('At

Vision's Edge' and 'Visual Tectonics') address art practice in Northern Ireland during the years immediately before and after the Agreement. In this discussion I want to consider how an expanded awareness of the role of a specific – and complex- notion of temporality emerging in relation to both the Peace Process and GFA can inform an understanding also of art dating from this time.

The term 'post-conflict' itself calls into being different temporal modalities of past, present and future. Separate from and yet intrinsically linked to what has gone before, it also implies a different shape of things to come. A sense of time – and timeliness - was implicitly central to the Agreement itself. Signed on 10 April 1998 (Good Friday) between British and Irish governments and the majority of political parties in Northern Ireland, the GFA both brought about an end to three decades of sectarian conflict and made provisions for how Northern Ireland would be governed. Central to this was the tenet of power-sharing in an assembly of both unionist and nationalist politicians, governing by the principle of cross-community consent. Included in the signatories' Declaration of Support with which the Agreement opened was a commitment to 'partnership, equality and mutual respect' (Belfast Agreement 1998: online) and, crucial to any hope of power-sharing between divergent political factions, an opposition to violence as a means of resolving political difference. Yet notions of *temporality* were also deeply embedded within the Declaration's first two principles, recognising from the outset the significance of both past and future in a resolution of Northern Ireland's present situation as a 'historic opportunity for a new beginning'. The intersection of different

temporal modes is particularly notable in the Declaration's second principle

(Belfast Agreement 1998: online), acknowledging that

> The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly recognisable
> legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been
> injured and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh
> start.

The close enmeshing of past and future incorporated into the wording of the

Good Friday Agreement is indicative of significant attempts in post-conflict

Northern Ireland to accommodate the experience of the catastrophic past.

Based on a widely recognised principle of 'parity of esteem' (Ruohomäki

2010), the GFA advocated the equal validity of the different communities'

views of history, including the marking of the past through practices of

commemoration. In Northern Ireland, however, both the meanings of the past

and the means of moving forward still continue to be heavily contested in

keeping with the deeply entrenched political allegiances that characterise

many people's lives.  In this situation, the notion of time itself becomes

politicised. The temporal complexities of this scenario are mapped out by

Graham Dawson (2017: 267) in characterising the discourse around post-

conflict Northern Ireland as

> An instrument of boundary-setting performative politics, a strategy for
> managing the unruly and unresolved past by casting conflict as

precisely 'past', in the name of a new normative 'present' that is clearly separated from it and directed towards bringing into being a vision of a particular desired future.

The progressive trajectory of the desire to construct a better future is repeatedly destabilised by a continued 'present past' (Dawson 2007: 10; Huyssen 2003) of a conflict whose issues still continue to resist resolution. The recurrent curveball of traumatic memory becomes lodged in the experience of the present, repeatedly undoing the dynamics of 'moving on', as official attempts to resolve issues of the Troubles remain largely unsuccessful. [14]

Dawson's essay, however, also focuses on *affect* in relation to these complex modalities of time in contemporary Northern Ireland, identifying the key significance of the 'intimate relationship between temporality and emotion' (2017: 263). This in turn helps to further situate my readings of affect and traumatic memory in post-conflict art in the essay 'At Vision's Edge'. However there is an additional aspect of Dawson's discussion that has a relevance to my research around post-conflict art in Northern Ireland. The state of resolution is 'not yet', something that remains in the future, rather than attainable in the present. This is also an assessment that I encountered when researching the latter chapters of *Art in Ireland,* on visits back to Belfast in 2008-2009 to find out how art had moved on since the conflict. When I asked

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[14] Notably in the furore surrounding the recommendations of the Consultative Group on the Past (2009: online) that financial reparations should be made to the nearest surviving relatives of those murdered during the Troubles, and the accompanying debate around whether perpetrators should be offered amnesty.

this question of artists and curators, the surprisingly frequent answer was 'It's still too early to tell'. Whatever their involvement in cultural institutions, the majority of artists and curators in Northern Ireland are also individuals whose experience – and those of their families and friends – has also been shaped by the conflict and its aftermath. However it is only now, in retrospect, that I recognise this response as not just a generalised reticence to speculate, but as perhaps indicative of an affective engagement with a particular post-conflict temporality.

# 6.READING TEMPORALITY IN THE SUBMISSION

Time, now, to look at my five pieces of writing again. This investigation of the dual role of notions of temporality in both art history and formations of irishness has led to insights both around my practice as a writer and also about how the history of Irish art might be envisaged. In this section I look again at the submission in relation to the modes of temporality discussed within this inquiry: the role of the canon and linear art history, contemporaneity, uneven temporalities and complex temporalities deriving from the experience of colonialism and the ending of conflict.

Impelled by a single narrative drive, *Art in Ireland since 1910* sought to impose order on the unruly material of Irish art, although in a manner distanced from the formalist and connoisseurial models of both S. B. Kennedy and Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin's versions. Instead I attempted to construct a politically informed canon, one that was consciously aware of Irish art's marginality to the Western tradition, but which also represented relationships between centre and periphery in nuanced terms, and which additionally situated the role of women firmly and explicitly within this. It was also important that the specificity of art in Northern Ireland *throughout* the twentieth century was explicitly acknowledged, rather than being conflict or post-conflict related. Meanwhile, Nicholas Allen's (2009) reinstatement of a masculine literary and artistic canon in his account of post-Civil War

reconstruction in Ireland was a factor that impelled my investigation of a historically marginalised women artist, Margaret Clarke (Barber 2017), whose work suggests readings of a gendered – and to some degree raced – engagement with the shifting social conditions of this time. And a further attempt at subversion was one that moved beyond Ireland to attempt to undermine the dominant canon of modernism and its logic of centre and periphery in my essay 'Surrealist Ireland: the Archaic, the Modern and the Marvellous' through the positioning of a gaze back from the edge of the map.

Yet despite these intentions, canons are also implicitly selective: something will end up being left out. In my version what was excluded was any discussion of the applied arts, which, as Nicola Gordon Bowe and other writers have shown (Bowe 1994, Sheehy 1980) were closely bound up with the formation of the modern movement in Ireland. To some degree, this was a conscious decision on my part. The task that I'd set myself already seemed too daunting, while additionally my own area of expertise lies more comfortably within histories of what might be defined as fine art practice. I am also very conscious of the book as an 'unfinished history', where there is scope for other writers to build on what I have written.

There are moments, however, in *Art in Ireland* where a retrospective contemporaneity rises to visibility within the text. My discussion of Jack B. Yeats' work of the 1920s is one of these (Barber 2013: 49), in foregrounding his engagement with the life of the city, including the women republican prisoners still incarcerated in the aftermath of the Civil War. Similar to the

formation of the canon, framing contemporaneity in art is also a selective process, achieved through the identification of what Karlholm terms its diachronic and synchronic registers (2009: 214): indeed, as Terry Smith argues (2007) canonicity and contemporaneity are closely bound up with each other as means of assessing the value of artworks. In "Visual Tectonics' and 'At Vision's Edge' contemporaneity functions as a regime that valorises art as having a privileged relationship to its time. So even as these essays attempted to situate the artworks they discuss in relation to the exigencies of post-conflict Northern Ireland, the phantasmic experience of the Celtic Tiger, or Ireland's place in globalised labour markets, arguably it is this very act that also marks them as canonical.

The sense of contemporaneity in Northern Ireland, as marked by the breakdown of normative modes of temporality, registers in artworks by Willie Doherty and Sandra Johnston in particular, discussed within 'At Vision's Edge'. However this is also a reading that goes beyond individual trauma towards a more pervasive socially experienced sense of the irruption of the cataclysmic past in the present. Contemporaneity, however, links to a sense of temporal instability that can be perceived in these pieces of writing. In 'Surrealist Ireland' the case of Maher, it resides in the non-canonical moments of diachronic continuity in her identification with the radical potential of Leonora Carrington's work (discussed earlier in the essay). However it can also be seen within the temporal disjunctions staged within Gerard Byrne's *A Man and a Woman Make Love* (2012) and which, as I argue, become

meaningful in relation to the currency of debates around gay marriage in Ireland at the time.

The disjunctive encounter of temporalities informed in an Irish context by the cataclysmic memory of the Famine also throws new light on my discussion of the construction of primitivist readings of irishness in Surrealism. Whatever the Surrealists' intentions, this further figures as an instance of the role of temporality within the uneven development of modernity and the concomitant logic of centre and periphery. The re-surfacing also of the archaic within modernist (and modernising) culture also can now inform my reading of both the work of Leonora Carrington and Colin Middleton in this essay.

The associations of the archaic with femininity – although valorised differently – in the work of both these artists also leads, finally to the potential for a further reassessment of similar readings in Margaret Clarke's painting *Bathtime at the Crèche.* I want to look again at how dress in this painting becomes a further signifier of a disruptive contradiction between archaic and modern, situated in the context of the adversely changing situation of women in the Free State of the 1920s, and more specifically in this painting, in the trauma of miscegenation suggested by the presence of the black infant.

## 8. DIRECTION OF FUTURE WORK

Given the time that has elapsed since I finished writing the work under consideration here, there has already been a 'future' that is beginning to shape up around a further investigation of temporality and Irish art. A significant distinction, however, is that this new work is much more explicitly focused around issues of femininity and women artists. I was commissioned to write an essay for an exhibition commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, *Keeper* by Amanda Dunsmore at Dublin City Art Gallery the Hugh Lane (10 April – 22 July 2018). My essay, 'Keeping the Peace: Amanda Dunsmore's Oblique Strategies' (Barber 2018b) in part explored the role of time as a gendered strategy in Dunsmore's video portraits of signatories of the Good Friday Agreement. In the light of my further investigation now of post-conflict temporalities I now intend to return to this subject in a more detailed analysis than is possible within the confines of a short catalogue essay.

The canonical role of portraiture also features in a second essay commissioned for a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Etudes Irlandaises* on Irish self portraiture. The essay 'Performative Self Portraiture,

*Femmage* and Feminist Histories of Art: Amanda Coogan's *Snails: after Alice Maher,* 2010' (Barber: 2018c) is focused around a durational performance by Coogan that explicitly engaged with an earlier work by Alice Maher. In an attempt to find ways of subverting the diachronic canonicity of art history, in the essay I develop the notion of *femmage* to signify the recognition of the influential role of female practitioners, drawing on both Teresa de Lauretis' work around feminist genealogies (1993) and Julia Kristeva's notion of 'women's time' (1986). Again, in the light of my current investigation into the time of Irish art, I am excited by the possibilities of developing this further into a more sustained investigation of ways in which relationships and affinities between Irish women artists can be imagined, theorised, and written.

And finally, to acknowledge the hegemonic role of temporality also brings the dizzying sensation that, just for a moment, one can stand outside time itself. I can begin to recognise the way I have been thinking about time in relation to my own writing. Without realising it, my practice has either involved the writing of art history to register its passing, or has implicitly considered time as a means of containing the process of producing a monograph and several essays – almost like a membrane that surrounds and envelopes the writing in which different modes of temporality are enacted. I am now beginning to categorise this approach to writing as close to the way in which Isaac Newton conceptualised the empirical measure of time in *The Principia*.

An alternative to this might suggest the potential for an art history that self-consciously uses its words and rhetoric, the materiality of language, in order

to position the writing itself in relation to different regimes of temporality. In

relation to my own practice that is what, I hope, lies in the future.

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