Troubling Heritage: Intimate Pasts And Public Memories At Derry/Londonderry’s 'Temple'

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Chapter 3
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By Margo Shea

**Introduction**

High on the east bank of the River Foyle, literally at ‘the Top of the Hill’ at the highest elevation in the city limits of Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, a temple stood briefly. At 72 feet high, it towered over its surroundings, a thin spire mirroring the city’s cathedral steeples on the river’s opposite bank. The sign at its entrance instructed ‘Leave a memory behind, let go of the past and look to the future.’ Memories relinquished would not remain – at least not in their material forms. ‘Temple’ was made to be ephemeral, built to be consumed in flames on the night of the vernal equinox, one week after a team of local and international volunteer builders had completed its construction in March 2015.

Sponsored and organised by London-based Artichoke Trust, which specialises in helping artists engage communities to stage large-scale installations located in unpredictable spaces, Temple was two years in the planning. Led by American artist David Best, known for his ‘build and blaze’ temples to loss and catharsis associated with Nevada’s annual Burning Man festival, a volunteer crew from Northern Ireland and around the world assembled the intricate balsa wood construction in six weeks. Aspirations for the project were as imposing as its form. In David Best’s words, Temple had ‘to be so beautiful that you [would] give up the thing that has been troubling you [for] your whole life’ (Anon. 2015a\cite{003}). In terms of visitor engagement, those aspirations were largely met. Over 60,000 people visited the site, which was open to the public for one week before it was set ablaze, leaving messages and mementoes or simply experiencing Temple. About 15,000 people witnessed the burn. Derry/Londonderry is a city of 100,000; even factoring in regional visitation, these numbers are significant. The nature of this engagement deserves attention because very little research has been done that investigates memory work and heritage practices in relation to the well-documented continued emotional burdens of the Troubles on people in Northern Ireland. Through this chapter, I suggest that memorial processes that intend to address, obliquely or explicitly, the pervasive effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Northern Ireland must develop new approaches to facilitate remembrance that is simultaneously private and public, intimate and shared.

This chapter is a scholarly reading of the Temple project that explores the ephemeral memorial process as a case study to discuss the ways in which both heritage practices and emotions are necessarily spatialised, contingent, embodied, relational and performative. Temple’s contributions to post-conflict place-making and ‘dealing with the past’ in
Derry/Londonderry can be more fully understood if the affective practices exhibited through this participatory public art project are linked more explicitly to the study of heritage practices and processes in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Through its form, composition, location and crowd-sourced construction and interpretation, Temple structured, quite literally, an open-ended process of meaning-making. When people physically ‘entered into’ the project space, I propose here that they co-created a shared place in which private loss and pain could be acknowledged and shared obliquely in ways that were communal without being confrontational. Further, I suggest that, while Temple has broadly been recognised as a successful project, the reasons for engagement and participation have been somewhat underdetermined. In practice, then, Temple was neither a repository for Troubles-related memories nor a container for quotidian suffering. Rather, the memorial process it enacted invited participants to acknowledge the intertwined composition of their emotional inheritances.

A Temple to loss: Heritage and affect in post-conflict Northern Ireland

Conceived and planned explicitly as a post-conflict community memory project that would explode divisive traditions, Temple was built both out of specific conceptions of heritage in Northern Ireland and out of a desire to destabilise those conceptions. I suggest that the collaborative, crowd-sourced and processual nature of the project, its spatial positioning and its echoes of familiar ritual allowed it to transcend, while still containing, remembered histories and emotional injuries of the Troubles. By inviting creation of an ephemeral intimate public, I posit that the sharing of personal and private memories promoted healing in part because of the impossibility of separating individual responses to grief, anxiety and trauma from the broader cultural legacies of the Troubles. Temple was effective, I argue, because it made space for reckoning with historical legacies of violent conflict that wove together public and private memory in subtle, significant ways.

In accord with the premise that heritage scholars must not treat affect as the result or byproduct of interpretative and curatorial processes, this chapter endeavours instead to engage with ‘the agency, context and above all, consequences of the affective moment’ in relation to Temple (Smith and Campbell 2016BIB-029: 455). It draws on scholarship of affect to suggest that the outcomes of the project were different from, indeed more complex than, what the organisers had intended because Temple resonated with and through a set of affective practices that simultaneously shaped and emerged from a wide range of emotions, framed here as active, embodied and never fixed. In the words of Sara Ahmed (2004BIB-001: 26), emotions ‘do things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments’. Following Ahmed, emotions factor in relationships between the individual and the collective, as Northern Irish people negotiate private and public memories of the past in relation to understandings of the present and visions for the future.

In its design and intent as a post-conflict project, the hilltop site, symbolism of bonfires and architectural mirroring with the city’s cathedrals echoed events and experiences associated
with the conflict and the peace process and also connected the project subtly to broader histories of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In interviews, news articles and invitations to participate, I postulate here that Temple organisers worked under the assumption that the injuries of the Troubles would adhere to these familiar representations and references – that the emotions raised by and through Temple would echo, challenge, implicate – but always imbricate with the ideologies that had trellised the conflict.

Paradoxically, this premise may have liberated participants to contribute expressions of memory of deeply private and personal experiences they might not necessarily associate with the Troubles. If, following Cvetkovich (2012BIB-011: 2), ‘everyday feelings’ are often linked to political or public feelings, those filaments of loss and burden weave through and around the histories of civil conflict in Northern Ireland, particularly in the ways citizens have learned to carry and cope with depression, anxiety and trauma both individually and as part of divided publics. Making multivalence both a design and a process goal may have been intended to allow conflicting memories to share space, but in the end it may have done more; I suggest it made possible a shared reckoning with emotions that defy easy and neat boundaries between public and private losses. In this sense, engagements with Temple linked the emotional burdens of private, ordinary experiences to longer and larger traumas that were more specifically and directly associated with the decades of civil conflict in Northern Ireland. By enacting an embodied memorial process that was negotiated and experienced spatially, kinesthetically, relationally and communally, I posit that participants in the memory process could be released from the responsibility of carrying Troubles memories. Paradoxically, the private griefs they relinquished in the fire cannot be divorced from the larger and longer histories of conflict.

Like others engaged in memory projects in Northern Ireland, Helen Marriage, director of Artichoke Trust, entered the project space by conceptualising heritage problematically and staging Temple as an intervention. Heritage has largely been viewed instrumentally ‘as a set of cultural productions that articulate parallel, oppositional narratives about the past’ (Shea 2010BIB-026: 290). In the years following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, heritage in Northern Ireland has been increasingly conceptualised as troublesome itself, as a set of cultural productions that articulate parallel, oppositional narratives about the past. Working within this framework, many scholars of heritage have highlighted the ways the past has been wielded as an ideological tool to justify the present by those on either side of the conflict (McIntosh 1999BIB-033; Crooke 2005BIB-032; McCarthy 2005BIB-034). This discourse gave credence to the assumption that heritage and memory work serve primarily to calcify difference and to provide safe cocoons for separateness in Northern Ireland, nurturing polarities instead of facilitating convergences.

As a result, the goal of many post-conflict heritage projects, including Temple, has been to create opportunities for more inclusive memory work that reframes the purposes of heritage and topples the longstanding parallel-narratives framework. Drawing from urban design theories on public space and the heterotopian possibilities of place-making, the Temple project thus emerged out of the notion that art and culture can be ‘productively disruptive’,
creating new forms through which to destabilise heritage practices and the ideologies they purportedly bolster and amplify (Artichoke Trust n.d.BIB-004).

I assert in this chapter that Temple was in keeping with an emergent thread that sees heritage as a potential tool for reshaping post-conflict society in Northern Ireland instead of as a weapon wielded by those with competing interests and identities. In this view, heritage practices act as conduits for an engaged and participatory public at peace with its differences. By moving away from divided and mutually exclusive heritage processes built out of divided and divisive ideologies that shape identity, new kinds of public engagements with the past, present and future become possible. Temple was part of a genre of projects intended to facilitate citizens’ efforts to engage in memory work that transcends dual narratives and begins to make space for broader, more complicated engagements with the past (Marriage 2015BIB-019). Marking a transition, indeed a transformation, from performing ‘ideology as heritage’ to ‘emotion as heritage’, I propose here that Temple relied on discourses of emotion, emphasised ritual and used deeply symbolic spatial understandings and place-identities to connect citizens to the project. As such, Temple is an object lesson in the productive unpredictabilities of multivocal heritage processes, where participation and meaning-making do not point to any one thing, but rather illuminate myriad histories and narratives and their undeniable interrelatedness.

**Spatialising Temple**

Temple’s location was important to its role in a post-conflict constellation of memory and identity projects. Place and the spatialisation of memory are critical to the synergies between heritage and affective practices.

Like memory, place is highly contingent and thus unfixed, always in the process of being revised and reshaped. Landscapes thus resonate as palimpsests of experiences, memories, beliefs and emotional and affective responses. I propose that, in its location, Temple operated at the nexus of multivalent spatial resonances and engaged diverse heritages in Derry/Londonderry’s long history. The structure echoed sites, events and themes that connect both to Catholic nationalist and to Protestant unionist memorial narratives. At the same time, its location operated in dialogue with key post-conflict public spaces and gestured to the proximal hillsides of County Donegal, several miles away in the Republic of Ireland.

Historians recount that the site at Ebrington saw King James II’s troops encamped during the Siege of Derry in 1689. They probably first saw the city from the Top of the Hill, where Temple stood. In the folkloric mythologies that have emerged, supporters of William of Orange famously withstood the siege trapped inside the walled city of Londonderry as James’ troops besieged them after a winning streak across Ireland (McBride 1997BIB-053). The Williamites stood their ground, ultimately surviving to secure an Orange victory in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne. While European histories tend merely to mention in passing the
siege in the tale of the Glorious Revolution, for the Protestants of Ulster it loomed large as an historically pivotal event. The walls of Derry became symbolic of their struggle for religious and political self-determination. As Macdonagh explains, for Protestant unionists, the siege of Derry of 1689 is their original and most powerful myth. They see themselves in that, and since then, as an embattled and enduring people. Their historical self-vision is one of an endless repetition of repelled assaults, without hope of absolute finality or of fundamental change in their relationship to their surrounding and surrounded neighbours (Macdonagh 1983BIB-018:14).

British Crown forces established barracks at the Ebrington from the mid-eighteenth century, mostly housing locally recruited regiments. It served as a place of colonial spectacle, a parade ground, in the mid-nineteenth century. From 1939 to 1970, it was a navy base and, when the Troubles began, British soldiers made their barracks at Ebrington, vacating in 2003 as Operation Banner wound down. For most of its history, then, the site was understood through a sectarian lens; for some it was an official and legitimating site of Northern Ireland’s belonging in the United Kingdom, while for others it situated and symbolised the power of the colonial other.

The River Foyle, which runs between the Ebrington site on its eastern banks, or Waterside, and the historic municipal building the Guildhall on the ‘cityside’, was long seen as a symbolic dividing line between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists. Thus, the opening of the Ebrington site in 2012 as public space connecting the city centre to the Waterside was an important departure for Derry and, by extension, for Northern Ireland. It not only changed the historic lens through which the space had long been viewed, but also created an important public space, of which the city of Derry and Northern Ireland itself has historically had few. As a concert venue, a staging ground for major city events and an open space for walking or sitting with friends, the site introduced unprecedented possibilities for public life. Further, this was not simply symbolic. In order to make the Ebrington site accessible, it was connected by the Peace Bridge to create pedestrian access from the heart of the Waterside to the city centre. The bridge, designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects and open for foot and cycle traffic in 2011, has opened up the city, reduced spatial divisions, and created new possibilities for how people, particularly young people, move through and around the city. Literally and figuratively, it has bridged historic schisms.

In its forms and purposes, Temple was situated in post-conflict Northern Ireland as part of a larger spatial discourse, whereby geographies of conflict and separateness between Protestant and Catholic, unionist and nationalist, have entered into flux. This includes security architecture, flags, painted curbs, murals and other markings of both territory and religious–cultural, ideological affiliations. The siting of Temple functioned within a larger spatial discourse by helping to break down binaries in public space between private and public, ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’, ‘Waterside’ and ‘cityside’. Further, its close proximity to successful post-conflict public spaces in the city such as the Peace Bridge and the Ebrington site likely affirmed collapsing geographic divides. Temple was spatialised within a familiar framework, inviting responses to the project and its purpose that fell within the same registers of feeling
as accompanied other successful post-conflict spatial projects. As such, it appeared to take inspiration from urbanists who imagine the ways urban space is constantly created and recreated through individual and collective practices. Space thus becomes fluid and multivocal as meanings are layered and relational dynamics affect social and political life (Tornaghi and Knierbein 2014BIB-031).

Temple’s design included a tall spire that mirrored the spires of Derry’s two cathedrals – the Church of Ireland’s venerable St Columb’s Cathedral and the Catholic Diocese of Derry and Raphoe’s St Eugene’s Cathedral. As ephemeral as it was, a third spire in the skyline – unattached to any religious tradition – may have sanctified the project and claimed its purpose to be credible, even sacred. I propose that it also suggested that the project itself was to be entered into with seriousness and intentionality.

Temple’s referents extended beyond Peace Bridge, Ebrington Square and local sacred spaces. It reached across the border, embracing the landscapes, histories and legends of nearby Donegal, located in the Irish Republic. The hills of Donegal have long been celebrated in song and story as emblematic of Irish and Celtic identity (Dorian, MacSuibhne and Dickson 2001BIB-015; Shea 2010BIB-026). As a parallel to Ebrington, during the colonial period, Donegal was seen as illegible and unconquerable space, the last corner of Ireland to capitulate to colonisation. The Top of the Hill site of Temple connects Derry to Donegal through continuity of landscape. Additionally, for many Catholic nationalists in Derry, the Grianan fortress, a ‘northern Tara’ only a few miles from the city centre, built centuries before the Christian era, connects the city both to Donegal and to traditional Irish identities (Deane 1998BIB-013). The Grianan fort is also implicated in histories of colonialism and resistance. Tradition has it that the loyal troops of Ulster’s last great chieftain, Hugh O’Neill, slumber within caves beneath the old fort. They will awaken when the time comes to conquer ‘the Saxon’ and to free Ireland once and for all.

Fire and its multiple meanings
The connection to Donegal went beyond imaginative geographies. Spatialised references to Derry’s rural hinterland, I suggest, related to the very notion of fire and the premise that Temple would be built to burn. Helen Marriage identified Northern Ireland’s bonfire tradition as a key factor in bringing David Best and his work to Derry/Londonderry after spending some time in Derry. ‘One of the things that came up constantly was the issue of bonfires’ (Marriage 2015BIB-019). Marriage was referring to the highly localised tradition of lighting bonfires to mark religious and political events annually; these became sectarianised in the early twentieth century and implicated in conflict in the decades leading up to, during and since the Troubles. For Protestants, there were fires to commemorate July 12th, the Relief of Derry in August and Lundy Day in December. Catholics built bonfires to observe Lady Day, or the feast of the Assumption of Mary in August. These, Seamus Deane (1971BIB-012) has argued, were a heritage practice of sorts – artefacts of the ancient bonfires lit to
signal calls of distress in Gaelic Ireland and to celebrate festivals like Lúnasa, the harvest festival of light.

Temple was designed specifically to respond to the bonfire tradition in Northern Ireland. Said Marriage, ‘we wanted to bring people into the same physical space and share something that would normally divide them’ (Bennhold 2015BIB-007). While Catholic and nationalist bonfires in Derry never reached the same heights of community organisation or cultural and ideological resonance as they did in Belfast, both Protestants and Catholics, unionists and nationalists, in Derry/Londonderry understand and identify the bonfire tradition as an artefact of the conflict that continues. At the heart of urban bonfires, there has always been an articulation of community and cultural identity as well as an inclination to impose physical boundaries that segregate neighbourhoods and proclaim territory. Artichoke brought Temple to Derry/Londonderry to take the long-held tradition of bonfire burning and ‘turn it on its head, reinventing the tradition as a shared space … with a very different set of values’ (Marriage 2015BIB-019).

As Marriage put it, conversations about this history gave the artists at Artichoke the idea to marry the bonfire tradition in the North with the Celtic notion of burning as cleansing and link it to ancient Celtic observances of the Spring Equinox. ‘Perhaps we could bring David [Best] with the values that are associated with peace, love, reconciliation, meditation, a kind of spiritual renewal … people could bring offerings, mementoes, messages and try to ditch some stuff of the past that they need to let go in order to move on’ (Marriage 2015BIB-019). The possibilities of the project for inviting the public simultaneously to engage and expel their memories and experiences revolved around the Troubles. Temple was envisioned as a cathartic release of memories deemed unproductive to healing and peace. The organisers hoped that it would help those ‘encumbered by the past’ to release that which ‘is ingrained, in what our parents and our grandparents said or did’ (Marriage 2015BIB-019). Initially, artist David Best also conceived Temple as a memory initiative that reflected the Northern Ireland conflict, though his perspective was somewhat different. Upon his arrival in Derry, he framed it as a way of healing in post-conflict society, a means of creating unity and marking a celebration of the fact that the Troubles are over. ‘What I was building was a piece of celebration, that the people of Ireland have come to grips with the Troubles – and this is a place for them to celebrate their accomplishments’ (Best 2015BIB-006).

What they brought to Temple: Affect and engagement with a multiplicity of histories
As I have argued above, the site, situation and symbolism of Temple were initially intended to foster and facilitate memory work about the Troubles. As an ephemeral public art project, Temple organisers didn’t build an archival or documentary component into the plan. However, the documentary Marriage directed, Temple: A Radical Arts Project in Derry–Londonderry, recorded many participants’ responses. Further, journalists of all stripes spent time at the installation and interviewed those engaged in the memorial process. I have
utilised these documentary traces as well as interviews with participants and observers to explore the affective responses to Temple.

Some of those who came did bring memories and mementoes from the Troubles to Temple. Former member of the Provisional IRA and longtime peace and reconciliation activist ‘Big’ John McCourt was filmed holding up a photo of Jim Wray: Seconds after that photograph, after thinking he’d actually run past me, I looked on the ground and he was lying, on the corner on the curb, half on and half off of it, shot through the spine. And I watched the soldier walk over to put another round in his back. And I’m the last guy out of Glenfada Park on Bloody Sunday. Maybe it’s time to put this down, not to forget about it, but just put it down. And I am going to take that opportunity now (Marriage 2015BIB-019).

As a counterpoint to McCourt’s story of his own physical vulnerability and personal memories of witness to the inhumanity of a British soldier during Bloody Sunday, one of the most public and famous events of the Troubles, city resident Gerry Temple recalled an abiding memory of a particularly painful experience during the Troubles:
I have struggled all my life with the memory of seeing a soldier shot dead in Derry. It’s a nightmare that has haunted me my entire life. One of the memories I had was of a girl dancing with joy after the death of the soldier ... Dave [Best] suggested I use ‘Temple’ to try and move past it. So I wrote a message and put it into the structure to be burned with all the other messages. My message simply read ‘bye dancing girl – no more nightmares’ (Marriage 2015BIB-019).

The correspondences between the two stories deserve attention. Both memories involve violent death in the midst of the Troubles. I suggest that both men express trauma and vulnerability here, though differently. For McCourt, his body was under threat in the event remembered. Identifying with Wray, his memory of victimisation corresponded more broadly to a nationalist and republican discourse of abusive power, invasion and injustice. The body became, in this discourse, part of extensive spaces of vulnerability. On the other hand, Temple’s remembered experience, as he articulated it here, emphasised both the death by shooting of someone who was there to protect him and a woman dancing in response. Mr Temple cited recurrent nightmares, a longstanding traumatic response he could not control in response to an event over which, similarly, he had no control. While McCourt came to Temple to release a sense of violation and fear, Gerry Temple came to the site with a memory of control that had been lost.

In many ways, Temple’s objective was to create space for stories like McCourt’s and Temple’s. As Best explained by way of example, ‘Maybe somebody who did something like, say, putting a bomb in somebody’s house and was sorry, might leave something in the Temple to be set alight – it will help them get a form of closure’ (Moriarty 2015BIB-021). The project, seen from this perspective, highlighted the shared cost of the Troubles from those on different sides of the conflict. It aimed to create a space where many people in Northern Ireland could lay to rest traumatic memories. If trauma is to be understood, as Jervis
(2015BIB-017: 6) claims, as the ‘repetition of the past as crippling present’, then the project may also have allowed a traumatised society to pause the cycles of grief.

The prospect of letting go and achieving catharsis, of bringing deeply personal memories to a public space, echoes and engages some of the most potent positions developed by scholars of the social and political experiences and implications of emotion and affect. Particularly, Sara Ahmed’s (2004BIB-001) insistence that we pay attention to the body and Lauren Berlant’s ideas of both sentimentality and intimate publics (Berlant and Prosser 2011BIB-009) suggest the ways Temple may have allowed people to co-create a shared space for emotional experiences of heritage, even when the experiences were deeply divided. The sharing of the affective space, I posit, counterbalanced divisive memories.

In Ahmed’s work, the relationships between emotions, bodies and civic and cultural life are examined carefully (Riedner 2006BIB-024). Ahmed (2004BIB-001) considers the body a conduit along which emotions travel back and forth from self to world. Registers of feelings are not private, she claims, nor do they emanate from within ourselves. Rather, emotions ‘create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds’. These processes are central to the ‘production of the ordinary’ (Ahmed 2004BIB-001: 118). In fact, it is the very fluidity of our emotions that gives them staying power. Framed through this lens, sectarian identities in Northern Ireland have taken root in the interstices of individual, social and collective memory – performed, enacted, spatialised and embodied.

In this frame, memories that express vulnerability, fear and confusion from nationalists and unionists alike are based on longstanding circuits in which narratives of injury created coherence and cohesion within identity groups and generated animosity between them. The ordinary and familiar nature of these narratives made them persuasive and pervasive over decades, as a broad register of emotional experiences simultaneously echoed and amplified the feelings that wove through and could not be separated from divisive ideologies. Whether British soldiers performing state violence or soldiers being targeted by paramilitaries in front of an audience of joyful enemies, examples from Temple participants, these narratives, and the ‘sticky’ figures they trellis (Ahmed 2004BIB-001: 120), have been particularly effective when they did not have to contend with each other directly.

At Temple, the long-held habit on both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland of privileging the ‘fetishisation of the wound’ was made to lose potency, I suggest, by complicating a parallel circulation of emotions that had accompanied parallel and oppositional memorial narratives. Proximity reframed narratives of memory. Again, Ahmed (2004BIB-001) helps us read the experience through the lens of affect. Borders between self and others, she claims, operate effectively through the ‘slide’ between signs that are used to categorise objects and figures. Distance reinforces and reifies fear and draws on ‘hate’ to establish unities and coherence among groups (Ahmed 2004BIB-001: 118).

In this way, Temple worked in exactly the way organisers had hoped that it would. Surrounded by thousands of images, messages and objects, each of which carried emotional
weight, the claim to injury as something uniquely associated with one identity or another, one event or another, one neighbourhood or another, lost any coherent footing.

Berlant’s conception of sentimentality helps us to understand Temple as an intervention in longstanding, multigenerational dispositions of affect in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict. Temple produced what Berlant calls sentimentality: a mode of relationality in which people take emotions to express something authentic about themselves that they think the world should welcome and respect; a mode constituted by affective and emotional intelligibility and a kind of generosity, recognition, and solidarity among strangers (quoted in McCabe 2011BIB-020).

Here, sentimentality itself was performative; it brought into being, briefly, an intimate public drawn from a broad range of Northern Irish citizens. I propose that Temple produced an ephemeral community around memory, inheritances, dispossession, loss and reflection. As William Scampton, a steward for the event who spent more than 50 hours at the Temple installation, put it, they came in their thousands, bringing their hopes and fears, their pain of loss, items of sacred memory and turmoil, images of those dear to them combined with messages by their thousands scribed and scribbled on every available surface for fellow citizens to read (Scampton 2015BIB-036).

If, as Berlant (2008BIB-008) explains, intimate publics are experimental project spaces where we might endeavour towards alternative versions of the past, present or future, then the multivocality and de-centredness of individual and sectarian memories, along with the experience of physically being together in a space of shared cultural production around the past, drew important connections between ordinary affects, political feelings and formal and intimate publics. This made Temple significant in its own right. I would assert that the project worked; it did what it was intended to do.

However, the actual affective resonances of Temple, I want to suggest, were overdetermined. Personal memories that fell outside the bounds of the Troubles far outweighed memories of the conflict brought to the site. By some estimates, there were 40,000 names inscribed on the Temple, ‘etched into its wood or pinned to its structures on handwritten notes, some with flowers and photos’ (Anon. 2015bBIB-037). Along with objects, messages and a range of visual narratives, visitors carried a complex set of intimate emotional inheritances, burdens, traumas and desires to the site. For example, the parents of 27-year-old police officer Philippa Reynolds came to Temple to honour the memory of their daughter, who was killed on duty in 2013 when her vehicle was hit by the driver of a stolen 4×4. The Reynolds brought a piece of crafted wood on which they had written ‘daughter, friend, colleague’ (Deeney, 2015BIB-014). Through these remembrances of quotidian loss and pain, relations between Temple and other experiences, histories and memories defied existing heritage categories.

Intimate pasts and public memories
I want to suggest that sharing intimate, personal and private memories would be likely to promote post-conflict healing in part because it is impossible to separate individual responses to grief, loss and trauma from the broader cultural legacies of the Troubles. Over decades of violent conflict, trauma and depression led citizens to develop coping and defence mechanisms for anxiety, insecurity, isolation, loss and fear. In these ways, public and private emotional experiences wove together in subtle and significant ways. As a welcoming, inclusive space girded with all of the symbolism of history and the intention of post-conflict peacemaking, Temple created a place where the lines between private and public pasts and memories blurred.

From early on in the building process, volunteers and visitors took on and articulated an array of deeply personal emotional goals that nonetheless found connections in a broader public, evidenced by the tens of thousands of names, pictures, objects and notes brought to the space (Scampton 2015BIB-036). If, as Kathleen Stewart theorises, ordinary affects are feelings that begin and end in public spaces and public discourses, but also ‘the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of ... the varied, surging capacities ... that give everyday life the quality of continued motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergencies’, then Temple was an experiment that married ordinary affects with exceptional histories: They work not through ‘meanings’ per se but in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas and social worldings of all kinds. Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible (Stewart 2007BIB-030: 5).

Following Stewart, the process of exploring ordinary affects was a critical intervention in Northern Irish heritage practice precisely because it was enacted as a memorial process that permitted ordinary affects to co-sign with extraordinary emotional burdens and inheritances. ‘Ordinary’ pain and grief wove through the more extreme instances of hurt and trauma associated with civil conflict that were memorialised before they were incinerated. They became, for a short time, one stream.

One volunteer, Belfast resident and breast cancer survivor Caroline Murphy, explained that ‘The Temple is about dealing with your losses, things that you’ve been carrying, baggage that’s been holding you back. The Temple is very much a place where, if you’re ready, if you want to, you can take representations of those things ... it is a beautiful, safe place where hopefully people from Derry and wider environs can leave things that are holding them back’ (Artichoke Trust 2016BIB-005). Scampton conveyed the sense of ordinary affects when he wrote that Temple was a place for ‘people to bring “their burdens, their hopes, their sorrows and their tears”’ ... and fostered understanding ‘that we are all making our way through life, for better, for worse, as best we can’ (Scampton 2015BIB-036). By the end of the build itself, as people came to visit, even David Best had reframed Temple, choosing an expansive interpretation, tied but not limited to the Troubles. He said, on BBC Front Row, ‘the degree of loss goes from rape and murder to someone losing their dog. There’s a whole lot of losses in people’s lives’ (Best 2015BIB-006).
One message read ‘Happy birthday, daddy, watching over us all.’ Another referenced miscarriage or stillbirth, ‘Baby Kath, we look forward to meeting you one day.’ There were notes about domestic violence, loss and suicide. Those who came with mementoes to the Temple included a woman who had survived breast cancer, parents of a car crash victim and a mother whose son had committed suicide eight months earlier. An 89-year-old came to spend time remembering his wife who had died of cancer – they had been married for 40 years (Anon. 2015cBIB-038). Observers noted that many visitors to Temple made affective investments in what they saw, read and heard, entering into one another’s stories and thus co-creating an alternative narrative. As Scampton (2015BIB-036) explained, ‘one could not but be drawn by the messages and mementoes, the tears shed as people left behind their objects, their images, their photographs or left a message that meant so much to them and spoke of their innermost thoughts and emotions’.

Through Temple, we see the possibilities for heritage practices and memory work to respond to public depression, a form of collective immobilisation that will not respond to old patterns of being and doing. As Cvetkovich (2012BIB-011) observes, that ‘form of being stuck, both literal and metaphorical, requires new ways of living or, more concretely, moving’. In Northern Ireland, of course, this is particularly poignant. With antidepressants prescribed at two and a half times the rate in England, the Northern Irish are more commonly medicated to address anxiety and depression than people in almost any other region in the world (Anon. 2014BIB-039). A 2007 study found that about 10% of 3,000 Northern Irish residents who responded to a completely random telephone poll met the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis (Muldoon and Downes, 2007BIB-023), and recent research indicates that Northern Ireland’s population had the highest rates of PTSD out of 28 countries surveyed by the World Mental Health Survey Initiative (Ferry et al. 2014BIB-016). When one takes into account issues of class and regional intensities (the Troubles affected urban and border areas particularly), the rate of PTSD in particularly badly affected regions is probably 25% or higher.

Depression is a byproduct of trauma, and, as I have argued elsewhere, one cannot disentangle individual experiences of depression in Northern Ireland from broad, pervasive cultural and political inheritances (Fay et al. 1999BIB-022; Shea 2010BIB-026, 2015BIB-027). However, even more strikingly, struggles to express loss and grief in other areas of one’s life were deeply affected by generations of conflict. Further, the legacies of the Troubles have had pervasive and long-lasting emotional and relational consequences.

Public conflict shaped personal coping mechanisms in a variety of ways. Social isolation, secrecy, suspicion and uncertainty as well as the performance of cultures of violence and accusation fostered a range of private everyday responses, including deflection, compartmentalisation and withdrawal, to name but a few (Shea 2010BIB-026, 2015BIB-027). In the Cost of the Troubles Survey, these emotional responses to the civil conflict and its legacies were studied. It was found that over 70% of respondents had experienced the inability to speak freely due to safety issues, while 63% had experienced feeling wary in the presence of those from a different community. In addition, 39% had had the experience of changing routes, routines and habits because of a sense of threat, and 40% of respondents
felt that they had personally been blamed for the Troubles (Morrisey, Smyth and Fay 1999BIB-022). These effects, the study illustrated, spilled out into everyday life. For example, 60% of respondents experienced wariness about sharing details of their lives with others or expressing an opinion, and 30% expressed generalised bitterness. In addition, 64% claimed to experience the feeling of powerlessness and 44% felt that the effects of the Troubles included ‘shattering the illusion that the world was a safe place’, while 43% reported feeling either very jumpy or that that they had to be on ‘guard all the time’ (Morrisey et al. 1999BIB-022: 73–74). This research supports my argument that the traumatic inheritances of the Troubles have as much to do with how people carry all of their tribulations as they do with how they have shouldered pain associated with the conflict itself.

The distinction between ordinary traumas and trauma associated with a generation of violent conflict is also tied, I posit, to distinctions between public and private. The weft and weave of structural, interpersonal and personal violence are difficult to disjoin. This shapes and defines the ways they produce affect. ‘Often what counts as national or public trauma is that which is more visible and catastrophic, that which is newsworthy and sensational, as opposed to the small dramas that … draw attention to how structural forms of violence are so frequently lived [and] how their invisibility or normalization is another part of their oppressiveness’ (Cvetkovich 2007BIB-010). The post-conflict moment is a vulnerable one. Periods of structural transition can create an imaginary impasse, whereby we live on while not knowing what to do, and develop accounts and practices of how to live as we do so (Berlant and Prosser 2011BIB-009). This concept is expressed by Scampton (2015BIB-036) as he reflected on the experience of Temple, ‘It became a reliquary or repository of personal hurt, loss and memory for so many hoping that the burn would remove such from them and at the same time illuminate a way forward for those unsure of the path ahead.’

**Conclusion**

In the face of complex legacies of civil violence, affective practices refuse to be contained within binary frameworks like before/after, war/peace, public/private and us/them and insist on the traces that link ordinary and everyday experiences to histories of conflict. Bodies interrupt discourses as well as participate in them. Visitors, bystanders and participants in heritage practices may confirm, deny or, in this case, simply complicate the goals of heritage in the present. Temple’s aim was to explore and expunge emotional burdens associated with a history and heritage shaped by conflict and violence. But it did more; the project made possible a shared reckoning with emotions that defy easy and neat boundaries and refuse to be contained within binary frameworks like before/after, war/peace, public/private and us/them. Through their emotional engagements, participants with Temple insisted on the integrity of traces that have linked ordinary and everyday experiences to their histories of conflict. Doing this together in a shared space was possible, I suggest, because Temple was designed and situated to shoulder some of the historical burdens that have been part and parcel of Northern Irish society for centuries. Temple’s overdetermined post-conflict framework freed people to respond outside familiar tropes of post-conflict memory and to move beyond familiar memorial frames of reference bounded by the Troubles. For a week, this created an intimate public, a space of
identification that created, enacted and legitimised a complex range of emotional attachments. Examining the ways those who built it, and the thousands who visited, experienced Temple allows us to think seriously about emotion as something other than that which accompanies ideology or offers up its antidote – particularly in relation to contentious and difficult history. In turn, the incalculable complexity that accompanies a reckoning with personal, political, social and cultural inheritances yields to a more diverse and engaged public heritage that transcends ideology, situates injury as myriad and collective and encourages compassion towards self and others.

References


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