‘‘The Dead Will Rise Here’’: Contested Cultural Memories of Bloody Sunday in the Abbey and Druid Productions of Frank McGuinness’ *Carthaginians* (1988/1992)

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Abstract

This thesis examines Frank McGuinness's *Carthaginians* (1987) as a pivotal work in Irish theatre of the Troubles, exploring its nuanced representation of trauma, memory, and identity in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday (January 30th, 1972). Set in a graveyard in Derry, the play foregrounds themes of and mourning, as it offers a distinctive perspective on how the events of Bloody Sunday shaped collective and individual experiences. A central focus of this study is the comparative analysis of two major productions of *Carthaginians*: the Abbey Theatre's premiere in 1988 and the Druid Theatre's production in 1992. Drawing on newly digitised archival materials, including recordings and reviews, this thesis highlights the interpretive differences between these stagings. The Abbey Theatre's minimalist, sombre approach emphasised the stark emotional weight of the play, aligning with the national significance of Bloody Sunday. In contrast, the Druid Theatre's vibrant, colourful staging brought a more localized and communal energy to the performance, reimagining the play for an audience in Derry, the site of Bloody Sunday itself.

This thesis also examines *The Burning Balaclava*, the play-within-a-play in *Carthaginians*, as a satirical critique of the stereotypical and often exploitative representations of the Troubles in theatre. By using humour to subvert these tropes, McGuinness engages the audience in a self-aware reflection on the ethics of representing conflict and trauma on stage. This meta-theatrical element not only critiques dominant narratives but also underscores the play's broader themes of healing and resilience through storytelling and performance. In the play, *The Burning Balaclava* is written by Dido, who is a queer character whose flamboyance and humour challenge traditional notions of masculinity and nationalism. This queer narrative will also be scrutinised, meaning this thesis investigates how McGuinness redefines the boundaries of cultural memory by incorporating marginalised voices that are often left out of stereotypical Troubles narratives.

The study further utilises archival research as a methodological approach to emphasise the importance of digital archives in theatre studies, as they offer invaluable insights into stage designs, directorial choices, and audience reception. This thesis argues that such research is critical for understanding how different productions interpret and reshape a play's themes in response to their historical and cultural contexts. The Abbey Theatre's production, performed in Dublin, underscored the play's national significance, while the Druid Theatre's

staging in Derry emphasised its resonance within the local community, highlighting the interplay between location and performance.

Ultimately, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates about the cultural memory of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally, as well as the role of theatre in shaping narratives of trauma and identity. It argues that *Carthaginians* transcends traditional nationalist and sectarian frameworks by foregrounding personal grief and queer perspectives, offering a more multifaceted portrayal of post-conflict Northern Ireland. By integrating archival research with performance analysis, this study not only enriches the understanding of *Carthaginians* but also underscores the evolving methodologies in contemporary theatre scholarship. McGuinness's work challenges audiences to confront the complexities of memory, trauma, and representation, ensuring its continued relevance in Irish theatre and beyond.

Keywords: *Carthaginians*, Frank McGuinness, Bloody Sunday, Troubles theatre, cultural memory, archival research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In an article on the memory of Bloody Sunday, Graham Dawson characterises Bloody Sunday (January 30th, 1972) as ‘‘the most devastating instance of the British state’s use of armed force against a section of its own citizens since Peterloo in 1819’’[1]. The day initially started with a peaceful civil rights march against the discrimination and state repression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, but led to the death of fourteen innocent civilians. It is for this reason that Bloody Sunday serves as a pivotal event at the onset of the Troubles and remains central in Northern-Irish memory.[2] Patrick Joseph Hayes and Jim Campbell, who conducted research on the family members of those who lost their lives due to the events on Bloody Sunday and its position in Northern Irish memories, observe that when grief is associated with a violent death, the grieving process is impaired and thus extended.[3] Hayes and Campbell illustrate this by observing that the comment ‘it is like a thing that’s going to stick with us forever’ was common among the family members.[4] They further state that ‘‘[the family members’] inconsolable losses extended beyond the death of a loved one and permeated all aspects of their lives’’.[5]

These difficulties in processing Bloody Sunday can also be seen within the political and legal world. In 1998, around thirty years after the beginning of the Troubles, the Good Friday Agreement was signed as a result of multi-party negotiations between the Provisional Republican leadership, the British government, and several others.[6] Although the violence did not immediately end after the signing, the Good Friday Agreement did break the cycle of continuous conflict that had been taking place during the Troubles. Nevertheless, a palpable tension remained present. An example of this is how Bloody Sunday and its aftermath has remained an important political topic within the UK and, most prominently, Northern Ireland; indeed, it was announced as recently as May 2023 that the prosecution of one of the British soldiers who was involved in the Bloody Sunday killings would continue.[7] This shows how even after more than fifty years, Bloody Sunday is not only

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[1] Graham Dawson, “Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972-2004,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 59 (2005): 151, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472791.
[2] Dawson, “Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972-2004,” 151.
[3] Patrick Joseph Hayes and Jim Campbell, *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 48.
[4] Hayes and Campbell, *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics*, 95.
[5] Hayes and Campbell, 97.
[6] Brian Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37.
[7] Eamonn McDermott, ‘’Prosecution of Soldier F for Bloody Sunday killings resumes,” The Irish Times, 26 May, 2023. https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2023/05/26/prosecution-of-soldier-f-for-bloody-sunday-killings-resumes/ (accessed October 11, 2023).

limited to the memories of those affected, but it is rather still an ongoing process that continues to influence those involved.

In addition to personal memories and the political and legal system, the memory of Bloody Sunday has also continued to be represented in art as a way of processing the event. In the decades following this tragedy, theatre has been a prominent place where both Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally were and still continue to be remembered. Over the past decades many Irish writers incorporated Bloody Sunday into their plays as either a main theme or use it as the backdrop of their narrative. As early as 1972, Frank Ormsby published the article ‘‘Write-an-Ulster-Play Kit’’, which signaled how theatre about the Troubles had ossified into stock scenarios and characters. Ormsby’s article illustrates just how quickly the theatre scene had started to incorporate Bloody Sunday to deal with the conflict.[8] Indeed, not long after this the term ‘Troubles drama’ emerged and this was considered a new genre within the theatre industry. This, then, suggests that theatre has been of significance for the processing of what actually happened and how it shaped Northern Irish society. Indeed, Mark Phelan has argued that artists have ‘‘an important role to play in the ongoing processes of conflict transformation’’[9] due to the ‘‘the political failure to deal with the past’’[10]. Here, Phelan is suggesting that there is a political shortcoming in uncovering the truths of the past , which art, and thus also theatre, can help with through representing the conflict and its impact on the (Northern) Irish communities. Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska reinforces this idea in her article ‘‘Theatre as a Figure and a Place of Cultural Memory’’ (2013), where she argues that theatre in and of itself is an *ars memoriae* and therefore all forms of theatre are inherently founded on memory, because literature in the broadest sense establishes and records cultural memory.[11] When considering these arguments by both Phelan and Kapushevska-Drakulevska, Troubles theatre, then, can be seen as a means of gaining insights into the collective experience of Bloody Sunday’s impact on Northern Irish citizens.

While all Troubles plays offer insights into the conflict, one of the most interesting is *Carthaginians* (1987) by Irish writer Frank McGuinness due to its progressive nature as it steps away from stereotypical portrayals of the Troubles and it includes a character that is

[8] Mark Phelan, ‘‘From Troubles to Post-Conflict Theatre in Northern Ireland,’’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Theatre*, eds. Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 372.
[9] Phelan, ‘‘From Troubles to Post-Conflict Theatre in Northern Ireland,’’ 378.
[10] Phelan, 378.
[11] Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska, ‘’Theatre as a Figure and a Place of Cultural Memory,’’ *Култура/Culture* 4 (2013): 31.

part of the queer community. This play's production history also allows for an analysis of how different audiences around Ireland responded to the play. Furthermore, there is ample accessibility to recently digitised archived materials, which allows for a more multifaceted analysis of varying productions and their reception. This means that, in addition to a textual analysis, this thesis will also consider video recordings and reviews, including the response to Druid Theatre Company's production of *Carthaginians* when it was playing in Derry, the city in which Bloody Sunday took place. Besides these reasons, the narrative and setting of McGuinness' *Carthaginians* is also interesting to research in relation to the existing theory around cultural memory and theatre as it diverges from stereotypical narratives of the Troubles.

Carthaginians' playwright Frank McGuinness was born in Buncrana, County Donegal, in 1953 and is one of the most celebrated Irish playwrights of the past decades. His most well-known works include *The Factory Girls* (1982) and *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985). These plays, along with many of his other works, include controversial themes that often represent the political landscape in Ireland. These two plays, for example, deal with gender inequality in Ireland and the Anglo-Irish tensions during World War I, respectively. Since McGuinness' plays often spark political conversations, writing a play about Bloody Sunday aligns with McGuinness' thematic interests.

McGuinness' two-act play *Carthaginians* follows seven inhabitants of Derry in the aftermath of the Bloody Sunday killings. The characters have all been personally affected by Bloody Sunday and are waiting in a Derry graveyard for the dead to rise. McGuinness wrote *Carthaginians* in 1987 and it was first performed the subsequent year in a production by the Abbey Theatre. The show opened on September 28th, 1988, and ran for thirty-four performances on the Peacock Stage in Dublin, which is part of the national theatre of Ireland. The production was directed by Sarah Pia Anderson and designed by Wendy Shea. Four years after the Abbey production, the Galway-based Druid Theatre Company also produced the play in a revised version. This version, which premiered on February 5th, 1992, was directed by Frank McGuinness himself. The production opened in the Druid Theatre in Galway, after which it went to Derry for a run of one week at the Rialto Entertainment Centre. This was the first time that it was performed in the city that *Carthaginians* is set in, which created an interesting dynamic between the production and its audience due to the impact of Bloody Sunday on the community of Derry.

Bloody Sunday remains a strongly contested and painful event in Northern Irish, British and Irish cultural memory, which is why this thesis aims to investigate how these productions channel those tensions through both a textual analysis of both versions of *Carthaginians* and archival research of reviews, audience responses, photographs and video recordings of both the Abbey Theatre and Druid Theatre productions of McGuinness' play. In the introduction of *Navigating Ireland's Theatre Archive: Theory, Practice, Performance*, Barry Houlihan explains how in recent years archives of performance are no longer dormant records but are ''now being reanimated, in an act of 're-performance of itself'''.[12] This is the result of the digitalisation of archives, since this allows both researchers and general audiences to go beyond reading to also hearing and seeing the memory of a performance.[13] Indeed, recordings of productions are added to digital archives whenever possible, which creates a more immersive preservation of theatre experiences. Researchers can now extend their research from written text and photographs to the movement of the actors and hear the audience's response. The contemporary archive of performance, according to Houlihan, has thus turned into ''a three-dimensional repository of the experience and production of theatre''.[14] This change, in turn, creates new research opportunities that this thesis aims to explore. The addition of digitally archived materials will allow for a more multifaceted comparison of the productions of *Carthaginians* by the Abbey Theatre and Druid Theatre. This thesis will not only consider reviews, scripts and photographs, but also the digitised recordings, which would not have been possible without the digital shift within archives of performance.[15]

By analysing archival materials from both productions of McGuinness' *Carthaginians*, it will become clear how cultural memories of traumatic events can be renegotiated through drama. Thus, the research question that this thesis will answer is: In what way can theatre be regarded as a space of cultural memory and, more specifically, how are contested cultural memories of Bloody Sunday asserted and explored in the Abbey and Druid productions of Frank McGuinness' *Carthaginians* (1988/1992)? By answering this research question, this

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[12] Barry Houlihan, ''Introduction: The Potential of the Archive,'' in *Navigating Ireland's Theatre Archive: Theory, Practice, Performance*, eds. Barry Houlihan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), 21.
[13] Houlihan, ''Introduction: The Potential of the Archive,'' 15.
[14] Houlihan, 17.
[15] All archival material that is used for this thesis was found in the archives of the James Hardiman Library in Galway during the period of September until December of 2023. Photographs were taken where allowed, but much material was researched within the archives. The James Hardiman Library holds a rich collection of Irish theatre archives, including physical and digital collections on Abbey and Druid. The Abbey collection is digitised and can only be viewed in the library's Special Collections reading room. The Druid collection is (at the time of writing) being digitised and will be turned into an open access online collection.

thesis aims to contribute to existing debates around the Troubles in Northern Irish and Irish cultural memory, as well as their impact on Irish theatre. Furthermore, the thesis aims to explore the new possibilities of digital archival research within theatre studies through the analysis of a wide range of archival materials from two theatre productions of the same play.

The thesis will explore the research question through first establishing a theoretical framework around the impact of Bloody Sunday on individual and collective identities, the Troubles and Irish theatre, and theatre as a space for cultural memory. The two productions of Frank McGuinness' *Carthaginians* by the Abbey Theatre and Druid Theatre and their respective reception will then be discussed throughout the three chapters. The first chapter will focus on the *embodiment* of trauma, which will be explored through the analysis of specific characters. The second chapter explores how trauma is *mediated* in the play, and the final chapter will discuss how trauma is *localised*. The analysis will focus on the (revised) scripts, the direction, design and reception of both productions. The thesis will end with a conclusion to summarise the findings and attempt to answer the previously stated research question and reflect more generally on the Troubles in Irish theatre, as well as the potential of digital archival research in theatre studies.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework will be divided into three sections. Since the research question revolves around the cultural memory of Bloody Sunday, it is crucial to scrutinize the psychological impact of Bloody Sunday on both individuals and communities. It is for this reason that in the first part of the theoretical framework relevant scholarship on the impact of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally on Northern Irish citizens will be examined. Furthermore, since this thesis will investigate how the cultural memory of Bloody Sunday is represented in a specific play, the second section of this chapter discusses theory around cultural memory in theatre. Finally, the framework will make these reflections more specific by clarifying ongoing debates regarding cultural memory in relation to the history of the Troubles in (Northern) Irish theatre, which will be used to situate the analysis of Frank McGuinness' *Carthaginians*.

The Influence of the Troubles on Northern Irish identities

As discussed in the introduction, the study by Patrick Joseph Hayes and Jim Campbell on the impact of Bloody Sunday illustrates that the event's impact on the individuals involved could last an entire lifetime. Family members of the victims stated in the study that ''things were never the same''[16]. Indeed, Hayes and Campbell state that the depth of their loss remains unchanged and according to the researchers this is because of the incomplete grieving process. For many this process was disrupted because of the abruptness of the loss, which left an 'aching hole' in their hearts as they wonder what might have been. This feeling was strengthened due to the fact that important rituals and habits were changed in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday. Hayes and Campbell illustrate this by giving the example of a man whose father was killed, which changed the way the man perceived the holiday season. He recalls their family's first Christmas after the event and states that he and his mother spent the day in deep mourning.[17] Behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with loss and grieving can be strengthened at symbolic times[18], such as Christmas in this example, and this shows how Bloody Sunday deeply impacted individuals by giving the feelings of grief and mourning the upper hand in people's lives. Hayes and Campbell

[16] Hayes and Campbell, *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics*, 97.
[17] Hayes and Campbell, 97.
[18] Hayes and Campbell, 48.

reiterate this by saying that the losses of the family members were inconsolable, which means that the grief ‘‘extended beyond the death of a loved one and permeated all aspects of their lives’’[19]. Indeed, when a grieving reaction is so strong it can become overwhelming and persistent, which leads to the grief interfering with, for example, relationships and work. In cases of abnormal grief, this can add elements of panic and self-blame.[20] Again, the consequences of Bloody Sunday become apparent through these statements, as their study suggests that Bloody Sunday changed the aforementioned aspects of the lives of the victim’s family members. Moreover, Hayes and Campbell describe how the family members are affected through symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in their everyday lives.[21] The collected data in the study indicates that symptoms of PTSD is evident in many of the participating family members.[22]

Next to the fact that Bloody Sunday had a strong emotional impact on the victims’ family members, Hayes and Campbell’s study also illustrates how the event changed the way they are externally perceived by stating that another consequence of Bloody Sunday was ‘‘the loss of one’s personal identity to that of being a Bloody Sunday family member’’[23]. A family member recalled how the killings became part of his life and how he has experienced being seen as someone associated with Bloody Sunday. He gives a specific example where he went to a store and overheard the grocer’s wife whisper to her husband: ‘‘That’s that wee boy whose father died on Bloody Sunday’’[24]. The family member reiterates that was the moment he realised he would from now on always be connected to Bloody Sunday.[25] This illustrates how the event could directly influence someone’s individual identity based on external perspectives.

Moreover, in the third volume of *Memory Ireland*, Oona Frawley argues that trauma will cling to a person to the extent where it continues to wound them over time. As a result, these traumatic experiences can hinder the formation of autobiographical memory, which is necessary for preserving the ‘‘sense of being a coherent *person* over time.’’[26] Trauma, then, ‘‘has the effect of *disrupting* the kind of identity-forming narratives that we construct about

[19] Hayes and Campbell, 97.
[20] Hayes and Campbell, 48.
[21] Hayes and Campbell, 40.
[22] Hayes and Campbell, 38.
[23] Hayes and Campbell, 98.
[24] Hayes and Campbell, 99.
[25] Hayes and Campbell, 99.
[26] Oona Frawley, ‘‘Introduction: Cruxes in Irish Cultural Memory,’’ in *Memory Ireland: Volume 3: The Famine and the Troubles*, ed. Oona Frawley (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 5.

ourselves; it disrupts that coherence of self.''[27] This indicates how trauma does not only affect someone's individual identity through external views, but also exerts an influence on the internal sense of self as it can negatively impact the episodic memory system.

Although Hayes and Campbell's study and Frawley's observations clearly illustrate the impact of Bloody Sunday on individual people, the study by Hayes and Campbell suggests that people in the wider community were affected as well. A family member notes how the death of one person affected hundreds of people, just in their family alone, and further mentions that ''they may have shot one person but they done a lot of damage to a lot of people just with that one particular person''[28]. This shows how the deaths on Bloody Sunday created a ripple effect of loss and grief that stretched further than the direct family of the victims. Moreover, several family members in the study expressed the feeling that they lost an entire generation within the thirteen who were shot dead on Bloody Sunday. One of them mentioned how they felt that a generation was ''taken off the face of the earth because of the pigs that came along''[29], which, according to Hayes and Campbell, illustrates that Bloody Sunday affected not only family members, but also people in the wider community. Hayes and Campbell continue by stating that due to the magnitude of the event, Bloody Sunday had seismic consequences for the generation of youth in Derry at that time.[30] All in all, the study by Hayes and Campbell illustrates how the impact of Bloody Sunday extends beyond the victims. Their study highlights how the lives of the victims' family members changed as a result of the event both internally and externally due to symptoms of PTSD and a loss of identity. Moreover, the study also shows that people in the wider community were heavily affected as well and that they even felt that an entire generation of Derry youth was taken away.

Both prior and after Hayes and Campbell's findings of the signs of PTSD in victims' family members, there have been more studies on a similar topic that support their analysis. An earlier study by Shevlin and McGuigan already supports the findings by Hayes and Campbell by also discovering symptoms of PTSD in first, but also second-generation family of the victims.[31] Their longitudinal study from 2010 expands on their study from 2003 and aims to investigate whether the long-term psychological consequences of Bloody Sunday

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[27] Frawley, ''Introduction: Cruxes in Irish Cultural Memory,'' 5.
[28] Hayes and Campbell, 98.
[29] Hayes and Campbell, 98.
[30] Hayes and Campbell, 98.
[31] Karen McGuigan and Mark Shevlin, ''Longitudinal Changes in Posttraumatic Stress in Relation to Political Violence (Bloody Sunday),'' *Traumatology* 16, no. 1 (2010): 2.

changed over time. For this study, Shevlin and McGuigan researched sixty-nine participants who each fell into one of four categories: those wounded during Bloody Sunday, the immediate family of the victims, second-generation family members of the victims, and lastly a comparison group. During the study the participants were exposed to reminders of Bloody Sunday (e.g. photographs and news reports) and through the Impact of Event Scale – Revised (IES-R), which is an administered self-report questionnaire, they were asked to reflect on how these reminders impacted them.[32] The researchers found that several participants were still experiencing high levels of distress when viewing the reminders of Bloody Sunday which, at the time of the study, happened thirty-seven years ago. The research also showed that, despite a difference in the level of distress, all three groups associated with Bloody Sunday still showed significantly higher levels of distress than the comparison group. Though the level of distress decreased in all groups, the study illustrates that even after multiple decades the Bloody Sunday killings remain a topic in people's lives that causes anguish.[33] Therefore, Shevlin's and McGuigan's study gives empirical evidence that the distress of Bloody Sunday extends beyond the victims and direct family, and has rather become an intergenerational trauma that still affects people today.

The idea that the next generation of the victims and their direct family also carries the emotional and traumatic memory of Bloody Sunday can be defined as 'postmemory'. In an article about postmemory in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, Caroline Dutka discusses how the phenomenon of postmemory remains present after the event. Dutka defines postmemory as ''the cognitive ability for the child of a survivor to imaginatively project his or herself into the position of the parent at a traumatic juncture''.[34] Thus, the child, or the ''postgeneration'', did not actually witness the event themselves, but rather receives connotations of trauma linked to the event vicariously through their elders. Dutka continues by stating that the phenomenon is mostly the product of implicit forms of communication, but it can vary as it is always dependent on how and when the parent shares their personal account of the traumatic experience.[35] Despite these differences that can occur within the onset of postmemory, it remains a fact that the elders of a family, particularly the parents,

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[32] McGuigan and Shevlin, ''Longitudinal Changes in Posttraumatic Stress in Relation to Political Violence (Bloody Sunday),'' 2-4.
[33] McGuigan and Shevlin, 5.
[34] Caroline Dutka, "'What I Didn't Know': Postmemory and the Absence of Narrative in the Aftermath of Bloody Sunday," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 20, no. 2 (2016): 82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44807192.
[35] Dutka, "'What I Didn't Know': Postmemory and the Absence of Narrative in the Aftermath of Bloody Sunday," 82-83.

play an important role within the shaping of the historical consciousness of a younger person.[36] Dutka's research on postmemory uses the children of parents who witnessed Bloody Sunday as its case study and found that in Northern Ireland, the communication of historical narratives regarding Bloody Sunday happened consciously. She further argues that parents are self-aware about their communication of historical narratives in order to control the narration within their household, especially when the conflict of the Troubles was still ongoing. Controlling the historical narrative was thus intended to control the formation of the political opinions of their children to make them correlate to the cultural group they belong to and is therefore part of the child's formation of group identity.[37] This illustrates the importance of historical narratives for the creation of a common understanding within communities.

All in all, this section has illustrated that the memory of Bloody Sunday is still a distressing factor for many families, both first and second generation, that were impacted by the event. This was illustrated in both Hayes and Campbell's, and Shevlin and McGuigan's studies. Although the three studies that were discussed all researched Bloody Sunday's victims, their direct family and second generation family, it was also argued by Hayes and Campbell that the overall wider community was likewise heavily impacted by the event and that survivors felt that even an entire Derry generation was lost as a result. Moreover, Frawley argued that trauma can persistently affect a person, which means it will continue to inflict emotional wounds over time and can disrupt a person's sense of self. Finally, Dutka's research illustrates the persistence of trauma through postmemory, as well as the importance of historical narration within households as it can help children in gaining both a better historical consciousness next to an increased sense of belonging within their cultural community.

Theatre as a vehicle of cultural memory

As stated in the previous section, Dutka argues that interacting with historical narratives allows individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves within a group or even become initiated into them. She further states that an absence of historical narratives of both one's personal historical memory and group narratives often results in a lack of connection to the cultural group a person belongs to.[38] Dutka thus suggests that sharing and

[36] Dutka, 81-82.
[37] Dutka, 96-97.
[38] Dutka, 82.

experiencing historical narratives on both micro and macro level plays a vital role within the feeling of belonging in a cultural community. The idea that it is important to share cultural narratives for the benefit of communities has been explored by more researchers and theatre is a medium where this can be realised. In his book *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland: Through and Beyond the Troubles*, Tom Maguire states that ‘‘theatres have long been and continue to be used as places where people gather and recognise themselves as a community or nation through the stage representation’’.[39] Here, Maguire is arguing that a dramatic representation has the ability to make communities and their memories of experiences feel recognised. This is not an uncommon statement within theatre studies and has been argued by many academics. Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska, for example, agrees with Maguire that theatre can create a space for audiences to experience memory since creating, performing and viewing theatre can be described as an act of memory in and of itself, which was already addressed in the introduction. If theatre can be regarded as an act of memory, then theatre is arguably comprised of memory at its core.

Kapushevska-Drakulevska further states that theatre establishes a type of communication. She argues that there is articulated communication between the actors on stage and the audience watching the performance. As a result, both the actors and the audience become subjects of theatrical memory.[40] This can be connected back to Maguire’s statement as a reasoning for how the staging of cultural memory can make communities feel recognised. When considering that ‘communication’ requires two participants (a sending and a receiving participant), this communication would create a connection between what is performed on the stage and its audience. This connection then allows for audience members to recognise themselves within the performance.

But what is it exactly that constitutes this connection? Jacques Rancière discusses his insights on this topic in his 2008 book *The Emancipated Spectator*, which explores the relationship between the performer and the spectator. Rancière states that actors ‘‘simply wish to produce a form of consciousness, an intensity of feeling, an energy for action.’’[41] In the case of audience members, he states that instead of being a passive observer, ‘‘the spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets.’’[42] The connection between the actor and the spectator, then, is one where the actor aims to

[39] Tom Maguire, *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland: Through and Beyond the Troubles* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006), 3.
[40] Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska, ‘‘Theatre as a Figure and a Place of Cultural Memory,’’ 33.
[41] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 14.
[42] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 13.

generate an emotional response from the spectator, leading to the spectator actively participating in the performance through the process of individual interpretation where they create meaning and understanding of the performance.

Emilie Pine shares a similar idea in *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre*, in which she states that ‘‘audiences, as critical consumers of performance, have the power to challenge the dominance of particular proprietors of social capital in the market, to bestow and coproduce symbolic capital, and to perform themselves as witnesses.’’[43] Pine’s argument, like Rancière’s, illustrates that audiences are not just passive viewers of theatre, but rather active participants that contribute to how stories are remembered and thus highlights the idea that theatre can give audiences the power to influence cultural memory. Audiences challenge dominant narratives and provide new ways of understanding the past and act as witnesses who carry these stories forward. Theatre, then, becomes a space where cultural memory is created and shared.

Rancière’s argument is also in line with Chris Morash and Shaun Richards’ notion of ‘spatial identification’ in their book *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place*. They argue that dwelling in the space that is created on the stage is ‘‘one of the definitional theatrical experiences’’[44] that is shared by both the actors and the audience. The actors make a place from the space in the theatre, which creates a shared experience between them and the audience members through spatial identification. This term means that an audience, at a structural level, are able to identify with the characters on stage as they ‘‘share the laying down of memories […] and the naming and investing of space with language.’’[45] Thus, where Rancière focusses on how the actor-audience relationship is created through an actor’s intention and the interpretive mindset of the audience, Morash and Richards illustrate the importance of theatrical space in terms of the building of this connection, and how it is inherent in theatre on a structural level.

One of the questions that remains is how this identification is made possible through the connection between the performance and the audience. Frederik Le Roy, Christel Stalpaert and Sofie Verdoodt, in an article on the performance of cultural trauma in theatre and film, argue that the fact that theatre is a live experience plays an important role in this. Within the context of traumatic experiences, they state that ‘‘the transmission of traumatic

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[43] Emilie Pine, *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2020), 219.
[44] Chris Morash and Shaun Richards, *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 76.
[45] Morash and Richards, *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place*, 76.

memory often relies on live, performance-like interactions''[46] and they give the example of a victim recounting their traumatic experience. This, then, means that sharing memory is intrinsically an act of performance, which underscores the argument that Kapushevska-Drakulevska offers. According to Le Roy, Stalpaert and Verdoodt, sharing memory is performance, while Kapushevska-Drakulevska states that performance is made of memory. Le Roy, Stalpaert and Verdoodt further state that because sharing memory is a performance-like interaction, theatre can become a medium to aid in such performative exchanges.[47]

Though many researchers agree that theatre is a strong medium of representation, what exactly is it that creates this phenomenon? In his book, Maguire reiterates how important it is to remember that, in relation to the conflict of Bloody Sunday, there are many individual experiences of the event and thus also identities within its memory.[48] Nevertheless, he also explains that stage representations of a community invoke a ''metonymic substitution of the part presented for the whole being represented''[49]. Maguire is thus suggesting that using a metonymic substitution within a theatrical narrative, then, allows theatre to refer to a large concept or community through telling the story of only one or few characters. This means that, despite a smaller cast, plays such as *Carthaginians* have the ability to create an artistic space wherein entire communities can recognise themselves.

Rancière also comments on the idea that theatre can, in and of itself, be regarded as a community site. As stated above, Rancière states that spectators of a performance create a personal interpretation. However, he continues to argue that this individual process is what creates the communitarian nature of theatre. According to him, the collective power of an audience ''does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body or from some specific form of interactivity.''[50] Instead, ''it is the power each of them has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest […].''[51] When considering Maguire and Rancière's statements, despite theatre often representing only a part of a community, as well as the individual processes of the spectators, it can be regarded as a communitarian experience. This, in turn, amplifies the idea that theatre can be used as an effective medium of sharing cultural memory, since it has the ability to speak to entire communities.

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[46] Frederik Le Roy, Christel Stalpaert and Sofie Verdoodt, ''Performing Cultural Trauma in Theatre and Film,'' *Arcadia* 45 (2010): 256.
[47] Le Roy, Stalpaert and Verdoodt, ''Performing Cultural Trauma in Theatre and Film,'' 256.
[48] Maguire, 5.
[49] Maguire, 3.
[50] Rancière, 16.
[51] Rancière, 16-17.

Cultural memory of the Troubles in Irish theatre

It has established that the memory of Bloody Sunday continues to generate feelings of distress for many Northern Irish citizens and that theatre can be a helpful tool in the sharing and processing of cultural memory. This part of the theoretical framework will therefore focus on how the field of theatre has engaged with the Irish Troubles and Bloody Sunday more specifically.

According to Emilie Pine, ‘‘Irish culture is founded on an intricate and intimate sense of the past.’’[52] In her book on the performance of remembrance in Irish culture she concludes that for the resolving of past traumas, remembrance culture is central since it demands a responsibility of bringing justice to those who are traumatised ‘‘whether that is achieved through the cathartic articulation of personal grievances, the judicial conviction of those who perpetrated the abuse in the past, or the public commemoration of the past as a way of opening it up and healing it.’’[53] Considering these statements, how has Irish theatre engaged with the traumas of the Troubles? In *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (1997), Christopher Murray argues that ‘‘the theatre in the North is, historically, a mirror image of the political relationship between the North and South’’.[54] Here, Murray is already suggesting that there is a relationship between Northern Irish theatre and the social and political landscape of Ireland. It is not surprising, then, that since the beginning of the Troubles many playwrights have incorporated the conflict, either consciously or unconsciously, as the forefront or backdrop of their plays. As Lisa Fitzpatrick observes, ‘‘theatre in Northern Ireland has frequently engaged with the social and cultural turmoil colloquially referred to as the Troubles.’’[55] While the Troubles were ongoing, playwrights were already writing about the violence and social turmoil that dominated life. After the Good Friday Agreement, theatre has continued actively engaging with the changing Northern Irish society through the commemoration of the conflict and its history.[56] According to Pine, this continuation of confronting the past is important in Irish culture in

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[52] Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 170.
[53] Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture*, 170.
[54] Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up To Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 188.
[55] Lisa Fitzpatrick, ‘‘The Politics of Performance: Theatre in and about Northern Ireland,’’ in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance*, eds. Eamonn Jordan and Eric Weitz (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 51.
[56] Fitzpatrick, ‘‘The Politics of Performance: Theatre in and about Northern Ireland,’’ 51-52.

order to accept and heal the past. When a trauma of the past is fully acknowledged, a way can be found to live with it in the present.[57]

In light of these observations made by Pine, Murray and Fitzpatrick, Troubles plays can be considered, in the words of Pine, a ‘‘cathartic articulation of personal grievances’’ and a ‘‘public commemoration of the past.’’[58] As observed by Graham Dawson in *Memory Ireland* in his chapter on life-stories and survivor memory, these instances of articulation and commemoration are necessary as ‘‘individual survivors [of Bloody Sunday] continue to grapple with personal memories that necessarily remain for the most part private, outside of and frequently invisible from the arenas of public representation.’’[59] He argues that these life-stories should be provided a more personal way of commemorating their past as opposed to the political discourse. The cathartic and public aspects of Troubles theatre, then, could provide a supportive environment for individuals to share and commemorate their experiences.

Although Troubles plays are valuable for their commemorative intent, in the recently published book *Contemporary Irish Theatre: Histories and Theories*, Charlotte McIvor and Ian R. Walsh argue that the Troubles plays genre rapidly devolved into clichéd portrayals of the conflict, which risks reinforcing a limited and polarised understanding of the Troubles.[60] Furthermore, the predictability of the narrative potentially desensitises audiences to the emotional and historical weight of the Trouble. Raising this issue, then, highlights the importance of diversifying representations by including marginalised voices and new perspectives as this ensures that theatre continues to engage meaningfully with the legacies of the Troubles.

Despite repetitive representations, Fitzpatrick states that the reception and meanings of Troubles plays ‘‘have shifted over the course of time’’[61] due to a changing society. She continues by arguing that, though many works engage with the factual history of the Troubles, there is also a wide range of plays that focus on the political and social impact.[62] Since the Troubles still remain a contested memory and, as stated in the introduction, the processes around Bloody Sunday are still ongoing, contemporary audiences will find new

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[57] Pine, 167.
[58] Pine, 170.
[59] Graham Dawson, ‘‘Life-Stories, Survivor Memory, and Trauma in the Irish Troubles,’’ in *Memory Ireland: Volume 3: The Famine and the Troubles*, ed. Oona Frawley (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 214.
[60] Charlotte McIvor and Ian R. Walsh, *Contemporary Irish Theatre: Histories and Theories* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024), 51.
[61] Fitzpatrick, 51.
[62] Fitzpatrick, 63.

meanings within the plays as a result of the changing society they live in. Tom Maguire holds a comparable view and argues that ‘‘the ways in which the conflict has been mediated publicly have contributed and continue to the determination of how it has developed; how it is experienced; and moreover, how it is perceived both within and beyond the borders of the Northern Irish state.’’[63] In other words, Maguire suggests that the cultural memory of the Troubles is still shifting, because the conflict is still being processed. Indeed, as stated in the introduction, as recently as 2023 the legal process of Bloody Sunday was still ongoing. This, then, means that the conflict continues to be publicly dealt with, which according to Maguire illustrates that the memory of the Troubles continues to change. This argument by Maguire underlines Fitzpatrick’s claim that the meaning behind Troubles plays continues to shift due to the everchanging political and social landscape of Northern Ireland.

Although both interpretations and the reception of Troubles plays may change over time, Mark Phelan proposes several motifs that have continued to characterize the genre and that have contributed to the ‘‘hackneyed representations’’[64] that McIvor and Walsh remarked above. One common motif is the ‘Romeo & Juliet *typos*’, in which a couple appears who remain star-crossed lovers due to their different sectarian backgrounds. The second motif that Phelan recognizes is how Troubles plays can often be categorized as modern-day tragedies, since they frequently appear to suggest that the Troubles are a conflict that is irreconcilable.[65] Although Phelan is of the opinion that the genre of Troubles drama as a whole now appears to be exhausted and no longer suited for portraying the complexities of life in post-conflict Northern Ireland,[66] popular Troubles plays such as *The Freedom of the City* (1973) by Brian Friel and Martin Lynch’s *History of the Troubles (Accordin’ to my Da)* (2002) remain relevant for theatre groups and thus also theatre scholars, since such plays are still being produced and also written till this day. As recent as March 2023, *Under the Black Rock*, a play by Tim Edge set in 1979 about a republican cell that punishes traitors, premiered and had a successful run. This all suggests that Troubles plays remain relevant in contemporary (Northern) Irish society.

In addition to identifying the common motifs of the genre, Phelan also comments on Troubles theatre in post-conflict Northern Ireland. In the latter part of his article he states how there is still too much emphasis on the politics between Catholics and Protestants.

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[63] Maguire, 3.
[64] McIvor and Walsh, *Contemporary Irish Theatre: Histories and Theories*, 51.
[65] Phelan, 374-375.
[66] Phelan, 373.

Instead, he desires the grey areas in the Troubles should be explored more, which include LGBTQ-community narratives and the experiences of women and immigrants.[67] Phelan argues that theatre is a medium to explore these issues and notes that, in recent years, Northern Irish theatre has already started to bring these topics to light, especially the increase of sexual and physical abuse of women during the Troubles, which was suppressed at the time. Phelan mentions the Theatre of Witness project *I Once Knew a Girl* (2010) as an example, which is directly based on real life experiences and can thus be categorised as a form of documentary theatre.[68]

As stated above, the two motifs that Phelan described are the Romeo & Juliet type, as well as seeing Troubles plays as modern-day tragedies where the violent events of the Troubles are seen as irreconcilable. Especially the Romeo & Juliet type is discussed in multiple articles and book chapters. In his book about Northern Irish theatre, Maguire also comments on the common motifs that can be found in Troubles plays. Maguire argues that these Romeo-and-Juliet-type romances in Troubles plays symbolise a national romance in a way where communities that are traditionally hostile towards each other start to recognize one another as political allies.[69] This analysis of the motif is similar to that of Phelan, who stated that the Romeo and Juliet motif is an allegory for political reconciliation within the sectarian society. Maguire offers a more expansive analysis than Phelan and further states that these types of narratives of love across sectarian divides arguably serve to underscore the humanity of individuals that are entangled within the Northern Irish political struggle.

The chapter about Northern Irish theatre in Murray's book offers another perspective. He argues that several plays that portray the Romeo-and-Juliet-type romances use the motif with the means of asserting both the pity and absurdity of the conflict of the Troubles. Some examples that are mentioned are Christina Reid's *Did You Hear the One About the Irishman?* (1989) and Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1985), which both use a love story for political purposes.[70] The stark contrast of the violence of the Troubles and the love between two people is what creates this effect of pity and absurdity. Patrick Lonergan also discusses this motif and argues that it can be seen as an attempt of Irish dramatists to write within the English dramatic tradition. Lonergan specifically mentions Graham Reid's Troubles drama *Remembrance* from 1984 and states that Reid combines the Romeo and

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[67] Phelan, 388.
[68] Phelan, 383.
[69] Maguire, *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland: Through and Beyond the Troubles*, 160.
[70] Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up To Nation*, 193.

Juliet motif with humour. This, then, creates a juxtaposition of the tragedy of the lovers and humour, which, according to Lonergan, ‘‘challenges the unwillingness of the British public to engage seriously with the Troubles.’’[71]

Additionally, Maguire and Murray share other motifs that Phelan’s article does not discuss. Maguire, for example, discusses the recurring motif of ‘‘the individual of a small group which is isolated and resisting the forces of paramilitarism or sectarianism’’[72]. He states that this motif is often, though not exclusively, brought forward in domestic tragedies where the space where everything happens is *inside* and that space is surrounded by the hostile *outside*.[73] Murray, on the other hand, discusses the concept of ‘the theatre of hope’ and states that Troubles plays often demonstrate characteristics of this. He explains that the theatre of hope reinforces the idea that humour within theatre is essential when a tragic event is portrayed. Murray reiterates how the theatre of hope only views a theatrical representation of a traumatic event successful when humour is employed. Martin Lynch’s *The Interrogation of Ambrose Fogarty* (1982) is used as an example, where the grim topic of poverty in Belfast during the Troubles is combined with humour. According to Murray, the humour allows audiences to see past constructed stereotyped attitudes.[74]

All in all, the events of the Troubles have had a significant impact on the Irish theatre scene and continue to do so. While the genre is defined by common motifs that have remained the relatively similar over the past few decades, the social and political landscape of Northern Ireland is everchanging, which can influence the interpretations of Troubles plays and the responses to them.

The theoretical framework has explained how theatre can be a valuable medium for transmitting cultural memory, with a specific focus on Troubles theatre and Bloody Sunday. These theoretical reflections will now be used to analyse how Frank McGuinness’ *Carthaginians* explores the trauma of Bloody Sunday in three chapters, each analysing different aspects of the play – the *embodying*, *mediating* and *localising* of trauma – as well as the differences between the Abbey and Druid productions. The theoretical discussion of the influence of the Troubles on Northern Irish identities can be used to analyse specific characters within the play and the responses to both productions. The theory regarding cultural memory in theatre and that of the Troubles specifically will be applied to create an

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[71] Patrick Lonergan, *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950* (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), 128.
[72] Maguire, 160.
[73] Maguire, 160.
[74] Murray, 194.

extensive analysis of how *Carthaginians* articulates the cultural memory of Bloody Sunday, as well as placing it within the context of Northern Irish Troubles theatre.

Chapter 3: Embodying Trauma: Queer Narratives

The concept of 'embodying trauma' refers to how a traumatic experience can leave deep imprints in a person's life, to the extent that the trauma manifests itself in a person's or group's behaviour and presence. This chapter will explore how, in *Carthaginians*, the queer character of Dido is a cultural embodiment of the traumas of the LGBTQ community who experienced shame and marginalisation during the conflict in Northern Ireland. As observed in the theoretical framework, Mark Phelan has encouraged the exploration of the grey areas in the Troubles, which include LGBTQ narratives. He further notes that Northern Irish theatre has started to bring these topics to light more frequently in recent years. Nevertheless, Dido shows that *Carthaginians*, a play first performed in 1988, already concerned itself with LGBTQ narratives. This illustrates that these topics were addressed before recent decades and, according to Phelan, McGuinness' play can be considered groundbreaking in this area.[75] Moreover, *Carthaginians* exemplifies how LGBTQ narratives of the Troubles were explored in theatre even before the Troubles ended. Frank McGuinness can thus be seen as a frontrunner in this area of Troubles theatre, since Dido's homosexuality is a prominent and, intentionally, controversial theme in the play.

Accordingly, this chapter will analyse the ways the characters in McGuinness' *Carthaginians* embody the trauma of Bloody Sunday, with a specific focus on the character of Dido. His role in the play, his relationship with Hark, and the function and reception of the representation of Dido's queer narrative in the play will be analysed. The reason for choosing Dido is because he was portrayed quite differently in the Abbey and Druid productions as the recordings serve to demonstrate. Similarly, Dido is one of the characters that featured prominently in reviews, which signifies that for Irish audiences he was also the character that stood out. Dido's role in the play will be examined first, followed by his relationship with Hark, after which the reception of this queer character will be discussed. It will be shown that Hark projects his trauma of the Troubles onto Dido due to Dido's sexuality. Furthermore, the comparative analysis between the two productions will illustrate how Dido in Druid's production is more forward in his queerness, which highlights how his exaggerations and humour are used as a way of releasing embodied pain due to the traumas of societal oppression of the queer community in Northern Ireland.

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[75] Phelan, 378.

Dido's role in *Carthaginians*

In the character list at the start of the published script, Dido is described as a man in his twenties with no further explanation of his personality or looks. Nevertheless, Dido's persona is soon made evident through Hark's comment towards Dido in the opening scene: "You are known as a queer in this town."[76] Indeed, Dido is an openly gay character and his sexual orientation is a prominent theme within the play. In addition to Hark's statement in the first scene, Dido's homosexuality is referenced from the very start since his name also symbolically points towards his queer identity. Dido is a character in the epic poem *The Aeneid* (30-19 BC), written by the Roman poet Virgil, in which she is one of its main characters and the queen of Carthage. Dido in McGuinness' play is thus named after a queen, which demonstrates a gender-bending aspect of Dido's character. The reference to *The Aeneid* is strengthened at the start of the play, as the stage directions in the script state that the opening scene of the play should begin with the song 'When I am Dead and Laid in Earth' from Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1684-1689),[77] which is based on Virgil's epic poem. This serves to set up the reference of Dido being a 'queen', which illustrates the empowerment of the queer community as it reclaims the word that was frequently used in a derogatory way to demean feminine men. By embracing the label of 'queen', Dido subverts negative connotations and demonstrates a resilience against homophobia as it confronts traditional ideas of masculinity and sexuality.

Furthermore, the fact Dido's name refers to a queen can also be connected to his role in the play. Firstly, it is a reference to the explicit feminine energy that he possesses due to his sexuality. Moreover, he displays similar characteristics to that of a queen within the group dynamic of the seven characters. It is not so much that Dido stands above the other characters, but rather that Dido creates a sense that he does not belong in the group, like a queen contrasting with her commoners, as a result of his sexual orientation. Moreover, he is the only character of the seven that ventures outside of the graveyard, which again illustrates that he differs from the others. Therefore, though Dido does not necessarily represent a 'royal' status, throughout the play it is reiterated that he represents an outsider position within the group of seven characters and thus illustrates a certain solitude similar to that of a royal.

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[76] Frank McGuinness, "Carthaginians," in *Frank McGuinness: Plays 1* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 305.
[77] Frank McGuinness, "Carthaginians," 297.

This perception of Dido's role in the play as an outsider among the other characters in the graveyard has also featured in the academic reception of McGuinness' play. In an article about homosexuality and the Troubles, Michael Cadden argues that Dido ''acts as an intermediary between the Creggan burial ground and the city of Derry, between the living dead of the cemetery and the living dead outside it.''[78] Dido, thus, provides the communication between the characters in the graveyard and the outside world. Arguably, this suggests that Dido is not as much of a grounded character in his connection to the Derry community. In a chapter about the narratives of death and resurrection in *Carthaginians*, Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly agrees with this argument and notes how ''Dido assumes almost a mythical status, world wanderer, between times, and places.''[79] Even in the play itself, Dido appears to confirm this statement. When recalling his past love for a sailor, Maela asks him what the sailor was doing in Derry. Dido answers by stating that he was ''wandering through, like myself.''[80] The fact that Dido mentions himself to be ''wandering through'' Derry indicates that the city does not feel as his home base. Instead, he is a traveller who passes through. This is reflected at the end of the play when Dido says: ''I believe it is time to leave Derry''[81] and he is symbolically the only character out of the seven that exits the stage. The rest remain in the Derry graveyard, implicating that they are not yet able to overcome the past compared to Dido, who is not as emotionally tied to the city and its violent history. All in all, when combining the statements of Cadden and Kelly-O'Reilly, Dido arguably has the status of an intermediary wanderer, which simultaneously gives him an outsider position when considering the six characters remaining in the graveyard.

In addition to Dido's unique contribution to the seven characters, Dido's role in the play also underlines the progressive nature of *Carthaginians.* In his article about Troubles theatre, Phelan discusses the theatre of Northern Ireland before 1998, the year of the Good Friday Agreement, and argues that several plays, among which *Carthaginians*, showcase a progressive character that was influential for future playwrights and theatre companies. The article states that *Carthaginians* ''helped contribute to a new form of civic politics and performance''[82] and, according to Phelan, the play can be considered a groundbreaking work

[78] Michael Cadden, "Homosexualizing the Troubles: A Short Query into Two Derry Airs by Frank McGuinness," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 68, no. 1–2 (2007): 565.
[79] Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly, ''*Carthaginians*: Narratives of Death and Resurrection in a Derry Graveyard,'' in *The Theatre of Frank McGuinness: Stages of Mutability*, ed. Helen Lojek (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2002), 106.
[80] McGuinness, 326.
[81] McGuinness, 379.
[82] Phelan, 378.

that has been built upon in other works and was of large influence to TheatreofplucK, the first Northern Irish queer theatre company.[83] This indicates how McGuinness' inclusion of a gay character was not only influential for its audience, but also impacted writers and creators of Northern Irish theatre.

Similarly, Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly recognises how McGuinness successfully defied censorship of LGBTQ narratives through the character of Dido. She states that ''the camp performance with the pram and the song, and later in drag, while foregrounding homosexuality, also draws attention to the interpretative frameworks within which one experiences history.''[84] Kelly-O'Reilly is illustrating how, through the character of Dido, the play is breaking through the common narratives of historical events and allowed audiences to view Bloody Sunday through a new framework. As stated earlier by Phelan, queer voices were silenced throughout the Troubles and as argued by Kelly-O'Reilly, these voices were presented in *Carthaginians*. Kelly-O'Reilly further argues that Dido provides a vantage point of the outsider which offers the audience a perspective that differs from the perspectives events are usually evaluated, because the position of a queer character questions the perceived assumptions of heterosexuality.[85] In *Queer Performance and Contemporary Ireland*, Fintan Walsh offers a similar perspective and argues that ''Frank McGuinness's work stands out for frequently deploying queer characters and aesthetics in order to revise dominant historical narratives and imagine them differently.''[86] This, then, suggests that McGuinness' aim to fight the censorship of LGBTQ narratives was successful. Through these new perspectives on historical narratives, McGuinness offers commentary on the social and political landscape of Ireland as it allows him to critique the traditional structures of identity and the repression of queer voices.

Additionally, in his article about gay narratives of the Troubles, Michael Cadden discusses the symbolism of Dido in the wider context of Northern Ireland. Cadden describes Dido as an eccentric gay man nicknamed ''Dido, Queen of Derry'' who dominates the stage in the Catholic cemetery. This satirical aspect indicates that Dido sees conservative situations and spaces, like the Catholic cemetery, as being there for his queer appropriation. The same can be argued for Dido's second role in *The Burning Balaclava*, the play-within-the-play, in which he not only has a drag persona, but also takes on the role of an English soldier in an

[83] Phelan, 378.
[84] Kelly-O'Reilly, ''*Carthaginians*: Narratives of Death and Resurrection in a Derry Graveyard,'' 95.
[85] Kelly-O'Reilly, 95.
[86] Fintan Walsh, *Queer Performance and Contemporary Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4.

exaggerated way. Again, this is a situation where he uses camp to create a satirical portrayal of the traditional image of an English soldier. Cadden goes on to make the strong statement that ‘‘Dido is a Cathleen ni Houlihan for postmodern Ireland’’ due to his protean personality.[87] Cathleen ni Houlihan symbolises Irish nationalism and the idea of sacrificial heroism, which signifies how she evokes the voice of the nation as a whole. In contrast to this, Dido gives voice to the marginalised queer community who have been historically repressed and overlooked. He thus represents a more inclusive and contemporary Ireland than the national symbol of Cathleen ni Houlihan. Furthermore, comparing Dido to a maternal symbol challenges the fixed gender values of the past. In this sense, Dido is redefining traditional national symbols and questions what it means to represent Ireland in the modern era. Therefore, due to Dido's progressive character, he can be considered a symbol of contemporary Ireland.

Moreover, in an article on feminism and myth in Irish drama, Maria-Elena Doyle observes that Cathleen ni Houlihan shifts between being a mother who calls her sons to protect her and a maiden whose purity attracts soldiers to serve her, which allows men who are often labelled as weak or feminine to project that image onto her instead and thus helping them reclaim their sense of masculinity.[88] Similar to how Cathleen enables men to project their ideals onto her, Dido uses theatricality and humour to reclaim his own identity in a society that rejects queerness. However, instead of supporting traditional nationalist narratives, Dido dismantles them. He thus becomes a figure who invites his community to question their fixed identities and embrace more fluid and inclusive understandings of themselves.

Depictions of homosexuality: Dido and Hark

Dido's sexual orientation is most prominently explored in his interactions with Hark. Hark is a man in his thirties who makes it apparent from his first entrance that he does not support Dido and his queer identity by saying to him: ‘‘I do not like being seen with queers. I do not like queers. I do not like you. Fuck you.’’[89] This hatred is carried through to the next scene where

[87] Michael Cadden, “Homosexualizing the Troubles: A Short Query into Two Derry Airs by Frank McGuinness,” 563.
[88] Maria-Elena Doyle, “A Spindle for the Battle: Feminism, Myth, and the Woman-Nation in Irish Revival Drama,” *Theatre Journal* 51, no. 1 (1999): 34 http://www.jstor.org/stable/25068622.
[89] McGuinness, 305.

Dido decides to confront Hark by asking him why he insulted him earlier. Hark's answer is simply ''because you deserved it''[90] and he gives no further reasoning. As a response to Dido's interaction, Hark quickly becomes agitated and continues to badger Dido about whether he has experienced a questioning by the army or police before. At first, these questions appear to be asked in an annoyed fashion, but Hark soon turns more aggressive in and even starts to physically assault Dido. He asks: ''Have you ever been picked up, Dido? Picked up, by the army or the police? Will I pick you up? Will I show you how to pick someone up?''[91] After this the stage directions tell Hark to touch Dido's face. This illustrates how both the questions and the physicality quickly become increasingly aggressive, though this 'touch' can also be interpreted as sexual as well. When viewed as sexual, the touch introduces a layer of complexity to their dynamic as it would reflect repressed feelings of Hark towards Dido. This, then, signifies an internal struggle within Hark where a subconscious desires surfaces momentarily, which challenges the rigid identity he has constructed for himself, shaped by the hyper-masculine culture of the Troubles.

Overall, the aggressive tension of Hark towards Dido throughout the play indicates how Dido can be perceived as a character that embodies multiple layers of trauma. In addition to his experiences of the Troubles, Dido's queerness makes him even more vulnerable within a community that is already traumatised. Indeed, as stated by Walsh, ''sexuality and shame go hand in hand in Irish culture,''[92] which meant that ''sexuality was largely seen as something to be culturally disciplined and repressed.''[93] This means that Dido carries the weight of both the violence and loss within his community, as well as the devaluing of his queerness by a broader society. Dido can thus be seen as an embodied form of this trauma due to the societal oppression of his sexuality.

Furthermore, the emotional outburst of Hark that follows the questioning is also an illustration of how Bloody Sunday and the Troubles as a whole impacted Hark traumatically. This is especially prevalent in the way Hark begins to refer to himself while talking to Dido: ''Tell me who you're involved with. Give me names, Harkin. Give me addresses.''[94] After Bloody Sunday, Hark decided to join the IRA, which eventually led him to serve time in prison. This quote illustrates how Hark is triggered to relive a memory of him being

[90] McGuinness, 313.
[91] McGuinness, 314.
[92] Walsh, *Queer Performance and Contemporary Ireland*, 63.
[93] Walsh, 63.
[94] McGuinness, 314.

questioned aggressively during his time in prison. Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly argues that this scene expresses how ''just as the army had picked up Hark, he mirrors this in pretending to pick up Dido. Hark's abhorrence of the sexuality of the gay man is as abhorrent as the imagined English soldier's image of a united Ireland.''[95] This parallel illustrates how Hark internalises the power dynamics of his oppressors, as he reenacts their aggression as a way of expressing his own unresolved anger. By turning his trauma onto Dido, Hark projects the emotional wounds inflicted on him, which reflects how unresolved trauma can manifest as harmful behaviour toward others. The scene also highlights how Hark's experiences in prison left him trapped in a cycle of aggression, as he is unable to separate his personal struggles from his interactions with those around him. Thus, Hark is expressing his trauma by taking on the role of the officer himself and projecting his trauma onto Dido and thereby expressing the anger he accumulated from his experiences in prison.

In doing so, the play emphasises how deeply the Troubles have scarred individuals, illustrating that trauma is not only personal but also a force that shapes interactions and relationships long after the violence has ended. This can be connected to Oona Frawley's theory that was discussed earlier, as Hark's experiences of imprisonment illustrate how trauma disrupts his internal coherence of self. The repeated references to his past, such as his aggressive questioning of Dido, suggest that Hark is trapped in a cycle of reliving his traumatic memories. This aligns with Frawley's argument that trauma ''clings'' to a person, continually wounding them over time and thus preventing Hark from moving forward psychologically.

Dido in the Abbey and Druid productions

During the questioning, Hark also begins to direct the questions towards Dido's sexuality: ''And after that, Dido, do you know what they do? (*Hark kisses Dido.*) Does it not turn you on?''[96] It is especially interesting to consider this direction of Hark kissing Dido when comparing the Abbey and Druid productions. It must be noted that the published script by Faber and Faber is a revised version which is the version that Druid performed in 1992, while the Abbey produced the original version. The overall plot has remained the same and the dialogue and stage directions are very similar, but there are revealing differences, such as the direction of Hark kissing Dido. Druid performed the revised version, which means this

[95] Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly, ''*Carthaginians*: Narratives of Death and Resurrection in a Derry Graveyard,'' 98-99.
[96] McGuinness, 314.

direction was carried out, while in the Abbey production the kiss between Hark and Dido did not happen, making it a much less sexual encounter. The addition of the kiss in the Druid production, especially after Hark's homophobic remarks, is a response to homophobia generated from toxic masculinity as it illustrates an internal conflict within Hark regarding his own discernible masculine identity.

The difference of this segment between the two productions is also apparent in the execution of stage directions that are present in both the first and revised version of the script. In addition to the kissing, there is a stage direction which requires Hark to grab Dido's groin which does happen in both the Abbey and Druid productions. However, in the Abbey production, Hark does this significantly more violently than in the Druid production. The assault is aggressive and so Dido attempts to pull back, resulting a physical struggle between the two characters. In the Druid production, on the other hand, this action is carried out in a more subtle way, which creates an almost sensual scene. This shows that the homophobic comments create a façade that hides deeper feelings of vulnerability and repression. This is especially significant when considering Hark's past with the IRA, which, as a paramilitary organisation, created a tough environment that emphasised masculinity and where showing vulnerability could be seen as soft or weak. Furthermore, the sensual struggle could also indicate an attraction of Hark towards Dido, much like Hark's touching of Dido's face discussed above. In this case, the initial comments made by Hark showcase his internalised homophobia and the physical struggle with Dido actually reveals his internal struggle. All in all, this interaction between Dido and Hark indicates how the Druid production accentuates the connection between Hark's suppressed trauma and emotions and his homophobia towards Dido.

Such overt expressions of homosexuality can be found in more places in the Druid production when comparing it to the Abbey production. The first and most predominant example is the way Dido carries himself on stage. In the Abbey production, there is not much that gives Dido away as being queer until Hark openly states it, while in the Druid production Dido behaves in a more stereotypical way in his movement and speech from the beginning of the play, which could give the audience an earlier indication that he is homosexual. This is also the case for *Carthaginians*' play-within-a-play *The Burning Balaclava*, in which Dido is crossdressing to play the drag persona Fionnuala McGonigle. In the Abbey production, Dido plays Fionnuala in a more subtle manner, while in the Druid production Dido performs this character in a drag-like fashion through posing and making exaggerated feminine movements.

It can thus be concluded that Dido is more expressive in his queer sexuality in the Druid production when compared to the Abbey production through how he presents himself on stage.

The exaggerated expression of queerness in the Druid production further strengthens the idea that Dido embodies the trauma of the marginalised LGBTQ+ community. Through his flamboyant character, he is portrayed as a counterpoint to societal norms which can be seen as a form of resistance, as well as a coping mechanism. Dido's use of camp and humour in, for example, *The Burning Balaclava* is a way for him to process societal rejection and the personal pain that stems from it. Dido, then, underscores the intersection of queerness and trauma, as his character suggests that his flamboyance is not merely performative but a deliberate act of survival in a world that marginalises him. The Druid production's emphasis on his boldness thus amplifies the duality of his character: both as a symbol of vulnerability and as a beacon of defiance against the constraints of societal norms. Considering that Dido in the Druid production provides a more flamboyant and outspoken image compared to the Abbey production, it can be argued that Druid produced a character that embodies the queer resistance to societal conformities more explicitly.

It is interesting to note that the more overt expressions of homosexuality did not derive from the revision of the script, since no stage directions indicate to what extent Dido should express his homosexuality. This would then mean that the expression of queerness through Dido's stage presence is a result of the differences in direction of both productions. Frank McGuinness directed the Druid production and he himself is part of the LGBTQ community, which he shared in an interview with *The Guardian* in 2008 by saying that from a very young age he knew he was gay.[97] In the interview he also discusses how several of his plays involve queer representation through one or multiple characters. McGuinness clarifies this decision by stating that ''every Irish writer has been engaged in a fight against censorship and gay characters have been few and far between. It was about bloody time, and it had to be faced.''[98] As previously stated, Walsh argues that shame and sexuality have been strongly connected in Irish culture. This belief, strengthened by the global AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s[99], resulted in the silencing of queer narratives during the Troubles. The fight against queer censorship, then, could be the reasoning behind the character of Dido in *Carthaginians* and

[97] Charlotte Higgins, ''Frank McGuinness: I'm not entirely respectable. I couldn't be,'' The Guardian, 18 October, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/oct/18/frank-mcguinness
[98] Higgins, ''Frank McGuinness: I'm not entirely respectable. I couldn't be.''
[99] Walsh, 36.

suggests the type of role that McGuinness intended Dido to fulfil. As stated, McGuinness decided to include gay characters in multiple of his plays with the aim to ‘‘fight against censorship.’’ Dido, then, is arguably McGuinness’ attempt in *Carthaginians* to raise the suppressed voices of the queer community during the Troubles through theatre.

This interview also illustrates Maguire’s and Dutka’s theories on cultural memory and theatre. As stated in the theoretical framework, Maguire argues that theatre is a space where people can recognise themselves as a community through the representation on stage and thus make people feel heard. Since LGBTQ narratives were silenced during the Troubles this means that, in the case of Dido, this indicates how his character can be a valuable point of recognition for the queer community who experienced the Troubles. Furthermore, Dutka suggested that experiencing historical narratives can play a vital role within the formation of the feeling of belonging to a cultural community. Thus, the recognition of homosexuality that Dido brings forward also has the ability to create a larger sense of community among members of the queer community. The narrative of homosexuality in *Carthaginians*, then, is not only a way for audiences outside of this narrative to see the Troubles through a new framework because queer narratives in the Troubles had not been addressed much, but also for members of the LGBTQ community to feel recognised in their experiences of the Troubles.

The importance of LGBTQ representation to McGuinness can also suggest why there is a large difference between the performance of Dido in the Abbey and Dido in the Druid productions. As previously argued, the Druid production portrays a stronger and more stereotypical image of a gay man through Dido, while Dido in the Abbey production displays less explicit characteristics. This suggest that McGuinness, the director of the Druid production, consciously chose to create a stronger queer image within the performances due to how important it supposedly was to him. Furthermore, the same reason could also suggest why McGuinness added the kiss between Hark and Dido on stage in the revised version, since it results in a powerful gay image on stage.

Reception of Dido’s character

The strong presence of Dido’s narrative aimed to defy censorship in *Carthaginians* did not go unnoticed by the critics at the time. It is interesting to note that Dido is one of the most discussed characters in the reviews from the Abbey and Druid archives. An example from such a review is from the *Sunday Independent* about the Abbey production, which notes the

‘‘flamboyant homosexual’’[100] who is ‘‘an outsider even among the outcasts’’[101]. Similarly, a review from the *Evening Press* describes Dido as ‘‘gloriously gay’’[102], which, according to the critic, is proven by the three costume changes. The fact that the *Evening Press* described Dido as ‘‘gloriously gay’’ indicates that the critic perceived the sense of pride that Dido carries with him about his homosexuality. This is an example of how these reviews indicate how the queer narrative translated well from the stage to its audience, since many critics found Dido a character that stands out positively among the others and thus to be worth mentioning.

The examples also suggest that McGuinness’ fight against censorship was also an aspect that audiences were (perhaps unconsciously) aware of. As stated in the *Sunday Independent* review, Dido was perceived by the critic as an outsider among the outcasts, which indicates how Dido’s narrative differs from that of the others due to his sexuality. Thus, despite all the characters being ‘‘outsiders’’, according to the critic Dido cannot even be categorised as one of them because of his sexuality. A similar statement was made in the *Galway Advertiser* about the Druid production, which stated that Dido is ‘‘already marginalised as a homosexual’’[103] and that he ‘‘acts as a kind of mediator between the brutal reality of the world the others are trying to escape and the […] graveyard.’’[104] This review describes how Dido acts as a mediator between the group in the graveyard and the ‘‘brutal reality of the world’’, which is interesting when considering his position as a gay man. The critic here is suggesting that Dido is aware of the brutal reality of the world, which could refer to him having to live in a reality where he is discriminated towards due to his sexuality, meaning McGuinness’ aim to fight the censorship was perceived successfully. Overall, reviews from newspapers from both the Abbey and the Druid production show either a neutral or positive stance towards Dido’s gay character and appear aware of how he influenced the play and challenged the censorship of queer narratives.

Despite McGuinness’ successful efforts to use Dido to spread awareness for the narratives of the LGBTQ community, not all initial reactions to this gay character, before

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[100] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.
[101] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.
[102] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p7.
[103] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 14 Feb 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[104] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 14 Feb 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.

watching the performance, were positive. As the archives show, this was most predominantly apparent in the reactions of the Derry audiences. According to Imelda Foley, members of the Derry City Council travelled to Galway to watch the Druid production and ‘‘declared [*Carthaginians*] to be a travesty of Bloody Sunday and called a special council meeting to consider whether or not to cancel the Derry event.’’[105] Despite these reservations, after its initial run in Galway, Druid Theatre took their production to Derry for several performances, which would be the first time *Carthaginians* was performed in the same city where Bloody Sunday took place.

Two critics from the *City Lights* magazine each wrote a review and reported on the thoughts and feelings of the attending audience, which illustrate that the expectations of the audience were similar to that of the Derry City Council. Tony Doherty describes the opening night in Derry and how ‘‘all the talk before the big night was of offence, the scandal, Bloody Sunday and a gay queen? How dare you Mr McGuinness! There are no gays in Derry!’’[106] The overall initial reaction to the information that a gay character plays a dominant role was thus received as an insult, especially since his narrative is tied to Derry. Particularly the combination between a gay character and the memory of Bloody Sunday was not appreciated by Derry audiences. The article continues by making the following statement: ‘‘Minutes before curtain-up, the air was thick with anticipation of scandal. Bring on the juicy stuff – insult us all.’’[107] However, despite these expectations of insult from the audience, Doherty eventually expresses that ‘‘nothing was further from the truth really.’’[108] Indeed, the critic praises the humour and vitality of Dido, which he refers to as the real strength of the play. According to Doherty, Dido brought life and soul to the production and his role can be described as ‘‘a tribute to the queens of Derry.’’[109] Thus, despite the apprehensive tension about the gay narrative that the audience felt before the performance, *Carthaginians* eventually received a positive response from the Derry audience. Moreover, Doherty clearly indicates how his perception of Dido differed from his initial expectations and even praises the character for being a tribute to the queer community in Derry. When considering that

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[105] Maguire, 33.
[106] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[107] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[108] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[109] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.

McGuinness aimed to create a meaningful representation of the LGBTQ community, Doherty's response is evidence that suggests it was successful.

The second review of the Druid production in Derry from the *City Lights* magazine by Malachy Martin and Lawrence Price shares similar opinions. They also state that Dido is the most active character since he is the only one who leaves the graveyard and confronts the outside world. According to Martin and Price, ''he is prepared to take his own personal struggle to the point of walking through Derry in drag''[110], which they perceive as an ''exposé of our own very insecure sexuality and lack of tolerance.''[111] Much like Doherty, Martin and Price argue that Dido brings light to the play due to his active personality. They further suggest that, in a way, Dido holds up a mirror to Derry audiences through his overt expression of his sexuality, such as his drag persona Fionnuala McGonigle in *The Burning Balaclava*. According to Martin and Price, Dido's courage to walk around the streets of Derry without hiding his homosexuality has the ability to have audiences question their tolerance of the queer community. This, again, illustrates how McGuinness' aim to have audiences consider gay narratives was successful.

All in all, this chapter has illustrated how Dido's flamboyant character stands out amongst the cast of characters and can be connected to experiences of trauma within the LGBTQ+ community. Dido's interactions with Hark illustrate how his queerness gives him a vulnerable place within society, which suggests he has to carry both trauma of the Troubles, as well as trauma of the societal repression of his sexuality. Nevertheless, his use of camp and humour, can be seen as a form of resistance towards the censorship of the queer community, which is an aspect McGuinness stated is important to him. This is also made evident in the Druid production that McGuinness himself directed, since Dido is performed with a more noticeable camp exuberance and even a kiss was included between Dido and Hark. Furthermore, the reception of the LGBTQ+ representation in *Carthaginians* reveals that though there was initial apprehension, audiences appreciated Dido's vulnerability and humour, and allowed their perspectives on this queer narrative of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally to be challenged.

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[110] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[111] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.

Chapter 4: Mediating Trauma

The theoretical framework already briefly discussed the notion of humour in theatre in relation to trauma, considering, for example, how the 'theatre of hope' reinforces the idea that humour is essential when a tragic event is portrayed. Christopher Murray reiterates how the theatre of hope only views a theatrical representation of a traumatic event as successful when humour is employed. Director Sarah Pia Anderson likewise states that she noticed how "the Irish […], really enjoyed the black humour and the comedy, and they understood the way that he [Frank McGuinness] uses comedy – in a cathartic way. The comedy in *Carthaginians* actually heals the people who have been traumatized by the terrible events in Derry on Bloody Sunday."[112] This chapter will therefore analyse the ways in which the trauma of Bloody Sunday is mediated in *Carthaginians*, with a specific focus on the use of humour. *The Burning Balaclava*, the play-within-the-play, will be examined, as well as the several interludes of pub quiz questions to illustrate how McGuinness satirises Troubles plays by deconstructing common tropes and excessive violence. In addition, it will be shown how the quiz interludes provide a semblance of normalcy against the backdrop of trauma and mourning, reflecting everyday life and its continuation despite the surrounding tragedies. Furthermore, the quizzes magnify the notion of trauma in the main play as they serve as a coping mechanism for the characters.

Play-within-the-play: *The Burning Balaclava*

The Burning Balaclava as a play within *Carthaginians* serves as a meta-theatrical device that satirises how the Troubles have been portrayed in other works of theatre, as it highlights and exaggerates several tropes of Troubles narratives. The first of these is the Romeo-and-Juliet motif, which is explored in Dido's play through the Catholic Padraig O'Dochartaigh and Protestant Mercy Dogherty, whose love is doomed by their differing religions. Padraig is conflicted and asks himself "should he or should he not take up the gun for Ireland?"[113] and "should he or should he not screw his girlfriend, a Protestant?"[114] Similarly, Mercy experiences feelings of intense guilt regarding her relationship with Padraig, because her

[112] Braden, 114
[113] McGuinness, 332.
[114] McGuinness, 332.

father is a member of the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary). Of course, as befits the famous trope, the fate of the two lovers ends in tragedy, which means Padraig and Mercy thus represent the Romeo-and-Juliet motif. Precisely because this trope is completely absent from McGuinness' main play, *The Burning Balaclava* serves to undermine the more common and stereotypical narratives of the Troubles that are often staged. By mimicking the Romeo-and-Juliet trope specifically, Dido's play-within-a-play critiques the absurdity of framing the Troubles as a romantic tragedy, thus inviting audiences to reflect on how romanticised portrayals can oversimplify and exploit the complexities of the conflict.

Another trope as described by Mark Phelan is representing the Troubles as a ''modern-day tragedy.''[115] While, of course, the conflict of the Troubles was a tragic experience for many, actually employing the theatrical genre of tragedy to represent the conflict can be problematic. A tragedy typically deals with serious, sombre themes and often ends in disaster and misfortune for the main characters, generally because the underlying conflict is insoluble. This means that tragedy, as a genre, ''forecloses possibilities and depoliticizes conflict by naturalising the conditions which precipitate it.''[116] Staging the Troubles as a modern-day tragedy, then, would suggest that there is no political or societal agency within the conflict and that people should feel ''encouraged to 'accept what we are witnessing in the North.'''[117] When considering *The Burning Balaclava*, Dido's play can be regarded as a tragedy due to several characteristics of the genre it displays. While Dido explains his play's narrative, Hark already notes this and states that ''there's a lot of torment in this,''[118] to which Dido replies: ''It's a tragedy, Hark. Shut up.''[119] Indeed, all characters are described as being ''tormented''[120] and the play strongly revolves around star-crossed lovers, betrayal and the death of all characters. The fact that *The Burning Balaclava* can be classified as a tragedy can thus be viewed as a problematic way of representing the Troubles, as well as a critique on Troubles plays that also adhere to the characteristics of this genre.

Moreover, when analysing the Abbey and Druid productions, the play-within-a-play aims to ridicule the tragedy genre as it is staged in a humorous manner. In both productions, Dido's play is performed in a frantic tempo, which already creates a sense of comedy. Additionally, *The Burning Balaclava* is made humorous is through the gender swapping of

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[115] Phelan, 375.
[116] Phelan, 375
[117] Phelan, 375.
[118] McGuinness, 333.
[119] McGuinness, 333.
[120] McGuinness, 333.

several characters. Maela, for example, is told to play a ‘‘sullen and rough spoken man’’[121] while Hark portrays a Derry mother and both Maela and Hark change their voice to suit their assigned characters. This already creates a sense of ridicule, signifying to the audience that the play-within-the-play they are watching is not to be taken seriously. Furthermore, by using humour to ridicule stereotypical portrayals, *The Burning Balaclava* encourages viewers to consider if such representations in serious plays actually use the conflict for dramatic effect and thus exploit the topic, perhaps at the cost of authenticity, which would create a misrepresentation of the complexities of the conflict and the individuals involved. The humour, then, creates a self-awareness that questions the line between representative storytelling and dramatization. The purpose of this self-awareness is to have audiences to critically engage with the ethical implications of representing the Troubles on stage.

The idea that Dido’s play is critiquing other Troubles plays is also discussed in an interview with Sarah Pia Anderson, who directed the Abbey production of *Carthaginians* in 1988. She notes how *The Burning Balaclava* essentially works on two levels: ‘‘One, of course, is just a straight parody of so many plays that were written at the time about the Irish Troubles in the North.’’[122] This is what the analysis of the play-within-the-play has illustrated so far. Anderson, however, continues by saying that ‘‘because [Frank McGuinness] is such a good playwright, it does serve that same function of facing [the seven characters in the graveyard] with a stereotype that they are perhaps even unconsciously fulfilling in some way.’’[123] One important way this is achieved is through Hark playing a female character.

The fact that Hark is directed by Dido to play a woman provides comic relief, especially in light of Hark’s previous homophobic interactions with Dido. Hark is deliberately put in a position where he is breaking down the gender norms that he strongly adheres to, which demonstrates Dido’s subversive control and authority over him. The comedy from Hark’s gender-bending stems from his initial aversion to play a woman, as it creates a satirical scene that ridicules the rigid gender norms that Hark feels most comfortable with. When questioning why he was chosen for this specific part, Dido blatantly says: ‘‘You have the looks for it.’’[124] Not only does the gender swap of Hark provide comedy, with this specific statement Dido also undermines Hark’s masculinity, which is something that Hark values

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[121] McGuinness, 335.
[122] Sharon Braden, ‘‘Directing McGuinness Plays: Sarah Pia Anderson in conversation with Sharon Branden,’’ in *The Theatre of Frank McGuinness: Stages of Mutability*, ed. Helen Lojek (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2002), 122-123.
[123] Braden, ‘‘Directing McGuinness Plays,’’ 123.
[124] McGuinness, 331.

most, and thus forces him to confront his own prejudices. Sarah Pia Anderson also discusses this in her interview and states that ‘‘the gender bending, the role reversal, was very deliberate on Dido’s part. So I suppose that it is a therapeutic session that he sets up for them.’’[125] Indeed, having Hark play a female character can be regarded as therapeutic for him, because it challenges his internal homophobia and the hyper-masculine ideals that were shaped by his experiences with the IRA. Dido is thus confronting Hark’s homophobia directly, which also results in comic relief for the audience as it addresses prejudices Hark has of the queer community in a playful manner.

By having Dido stage the play-within-the-play, McGuinness also critiques the narratives of the Troubles that focus on violence without delving deeper into the personal aspects. This critique is highlighted by the ending, for which Dido had to collect a large amount of fake guns for everyone to use during the ‘‘big shoot-out at the end.’’[126] Indeed, *The Burning Balaclava* ends bombastically as all characters shoot one another, leaving no one alive, thus critiquing how such plays can sensationalise the Troubles through excessive violence, as well as oversimplify the human condition within the situation. The ending shows little emotional depth with regard to the numerous killings, insinuating that during the Troubles violence likewise occurred haphazardly and without causing mental strain on the perpetrators and victims involved, which exposes the way such portrayals can potentially desensitise audiences by reducing the complex realities of the Troubles to a spectacle. Through the exaggeration of violence, McGuinness invites viewers to reflect on how repeated depictions of violence can distort the emotional and psychological toll of conflict. Even the title *The Burning Balaclava* already has strong, overly dramatic connotations with violence and criminality, which enhances the idea that this is what the main narrative revolves around.

The satire of *The Burning Balaclava* taken even further by Dido when the rehearsal is finished and he asks the others: ‘‘Tell me the truth. Isn’t it just like real life?’’[127] This question, almost directed to the audience itself, raised peals of laughter in both the Abbey and Druid recordings of their productions. The characters then tell Dido that *The Burning Balaclava* is ‘‘shite’’[128] and even shame him for writing such a play. Maela crudely says: ‘‘If I’d written that shite, I wouldn’t show my face for a month.’’[129] This statement can be read as

[125] Braden, 123.
[126] McGuinness, 334.
[127] McGuinness, 344.
[128] McGuinness, 345.
[129] McGuinness, 345.

direct criticism of stereotypical cultural representations of the conflict as it is directly shaming a writer who engages with the Troubles is such a manner, illustrating Christopher Murray's statement that humour in plays allows audiences to see past constructed stereotyped attitudes. Dido's play highlights the stereotypical representations of the Troubles by bringing this to light in a humorous manner, which strengthens the idea that it is parodying other works and invites audiences to reconsider their own perceptions of how historical narratives of the Troubles are constructed. Furthermore, the comedy of *The Burning Balaclava* creates a break from the heaviness of the main narrative, allowing audiences to relieve tension and thus becomes a moment of catharsis.

In her article on the rewriting of stage space in McGuinness' works, Clair Gleitman observes that ''McGuinness dramatizes [Bloody Sunday] by not dramatizing it at all. Instead, he considers the episode's insidious infiltration of the present.''[130] Indeed, the main play does not centre directly around the violence of the Troubles, but rather how one event continues to influence the lives of several people years later. An example that illustrates Gleitman's characterisation can be found is when comparing the endings of the main play and *The Burning Balaclava*. *Carthaginians* ends quietly, with most characters peacefully asleep and Dido silently leaving. A serene setting is created on stage where, as the stage directions in the script suggest, guitar music is playing, birds are singing and the morning sun softly shines down on the characters in the graveyard. The violent ending of Dido's play-within-a-play is in stark contradiction with McGuinness' final scene of *Carthaginians*, which suggests a sense of self-reflectiveness of the playwright on how the Troubles are represented. This contrast thus enhances the stereotype that was presented in Dido's play, where violence is one of the dominant narratives in exploring the Troubles. Instead, McGuinness shows how a subdued ending can be equally powerful by focussing on different and more personal aspects of the Troubles.

It can be concluded that, through this play-within-a-play, McGuinness invites the audience to scrutinize and challenge the stereotypes and simplifications that had dominated narratives about the conflict. This device also enriches the main play by adding a layer of self-awareness and critical engagement, encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the Troubles and its representation in theatre. Furthermore, the comedic aspects of *The Burning Balaclava* create a satirical view of other tragic and violent representations of the Troubles,

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[130] Claire Gleitman, "'Isn't It Just like Real Life?': Frank McGuinness and the (Re)Writing of Stage Space," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994): 65, https://doi.org/10.2307/25512987.

meaning that Dido's play can be regarded as a parody. All in all, the humorous characters and situations within *The Burning Balaclava* contrast with the more serious tones of the main play, which means that the play-within-a-play highlights what *Carthaginians* is not. Precisely by satirising a stereotypical tragedy with narratives surrounding star-crossed lovers and violence, *Carthaginians* is able to create a moment of comedic catharsis that makes the heavier themes of the main play more accessible.

Reception of Dido's play

When the *Cork Examiner* reviewed the Abbey production of *Carthaginians*, the title ''New McGuinness play blends fun and death''[131] already sparked intrigue, because how can a play about Bloody Sunday be combined with ''fun''? *The Burning Balaclava* is an aspect of the play that stands out in this regard, as it is discussed in many reviews from the Abbey and Druid archives. Within the reviews it is most predominantly considered within the context of *Carthaginians* being a Troubles play. For example, a review of the Abbey production in the *Irish Press* observes how ''*Carthaginians* by Frank McGuinness can be viewed as a tragic comedy – or a comic tragedy. It is a rare thing – a work of art which transmutes tragedy into comedy. The tension balancing the two traditional theatrical masks is the motive force of this drama, which has a minimalist plot and relies for its success on the wit and pathos of the dialogue.''[132] The review highlights how McGuinness steps away from the traditional genre of tragedy through his addition of comic relief. Similarly, a review from the *Sunday Independent* states how, in the main play, ''there is a hint, no more than that, of optimism at the end.''[133] This, again, indicates how *Carthaginians* moves away from the traditions of the tragedy genre. The *Sunday Independent* goes on to observe that ''on the face of it, Frank McGuinness's new play, *Carthaginians* at The Peacock seems formidably sombre. On the contrary, it is a vivid, brilliantly crafted and, at times, very funny play.''[134] These comments illustrate how McGuinness defies expectations of plays that revolve around the Troubles. Audiences expect a darker and more serious play, and though there is an underlying tone that

[131] Abbey Theatre. *Carthaginians,* 28 Sep 1988 [press cuttings]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p11.
[132] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p6.
[133] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.
[134] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.

resonates with the genre of tragedy, they are met with unexpected comic relief. Indeed, according to the *City Tribune*, ‘‘humour, even if it is savage at times, is an essential buffer in the face of such mass trauma afflicting a city’s people,’’[135] and this is exactly what *Carthaginians* achieves with the comedic aspects in the play.

The example of comic relief that is most often mentioned in the reviews is *The Burning Balaclava*. *The Word*’s review of the Druid production notes how ‘‘the [humour] is most evident in the outrageously funny ‘Burning Balaclava’ section, a sort of play-within-a-play, where the comedy is so black you don’t know whether to gasp or laugh.’’[136] Much like the reviews discussed above, this comment describes the balance between the sombre theme of the Troubles and Dido’s satirical play. Likewise, *The Guardian*’s review of the Abbey production notes how within *Carthaginians* ‘‘moments of heightened tragic poetry can be juxtaposed with sharp satire,’’[137] and names *The Burning Balaclava* as the primary example.

The reviews of both productions further suggest that the journalists are aware of how the inclusion of the play-within-the-play impacts the main play and what it suggests about the genre it supposedly belongs to. In a review of the Druid production, the *Tuam Herald* describes the *Burning Balaclava* as ‘‘Dido’s own version of the Northern ‘Troubles’’[138] and notices that it ‘‘has all the usual stock characters and situations simplistically lined up […]. This is the parody of the play McGuinness might have written.’’[139] This indicates that, while the Troubles were still ongoing, people were already aware of how the conflict was often represented within cultural contexts and that *Carthaginians* thus differs from this common narrative. A similar statement can be found in the review from the *Sunday Independent*, which mentions how Dido ‘‘‘directs’ the other characters in a ‘play-within-a-play’ as a hilarious parody of a thousand instant plays ensues. It is a contemptuously brilliant device through which McGuinness lampoons simplistic perceptions of the mechanics of bigotry.’’[140] As explained above, *The Burning Balaclava* shows what the main play is not, and this review

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[135] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 7 Feb 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[136] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* Feb 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[137] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 10 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p19.
[138] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 15 Feb 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[139] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 15 Feb 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[140] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.

further underlines how Dido's play is a parody of what McGuinness might have written if he had adhered to the stereotypical narratives. Instead, the play-within-the-play becomes a statement about the tropes that are often used to represent the Troubles on stage.

All in all, the reviews of both the Abbey and Druid production highlight *The Burning Balaclava* in McGuinness' play, since the comedy of this play-within-the-play stands out from main play as it adds an unexpected layer of comic relief and satire. Several reviews further acknowledge how Dido's play can be viewed as a direct parody of many other Troubles plays due to the use of subversive tropes and characters. *The Burning Balaclava*, then, allows audiences to reconsider their perspectives on narratives of the Troubles while simultaneously providing a moment of catharsis, making the heavier themes of the main play more accessible.

Pub quiz interludes

Another distinct aspect of comedy in *Carthaginians* are the moments where the characters ask each other pub quiz questions. In these moments, the characters in the graveyard ask general knowledge questions, either individually or in the teams they have divided themselves into. The first instance where this happens is a short moment at the beginning of the third scene, when Hark asks Paul to quiz him on his knowledge of *The Flintstones*. At this point in the play, the small quiz merely appears to be a Beckettian way of passing time in the graveyard. However, near the end of *Carthaginians*, a scene opens to a light rising on the seven characters and finding them "*in party mood*,"[141] as the stage directions suggest. The group is split into two teams, with one quizmaster, and a pub quiz unfolds that is filled with fast-paced and humorous dialogue. Within the setting of the graveyard, a light-hearted scene like this subverts the audience's expectations. There is an inherent irony in the juxtaposition of the pub quiz's trivial nature with the themes of the play, which serves to highlight the absurdity of life and the Troubles and the capacity of the characters to find a sense of normalcy and humour, even in dark circumstances.

The pub quizzes often take place at the beginning of a new scene and several times throughout the play they follow moments of solemnity for the characters. An example of this can be found near the start of the play, where the second scene ends with Maela making a

[141] McGuinness, 354.

sorrowful comment about the death of her daughter and the third scene opens with Hark singing the Flintstones theme, after which Paul questions him about the cartoon. These transitions reflect the intricate relationship between humour and trauma in coping with grief. The sudden shifts in tone mirror the unpredictable nature of mourning, where sorrow can coexist with moments of normalcy. By introducing humour and communal activities like the pub quiz immediately after an intense moment, McGuinness demonstrates how laughter serves as both a coping mechanism and a means of emotional resilience. This juxtaposition challenges traditional expectations of mourning, which often focus solely on solemnity, and instead offers a more realistic portrayal of how individuals and communities process trauma. This duality further suggests that moments of joy are not a denial of pain, but rather an essential part of enduring it, illustrating Christopher Murray's statement that humour in theatre is essential when a tragic event is portrayed.

Moreover, the abrupt changes in tone also create a sense of discomfort for the audience, as it mirrors the psychological disorientation of the characters and emphasises the complexities of grief. As a result, the audience's ability to settle into one emotional state is disrupted. The disorientation that this creates reflects the fractured experiences of those affected by the Troubles, where moments of normalcy were constantly interrupted by violence. At the same time, the cheerful scenes underscore the importance of community in navigating trauma, as shared rituals, like a pub quiz, provide moments of connection.

Compared to *The Burning Balaclava*, the use of the pub quiz scenes is not referred to as a source of comedy as often in reviews. Nevertheless, it is still acknowledged on several occasions. *The Guardian*'s review about the Abbey production, for example, discusses how the ''moments of heightened tragic poetry can be juxtaposed with […] the coarse comedy of a pub quiz.''[142] However, these interactions also showcase how the characters deal with their trauma of Bloody Sunday.

This is most prominent in the fifth scene of the play, where Maela is struggling emotionally when trying to comprehend the death of her daughter. This is something Maela has shown to have difficulty coping with from the very start of the play, as during the beginning she spreads clothes over her daughter's grave as if to dress her for the day. The fact that Maela is carrying out the mundane task of 'dressing' her daughter clearly indicates that

[142] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 10 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p19.

she has not yet come to terms with living without her daughter. While her daughter did not die as a direct result of the conflict of Bloody Sunday, the reason why Maela's grief is connected to Bloody Sunday is because her daughter passed away due to cancer on that same day. During the fifth scene, she explains how, after the doctors told her about her daughter's death, she said: "'What do you mean she's dead? There is a dead thing in there and that thing is cancer; that thing is not my daughter. My daughter's at home. I better get back to her. I don't know what I'm doing out.' The town's gone mad today, hasn't it?"[143] This illustrates the initial stage of shock and denial that Maela has entered. She cannot accept the passing of her daughter and remains in a state of denial by suggesting that she is still alive and well at home. A few moments later she recalls her walk home from the hospital:

> "At my age I should know my way around Derry. I've walked through it often enough. William Street and Shipquay Street and Ferryquay Street and the Strand and Rosville Street and Great James Street. I'm walking home through my own city. Everybody's running and everybody's crying. What's wrong? Why cry? Two dead, I hear that in William Street. I'm walking through Derry and they're saying in Shipquay Street there's five dead. I am walking to my home in my house in the street I was born in and I've forgotten where I live. I am in Ferryquay Street and I hear there's nine dead outside the Rosville flats. They opened fire and shot them dead. I'm not dead."[144]

During her walk home Maela was in a state of shock to the extent where even in her own "house," the city of Derry, she cannot remember where she lives:

> "Where are there dead in Derry? Let me look on the dead. Jesus, the dead. The innocent dead. There's thirteen dead in Derry. Where am I? What day is it? Sunday. Why is the sun bleeding? It's pouring blood. I want a priest. Give me a priest. Where am I? In Great James Street. It's full of chemists. I need a tonic for my nerves. For my head. For my heart. Pain in my heart. Breaking heart. I've lost one. I've lost them all. They had no hair. She had fire. She opened fire on herself. When I wasn't looking she caught cancer. It burned her. She was thirteen. It was Sunday. I have to go to Mass. I have to go to Mass. I have to go to Mass. Dido, take me to Mass, Dido."[145]

Due to her personal circumstances Maela is also unable to process the turmoil that is unfolding around her. She is confused about the sudden state of disorder in the city, but after some time she learns about the deaths of the protesters. The connection between the deaths as

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[143] McGuinness, 351.
[144] McGuinness, 352.
[145] McGuinness, 352.

a result of the conflict and the death of her daughter is strengthened by the number thirteen. On her walk home, Maela hears that there are ‘‘thirteen dead in Derry,’’ which corresponds with the age of her daughter. As a result of her daughter’s death on Bloody Sunday, her personal trauma is now intertwined with turbulence of the conflict on that day. This duality of loss highlights the simultaneity of personal and communal grief, as it suggests that individual sorrow cannot be separated from the broader societal context. The repetition of the number thirteen, for example, creates a haunting parallel and reminds Maela that private tragedies are often mirrored in collective trauma. This reinforces the idea that grief stemming from conflict is not limited to a single event or person, but rather radiates outward as it affects individuals in unexpected ways. The intertwining of Maela’s grief and the collective trauma of Bloody Sunday thus illustrates the complexity of mourning and signifies that there is a universality to loss and highlights how individual and collective experiences of trauma are deeply interconnected.

Moreover, Maela’s personal trauma subverts audience expectations of stereotypical Troubles narratives. Her story offers a fresh perspective on the emotional landscape of the Troubles as it challenges traditional depictions that often centre around public tragedies. The death of Maela’s daughter strays from the typical depiction and it is for this reason that it stands out in the play and strikes an emotional chord with the audience. Furthermore, Maela’s mourning as a mother introduces an emotional depth that counters the hyper-masculine and often militant narratives that are commonly associated with the Troubles. Her story centres around vulnerability rather than sacrifice for a political cause and thus destabilises audience expectations.

Near the end of the soliloquy in which Maela recalls her experience of Bloody Sunday and the death of her daughter, she starts having a mental breakdown. She turns to Dido and exclaims: ‘‘I have to go to Mass. I have to go to Mass. I have to go to Mass. Dido, take me to Mass, Dido.’’[146] These repetitions illustrate how Maela feels an urge to find comfort in what is known to her, namely her religion, to leave the state of distress that she is in. The first thing that Dido says to her in response is: ‘‘Who wrote *The Firebird*, Maela?’’[147] After a moment of silence, he strongly insists Maela to answer the question and, once she does, Dido immediately asks several follow-up questions, much like a pub quiz. The reasoning for Dido to ask Maela these questions is to take her out of her mental torment and help her come back

[146] McGuinness, 352.
[147] McGuinness, 352.

into a more rational mindset. The questions require Maela to think about factual information that is not connected to strong emotions, which allows her (for the moment) to replace her sorrow with light-hearted facts. Anne F. Kelly-O'Reilly comments on this scene and discerns that "as Dido questions Maela, like a quiz-master, there is a sense of an old order returning."[148] Indeed, after several questions Maela is able to calm down and come back to reality. Dido's ability to aid Maela in overcoming her emotional breakdown with the pub quiz questions highlights the therapeutic potential of communal bonds. This moment demonstrates how human connection through shared activities can provide a sense of relief and grounding, which underscores the importance of everyday acts of care when navigating through trauma.

It can be concluded that the humour in *Carthaginians* helps to mediate the trauma of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally, as it works almost therapeutically for both the characters on stage and the audience by providing moments of catharsis. Dido's play *The Burning Balaclava* is a prominent example of this, as it critiques stereotypical cultural representations of the Troubles, since it parodies common tropes such as the Romeo-and-Juliet motif and the Troubles staged as a tragedy. This play-within-the-play is also often referred to in the reviews of both the Abbey and Druid production as it stands out due to the comedy that it adds, which contrasts with the main play. In addition to Dido's play, the scenes that involve pub quizzes also provide comic relief for the audience, as they deliver a juxtaposition between the light-hearted moments during the quiz and the tragedy of Bloody Sunday. Furthermore, the pub quiz exchange between Maela and Dido illustrates how it is used as a coping mechanism for Maela's personal trauma, which is tied to the public trauma of Bloody Sunday. All in all, *Carthaginians* provides a balance between tragedy and humour, as Sarah Pia Anderson also observes: "[*Carthaginians*] is a very funny, very moving play. It would be a mistake to do the play entirely naturalistically, and a mistake to do it as though it was a poetic drama. Somewhere in the middle it sits."[149]

[148] Kelly-O'Reilly, 103.
[149] Braden, 124.

Chapter 5: Locating trauma

In an interview with the *Irish Times* in 1992, Frank McGuinness, who was directing Druid's run of *Carthaginians* at the time, announced that he had a fervent hope to bring the play to Derry, where he felt it belongs: "It's never been seen there. I'll be nervous, but I want to hear those speeches said, those names of the dead proclaimed in that town."[150] Indeed, after its initial run in Galway, Druid performed *Carthaginians* for one week at the Rialto Entertainment Centre in Derry. Since this was the first time that it was performed in the city that *Carthaginians* is set in, it created an interesting dynamic between the production and its audience due to the impact of Bloody Sunday on the Derry community, which will be scrutinised in this chapter. Next to exploring the impact of various performance locations of the Abbey and Druid productions, this chapter will also provide an analysis of the setting of the play itself, as well as scrutinising and comparing the stage design of the two productions. It will be argued that the setting of the graveyard as well as the characters' waiting for the dead to rise serves as a metaphor for Northern Ireland's Troubles, reflecting the unresolved nature of the conflict and the ongoing process of reconciliation. Furthermore, the comparison between the Abbey and Druid stage designs will illustrate how the themes of loss and mourning were projected in two different ways. The Abbey's dark and bleak stage encompasses the prominent themes of loss and mourning, while Druid's colourful design starkly contrasts with these themes, symbolising the complexities of grief. Lastly, the reception of the Druid production in Derry will be explored to illustrate how, after strong initial hesitation, the play was received positively by the Derry community.

The graveyard

Carthaginians is set an unspecified amount of time after Bloody Sunday in a Derry graveyard, which is a communal site of death and mourning. Particularly in the context of Bloody Sunday, the graveyard embodies a collective grief that extends beyond the characters on stage and includes all those who were affected by the conflict. The fact that there is no specifically indicated time or year in which *Carthaginians* is set enhances this idea, since it leaves room for multiple interpretations and highlights the ongoing nature of the social and political issues stemming from the Troubles, as well as a lack of closure for those affected by Bloody Sunday.

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[150] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 29 Jan 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.

This allows the play to resonate with audiences regardless of when they are viewing it. Furthermore, this lack of temporal specificity can be seen as a critique of the way historical narratives are often given clear endpoints. The indefinite time setting of the play thus underscores that the impact of events like Bloody Sunday extends far beyond the immediate aftermath, affecting individuals and communities indefinitely. This lack of a specific timeframe situates the play as a timeless exploration of trauma and memory, and thus challenges audiences to confront the enduring relevance of the Troubles. By resisting a fixed timeframe, McGuinness also emphasises the cyclical nature of grief and the difficulty of moving forward when wounds remain unhealed.

This is also reflected by the location of the graveyard in which the narrative unfolds. In a chapter on ghosts in Irish culture, Emilie Pine discusses the symbolism of ghosts in Irish remembrance culture and what they represent. Ghosts have been a recurrent feature of Irish drama for decades and can be connected to the idea that the past is haunting the present. Ghosts represented on stage, then, illustrate the ability of the theatre to provide a space where the past and the present co-exist.[151] Pine further articulates how ghosts are a disturbing presence because they force us to confront and challenge our past, stating that ‘‘while it is, of course, vital that Irish culture is founded on an intricate and intimate sense of the past, the disturbing presence of ghosts in Irish culture implies that the constant re-enaction of memories and traumas of the past in the present is disabling rather than enabling.’’[152] Instead, Pine suggests that issues of the past should be properly addressed in order to move on from them. Responsibly recognising trauma can aid in bringing justice to those who are afflicted by it. *Carthaginians* can be considered an example of Pine’s gesture towards the healing of trauma. By not having the ghosts of the dead appear, McGuinness places the responsibility of healing on the living characters, which generates a similar message to what Pine argues: continuing to bringing the past to life will only work contradictory when aiming to move on from the past. Instead, there should be a focus on navigating trauma through communal healing without relying on otherworldly solutions.

Pine ends her chapter with the statement that ‘‘we must learn to carry the ghosts within us, yet not be ghostly ourselves,’’[153] thereby transcending the notion of physical ghosts on stage in Irish theatre and observes how remembrance culture plays a central role in the

[151] Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture*, 154.
[152] Pine, 170.
[153] Pine, 170.

resolution of past traumas. Again, this is something that McGuinness' play highlights, which becomes especially evident through an interview with Maelíosa Stafford, who was the artistic director of the Druid production, published in the *Galway Advertiser*. He stated that the company was ''not seeking controversy for its own sake by bringing this play, but we are prepared for a lot of discussion.''[154] He later reiterated that Druid was hoping the play would provide a forum for people to discuss the topics that the show highlights and that they were ''willing to do as many interviews as possible.''[155] Maelíosa further highlighted the intentions of the playwright and director by saying that ''[Frank McGuinness] feels it is time people stopped mourning and grieving. It is time for people to remember and honour those who were killed.''[156] Although, as explored in previous chapters, the play sparked controversy, this interview illustrates how McGuinness aimed to open up the conversation around Bloody Sunday with the intention to commemorate the victims and to step away from narratives that fetishise mourning as a way to process trauma.

This is especially relevant in light of Pine's argument which states that ''ghosts are unwanted haunting presences,''[157] for the opposite appears to be true in *Carthaginians*. The seven characters are purposefully waiting in the graveyard with the anticipation of seeing spectres appear on this earth, meaning that the ghosts are desired rather than unwanted. This shift in the narrative of what is commonly expected with regard to ghosts reveals a tension between two modes of memory and, more specifically, trauma. Pine emphasises a certain discomfort and intrusiveness of unresolved trauma through the physical presence of ghosts, as they symbolise the burden of painful memories that cannot be forgotten. McGuinness, on the other hand, suggests that grief can also create an absence that results in a strong aching for what is lost. In this instance, the dead are desired, though they remain unreachable. The characters' longing in *Carthaginians*, then, reflects a form of mourning that seeks solace in connecting with the victims of Bloody Sunday, even if it means confronting the pain of the past. Nevertheless, as discussed above, McGuinness aimed to have audiences remember and honour those who were killed without getting enfolded in feelings of grief. The fact that the ghosts never actually appear, then, paradoxically confirms Pine's argument, as it suggests that

[154] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 5 Mar 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[155] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 5 Mar 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[156] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 5 Mar 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[157] Pine, 154.

their return to the world of the living is not the answer. This absence forces the characters to reckon with their grief internally, rather than relying on the dead to bring closure. This emphasises that healing must come from within the living, rather than relying on an intervention of the past.

In addition to reflecting on physical spirits in the theatre, Pine also discusses symbolic ghosts of the past that haunt the present, arguing that these may be considered a disturbing force as they can force someone to confront their past; one which would have rather been left behind.[158] Jessica Auchter develops a similar argument, stating that ‘‘ghosts represent a kind of visible invisibility,’’[159] which suggests they can represent a person’s haunted past. Much like Pine, instead of focussing only on personal pasts, Auchter extends this analysis to a larger national context, observing that ‘‘the spectre also represents that which is often invisible to us about how the state functions: the mechanisms of statecraft, of ordering and limiting and of identity construction.’’[160] Again, *Carthaginians* clearly illustrates this larger context in which ghosts can be considered. Auchter’s observation about ghosts representing invisible state mechanisms can be related to the fact that the dead never rise within the play. This absence underscores the way that the state obscures its role in the violence and trauma experienced by its citizens. The lack of visible ghosts, then, symbolises how the state’s complicity in Bloody Sunday and the Troubles as a whole remains concealed, which leaves the living with unanswered questions and unresolved grief. Furthermore, it can be argued that the lack of physical spectres reflects the failure of the state to adequately address the collective trauma it has caused. The characters’ waiting for the dead to rise thus highlights their desire for acknowledgment and accountability, which the state has failed to provide.

Stage design of the Abbey and Druid productions

Since *Carthaginians* features only the single location of the graveyard, the Abbey and Druid productions both consisted of a static set design that did not change during the performances. A review in *The Guardian* described the dark and bleak set of the original Abbey production as follows: ‘‘It’s set, uncomfortably, in a Derry cemetery. Wendy Shea’s design […] buries the

[158] Pine, 170.
[159] Jessica Auchter, ‘‘Ghosts,’’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism*, eds. Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 119.
[160] Auchter, ‘‘Ghosts,’’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism*, 119.

audience in a stratified auditorium of the Peacock Theatre with the six characters raised on a raked horizon, waiting for their resurrection of the dead.''[161] Indeed, Shea's design displays a dark and eerie stage that is almost completely barren. Next to the clothes that Maela has brought for her daughter, there are no other props or any décor present. *The Evening Herald* commented on this design by expressing how ''no play by Samuel Beckett could have a bleaker beginning,'' due to the ''crouched figures staring into the distance'' on the ''tilted, bare stage.''[162] The empty stage visually represents the emptiness left behind by those who have died and thus underscores the void in the characters' lives and the desolation they feel. The barrenness of the stage can therefore be seen as a physical representation of the characters' mental states that are characterised by a sense of emptiness and destruction due to the losses and traumas they have suffered.

What further stands out in Shea's design is the sloping stage, which is tilted with an angle towards the audience and serves to symbolise the characters' psychological disorientation and emotional imbalance caused by the trauma of Bloody Sunday. A review from the *Financial Times* also discusses how the design ''isolates the not so magnificent seven on a stark, sloping stage […] that underlines the timeless, Beckettian void of this reminiscent half-life.''[163] Indeed, the sloping stage reflects the emotional imbalance of the characters due to the inner turmoil, creating the sense of a world turned upside down as a result of the violence and loss caused by the Troubles. This disorientation, emphasised by the stage's physical tilt, mirrors how trauma can distort one's sense of reality. Additionally, the stark minimalism of the stage intensifies the focus on the characters' emotional struggles, placing their grief and fractured identities at the forefront of the audience's experience. The review indicating that the bare sloping stage underlines ''this reminiscent half-life,'' then, suggests how audiences at the time interpreted the Abbey stage design as a strong metaphor for how the Troubles have impacted their lives.

The stage design of the Druid production differed greatly from the Abbey production. Instead of a barren and black stage, Druid's set constructor Alan Clarke created a colourful design on a smaller stage. The entire background, as well as the floor, had a bold paint-stroke motif and extra wooden panels located around the edges of the stage that resemble

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[161] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 10 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p19.
[162] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p5.
[163] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 8 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p17.

gravestones. The panels were painted in the same paint-stroke motif and with the same colours as the background, which means that they merge into one another. The stage of the Druid production, then, is overall more colourful and lively than the Abbey design. Contrasting sharply with the dark and eerie design of the Abbey production, the Druid production seems to be at odds with the themes of loss, mourning and trauma that are prominent in the play. However, the colourful stage symbolises how the emotions that the characters experience are more complex: alongside trauma and mourning, there remains a space for hope and resilience. In this sense, it reflects the Derry community's spirit, as it illustrates how amidst the conflict of the Troubles there is still vibrance and creativity that continue to thrive.

Performance locations

In addition to analysing the setting of the play and the stage design of the two productions, several venues where the Abbey and Druid productions were performed should also be scrutinised, since these reveal more about how the play was received at a time when the Troubles were still ongoing. The play's initial run took place at the Peacock stage of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which is the National Theatre of Ireland. This was simultaneously the first ever production of the play. Premiering in 1988 at a location that reaches a wide audience, while the conflict of the Troubles was still continuing, is certainly a bold statement. Being the National Theatre of Ireland, the Abbey Theatre has the historical function of promoting Irish voices in a cultural framework. As Susan Bennett observes in an article on the Abbey Theatre, the Abbey has a ''national signification that attaches to its very presence, literally and symbolically, in the nation's capital city'' as it ''occupies a very particular place in the enactment […] of Ireland's political independence as well as in a dynamic cultural expression of national identity.''[164] The fact that *Carthaginians* had its official premiere in the National Theatre of Ireland, then, highlights the cultural and political relevance of the play as it instantly gave McGuinness' play an important national platform.

Although the Abbey Theatre provided a national stage for the play, it should also be acknowledged that Dublin was the city that *Carthaginians* premiered in, as the play's content is centred around the Troubles in Northern Ireland. A review from the *Irish Independent*

[164] Susan Bennett, "Peforming Ireland: Tourism and the Abbey Theatre," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25515531.

referred to the play being performed in Dublin as a ‘‘bid to bridge the North-South divide.’’[165] Indeed, from a political standpoint, having *Carthaginians* premiere in Dublin highlights the relevance of the Troubles to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and thus promotes a shared understanding by facilitating dialogues on this matter and therefore fostering a sense of collective empathy and responsibility.

The article in the *Irish Independent* continued by stating that ‘‘The Peacock Theatre was the venue last night for a unique effort to bridge the North-South divide – through the medium of the arts.’’[166] This becomes especially apparent when considering the opening night of the Abbey production in Dublin. According to the article, the premiere was opened by Dr. A. J. F. O’Reilly, the patron of the Irish Association for Cultural, Economic and Social Relations. This organisation was founded in 1938 to promote better understanding between the north and south. *Carthaginians* was part of their programme ‘A Celebration of Ulster,’ and a page in the production’s programme booklet is therefore dedicated to this project. It explains how, since attention is normally and perhaps inevitably drawn only to the political conflict and its destructive consequences, the association aimed to redress that imbalance in the coverage of Northern affairs with a presentation of creative achievements in literature, music, theatre, crafts, painting and sculpture: ‘‘Through our programme ‘A Celebration of Ulster’ we hope to remind a southern audience that the North continues to play a vital and distinctive role in Irish culture rather than being seen simply as a remote battlefield.’’[167]

Although the association had the intention of fostering mutual understanding between the north and south through McGuinness’ play, not all critics viewed the attempt as successful. A review from *The Evening Herald* notes how *Carthaginians* is ‘‘a strange, complex, haunting, often quite an impenetrable play for a southerner to fathom.’’[168] Indeed, a Dublin audience might not share the same emotional connection to Bloody Sunday, which could impact their engagement with the narrative due to the geographical disconnect. Furthermore, there may be sensitivities around how stories of the Troubles are presented and received in the South, given the complex political relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of

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[165] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p5.
[166] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p5.
[167] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* [programme], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p4.
[168] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 27 Sep 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p3.

Ireland. Nevertheless, as the 'A Celebration of Ulster' project aspired to achieve, *Carthaginians* did provide a space where stories of Bloody Sunday could be shared and experienced. In contrast to what the review in *The Evening Herald* observed, the *Sunday Independent* argues that ''although this is very much a play of Derry, its reference points are universal and, even if we haven't witnessed the gradual destruction of Derry at first hand, we each have our own 'Carthage'.''[169] This, then, illustrates how even though southern audiences might not directly relate to the trauma that is presented on stage, the themes are universal and can thus be understood and empathised with by anyone.

In a later interview with the *Irish Times*, Frank McGuinness told the newspaper that ''there was a report in the local Derry paper the time the play was on in Dublin, saying that I was mocking Bloody Sunday and accusing me of contempt, which I don't have. I just couldn't. It was much too decisive in the shaping of my life.''[170] This means that before the play was ever performed in Derry, the local community might have already had presumptions about *Carthaginians* and how the play would impact them as an audience. Indeed, as discussed in the third chapter, when, four years later, Druid planned a one-week run of *Carthaginians* in Derry, members of the Derry City Council travelled to Galway to watch the Druid production and declared the play to be dishonouring the memory of Bloody Sunday and subsequently called a special council meeting to consider cancelling the Derry event. This resulted in noticeable negative expectations of the play, as the local Derry magazine *City Lights* reported on the opening night of McGuinness' play in Derry: ''The Druid Theatre Company's production of *Carthaginians* was anticipated with much trepidation. There was most noticeably talk of insensitivity of the play's treatment of the families of the victims of Bloody Sunday. Response to Frank McGuinness' play was expected to be hostile. One person, having seen the earlier production in Dublin claimed that if it were shown in Derry ''there would be riots in the city!''[171] Although expectations of controversy were high, the report on the opening night observed how ''the expected hostility never came.''[172] Instead, *City Lights* praised the play and observed that ''*Carthaginians* provided what all good plays should

[169] Abbey Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 2 Oct 1988 [press cuttings], Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at University of Galway, Galway, 2943_PC_0001, p12.
[170] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 29 Jan 1992 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[171] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[172] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.

provide – an insight which raises questions about society.''[173] Indeed, this report also illustrates how the play encouraged audiences to question the impact of Bloody Sunday: ''So what of our ''new town''? Can the past be left to itself? Should we plan to wake up tomorrow free from Bloody Sunday?''[174]

The *City Lights* report continues reflecting on how the past has influenced the present, with a specific focus on the response of the government to Bloody Sunday. The author of the piece states that ''John Major certainly believes in the past. He denies today what that bastard Widgery denied in 1972. The truth.''[175] This remark illustrates Auchter's theory on ghosts in Irish theatre. As previously stated, Auchter argues that in a cultural context ghosts represent what is often invisible to citizens about the functioning of the state, such as the ordering of identity construction. This was also apparent in the response of the British government to Bloody Sunday, as their initial response to the conflict, as presented in the Widgery Report, is widely regarded as an attempt to diminish the impact of Bloody Sunday. The Widgery Report exonerated the soldiers and put the blame on the victims by stating that they were the first to open fire on the soldiers, which fuelled the anger of the nationalist community. As observed by Sarah Ganderup, due to the sectarian condition of Northern Ireland, ''memory became yet another aspect of life that was politicized and divisive.''[176] When news of the Bloody Sunday killings emerged, both reporters and those directly involved began sharing their conflicting recollections of the event. This divergence gave rise to two primary groups of memories: one aligned with the army's narrative, such as the Widgery Report, which claimed the deceased were IRA gunmen and nail bombers, and the other grounded in the accounts of Catholic civilians, who asserted that those killed were innocent victims of unprovoked military violence.[177] As discussed above, the setting of the graveyard and the lack of physical ghosts that the characters are waiting for symbolises a desire for acknowledgment and accountability which the state had failed to give. The fact that the report of the opening night highlights a strong resentment against Major and Widgery thus underscores Auchter's observation that

[173] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[174] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[175] Druid Theatre, *Carthaginians,* 28 Mar 1988 [press cuttings], Druid Theatre Archive at University of Galway, Galway.
[176] Sarah Ganderup, ''How White Was the Wash?: Bloody Sunday, 1972, and Memory in the Creation of the Widgery Report,'' *Voces Novae* 2, no. 1 (2010): 30.
[177] Ganderup, ''How White Was the Wash?: Bloody Sunday, 1972, and Memory in the Creation of the Widgery Report,'' 32.

ghosts (or a lack thereof) represent the invisibility of state mechanisms and the unresolved grief that stems from a hidden truth.

All in all, this chapter has illustrated how the graveyard serves as a symbol of both personal and collective mourning, as it offers a space that is both physical and metaphorical where memory and loss intersect. By situating the characters in this liminal location, McGuinness underscores the tensions between remembrance and the impossibility of resolution. Furthermore, the physical absence of the dead rising, despite the characters' anticipation, reflects the enduring invisibility of trauma within state narratives. The symbolic weight of the graveyard is heightened through the contrasting stage designs of the Abbey and Druid productions, as they each offer distinct interpretations of grief and memory. The comparison revealed how the bleakness of the barren and dark Abbey design encompasses the prominent themes of loss and mourning. The colourful Druid design, on the other hand, starkly contrasts with these themes, which symbolises the complexities of grief. The national implications of this grief are further underscored by the play's premiere at the Abbey Theatre, which positioned *Carthaginians* within a broader Irish discourse. By extending the significance of Bloody Sunday beyond Derry, the premiere connected localised trauma to a shared national history, suggesting the need for collective reflection on Ireland's past. Meanwhile, Druid brought the play back to Derry, which, after initially generating mixed reactions, was received positively by the local community. Ultimately, the chapter has illustrated how McGuinness redefines the act of mourning, inviting audiences to confront the layered intricacies of the trauma of Bloody Sunday through the settings, locations and designs of the play.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the introduction to *Frank McGuinness: Stages of Mutability*, Helen Lojek states that ‘‘a playwright who can make us laugh while searing our souls is always worth another look,’’[178] which perfectly encapsulates Frank McGuinness’s ability to blend humour with emotional depth in his works. *Carthaginians* is a prime example of this strategy, and the newly digitised Abbey and Druid archives at the James Hardiman Library in Galway allow for a multifaceted analysis of the earliest two productions of this play. It is for this reason that this thesis focussed on scrutinising how contested cultural memories of Bloody Sunday are asserted and explored in the Abbey and Druid productions of Frank McGuinness’ *Carthaginians* (1988/1992), with the aim to contribute to existing debates around the Troubles in Northern Irish and Irish cultural memory, as well as their impact on Irish theatre. To do so, this thesis has embraced the possibilities of new types of archival research within theatre studies by employing a wide range of materials from the newly available digitised Abbey and Druid archives. This thesis has thus shed light on how the two productions interpreted *Carthaginians* in distinct ways and how they reflect different approaches to representing trauma, the memory of Bloody Sunday and contested identities on stage. By comparing these productions, as well as their reception, it became clear how performance choices – such as staging and tone – shape the way an audience engages with the play’s themes, which offers new insights into the cultural and historical significance of *Carthaginians*.

The first analytical chapter, ‘‘Embodying Trauma’’ focussed on queer narratives in *Carthaginians* and argued that Dido’s interactions with Hark illustrate how his queerness places him in a vulnerable space within society, which suggests he has to carry both the trauma of the Troubles, as well as the societal repression of his sexuality. Nevertheless, his use of camp and humour can be seen as a form of resistance to censorship of the queer community, which is an aspect McGuinness stated is important to him. This is made especially evident through the archival materials of the Druid production that McGuinness himself directed, since Dido was performed with a more noticeably camp exuberance, and a homosexual kiss was included between Dido and Hark. Furthermore, the reception of the queer narrative in *Carthaginians* has shown that though there was initial apprehension,

[178] Helen Lojek, ‘‘Introduction,’’ in *The Theatre of Frank McGuinness: Stages of Mutability*, ed. Helen Lojek (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2002), vii-viii.

viewers appreciated Dido's vulnerability and humour, indicating that audiences welcomed this new perspective on Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally.

The chapter ''Mediating Trauma'' concluded that the humour in *Carthaginians* helps to mediate the trauma of Bloody Sunday, as it works almost therapeutically for both the characters on stage and the audience by providing moments of catharsis. Dido's play *The Burning Balaclava* is a prominent example of this, as it critiques stereotypical cultural representations of the Troubles, since it parodies common tropes such as the Romeo-and-Juliet motif and the Troubles staged as a tragedy. This play-within-the-play is also often referred to in the reviews of both the Abbey and Druid production, as it stands out due to the comedy that it adds, which contrasts with *Carthaginians*' dark subject matter . In addition to Dido's play, the scenes that involve pub quizzes also provide comic relief for the audience, as they create a juxtaposition between the light-hearted moments during the quiz and the tragedy of Bloody Sunday. Furthermore, the pub quiz exchange between Maela and Dido illustrates how it is used as a coping mechanism for Maela's personal trauma, even as her emotions remain tied to the public trauma of Bloody Sunday.

The final chapter, ''Locating Trauma,'' has illustrated how the graveyard serves as a symbol of both personal and collective mourning, as it offers a space that is both physical and metaphorical where memory and loss intersect. By situating the characters in this liminal location, McGuinness underscores the tensions between remembrance and the impossibility of resolution. The chapter also argued that the absence of the dead rising, despite the characters' anticipation, reflects the enduring invisibility of trauma within state narratives. It further compared the Abbey and Druid stage designs, observing how the bleakness of the Abbey design encompasses the prominent topics of loss and mourning. The colourful Druid design, on the other hand, starkly contrasts with these themes, which symbolises the complexities of grief. The contrasting stagings, then, underscore how McGuinness' work has interpretive flexibility, as they offer distinct perspectives on how trauma is embodied and performed. It has further been argued that the play's premiere at the Abbey Theatre situated *Carthaginians* within a broader national discourse and thus reframed the significance of Bloody Sunday beyond the borders of Derry to Ireland as a whole. Lastly, the chapter has explored the reception to the Druid production in Derry, which, after initially generating mixed reactions, was received positively by the Derry community.

One of the main reasons that the play's premise initially received a mixed response was due to the inclusion of the queer character Dido, who steps outside of the conventional

historical narratives of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally. Such resistance to Dido's character reflects the deeply ingrained expectations about how narratives surrounding Bloody Sunday and the Troubles should be represented. Nevertheless, as Fintan Walsh argues, queer performance in Irish theatre ''has been an important vehicle for staging those experiences and concerns which might seem particular to LGBTQ+ people,''[179] but actually also serves to explore the intricate connections between gender, sexuality and national identity.[180] Indeed, as illustrated in this thesis, Dido is the voice of a community that is often silenced and therefore redefines the parameters of what narratives are considered valid in relation to the Troubles. This process from rejection to acceptance of Dido, then, signifies a cultural shift, as it suggests that communities can expand their understanding of trauma to include multiple layers of identity through exposure to diverse perspectives. As Patrick Lonergan argues, Frank McGuinness is ''the most important figure''[181] in the developments regarding queer narratives in theatre, and, ultimately, this thesis reaffirms Lonergan's statement. *Carthaginians*, as a vital work in Irish theatre, is a play that confronts various aspects of trauma while creating a space for marginalised queer voices to challenge and reshape historical narratives and cultural memories.

The ability to alter cultural memory through the play reveals how the memory of Bloody Sunday is not fixed, but can evolve to reflect the needs, voices and identities of the generations that follow, indicating the power that performing traumatic memory can have. Or, in the words of Emilie Pine, ''theatrical witnessing of painful pasts represents an opportunity to perform power''[182] which ''challenges the dominance of particular proprietors of social capital in the [memory] market.''[183] This is precisely what *Carthaginians* demonstrates, as the play shifts the focus from the larger political narratives that are often associated with Bloody Sunday to the more personal and emotional toll that it had on individuals and communities. By highlighting characters like Maela, whose grief is tied to both personal loss and the collective tragedy of the Troubles, the play underscores the deep, human impact of the event. This humanisation of Bloody Sunday in a theatrical space makes the event more than a historical or political marker; it becomes a shared experience of resilience that can resonate with audiences on a personal level. Similarly, McIvor and Walsh observe that McGuinness is a prominent example of a playwright who focussed on ''recreating the past in order to find a

[179] Walsh, 3.
[180] Walsh, 3.
[181] Lonergan, *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950*, 164.
[182] Pine, *The Memory Marketplace*, 219.
[183] Pine, 219.

means of better understanding the troubled issues of the contemporary period.''[184] Again, this thesis has illustrated how, indeed, through reimagining the past, McGuinness creates a space for reflection that enables audiences to consider tensions in the recollection of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles more generally that continue to shape their contemporary cultural and political landscape.

Overall, then, *Carthaginians* occupies a compelling position within the genre of Troubles theatre, as it both engages with and challenges its conventions. The play redefines the act of mourning as a communal and contradictory process. Indeed, the absence of the dead rising despite the characters' anticipation reflects the difficulty of achieving closure, which Sarah Pia Anderson observes as being the primary purpose of the play: ''If you are waiting for the poltergeist to appear or expecting it to be like a murder mystery, then it's just not going to happen. […] Frank is not prepared to solve the mystery. […] What is the point of putting something in front of people of this kind of complexity, if you have an easy answer for them?''[185] By leaving audiences with unmet expectations, McGuinness invites them to actively engage with the question of how collective traumas are experienced and thus ensures that his play provokes ongoing reflection on the societal legacies of the Troubles.

Although the powerful performances of *Carthaginians* that were analysed in this thesis were produced by the Abbey and Druid over three decades ago, recently digitised archives are once again making them accessible. This means that, as Barry Houlihan observes, ''we, as witnesses of the digital archive as well as of physical archive, can now move past just a reading of the archive to also hearing it, creating a sensory engagement and questioning of the memory of performance itself – to release the potential memory within its documented forms.''[186] Indeed, as illustrated by the comparative analysis between the Abbey and Druid productions, archival materials allow scholars to compare different productions of the same play, which highlights the interpretative choices made by directors, actors, and designers, and reveals how these choices influence the play's themes and audience impact. Especially reviews and audience feedback in the archives document how a performance was received at the time. This is particularly valuable for understanding the socio-political impact of plays such as *Carthaginians*, and how their themes resonated with or provoked specific communities, such as in Derry or Dublin. Furthermore, as discussed above, archives bring

[184] McIvor and Walsh, 68.
[185] Braden, ''Directing McGuinness Plays: Sarah Pia Anderson in conversation with Sharon Branden,'' 124.
[186] Houlihan, 15.

attention to marginalised perspectives in history, such as the representation of queer identities or individual trauma narratives, which may have been overlooked in mainstream discourse and thus allow for a re-examination of these narratives through a contemporary lens.

This re-examination of performances of the past thus highlights how memory is fluid rather than fixed. Barry Houlihan argues that ‘‘the theatre archive of today is one which has been repositioned from an act of memory, trapped in perpetual stasis, into a performative, collaborative and active unit that creates new memory as much as it preserves the old.’’[187] This highlights the idea that varying productions of a play can be regarded as new interpretations of the source material, meaning that plays should not be considered in absolute terms. The use of performance archives in this thesis, then, does not only serve to enrich thematic analyses, but also underscores the evolving role of archival research in theatre studies as a field. Overall, by examining archival materials such as reviews and recordings, this thesis has demonstrated how new digital theatre archives enable innovative, multifaceted analyses, allowing us to reinterpret performances that might otherwise have been lost to time.

[187] Houlihan, 26.

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