

The City's Hostile Bodies: Coriolanus' Rome and Carson's Belfast

Abstract

When change is articulated in literary cities as diverse as *Coriolanus*' (1608) early republican Rome and Ciaran Carson's Troubles Belfast in *Belfast Confetti* (1989), bodies become the agents of that change. These bodies-at-war induce *stasis*: a civil war in which the domestic is politicised and the political domesticated. To resolve the violence at the heart of these evolving polities, these hostile bodies claim sovereignty over the city – whether Shakespeare's plebeians or Coriolanus; Carson's unionists or nationalists. Both texts employ the paradoxical logic of hospitality to resolve the antagonisms, realising the divided, yet fully-functioning cities in which hosts hospitably contest with other hosts, and in which bodies underpin the political (r)evolutions.

Keywords

William Shakespeare; *Coriolanus*; Ciaran Carson; *Belfast Confetti*; body/bodies; Rome; Belfast; Troubles; *stasis*; hospitality

Belfast is Rome with more hills[.]

— Robert McLiam Wilson, *Eureka Street*

Take back the city for yourself tonight,

Or I'll take back the city for me.

— Snow Patrol, *Take Back the City*

The body and body politics are central to the radically different texts of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (1608) and of contemporary Belfast poet Ciaran Carson. Both take the body as agent of narrative and site of victimhood as it is assailed by discourses of power, literal and symbolic. In *Coriolanus*, the eponymous hero's body grants him favour in Rome, but is also the private object which he seeks to hide from the plebeians who can grant him his consulship. Ultimately, his unwillingness to publicise his body is his downfall as he is exiled from the city. In Carson's *Belfast Confetti* (1989), the body is implicated everywhere in the city as an object of surveillance, means of travel across and around the city, and as a mode of identification, by either sectarian friend or enemy. In and through these narratives of the body, I show how the citizen's body in any contested city – early republican Rome (and a version of early modern London) or 'Troubles' Belfast – is central to that city's emergence. By bringing the texts and their contextual moments together – early Jacobean England¹ and New Elizabethan Northern Ireland – I reflect on the history of the body in relation to social change across the centuries. I conclude that the body that registers the political dissent immanent to the city in which it resides offers citizens a mode of passage between home and

¹ For a reading of *Coriolanus* in relation to the Jacobean body politic and the mooted formation of the UK, see Alex Garganigo, 'Coriolanus, the Union Controversy, and Access to the Royal Person', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42 (2002), 335-59
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556118>>.

public space, between the politicised *oikos* and the domesticated *polis*. Hostile bodies found the modern city.

Moreover, at the heart of both texts is irreparable violence and, on the surface, an ultimate inhospitality. And yet, through the series of unwelcome bodies that are displayed and catalogued, the paradoxical practice of hospitality is revealed as a phenomenon that both accommodates and encourages civil war, *stasis*, so that its citizens can co-exist harmoniously in acknowledged disharmony. By bringing *Coriolanus* to bear on *Belfast Confetti*, and vice versa, it becomes clear how civil war repeatedly heralds modernity in the city, be it the Jacobean representation of the early Roman republic, or the recent Troubles in Belfast.

The body politic is as central to *Coriolanus* as it is to the Belfast polity. In the former, the play begins with a riot over bread and with citizens taking arms in the street, before a lecture on the parable of the belly by the patrician Menenius Agrippa. As the citizens set their ire on Caius Martius, later Coriolanus, their impetus is simple: ‘the plebeians [...] demand not only an adequate distribution of corn, but also some share of respect as worthy components of the city’.² As the narrative progresses, ‘everywhere we encounter legs, arms, tongues, scabs, scratches, wounds, mouths, teeth, voices, bellies, and toes’. This leads Zvi Jagendorf to conclude that politicised and fragmented bodies are omnipresent, first of all, because of war: ‘the body language of battle is the battle of body counts, the description of wounds, and the naming of limbs’.³ Similarly, Allen Feldman has written that ‘In Northern Ireland the body is not only the primary political instrument through which social transformation is effected but is also the primary site for visualizing the collective passage

² Tetsuya Motohashi, ‘Body Politic and Political Body in *Coriolanus*’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 30 (1994), 97-112 (p. 99) <doi: 10.1093/fmls/XXX.2.97>.

³ Zvi Jagendorf, ‘Coriolanus: Body Politic and Private Parts’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41 (1990), 455-69 (p. 458) <doi: 10.2307/2870776>.

into historical alterity'.⁴ This is particularly important in the North of Ireland during the Troubles (1969-1998, formally), in which bodies were not only targets for violence, nor only vessels for political dissent through the Hunger Strikes, but also markers of difference: Catholic versus Protestant and nationalist versus unionist. As Eamonn Hughes theorises, writers from the North have registered this contentious body politic in part by creating Belfast as a city-space that can be 'a potential Utopian space [... but] always shadowed by an infernal counterpart'. Moreover, while 'Belfast as "Troubles" city is simply an exaggeration of itself [... a]t the heart of the city is then the mystery of the self'.⁵ I argue that this mysterious 'self' is constructed in and through the individual body, reflecting the mysterious body politic at work in a city that is at war with itself.

These ideas are borne out in Troubles literature other than Carson's. In Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street* (1996), the extended poetic section describing Belfast, wherein the city is 'celebrated and recreated with such deeply compressed intensity and loving lyricism' like 'Nowhere else in Irish literature',⁶ is followed by the enforced anatomisation of Rosemary's body when she is victim to a terrorist bomb attack:

Her left arm was torn off by sheeted glass and most of her face and head destroyed by the twisted mass of a metal tray. [... S]ome heavy glass jars impacted on her chest and stomach, pulverising her major organs. Indeed, one substantial chunk of glass whipped through her midriff taking her inner stuff half-way through the large hole in her back.⁷

This alternation between poetry and violence visited on the body suggests, at best, an

⁴ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 9.

⁵ Eamonn Hughes, "'Towns of Shadows': Representations of Belfast in Recent Fiction", *Religion & Literature*, 28 (1996), 141-60 (pp. 141-60, 153, 147).

⁶ Laura Pelaschiar, 'The Evolving Role of the City in Northern Irish Fiction', *Irish University Review*, 30 (2000), 117-30 (p. 129).

⁷ Robert McLiam Wilson, *Eureka Street* (London: Minerva, 1997), p. 222.

ambivalent, capricious city-space. That this takes place in a city riven by fractures is cemented in the description of the young Muire, tight-rope walking on barbed wire, who falls, ‘dropping straight down, her open legs straddling the barbed wire’.⁸ However, these lines of division – here the barbed wire – do not always divide; sometimes they uphold the twin sides of its borders, as with Muire’s mutilated body.

The poem ‘Hamlet’, which closes *Belfast Confetti*, encourages consideration of the mutilated, anatomised body. Thinking of a bomb-disposal expert who, in his ‘suit of salamander cloth’ is ‘Shielded [...] by a strangely medieval visor’, the speaker notes that ‘I still have this picture of his hands held up to avert the future / In a final act of *No surrender*’. The body’s sign of surrender only temporarily halts the imminent explosion. Almost in an act of simultaneous deconstruction, certain streets in Belfast are ‘abolished’, and the ‘tin ghost’ that lingers there ‘was never heard again’.⁹ The ghostly figure swings between bomb-disposal expert in contemporary Belfast and *Hamlet’s* Ghost in evoking the coeval (and co-mortal) nature of body and city.¹⁰ In this juxtaposition, *Hamlet’s* Ghost allows Carson’s speaker to explain the palimpsestic accumulation of the past on to the present city: the Shakespeare-Belfast connection is productive as analogue, in and through the body and the city simultaneously.

This Shakespeare-modern Ireland connection has previously been implied in the Stormont political landscape. In 1994 Fintan O’Toole proffered that ‘You know that politicians are in trouble when they reach for the *Collected Works of William Shakespeare*’.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ciaran Carson, *Belfast Confetti* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 1989), pp. 106-7. Further references to this volume will be given parenthetically.

¹⁰ It is interesting, also, to think of Carson’s bomb-disposal expert as a version of *Hamlet’s* ‘engineer / Hoist by his own petard’ (III. 4. 204-5). Following this idea instead of the ghostly heritage highlights the self-reflexive destruction that the civil war Troubles engendered. This internecine strife is central to my readings of hospitality and *stasis*, below.

O'Toole's immediate references were the 'unfulfilled' politician Charles Haughey and Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams. O'Toole records that Adams was 'preparing the way [...] for the end of another era' and, regarding British prime minister John Major, 'quoted what he called "the original grey man in a grey suit", Brutus from *Julius Caesar*'.¹¹ When Adams urges Major to 'take the current when it serves' (IV. 3. 254), O'Toole accuses Adams of selective quotation, ignoring the lines prior to these when Brutus recognises his coming demise. Either way, Adams saw in *Julius Caesar* something analogous to the current political situation: a civil war threatening the very polity in whose name it was fought. The imaginative analogies co-opted by politicians have not been lost on artists, with Belfast-based Tom Finlay's 2012 Rainbow Theatre production of *Julius Caesar* 'given a contemporary make-over': 'The play, which explores issues of power, societal violence and the morality of murder, decamps Rome's Via Sacra to set up shop on Belfast's Shankill Road'. It was set 'against the backdrop of a loyalist feud' and was 'loosely based, according to Finlay, on real events in the loyalist community during the early 21st century'.¹² Belfast could be Rome, in short, if the political state in the city were acknowledged as (uneasily) at civil war.

Thus the discussion of the body begins in a figuration of the city. As with Troubles Belfast, cities are sites for capricious action in Shakespeare's drama. As Titus Andronicus says after his sons are sentenced to death for 'killing' Bassianus, 'Rome is a wilderness of tigers' (III. 1. 54). If the moral code of the city is characterised by civility, then when that code is transgressed, citizens are tacitly acting against the city itself and civil war is

¹¹ Fintan O'Toole, 'Forked Tongues: The Language of Contemporary Politics', *The Furrow*, 45 (1994), 675-82 (p. 675). In his resignation speech, Haughey quoted Othello who had 'done the State some service and they know't' (V. 2. 337).

¹² Lisa Nelson, 'Julius Caesar' <<http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/reviews/performing-arts/julius-caesar>> [accessed 11 January 2018], paras 1, 3.

threatened. However, since abiding by the city law is sovereign,¹³ then punishment according to the transgression of the law maintains the civility of the city-state.

Nevertheless, if those acting sovereignly in line with the ‘laws rightly framed’ are unable to assert control, and if the transgressors can effectively challenge the sovereignty of the laws, then the city enters a state of civil war. As Plato outlines in the *Republic* (book VIII), between the different forms of governments are moments of transition which are necessarily contests between two orders of political animal, at which point civil war is entered. Civil war, thus, takes place in the moments of motion or transition between political states, perfectly contradicting in the English tongue the Ancient Greek word for civil war, *stasis* (στασις).¹⁴ If transgression is constitutive of a city’s sovereign power through laws, then the threat is maintained – and on occasion, actualised – that through transgression, the *polis* (πολις; city) and *politeia* (πολιτεία; constitution) are at existential risk at moments of *stasis*. The dynamism of change – either of Whiggish progress or of Platonic degradation – carries with it potential destruction. However, this energetic change is not to be confused with revolution. Hannah Arendt argued ‘We cannot equate [revolutions] with Plato’s μεταβολαι [*metabolai*], the quasi-natural transformation of one form of government into another’. Arendt equally warned that ‘Modern revolutions have little in common with the *mutatio rerum* of Roman history or the στασις, the civil strife which disturbed the Greek *polis*’.¹⁵

Developing these and other ideas, Giorgio Agamben’s theory on *stasis* focuses on the ‘relationship between the *oikos*, the family or the household, and the *polis*, the city’.¹⁶ For Agamben, these two dominant spaces are confused in and through the moments of *stasis*,

¹³ Q.v. Aristotle, *The Politics*, bk III, ch. 11.

¹⁴ In modern Greek, *stasis* translates as ‘bus stop’, thereby tying it to the English understanding of ‘stasis’.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990 [1963]), p. 21.

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm; Homo Sacer II*, 2, trans. by Nicholas Heron (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015b), p. 4.

when war – otherwise considered an *agon* of some kind between those factions inside the city walls and those outside – takes place in and through the city. Perhaps ‘the effect of the *stasis* is that of rendering the *oikos* and the *polis* indiscernible: kinship is dissolved into citizenship, while the factional bond assumes [...] the incongruous form of a kinship’. Thereafter, answering his own question (‘Where does the *stasis* stand?’), Agamben hypothesises that the *stasis* in fact constitutes a

zone of indifference between the unpolitical space of the family and political space of the city. In transgressing this threshold, the *oikos* is politicised; conversely, the *polis* is ‘economised’, that is, it is reduced to an *oikos*. *This means that in the system of Greek politics civil war functions as a threshold of politicisation and depoliticization, through which the house is exceeded in the city and the city is depoliticised in the family.*¹⁷

Agamben’s formulation of *stasis* as a zone maintains the sense of politics as ‘a field incessantly traversed’, and also permits him to argue that ‘civil war marks the *threshold* through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is “economised”’.¹⁸ In evoking a threshold, Agamben throws the theory of *stasis* firmly into the ground demarcated by hospitality: *stasis* is the temporal welcoming of a new political space into the old which emerges from the *oikos* into the *polis*, and is internalised *vice versa*; *stasis* is also a spatial metaphor where exchange can take place. Roads, crossroads, fora, atria and even pubs all become zones of indifference where enemies are domesticated, where family is politicised and where *stasis* is enabled and visible.

Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* provides an unusual but important exemplar in the analyses below. Whilst *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*, as has been made evident, also offer a contested Rome, theirs is a different conception of the city: *Titus*’s is a later Rome, when the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 17; my italics.

imperial impulse is giving way to a crowned monarchy,¹⁹ while *Julius Caesar*'s Rome is also dealing with the idea of a figurehead, whether Caesar himself, or the members of the second triumvirate that eventually succeeds him. *Antony and Cleopatra* offers yet another Rome, albeit one concerned with empire much more than the *urbs* of *Coriolanus*; the more frequent appearance of Alexandria by the play's end testifies to that.

In *Coriolanus* the threat of civil war comes about not solely between members of the ruling class, but between the patricians and plebeians. In this, mode, it might be thought that *Richard II*, *2* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* are better-placed analogues for a contemporary reading of civil war, treating as they do the shifting power dynamics between Plantaganet, Lancastrian and Yorkist dynasties that continued to affect Elizabethan and Jacobean politics when Shakespeare was writing. The plebeian-like insurrection of Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI* would seem to offer a worthwhile analogue. Indeed, the importance of Ireland to Cade and beyond in *2 Henry VI* has already been sketched, thereby strengthening that claim.²⁰ However, to focus on any of the Wars of the Roses plays would forgo the urban tension that privileges *Coriolanus*. On both counts – the city and the civil war – *Coriolanus* merits attention alongside Carson's own urban drama.

Critically in *Coriolanus*, Rome is undergoing the dynamic change of *mutatio rerum* as a city-state on the cusp of becoming a republic – thereby reflecting to a certain extent 1608

¹⁹ Although, *Titus* telescopes different types of governance from throughout Rome's history: '[T]he eclecticism is deliberate. Shakespeare is interrogating Rome, asking what kind of an example it provides for Elizabethan England; in so doing he collapses the whole of Roman history[.]' (Jonathan Bate, 'Introduction', in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995), pp. 1-121 (p. 17)).

²⁰ Q.v. Stephen O'Neill, 'Beyond Shakespeare's Land of Ire: Revisiting Ireland in English Renaissance Drama', *Literature Compass*, 15 (2018) (p. 4) <doi: 10.1111/lic3.12491> and Nicholas Collins, "'This prison where I live": Ireland Takes Centre Stage', *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 88 (2015), 125-38 (pp. 132-4) <doi: 10.7227/CE.88.1.9>.

London which was changing along with the monarchic dynamics brought about by Jacobean politics: both are cities for which ‘the moment of unity is also a moment of division’.²¹ The patricians, who control the senate, agree with the organisation of the current *politeia*, whilst the plebeians contest the decisions the patricians make: they believe the laws not to be ‘rightly framed’, and therefore counter to the wishes of the city of Rome which stands on the cusp of a democratic polity.²² In the middle of this argument stands Caius Martius, both a servant of the senate and its representative to the people. Therefore, he is also the target of their ire: ‘First, you know that Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people.’²³ Thus the play opens in nascent *stasis*: threats to the civil order are verbally and visually onstage, as the plebeians stand ‘*mutinous[ly ...] with staves, clubs and other weapons*’ (I. 1. 0 SD). At junctures such as these, the sovereign law is in flux, and the sovereign’s representative(s) unstable. ‘For the citizens to take up arms against the Senate,’ write Bernard Dobski and Dustin Gish, ‘is to wage war against that part of Rome that provides sustenance to the entire body politic.’²⁴ *Coriolanus* is a play that bears out that logic of civil war to a fatal end.

²¹ Motohashi, p. 104.

²² In a compelling argument, Thomas Anderson argues that hospitality in *Coriolanus* is importantly figured in the problem of amicable equality in which Coriolanus and the Volscian Aufidius emerge as ‘dual sovereigns consenting to a social form of parity’. However, whilst his interest is focused on the hospitality between Rome and its enemies *external* to the enemy, my chief interest is in the question of hospitality during *stasis*, which is *internal* to the city-state (Thomas P. Anderson, “‘Here’s Strange Alteration!’: Hospitality, Sovereignty, and Political Discord in *Coriolanus*”, in *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*, ed. by David B. Goldstein and Julia Reinhard Lupton (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), pp. 67-86 (p. 70)).

²³ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Peter Holland, *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), I. 1. 6-7. Further references to this text will be given parenthetically.

²⁴ Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin Gish, ‘Shakespeare and the Body Politic’, in *Shakespeare and the Body Politic*, ed. by Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin Gish (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 1-27 (p. 11).

After 1969, Belfast stands as a microcosm of the civil strife that has for several hundred years assailed the western reaches of (successively) England, Britain and Great Britain. Like Berlin, another divided European city, Belfast is informally bisected on an island already bisected according to sovereign commitment. Belfast is in the north; to the south stands the Republic of Ireland which cut ties from the United Kingdom in 1922. As the decades continue, and the ‘Troubles’ continue to distress religiously and politically divided Northern Ireland, Belfast too becomes a walled city, with those informal markers between, for example, the predominantly Catholic Falls Road and majority Protestant Shankill, concretised, twenty feet high – Belfast ‘has come itself to mirror *constitutional* violence in its very fabric. Those “troubles” have been built into the streets and spaces and buildings’.²⁵ As notionally at ‘home’ according to the established church, those loyal to the Crown reject the advances of the nationalists and their threats to the UK *politeia*. Though not an exact division, Catholic nationalists and republicans are at civil war with Protestant unionists and loyalists.²⁶ Belfast, like *Coriolanus*’s Rome, accelerated through constitutional change, with the *stasis* not formally ended until 1998’s ‘Good Friday’ Agreement. As part of the Agreement, the Republic of Ireland’s government relinquished a claim that had formed part of Articles 2 and 3 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (the Constitution of the Irish Republic) over the ‘lost six counties’ of Ulster that constitute Northern Ireland. Tacitly, therefore, the civil war

²⁵ Damian Smythe, ‘Being Unkind to Belfast’, *Fortnight*, 325 (1994), 43 (p. 43).

²⁶ According to figures from the General Election 2017, Jonathan Tonge and Jocelyn Evans note ‘the continuing extraordinarily strong correlations between Protestant religious community background and the unionist bloc vote and Catholic religious community background and nationalist bloc vote’. For more information, see Jonathan Tonge and Jocelyn Evans, ‘Northern Ireland: Double Triumph for the Democratic Unionist Party’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 71 (2018), 139-54 (p. 94) <doi: 10.1093/pa/gsx067> and esp. Table 9.4, which indicates a correlation in the high nineties in percentage terms.

was in part a constitutional crisis about the right to the city of Belfast, Northern Ireland's capital.

From the 1970s onwards, Belfast poet Ciaran Carson published poems that took his home city as a chief topic, establishing him 'as the poet of Belfast not just as a specific city but as a paradigm of the urban'.²⁷ This is notable especially in his collection *Belfast Confetti*. The Belfast he lightly fictionalizes has factual foundations and the poetry documents, from a range of perspectives, the experiences of Belfast citizens during the 'Troubles'. In 'Gate', for example, 'The stopped clock [...] seems to indicate the time / Of the explosion', and 'Everything's a bit askew, like the twisted pickets of the security gate, the wreaths / That approximate the spot where I'm told the night patrol went through' (p. 45). As Temple Cone details, the 'security' that the gate should offer proves 'less a matter of safety than containment'. Its 'jagged ends [...] promise to cut anyone who tries to pass through. Such threatened violence lurks everywhere in *Belfast Confetti*'.²⁸ In my examination below, however, the way that violence manifests in the image of the body is read radically differently.

Structured in three, the textual body of *Belfast Confetti* is massed in the central Part 2 which forms the focus of most of my interest here. As Carson attests, there is a corporal concern in relation to this composition – he 'began initially with an intention to do a whole book on parts of the body'.²⁹ The poems whose titles address mouths, knees and hands 'are left-over from a kind of abortion', stressing that, as Cone states, 'In Carson's Belfast, British, UDA, and Provisional IRA forces alike treat the body as the site for enforcing compliance

²⁷ Eamonn Hughes, "'The mouth of the poem": Carson and place', in *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays*, ed. by Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), pp. 86-105 (p. 86).

²⁸ Temple Cone, 'Knowing the Street Map by Foot: Ciaran Carson's "Belfast Confetti"', *New Hibernia Review*, 10 (2006), 68-86 (p. 75).

²⁹ Rand Brandes, 'Ciaran Carson', *The Irish Review*, 8 (1990), 77-90 (p. 87).

with their needs'.³⁰ Jagendorf's description of *Coriolanus* that 'The play's rhetoric makes us see the body politic as chopped up into grotesquely independent limbs and organs that refuse to become a complete body even though political orthodoxy says that this is what they must do' is even apposite here, and emphasises the connection between Shakespeare's early Roman republic and modern Northern Irish polity.³¹ Thus, bodies signal the sovereign contest undertaken in civil war cities like Belfast, and to that extent *Belfast Confetti* documents the *stasis* that concentrates in Belfast, and gravitates around a body politics.

What, then, connects *Coriolanus* and Carson? Clearly there is a conjoining interest in *stasis* and a changing *politeia* within the respective cities of Belfast and Rome. If that were all, then *Julius Caesar* would rightly be the only Shakespeare text worthy of comparison. But more than the changing polity there is a corporal interest at the heart of these polities: the shifting body politic of Rome and Coriolanus's documentary body, memorialising past battles in service to Rome, and the textual body of Carson's writing allied to his own concerns with the body. Moreover, these bodies stand as symbols during the *stasis* of either welcome or unwelcome persons. The invisibility of Coriolanus's wounds causes his own self-exile from Rome, while various republican or loyalist paramilitaries – often recognisable through their bodies – are assassinated or mutilated in Carson's poems. These unwelcome bodies signify enemy bodies within the walls – the wilderness internalised – and are therefore *hostile*. These texts' discourses of hospitality invite a critical evaluation of how they converse with one another when welcomed into each other's home.

Hospitality

If those hostile bodies belonged to the city prior to their hostility, and if they are at home in

³⁰ UDA: Ulster Defence Association; IRA: Irish Republican Army. Cone, p. 73.

³¹ Jagendorf, p. 458.

the city, then we must consider that those bodies contesting the sovereign do so as host (Latin *hostis*), rather than as enemy (also *hostis*).³² In short, we cannot approach a question of hostile bodies and *stasis* without also considering the law of hospitality: how and with which manners hosts invite, welcome and treat guests (*hostes*). And this, also, is about the city and its boundaries, and how jurisdiction is managed within (by the host) and how it is marked by its outside (by the sovereign deciding on the exception).³³ Derrida writes that there is ‘No hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one’s home, but since there is also no hospitality without finitude, sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence’.³⁴ A city such as Belfast, undergoing its own *stasis*, has an overflow of hosts,³⁵ each contesting their rights to the city through hospitality, violently rendering the other host (nationalist rendering unionist; unionist rendering nationalist) into an enemy/guest (*hostis*).

³² Q.v. Daryl W. Palmer, *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1992), p. 3.

³³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 198.

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Fourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000 [1997]), p. 55.

³⁵ This is contrary to a play such as *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, in which ‘In both the Greek and Trojan communities there persists an obsessive interest in *willing oneself to be a guest* in order to gain prized access to household space and knowledge’ (Andrew Hiscock, “‘Will You Walk in, My Lord?’: Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and the Anxiety of *Oikos*”, in *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange*, ed. by David B. Goldstein and Julia Reinhard Lupton (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), pp. 19-38 (p. 28)). The topic of hospitality in Shakespeare’s *oeuvre* more generally has merited a slew of recent publications, such as David B. Goldstein and Julia Reinhard Lupton, ed., *Shakespeare and Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Exchange* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), Sophie Emma Battell, “[L]ike a fountain stirred”: Impure Hospitality in *Troilus and Cressida*, *Études Épistémè*, 33 (2018) <doi: 10.4000/episteme.2383> and Nicholas Taylor-Collins, ‘The Duke’s Hospitable Return in *Measure for Measure*’, *Notes and Queries*, 65 (2018), 538-9 <doi: 10.1093/notesj/gjy160>.

Bifurcating the following thoughts on hospitality – Derrida’s late-twentieth century ideas and Felicity Heal’s twentieth-century research on early modern England – stand Immanuel Kant’s Enlightenment ideas, turning the ideals of hospitality to cosmopolitanism. In *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, Kant offers as his ‘Third Definitive Article’ a ‘Cosmopolitan Right’ which rests on the ‘Conditions of Universal Hospitality’. For Kant ‘cosmopolitanism’ is, as the word’s etymology suggests, about being a citizen (πολιτης, *politeis*) of the world (κοσμος, *cosmos*), entering into a ‘universal community’.³⁶ In Derrida’s *On Cosmopolitanism*, he forcefully tethers the ethics of hospitality to the city when he delineates the ‘city of refuge’, either in the ‘Hebraic tradition’ when cities were founded to ‘welcome and protect those innocents who sought refuge from what the texts of that time call “bloody vengeance”’ which forged an ‘urban right to immunity and to hospitality’, or in a ‘medieval tradition’ when ‘one can identify a certain sovereignty of the city: the city itself could determine the laws of hospitality, the articles of predetermined law [...] with which they meant to condition *the* Great Law of Hospitality’.³⁷

Both the Law and laws of hospitality appear in the literary analysis below. The Law is ‘irreducibl[y] pervert[ed]’ by the laws, in the sense that the Law is of a deontic order, demanding that a host open their doors and await the surprise arrival of the Other. The Law has no limit, and the host must set no limits on the guest. The logic of this opening is to allow the ‘step’ of the guest into the host’s domain – returning the argument again to the body in this discourse – while also allowing for the guest to be an enemy who may, in turn, take advantage of the host’s hospitality, even overthrowing the host in their very home: ‘This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage.’ Nevertheless, this Law is

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Political Writings*, trans. by H. B. Nisbet, ed. by Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 105, 107.

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, ‘On Cosmopolitanism’, trans. by Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes, in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-24 (pp. 17-19).

at the heart of an ethical society,³⁸ and reveals how the host is nothing of that name until the guest turns them into a host. Contrarily, the laws might be best considered practicable versions of the Law: they allow for amendments to safeguard the security of the host, and to ensure that the guest is only truly welcome if they subscribe to the customs of the host's home. Notwithstanding this contradiction, 'In order to be what it is, *the* law thus needs the laws, which, however, deny it, or at any rate threaten it.'³⁹

The Law is adopted in the early modern practice of hospitality, which derives from 'an awareness of the Roman *ius hospitii*, and of the Stoic tradition of natural law, and hence to be a humanist import', with *Coriolanus* therefore proving a useful medium to investigate how Shakespeare constructed this urban hospitality. The *ius hospitii* constituted a 'powerful idea of generosity', which translated into a focus on 'reciprocity, of the exchange of gifts and rewards to which value not simply articulated in money terms attaches'. Whilst these early modern conceptions of hospitality were greatly inflected by 'Christian perceptions of beneficence', it maintained the classical ideas of the Law of hospitality that 'the neighbour *and* the stranger, the rich *and* the poor, were all to have equal access to a host's generosity'.⁴⁰

The tension remarked on by Derrida between the 'unconditional' quality of the Law of hospitality, and the constrained and constraining laws (plural) of hospitality is found also in early modern England. Heal specifically notes that the construction of a written tradition of hospitality was 'no more than the abstract formulation of a notion that hospitality had a mandatory quality'.⁴¹ And yet, in that process that transformed stranger to guest, for the host

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³⁹ Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, pp. 25, 75, 55, 123-4, 79.

⁴⁰ Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 4, 2, 19, 3-4.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 5.

To allow total openness would have been to deny the significance of this transition, and hence of the integrity of the household and its head. Therefore an accommodation had to be sought between two objectives: the desire of the household to maintain internal power, and his wish/obligation to display this through extroverted gestures of generosity.⁴²

This particularly English form of hospitality is premised on the idea that there is a reputational game in play, such that the host can use their generosity as a way to enhance their profile, necessitating the dilution or adjustment of the Law of hospitality into the traditional laws. Thus whilst the host has to acknowledge the ‘distinctive, or even sacred nature’ of the stranger/guest, they are also keen to provide ‘good entertainment’ in order to reap the ‘reciprocal benefits’ of this performance. Not for nothing is the ‘household [...] sometimes described as an arena, in which the host can dramatize his generosity’, and therefore can transmute this quotidian act into hospitality-as-theatre.⁴³ Foucault drew our attention to the idea of early modern strangeness in the relation between staged spaces, arguing that ‘the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another’,⁴⁴ which inversely reveals the early modern stage as a space of universal hospitality.

The hospitality primarily found in households of the wealthy and badged individuals also has an urban dimension. Though the ‘analogy is not perfect’,

⁴² Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22-27 (p. 25) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/464648>>. Cf. Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space, and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), p. 65: ‘On the early modern stage there is a ‘relational spatial system: the fictional world [...] is] evoked by means of a series of relationships between ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’, [and] by setting up scene-by-scene different sets of spatial polarities between the ‘here’ represented by the stage and the “there” or “theres”, one or more unseen counter-places, that are taken to be located offstage.’

The old corporate borough was able to employ urban geography rather as the nobleman employed his dwelling: the gates provided the ceremonial focus for entry and departure, the guildhall or similar administrative centre the great hall of entertainment, the inn the individual of lodging.⁴⁵

The hospitality practised in the house, the city and on the stage all, therefore, carry the same logic and resemble one another. That also means, however, that the problems of hospitality attend each of these arenas, visible in both texts under discussion.

Making strange

Coriolanus opens with the plebeians – citizens (*politeis*), formative members of the *politeia* – contesting the sovereign law as espoused by the senate, particularly when it comes to allocating corn in times of famine: ‘We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good. What authority surfeits on would relieve us.’⁴⁶ (I. 1. 13-14) Martius is the focus of their ire, but Menenius is his defender and spokesman for the senate. He lectures the plebeian citizens on the body politic, employing the parable of the belly to make direct comparisons between the construction of this early republican, Roman polity and a body whose anatomisation threatens the functioning of the coherent whole. In doing so, ‘Menenius becomes a host’.⁴⁷ The belly, says Menenius, is challenged – by the peripheral, ‘rebell[ious ...] members’ of the

⁴⁵ Heal, p. 304.

⁴⁶ Contextualising the Jacobean experience of riots inspired by famine, in his Introduction to *Coriolanus*, Peter Holland describes how ‘In 1607 there was serious concern over riots and other examples of popular discontent [...] in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire. The Midlands Revolt [...] was driven in part by a long sequence of poor harvests, especially in the mid-1590s, which created both then and as a sustained after-effect a shortage of grain sufficient to reach famine proportions, raise the death rate and create substantial anxiety over the political stability of the region’ (Peter Holland, ‘Introduction’, in *Coriolanus*, ed. by Peter Holland, *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series*, ed. by Peter Holland (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), pp. 1-141 (p. 56)).

⁴⁷ Anderson, p. 72.

body who claimed to ‘labour’, to ‘see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel’ on behalf of the whole – as to why it ‘cupboard[s] the viand’. In response, the belly re-affirms its place as the centre of the body – its home, if you will – ‘the store-house and the shop / Of the whole body. But, if you do remember, / I send it through the rivers of your blood’ (I. 1. 91-30). The centrifugal process admits concentrated power in the body’s atrium of welcome. Thereafter, it disseminates power to the rest of the body. Menenius concludes:

The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members. For examine
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly,
Touching the weal o’th’ common, you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
And no way from yourselves. (I. 1. 143-9)

Here the body *tout court* is analogised with the body politic, and used to condemn the plebs’ riotous actions against those whose sovereign laws underpin the city-state and improve ‘the weal o’th’ common’ – the very political organisation from which hospitable cosmopolitanism emerges.⁴⁸ By labelling the plebeians ‘mutinous members’, Menenius tacitly acknowledges the *stasis* bubbling beneath the aggressive sentiments in Rome, describing ‘the organically enclosed society with its heterogeneous parts in contention against each other’:⁴⁹ the plebeians are creating civil war between themselves and the sovereign authorities. Moreover, Menenius’ metaphor concedes that, though the whole body politic ought to be considered in totalising terms, it is the ‘mutinous members’ themselves – and their rebellious leader the ‘great toe’ – who first encourage the body’s fragmentation, such that ‘The organic metaphor of body, reduced to the small change of this grotesque and demeaning synecdoche, cannot

⁴⁸ E.g. Kant, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Motohashi, p. 100.

retain its cohesive force'.⁵⁰ Trouble, therefore, must ensue in the city.

Though the plebeians are primary cause for much of the internecine tension in Rome, Caius Martius is the source of the *stasis* – not just as an individual, but as (un)identifiable with his own body, a character for whom 'corporeal identity takes on a heightened presence'.⁵¹ When first addressed about his 'too violent' 'exercise' in Corioles defeating the Volsces, Martius thrills in his wounds, claiming 'The blood I drop is rather physical / Than dangerous to me' (I. 5. 15-19); pre-empting the wounds' full signification once he returns to Rome, here Martius begins his *hamartia*. Whilst he carries these wounds proudly, he asserts that 'they smart / To hear themselves remembered' (I. 9. 29); later he laments that 'I had rather have my wounds to heal again / Than hear say how I got them' (II. 2. 67-8). For others, however, Martius is known by his wounds, with Menenius confirming that 'the wounds become him' (II. 1. 119-20) and his mother Volumnia proclaiming 'O, he is wounded, I thank the gods for't!' They enumerate his injuries, as though Martius were Christ himself:

VOLUMNIA He had, before this last expedition, twenty-five wounds upon him.

MENENIUS Now it's twenty-seven; every gash was an enemy's grave. (II. 1. 149-52)

The reason for the interest is clear: Martius's mother wants her son to enter the political realm with 'large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place' (II. 1. 144-5). In thinking through the semiotic 'precedence' of Coriolanus' wounds, Marshall compares Coriolanus to an early modern 'wound-man', whose image was used to tutor physicians in how to treat a variety of wounds. To this end, Marshall thinks of Coriolanus as

a visual encyclopaedia of possible complaints, not a patient any practitioner might encounter and certainly not a wounded hero. What is missing is the acknowledgement of

⁵⁰ Jagendorf, p. 460.

⁵¹ Cynthia Marshall, 'Wound-man: *Coriolanus*, gender, and the theatrical construction of interiority', in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 93-118 (p. 109).

pain that would establish the wound-man as a suffering person. Instead, the individual's identity is subordinate to that of his wounds[.]⁵²

In their instability as 'appropriable [...] signifiers',⁵³ the wounds can be the historical markers of Coriolanus' heroism, the emblems that give him access to the consulship, or even the symbol of Volumnia's pride. Their appropriability violates the individuality that should be afforded to a citizen and his body, as Coriolanus is forced 'to grasp impropriety itself' when he 'finds himself, on the one hand, irremissibly consigned to his body and, on the other, just as inexorably incapable of assuming it' properly.⁵⁴ Thus, the wounds' instability defy Coriolanus' desire 'to be simply a sign of what he is, a kind of tautology',⁵⁵ such that he cannot 'play / The man I am' (III. 2.16-17). Through the wounds, in short, Volumnia envisages her son's translation into a political ambassador: the transition through *stasis* is desired on the body, and will encounter plebeian resistance.

This focus on the body draws attention to Martius' body-as-host. Before he meets the plebeians in the forum, 'For what he did before Corioles', the general Cominius renames him 'Martius Caius Coriolanus' (I. 9. 62-4). By surnaming him, by adding this *cog-nomen* (a name with another name; an allied name; a name adequate with the first name) – Cominius actually nominates Martius' wounds. Whilst these 'smart' when 'remembered', they are now signified by this new name. In thinking through the importance of the wound-man figure, Jack Hartnell also draws attention to the penetrative *words* that nominate the *wounds* in many of the mediaeval and late mediaeval iterations of this 'enigmatic and troubling' figure (an

⁵² Ibid., pp. 102-3.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV*, 2, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015a [2014]), p. 84.

⁵⁵ Jagendorf, p. 462.

equally apt description of Martius).⁵⁶ For Martius, these nominative words have a political genesis and are housed on Martius' body (now the host) – they are the zone of indifference in this process of *stasis* – and themselves take 'Coriolanus' into and on to themselves.⁵⁷ Moreover, in this passage Cominius asks those present to welcome this 'new' man as a host would: hospitality is at the heart of the domesticating process of the political endeavour, when the foreign 'Corioles' is re-homed on to the Roman hero. Thus, 'at the instant in which what is most intimate and proper to us – our body – is irreparably laid bare, it appears to us as the most foreign thing, which we cannot in any way assume and which we want, for that reason, to hide.'⁵⁸ The enemy/foreign/strange (*hostis*) name becomes the host's name (*hostis*), and 'the solitary hero makes the entire enemy city a part of himself'.⁵⁹

On the importance of the name in hospitality, Derrida argues that laws of hospitality are only practicably available when the guests are 'subjects in law, [...] to be equipped with nameable identities, and proper names'. Whilst this precludes the possibility of absolute, unconditional hospitality by placing a limit on the guest, it also enables the welcome of the foreigner into the city or household. Derrida makes this a jussive practice, since 'this foreigner, then, is someone with whom, to receive him, you begin by asking his name; you

⁵⁶ Jack Hartnell, 'Wording the Wound Man', 6 (2017) (p. 1) <doi: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/jhartnell>.

⁵⁷ Cf. Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 86: 'There exists, from this perspective, a structural analogy between the body and language. Indeed, language also [...] appears for each speaker as what is the most intimate and proper; and yet, speaking of an "ownership" and of an "intimacy" of language is misleading, since language happens to the human being from the outside, through a process of transmission and learning that can be arduous and painful and is imposed on the infant rather than being willed by it, and while the body seems particular to each individual, language is by definition shared by others and as such an object of common use.'

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁹ Jagendorf, p. 462. The suffix '-anus' can be linked etymologically to the word 'sovereign' when it once took the form 'superanus' (*OED*, 'sovereign', *n.* and *adj.*, etymology).

enjoin him to state and to guarantee his identity, as you would a witness before a court'. Since practicable hospitality therefore consists of 'interrogating the new arrival', the foreigner is then firm in their understanding of themselves-as-foreign.⁶⁰ Coriolanus, welcomed by the Romans in the manner of a host who names the stranger, is rendered foreign. At the same time the Roman hero is celebrated above all others, and when 'Rome must know / The value of her own' (I. 9. 20-1), Martius is estranged in a perverse act of hospitality and *stasis*. He – his body metaphorically – is held hostage 'in manacles' (I. 9. 56) while he undergoes this process, and his body made hostile.

This process of estrangement from one's home city is not unusual in Carson's 1970s and 1980s Belfast. 'Last Orders' narrates visiting a pub where the entry is fundamentally inhospitable: you must 'Squeeze the buzzer on the steel mesh gate like a trigger, but / It's someone else who has you in their sights. Click.' (p. 46). For Alexander, the poem illustrates 'a tense negotiation of identities and allegiances'.⁶¹ 'Last Orders' is a story and the deformed poetry suggests a deformed city. The gate's 'Click' threatens absolute inhospitality, hinting at the 'bang' or 'boom' of a firearm or bomb. In that threat, however, the 'Click' pulls back to acknowledge a hospitality with reservations: since we have seen you, we accept you *as you are*. The guest, in this instance, must offer themselves up to the question posed as to their identity; to 'Squeeze the buzzer [...] like a trigger' (the martial connotations self-evident) is to submit to the question of hospitality: 'Isn't the question of the foreigner a foreigner's question? Coming from the foreigner, from [outside]?'⁶² The speaker goes on to raise the spectre of the Law of hospitality since it would be 'simple [...] for someone / Like ourselves

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, pp. 23-4.

⁶¹ Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 103.

⁶² Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 3. Translator Rachel Bowlby offers in her text 'abroad' for '*à l'étranger*'. This French phrase is multifarious, for which reason in this context I substitute 'outside' to highlight its relevance to my argument.

to walk in and blow the whole place, and ourselves, to Kingdom Come'; that is, the stranger carries the threat of the enemy who can destroy the home into which they have been invited. The internal divisions resonating with my theory of *stasis* in the poem are well adumbrated by Cone when she highlights the contrast between the 'Harp' – a lager brewed in the South – with the 'Bushmills' mirror – advertising a whiskey from the North – which shows how 'individual decisions are imbued with political significance'.⁶³

Carson's speaker is permitted to cross the threshold into the pub because, despite the threat of the guest, 'Taig's written on my face'. Here the Levinasian Other is brought into the poem, because it is a *vis-à-vis* encounter that removes the nascent threat that the publican feels at the speaker's entry. Emmanuel Levinas explains that 'being is man, and it is as a neighbour that man is accessible: as a face', even though 'The other is the only being I can want to kill [...] To be in relation with the other face to face [...] is to be unable to kill'. Thus the *vis-à-vis* encounter is, in Levinasian terms, the hospitable welcoming of the guest.⁶⁴ Moreover, this is a face with a name: Taig. A *taig* is a derogatory term used to describe a Catholic living in (juridically) protestant Northern Ireland. It is a term used by citizens of the same polity to distinguish their sectarian Others from themselves. In 'Last Orders', however, it is used self-reflectively and semi-comically by the speaker to highlight how he has been interpellated by those abusing him as 'Taig', which becomes his badge of membership allowing him entry into this pub. In his home town of Belfast, the speaker is othered by virtue of a politicised name figuratively inscribed on his body, which also gains him entry into the pub, a 'previously safe space[]'.⁶⁵ This pub becomes a zone of indifference, of exchange, reminiscent of the classical *agora* and the classical idea of *trivia*: idle talk, chitchat, the

⁶³ Cone, p. 79.

⁶⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshaw (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998 [1991]), pp. 9-10.

⁶⁵ Cone, p. 70.

overheard stuff that fills many of Carson's poems – *Belfast Confetti*, after all, is a collection in which the persona is 'An ear overhearing things in bars'.⁶⁶ The citizen is guest who could hold the pub hostage, but who releases his prisoners by virtue of his body named and inscribed as hostile by the Other – a hostility that the speaker internalises in the pub and the body of the poem.

The trope of the hostage repeats between *Coriolanus* and 'Last Orders', these two instances of named otherness and hostile bodies, making parallel these two moments of (in)hospitable *stasis*. *Coriolanus* is taken hostage by the Roman host, to whom he also belongs, while Carson's speaker considers the possibility of taking the publican and his fellow drinkers hostage in 'Last Orders'. In a companion poem to 'Last Orders', 'Night Out', the threat of the Other is 'treat[ed] symphonically'⁶⁷ as it is externalised and surrounds the pub: 'From somewhere out beyond the breeze-block walls we get a broken rhythm / Of machine-gun fire' (p. 77). Through the externalised threat, the pub as a whole is taken hostage, and yet the merriment continues as 'the sentence of the night / Is punctuated through and through by rounds of drink, of bullets, of applause'. The aural threat collides with the singing in the pub of the sectarian '*Four Green Fields*', and the sounds' intermixing 'points to the overlapping cadences – the conflict's competing earmarks – clamoring for the speaker's attention'. The sounds are carried over the thresholds of the entry gate and in through the 'semi-opaque, heavy-duty polythene' doors, and represent the ultimate uninvited guest. Yet, through the speaker's acknowledgement of these sounds as they take him and his drinking partners hostage, the poem suggests 'that bearing earwitness to the city amounts to taking its political temperature and to moving more securely through place'.⁶⁸ Being taken

⁶⁶ Carson in John Brown, ed., *In the Chair: Interviews with Poets from the North of Ireland* (Cliffs of Moher: Salmon Poetry, 2002), p. 148.

⁶⁷ Julia C. Obert, *Postcolonial Overtures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015), p. 41.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

hostage by the other host, or being taken hostage in your own home as host, does not lead to paralysis, but rather to an enabling *stasis* that creates and acts as a neutered zone of indifference. The ironic title, ‘Night Out’, thus punctures the bunker-like atmosphere in this bar – where its ‘breeze-block walls’ do not intimate liberation – by proclaiming that even when taken figuratively hostage in this bar, it is still recognisably a night out on the town.

The Other language

Coriolanus’ political career is also as a hostage – to his mother, the senate, and the plebeians. When Menenius first informs Coriolanus that it ‘remains that you do speak to the people’, Coriolanus replies in a curtailed line, bespeaking his distress, ‘I do beseech you, / Let me o’erleap that custom’. Coriolanus specifies his inability to ‘entreat [the plebeians] / For my wounds’ sake’ (II. 2. 133-7), essentially ‘declar[ing] that he is “foreign” to the plebeians’ language.⁶⁹ Yet the sovereign laws, properly acted upon, require that ‘the people / Must have their voices’ (II. 2. 139). When Coriolanus first seeks the plebeians’ support, it is in the forum, a public space in the city co-opted by the plebeians as their own space: Coriolanus crosses the threshold from the senate where he has ‘dragg[ed] Rome back to the brink of civil war and destruction’ in the previous scene (II. 2) to the forum in this (II. 3).⁷⁰ Moreover, he is dressed in the traditional ‘gown of humility’ (II. 3. 39 SD) which masks who he really is – a soldier – and presents him as a guest seeking the hospitality of the plebeians in their space: he is visibly masked as Other onstage.

The plebeians surround him, and every way he turns, he finds a citizen ready to challenge him. New to this space, Coriolanus asks his foreigner’s question in the host’s household: will you support my bid to be consul? (II. 72-3, 77, 101, 129) He even cites wearing the gown as a reason to accept him and his request (II. 84-5). The plebeians, as is

⁶⁹ Dobski and Gish, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

customary in the practice of the laws of hospitality, ask Coriolanus a question: to show them his wounds. These are the wounds which have become him, to which have been added the enemy's name. The host plebeians require sight of this mark of the Other on this man who comes as guest to their space; moreover, they need to establish the Other as he who requests a change of role from foreigner-host to sovereign consul. For Coriolanus, this is a necessary transformation from guest to host, abiding by the Law of hospitality. Marshall explains that 'For Shakespeare's Coriolanus, the question of exposing his wounds is less one of compliance to ceremony or conformity to public expectation than of allowed knowledge, of the extent to which his wounds cease to be his own and become more generally available – whether, as he puts it, they “shall be yours” [II. 3. 76]'.⁷¹ When the offer to show the wounds is confirmed, they 'ALL' cry 'God save thee, noble consul!', declaiming him their sovereign. The Law of hospitality has worked through its logic.

However, apart from crossing this threshold into foreign space, Coriolanus must also endure another problem of the guest: speaking in the tongue of the other. Writing about Socrates on trial before his sentencing to death in Sparta, Derrida asks,

What does he say in presenting himself as *like* a foreigner, at once *as though* he were a foreigner (as a fiction) and *inasmuch as* in effect he does become the foreigner by language [...], a foreigner accused in a language he says he doesn't speak, a defendant required to justify himself, in the language of the other[?]⁷²

The answer is that 'Socrates turns the situation on its head: he asks them to treat him like a foreigner for whom marks of respect can be demanded'.⁷³ To become Other in the face of a host *alongside whom you are also host* offers some way of finding an effectual voice. Thus, Coriolanus at first complains about the language problem:

⁷¹ Marshall, p. 102.

⁷² Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 17.

⁷³ Ibid.

What must I say?
 ‘I pray, sir’? Plague upon’t, I cannot bring
 My tongue to such a pace. ‘Look, sir, my wounds![]’
 [...]

 Hang ’em!
 I would they would forget me[.] (II. 3. 48-57)

However, he thereafter opts to speak in prose when conversing individually with the hosts, and claims proudly to have dressed his body differently for his meeting with the plebeians: Coriolanus, like Socrates, ‘turns the situation on its head’ by adopting the speech practice of the host, and disguising his body in order to succeed.

However, by the beginning of Act Three the plebeians rescind their support for his consulship when the tribunes, Brutus and Sicinius, meet Coriolanus and his company in the street. They find their presence unwelcome, according to Coriolanus. This highlights the full-blown *stasis* underway as Coriolanus vents his frustration, calling the plebeians a ‘herd’ (III. 1. 34), ‘rank-scented’ (l. 68) and a ‘Hydra’ (l. 94) – the many-headed association focusing again on the grotesque bodily monstrosity that the hostile plebeians represent to Coriolanus – since ‘In soothing them we nourish ’gainst our Senate / The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition, / Which we ourselves have ploughed for, sowed and scattered’ (ll. 71-3). The agricultural metaphor returns the discourse again to the laws of the household, to economics, showing the mode of transition that *stasis* entails, from politics to the household, in the becoming-indifferent zone of the public street.

This process turns the notional host, Coriolanus, into the absolute enemy inside Rome. After his diatribe that condemns ‘the multitudinous tongue’ (III.1. 157) for ‘bereav[ing] the state’ (l. 159), Sicinius declares ‘He’s spoken like a traitor, and shall answer / As traitors do’ (ll. 163-4), as a ‘foe to th’ public weal’ (l. 176) – and therefore spoken against cosmopolitanism and hospitality *tout court*. Whilst Anderson shapes ‘Coriolanus’s rejection of the citizens [...] as a commitment to a form of friendship’ with Aufidius, through

which the audience glimpses ‘an irreducible, albeit unsustainable, anti-community that rejects consensus’,⁷⁴ I see the latter developing because of hostile bodies and the emerging *stasis*.

Sicinius’ declarations cause a senator to assert that the tribunes’ actions threaten to ‘unbuild the city and to lay all flat’ (III. 1. 198); he responds:

SICINIUS What is the city but the people?

ALL CITIZENS True, the people are the city. (II. 199-200)

This radical reclamation of the city is even more dramatic because it happens in the city’s hitherto communal space. This *stasis* turns the senators and patricians, the sovereignly-anointed hosts, into excluded, unwelcome Others. It also turns the neutral space into the space of the non-sovereign plebeians as the senators are taken hostage by the wishes of the ‘barbarian[]’ (III. 1. 239) citizens. If the senators are nominally the juridical hosts everywhere in the city, then the *hostes* (guests/enemies/strangers) turn the *hostes* (hosts) into hostages in their own space, and the street becomes a zone of indifference where *stasis* is produced and takes hold simultaneously.

Critically, this reflection on hospitality in *Coriolanus* has shown the development of hostile bodies in the city as based on an antagonism between hosts, and producing a ‘rebellion’ akin to *stasis*. Moreover, the procedure takes place in a politically neutral space and firmly alters that space’s values, co-opting it on behalf of the hierarchically inferior citizens. In Carson’s Belfast, a parallel moment presents itself.

In ‘Question Time’ – a prose-poem to which Obert refers as the prime example of Carson’s city, wherein ‘violence [...] conditions the city or, rather, violence [...] conditions locals’ experience of the city’⁷⁵ – Carson’s speaker recalls living on Raglan Street, near the

⁷⁴ Anderson, p. 73.

⁷⁵ Obert, p. 42.

majority Catholic Falls Road. The speaker's walk to primary school was limited by his father, saying '*Never go by Cupar Street*' for

Cupar Street was one of those areas where the Falls and [Protestant] Shankill joined together as unhappy Siamese twins, one sporadically and mechanically beating the other round the head, where the Cullens, Finnigans and Reillys merged with Todds and Camerons and Wallaces. (p. 59)

The hostility encountered between those whose names speak Other is implied here, even before the proper examination of space. Much as Sicinius claims that 'the people are the city' in *Coriolanus*, there is a politics of proper place in Belfast. The implication is that these zones of indistinct interchange, such as Cupar Street, are a no man's land: claims to this space are forcefully argued by both Cullens and Camerons, just as with the street in *Coriolanus*. Both lay claim to hosting this space, and therefore both are strangers trespassing one another's space. The speaker and his friend, aware of this spatial *stasis*, nonetheless attempt to assert their nascent authority by travelling through Cupar Street until

The forays ended when we were stopped one day by four boys about our own age. One of them had fashioned two little charity-type flags from paper and pins: he held a Union Jack in one hand, a tricolour in the other. He eyed us slyly, knowingly: *See them flags?* We nodded nervously. *Well, which of them would youse say was the best?* He had us cornered. If we chose the Union Jack, we were guilty of cowardice and treason – and he would know we were lying anyway; if we chose the tricolour, we would get a hiding. (p. 59)

An analogous language problem that *Coriolanus* encounters in the forum is found in Cupar Street, but Carson's speaker fails where *Coriolanus* succeeded: the former cannot turn the situation on its head, and he 'escap[es] with a few bruises into the unspoken force-field of the Catholic end of the street' (p. 60).

This first half of the poem should be countered by the second when the adult speaker 'was reminded of [the earlier encounter] today, when I went out for what I imagined was a

harmless spin on the bike' (p. 60). However, after travelling along a litany of road names that recall nineteenth-century British battles and conquests in India and Crimea – mapping this space as politically Other in its very home-ness – the speaker faces the same fate as decades earlier:

I turn, and I'm grabbed round the neck by this character, while someone else has me by the arm, twisted up my back, another has the other arm and I'm hauled off the bike, *Right – where're you going? Here, get him up against the railings – what do you think you're at?* (p. 61)

Replacing the road names is a list of 'threatening questions'⁷⁶ concerned primarily with the speaker's topographical knowledge (pp. 61-2). They 'are snapped at me like photographs' because, while 'The map is pieced together bit by bit. I am this map which they examine', albeit 'a map which no longer refers to the present' (p. 63). For a second time, the speaker's body is made to feel its hostility in the indifferent zone that best represents the *stasis* at work in Belfast, emphasising the idea that 'Carson's narrator figures as an (unwelcome) ghost haunting the places of his childhood'.⁷⁷ Through the cartographic questions, his mapped body becomes hostile – not unlike Coriolanus' – precisely because his home life is strained through a political filter.

The speaker is released and returns home, like thirty years previously. However, a key difference between this and the childhood assault is the questioners' identity: in the earlier example they were Protestant schoolkids, whilst in the latter they are republicans policing the no man's land, taking one of their own temporarily hostage. That is, a man self-identifying as co-host is turned into enemy in the production of *stasis*. The indications are subtle, but important: he is 'grabbed' on the Falls Road, and he is 'dragged [...] into one of these hole-

⁷⁶ Alice Entwistle and Kevin Mills, 'After Carson: Reading as Anacoluthon', *Textual Practice*, 30 (2016), 815-33 (p. 821) <doi: 10.1080/0950236X.2015.1084370>.

⁷⁷ Alexander, p. 120. The words 'ghost', 'host' and 'guest' are etymologically cognate.

in-the-wall taxi places’ (p. 61). Known to be bases for paramilitaries, these re-calibrated offices are fundamentally politicised from the apolitical purpose which they once served: *stasis* is at work. Therefore, when considering transgressing into the contested space *par excellence*, the speaker is taken hostage by those nominally identifiable with him in Belfast’s civil war. These hosts take their co-host hostage and turn him into an enemy-stranger in his and their own space, confirming Cone’s assessment that no individual is ‘completely safe or capable of moving freely about Belfast’.⁷⁸ The interrogators take *oikos* and politicise it in order to make a host feel like an enemy:⁷⁹ this is how their hospitable practice contests the sovereign law. The paramilitaries tasked with guarding their space – always on the threshold with the Other’s space – do not aim to assault their own sectarian supporters; however, in order to secure their space in the city, a process of inhospitality must be undertaken, which resembles the process of hospitality. The co-host being taken hostage is the net effect, making Carson’s speaker feel like both ‘a “native” and an interloper’.⁸⁰ This process is not merely ‘manag[ing] multiple cartographies in the space of political violence’,⁸¹ but maintaining violence in the management of contested cartographies.

⁷⁸ Cone, p. 83.

⁷⁹ For another instance of this, consider the nationalist character in Anna Burns’s *Milkman* (2018) who explains that anyone suspected of crossing sides between the warring factions in Troubles Belfast ‘could open himself to traitorship and informership’. Moreover, when that same nationalist character accuses one of his own of ‘traitorship’, Burns’s protagonist makes clear what ethic has been crossed: ‘[B]ad behaviour on the part of that neighbour – coming into maybe-boyfriend’s house, inviting himself into that house [...], then talking like that, breaking rules of hospitality, stirring up trouble’ (Anna Burns, *Milkman* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018), p. 30). *Milkman* is set during the 1970s, the same time period documented in *Belfast Confetti*.

⁸⁰ Alexander, p. 120.

⁸¹ Cone, p. 82.

Hinging on knees

The figure of the hostage has reappeared in these forays into the literature. If the host is taken hostage by the foreign guest, and by co-hosts, and if the guest is taken hostage by the host, then can the becoming-hostage element of *stasis* ever entail a position of power, or is it always a sign of, or position producing, weakness? The answer in these corporeal texts is again found in and through the body – particularly through knees.

At the camp outside Rome, when Coriolanus has allied with his long-time adversary, Aufidius, Volumnia emerges from Rome as the city's ambassador. Her task is to convince Coriolanus to desist, encamped as he is outside Rome and threatening to overwhelm the city as general to the enemy, Volscian forces. Rome is held hostage by Coriolanus who, in a reversal of the topography of the city, left Rome vowing to 'banish you' (III. 3. 122). He inverted the interior-exterior spaces of the city when he left to join the enemy to attack the city he very recently hosted. Now Volumnia, in a stirring plea to her son, calls on the language of hospitality and of bodies to persuade Coriolanus to desist. She asserts that, 'Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment / And state of bodies would bewray what life / We have led since thy exile.' (v. 3. 94-6) She professes her woe at seeing her son 'tearing / His country's bowels out' (II. 102-3). The risk, she argues, is personal as well as political – she depoliticises the threat from that of a 'foreign recreant' (l. 114) to that of 'the son, the husband and the father' (l. 102) in the motion of *stasis* – claiming that 'thou shalt no sooner / March to assault thy country than to tread [...] / on thy mother's womb / That brought thee to this world' (II. 123-5). Emphasising the hostility of the (now-)foreign body of Coriolanus, Volumnia makes a personal, corporal and economical point that Coriolanus should treat his mother with greater respect. In Tetsuya Motohashi's terms, Volumnia thus bears her son again, 'this time as a family man who finally abandons the destructive notion of honour';⁸²

⁸² Motohashi, p. 102.

metonymically this focus on Coriolanus' re-situation in the *oikos* would lead to Rome's liberation from his imprisonment. Hers is a 'duty' and a 'mother's part' (ll. 167-8) in Rome's political safekeeping.

When Coriolanus fails to cede to his mother's wishes, Volumnia instructs Virgilia, Young Martius and Valeria – Coriolanus's wife, son and wife's friend – to join her in kneeling as a last resort: 'Down! An end, / This is the last.' (v. 3. 171-2) As she and the others kneel before Coriolanus, the scene shifts from a parental blessing, with Volumnia 'blessing' the kneeling Coriolanus, to one in which another contextually-rich image is enacted onstage.⁸³ They adopt a pose more commonly seen in the practice of communion,

⁸³ There is a critical assertion that with Volumnia, Virgilia and Young Martius kneeling before Coriolanus, the common onstage spectacle of the parental blessing is reversed. 'Interestingly enough,' writes Bruce Young (after John T. Onuska, Jr), when Volumnia kneels 'she does so, not by *giving* a blessing, but rather by kneeling as if she were *asking* for one.' However, I believe there is sufficient evidence to allow for my alternative reading, that this onstage spectacle is redolent of communion, and also of the image of the Virgin Mary as Christ's intercessor. Young's comment that Volumnia is made to look as if she were '*asking*' for a blessing offers the possibility that this part of the scene is calling on a different mode of address, rather than merely being a 'distort[ion]' of the traditional parental blessing.

Moreover, if, as Peter Holland asserts in his introduction to the play, *Coriolanus* is likely a play first performed at the Blackfriars theatre, then attendant tensions between the location and the drama onstage merit exploration. As such, Tiffany Stern has argued that the Blackfriars stage carries with it a host of residual tensions because of its former use as a monastery. It was a 'site [...] that constantly brought its past to mind', not least because 'the audience had to approach [...] by walking through the old monastery courtyard' and it must have felt 'like going to a monastic hall'. In such a space, the conjectured onstage image of Christ and the Virgin Mary could well be more forthcoming to the play's Jacobean audience.

And, finally, given the idea I have already suggested of Coriolanus as a version of Christ when his mother and Menenius enumerate his wounds at II. 1. 149-52, it seems plausible that this theme is continued later in the play. Indeed, my alternative reading is at worst a complement to the commonplace critical reading of the parental blessing at v. 3, and at best a viable alternative. See Bruce Young, 'Parental Blessings in Shakespeare's Plays', *Studies in Philology*, 89 (1992), 179-210 (p. 200) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4174418>> [accessed 31 October 2018], John T. Onuska,

reproducing in turn an image of the Virgin Mary as Christ's intercessor:⁸⁴ they become supplicants to the stranger holding them hostage, invoking 'language beyond language, or [something] inexpressible in ordinary language' as Carson would describe it.⁸⁵ Indeed, the structure of the conversation recalls Levinas' conception of 'religion', 'the bond with the other which is not reducible to the representation of the other, but to his invocation[. . .] The essence of discourse is prayer'.⁸⁶ Coriolanus is posited as the ultimate, divine Host before them, though it is he as enemy who threatens to invade the host city. The logic of hospitality is borne out in Volumnia's speech as she confirms, unwillingly, that 'we will home to Rome / And die among our neighbours' (ll. 172-3), thereby reasserting the domestic elements of the fate of Rome, while she contends that Young Martius 'kneels and holds up hands for

'Bringing Shakespeare's Characters Down to Earth: The Significance of Kneeling', *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 56 (1981), 31-41, Holland, p. 50 and Tiffany Stern, "'A ruinous monastery": the Second Blackfriars Playhouse as a place of nostalgia', in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse*, ed. by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 97-114 (pp. 98, 101, 103).

⁸⁴ Though both public and private prayer practices were evolving in response to the ongoing Reformation, in Calvinist Robert Hill's *The Pathway to Pietie* (1606), the writer dictates that though 'this Church of ours doth detest al popish adoration in this Sacrament', you should 'not refuse to communicate with us, because you are enjoyned to kneele. If you do not take heed of such singularitie, it may bee in you, as it hath been in others, a fore-runner, either of schismaticall separation, or supine contempt of this blessed banquet' (Robert Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (Amsterdam: Theatris Orbis Terrarum, 1975 [1613]) II, p. 33. I have silently amended all iterations of the long-s). After surveying a range of early modern prayer manuals, Cynthia Garrett notes that 'While strict Puritans might not agree with this defense of gesture in prayer if it entails "popish" crossing or genuflection, they acknowledge that prayer necessarily entails expression, and they, too, are concerned to identify a language that, unlike the empty expression of Catholic ritual, will truly communicate with God' (Cynthia Garrett, 'The Rhetoric of Supplication', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46 (1993), 328-57 (p. 355)).

⁸⁵ Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, 'For all I know: Ciaran Carson in conversation with Elmer Kennedy-Andrews', in *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays*, ed. by Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), pp. 13-27 (p. 16).

⁸⁶ Levinas, p. 7.

fellowship' (l. 175), which is to say, he wants to transcend the host-enemy binary, instead desiring to forge anew his alliance with his father.

Volumnia's complaints are successful: 'O, mother, mother! / What have you done? [...] / O, my mother, mother! O! / You have won a happy victory to Rome' (v. 3. 182-6). Where Volumnia's speech *depoliticised* Coriolanus' antagonism, Coriolanus *repoliticises* Volumnia's domestic role into a state-sponsored, sovereign one. As enemy holding Rome hostage, he liberates his mother and the city in a moment of unconditional hospitality – and all because she falls to her knees, deifying Coriolanus as absolute, divine Host. Ann Christensen's argument that Volumnia uses her identification with motherhood 'in public and political ways throughout the play, blurring the distinctions between family and state' is no more salient than it is here,⁸⁷ and works doubly to confirm the importance of the idea of corporal *stasis*. In the process, the knee is moved from the limb to the heart of the body, in sanitising the hostile Roman bodies and in neutering Coriolanus' hostility toward Rome. A man who feels undone by the way his body is received and coded as Other in his home city responds favourably to the genuflecting corporal gesture.

There is no genuflecting in *Belfast Confetti*. And yet, as I argued above, at the heart of the collection the poems are all concerned with the body: 'Hairline Crack', 'Bloody Hand', 'The Mouth' and 'The Knee'. For example, 'Hairline Crack' explores the sub-division in the paramilitary republican cause between the PIRA ('Provisional') and traditional IRA ('Sticky'), leading to 'Daily splits and splinters' (p. 50). It tells the story of how a 'bullet neatly parted' a bystander's 'permanent wave' as she 'stooped for the dashboard cigarette lighter'. In the last line, the 'Crack' is impressed into the syntax, as grammar is deconstructed: 'Between life. And death.' Couched within the logical impasse of contingency – 'It could have been or might have been' – 'Hairline Crack' demonstrates the paralysis that

⁸⁷ Ann C. Christensen, 'The Return of the Domestic in *Coriolanus*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37 (1997), 295-316 (p. 300) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/450835>>.

sectarianism and factionalism imbue on the indifferent citizen who is nonetheless a victim of violence. According to this poem, the body is only object, and never agent, of the division-generating *stasis*.

However, the corporal anatomisation can be read more productively in relation to Agamben's theories, especially in the consecutive poems 'The Mouth' and 'The Knee'. In the former, Carson's main speaker is substituted by a Provisional IRA (PIRA) speaker as the story is told of a man who, among his possible accusations, is considered an informant: a 'head [who] had this mouth he kept shooting off' (p. 70). For the mere fact of this allegation, 'We thought it was time he bit off more than he could chew', as The Mouth is killed off by the paramilitary force – known to the reader by the allusion in the third line: 'It could have been worse for us than it was for him. *Provisionally*.' (my italics). Thus the PIRA speaker explains how he killed an informant on the same side as him in order that they might expedite the *stasis*: civil war predominates in human interaction. Controversially, the killing of the potential informant defies all theories of hospitality – murder has no place in the schemes of hospitality. However, in the next poem, 'The Knee', the speaker talks about the same informant, albeit from a third-person perspective. 'The Knee' focuses on a different part of the informant's body, and also takes place prior to 'The Mouth', although it appears after it in the collection – the line 'what we've just talked about' (p. 71) playfully alludes to the non-chronological nature of the poems. Importantly the poem's first line announces that 'His first bullet is a present', thereby forcing the issue of hospitality into this tale of informing and punishment. The notion of gift or present is critical in the ideas of hospitality, since 'absolute hospitality [...] offers the gift without reservations'. Derrida makes this argument specifically at a moment when he is discussing the nature of language in hospitality, and when he also considers that 'Keeping silent is already a modality of possible speaking'.⁸⁸ That is to say,

⁸⁸ Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 135.

Derrida focuses on the gift when considering the unconditional hospitality of not speaking, of communicating without speaking, or of accepting someone for who they are without challenging them as to their identity. These ideas are all radicalised and perverted in the practice of kneecapping, on which 'The Knee' is focused.

Kneecapping was (and has continued to be up to at least 2012)⁸⁹ a method of discipline imposed by paramilitaries on their own parties in the conflict, just as the murder of an informant was. However, by focusing on kneecapping, the PIRA (in this instance) sought to give a present to the informant that he could neither refuse, nor give back, nor forget. In the second half of the poem, the victim is visited in hospital by his father and son. The latter is

Learning to walk, [and] he suddenly throws himself into the staggering
Distance between his father and his father's father, hands held up high,
His legs like the hands of a clock, one trying to catch up on the other. (p. 71)

The child's distinctive gait, hinging on the knee, replicates the problem his father, the victim, now has in walking. The syntax and vocabulary 'staggering', 'like the hands of a clock', could well describe the victim himself in his rehabilitation; the gait shows off the present he received from the PIRA paramilitaries who shot him. The knee becomes the focus of the gift, and thereafter the domesticated marker of the political antagonisms enacted on his body and the father-son kinship absorbs the political violence as a marker of the child's relationship with his father. At the same time, the victim's body, that is, is marked as hostile, pending further action dependent on his own future behaviour.

In an earlier poem in the collection, 'Bloody Hand', the speaker hears a man discussing the killing of another – the latter will be recognised by his distinctive gait and the knee problems he suffers:

⁸⁹ See Feargal Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), esp. ch. 9.

*Your man, says the Man, will walk into the bar like this – here his fingers
Mimic a pair of legs, one stiff at the knee – so you'll know exactly
What to do. He sticks a finger to his head. (p. 51)*

This man could well be the victim from the later poems. He is identifiable by his stiff knee, mark of someone who has already been kneecapped. Not unlike Coriolanus, he is reduced to an artificial, physical description which defines him absolutely, and which lead directly to his death – his ‘wounds as signifiers construct the individual while deconstructing his [...] body’.⁹⁰ And yet this Mouth has not changed his ways – the implication is that he has continued to inform, continued to speak when he ought to have kept silent, continued to enhance the enemy at the cost of the host. The alleged informant is he who crosses thresholds, is a welcome(d) guest in a foreigner’s *oikos*, and therefore must be disciplined by his neighbours. He is marked as hostile for the community to know *through his knee*. This latter-day wound-man – marked for death – becomes a *homo sacer*: ‘[H]omo sacer names something like the originary “political” relation, which is to say, bare life insofar as it operates in an inclusive exclusion as the referent of the sovereign decision.’⁹¹

The gift of the knee injury is not, in this sense, a gift to The Mouth, but rather a gift to the community, and is paralleled in the plebeians’ gift of Coriolanus’ exile to the city of Rome. Traditional juridical practice – police, charges, juries, judges, etc. – have no place in a society undergoing *stasis*, where the sovereign rules are adjudged to be no longer sovereign, and where neighbours fight neighbours to become host, to be the (new) sovereign. *Stasis* is a period when injuring your own strengthens your claim to sovereignty, when hospitality is forgone and also created: when hospitality is impossible *here* because it has been proven possible *elsewhere* by the enemy; when the man marked for exile becomes the marker of another’s sovereignty; when those considered guests can become hosts.

⁹⁰ Marshall, p. 100.

⁹¹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 85.

These knees – Volumnia’s and The Mouth’s – belong to different symbolic orders (liturgical; treachery), and yet they both prove the value of hospitality when *stases* are underway. Volumnia’s pleading genuflection successfully reinstated Coriolanus as her son, and as a result turned him against the making-hostile of Volumnia’s body as metonymic representative of Rome. The Mouth’s wounded knee is also a persuasive technique, relying on the concept of the hostile body to police the competing hosts/hostilities in civil war Belfast. Like Coriolanus and his own wounds, The Mouth is marked as Other within his own neighbourhood, as part of the mutating space conditioned by *stasis*.



To return: what, then, connects *Coriolanus* and Carson? It is not as easy as arguing that Carson’s Belfast is modelled on *Coriolanus*’ Rome; nor is it necessarily that Carson found in *Coriolanus* an explicit analogue with which he could frame his experiences of Troubles-era Belfast. It is certainly not that Carson liberally quoted from *Coriolanus*. No: I contend it is far less intentional, yet far stronger for all that. *Coriolanus* and *Belfast Confetti* share a home in the city that is both *oikos* and *polis*. This estranged homeliness is transported into this article. They are strictly on polar ends of time – 1608, 1989 – of politics – Jacobean England (with a king modelling his kingdom as a United Kingdom of England, Scotland and Ireland); New Elizabethan Northern Ireland – and poetics – pre-fourth-wall drama; narrative lyric and prose poetry. In this article, when read alongside another, they are guests in each other’s domains. They look different to themselves when in each other’s presence, and are made strange by the comparisons and analogies I have made. Yet, as guests in one another’s stories, these two texts illuminate the literary representation of hospitality, the importance and function of *stasis* to fracture and join warring parties in literature, and the centrality of hostile bodies onstage and in print. The narratives they tell of hostility as worn on the body are that sovereign evolution, from one polity to the next, will necessarily entail violence and other-ness, but also

that other-ness and violence can make of hostility a welcome guest. In this article I welcome *Coriolanus* and *Belfast Confetti* as guests at my table, estranging myself as their host, their terms dictating mine. Of course, the practice of literary criticism is, like culture writ large, hospitable at its core, but who is host and who guest – of that we can never be sure.