Resurrection: The Return of the Gothic Home in Contemporary Irish Art (1990-2015)

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Ph.D. Thesis

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From top left: Aideen Barry (2008) *Spray Grenades***; Dorothy Cross (1997)** *Storm in a Teacup***; Alice Maher (1997)** *Staircase***; Anthony Haughey (2011)** *Settlement***; Aideen Barry (2011)** *Tower of Folly.*

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or any other person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

Signed   _____

Date   _____

Acknowledgements

Dissemination of thesis

Different parts of this thesis have been disseminated over the last few years; some sections have been published as book chapters, or as articles in journals. The *Introduction* was published as a chapter in *The Gothic Compass: New Directions in Scholarship and Inquiry* (Routledge 2015). Parts of *Chapter One* were published in *Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic* (Palgrave 2014) and other parts of this chapter will appear in *Irish Gothic* (Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming). *Chapter Four* will form a chapter of *International Gothic in the Neo-Liberal Age* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming) and *Chapter Three* has been accepted for *Imagining Suburbia* (Cork University Press, forthcoming). Other parts of the thesis have been circulated through conference papers or invited lectures. Finally, several sections of the thesis, particularly *Chapter Five,* have influenced, and been influenced by, my practice-led art research projects and my fiction publications.

Book Chapters

Fahey, T. 2014. 'A Dark Domesticity: Echoes of Folklore in Irish Contemporary Gothic'. In: Beville, Maria and Piatti-Farnell, Lorna (eds.) *Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic* (London: Palgrave)

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Fahey, T. Forthcoming. 'Haunted by the Ghost; From Global Economics to Domestic Anxiety in Irish Contemporary Art Practice'. In: Blake, Linnie and Soltysik Monnet, Agniezska (eds.) *International Gothic in the Neo-Liberal Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

Fahey, T. Forthcoming. '"A Woman's Place…": the Irish Gothic suburbs in contemporary art practice'. In: Smith, Eoghan and Workman, Simon (eds.) *Imagining Irish Suburbia*, (Cork: Cork University Press)

Fahey, T. (Submitted) 'There's No Place Like Home: Domestic Disasters and Gothic Tourism in Ireland' For consideration in: Brien, Donna Lee and Piati-Farnell, Lorna (eds.) *Gothic Tourism: New International Perspectives* (forthcoming)

Journal Articles

Fahey, T. 2014. 'A Taste for the Transgressive: Pushing Body Limits in Contemporary Performance Art'. In: Wessell, Adele and Brien, Donna Lee (eds.) *Media Culture Journal* Volume 17. Issue 1. (Special edition: 'Taste')

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Conference Papers

'Paranormal Domesticity: the reinvention of the Irish home as uncanny, revenant space' (*Exploring the Extraordinary*, 7th annual conference, York, December 2015)

'What Lies Beneath: Unveiling Occluded Patient Narratives' (*What Lies Beneath* conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, October 2015)

'The Persistence of Legends; Folklore and the Ethnographic Art Practice of Michael Fortune' (*Why Folkloristics?* conference, Uppsala University, Sweden, June 2015)

'Remembering Wildgoose Lodge: Gothic Trauma Recalled and Retold' (*Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory* conference, Radboud University, Nijmegen, March – April 2015)

'The Locality of Loss; Memory Projects and Community Narratives' co-written and co-delivered with Dr. Niamh Nic Ghabhann (*The Literature of Loss* conference, Mary Immaculate College, February 2015)

'Cracks in the foundation: Irish Gothic suburbs in contemporary art practice' (*Encircling Worlds: Imagining Irish Suburbia* conference, Carlow College and VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, September, 2014)

'In Between Days; Domestic Liminality in the work of Aideen Barry '(*Between Spaces and Places* conference, Trinity College Dublin, May 2014)

'From Folklore to Contemporary Art Practice; Strange Spaces in Irish Gothic (*Irish Gothic* conference, Università degli Studi di Perugia and Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Italy, December, 2013)

'[Re] Animating the Ghost Estate; Manifestations of the Uncanny in Irish Contemporary Art Practice' (*International Gothic Association* conference, University of Surrey, August 2013)

'Walking and Talking: Gothic Sites and Stories' (*Art and Geography Ireland* conference, May 2013)

'Mapping the Intersections of Irish Folklore and Gothic: A Cultural Geographic Approach' (*LIT Research Symposium*, Limerick, April 2013)

'It's Not My Place': Dark Domesticity in Irish Folklore and the Visual Arts' (*Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia* inaugural conference, New Zealand, January 2013)

'Gothicise: Site Specific Gothic in Irish Fine Art Practice' (*Studies in Gothic Fiction* conference, San Diego, March 2012)

'The Bloody Chamber: The Architecture of Angela Carter' (*Angela Carter* conference, University of Northampton, June 2009)

'The Irish Gothic Castle: Setting, Character, Metaphor' (*Gothic Locations* conference, Cardiff University, Wales, September 2008)

'A House Divided: Notions of 'The Other' in Irish Gothic' (*The House of Fiction as the House of Life. Representations of the House in Literature and Culture, 1700-1900* conference, University of Aarhus, Denmark, August 2008)

'House; Shaping Spaces in Irish Domestic Gothic' (at *Global Gothic* conference, University of Stirling, December 2007)

Relevant Invited Lectures

'Forgetting to Remember; Making Folk Memory Projects in Limerick and Louth'. 2014. Part of the *Lime Tree Lecture series*, Mary Immaculate College.

'Gothic Locations: [Re] Imagining Sites and Stories'. 2013. Part of the *Art Works* seminar programme on the MA in Festive Arts, University of Limerick.

'Making Myths: Intersections in the Gothic.' 2012. Part of the *Visiting Lecturer* programme, University of Aarhus.

'Contemporary Irish Gothic: reimagining the old'. 2012. Part of the *Bealtaine* lecture series, the Hunt Museum, Limerick.

Practice-Based Research

Gothicise (2013 - 2016) *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*

Gothicise (2015) *Death Café Limerick*, funded by Grants under the Arts 2015.

Gothicise (2014) *Waking St. Munchin* in conjunction with Open House Limerick, funded by Grants Under The Arts 2014.

Gothicise (2011) *A Haunting*, funded by Limerick City Council

Gothicise (2011) *The Double Life of Catherine Street*, part of *Catherine Street Cultural Dig* 2011

Gothicise (2010) *ghostwalk/ghosttalk,* part of SpiritStore event for *Eva International* Biennale 2010.

Fiction publications:

'Scarecrow, Scarecrow on the Hill' (forthcoming 2015). In: Hall, Frank (ed.) *Dystopian Anthology* (Louisville: Hydra Publications)

'Tracing the Spectre' (forthcoming 2015). In: Ingham, Martin (ed.) *The Secret Life of Ghosts*, (Robbinston: Martinus Publishing)

'The Cillini' (forthcoming 2015). In: Wearing, Adele (ed.) *Piercing the Vale* (Leicester: Fox Spirit Press)

'Wherever You Go, There You Are' (forthcoming 2015). In: Wearing, Adele (ed.). In: *An Unknown Country* (Leicester: Fox Spirit Press)

'Walking the Borderlines'. 2015. In: Warren, Ross (ed.) *Darkest Minds* (Cheltenham: Dark Minds Press)

'Under the Whitethorn'. 2015. In: Messner, Adrean (ed.) *Faed* (Tulsa: A Murder of Storytellers)

'I Look Like You. I Speak Like You. I Walk Like You' .2015. In: Gerrard, Nick (ed.) *United Jotters Lit-zine* Issue 10, *Loose Fit*

'Long Shadows'. 2014. In: Blowers, Mary (ed.) *Where Dreams and Visions Live* (Create Space)

'The Changeling'. 2014. In: Laity, K.A. (ed.) *Drag Noir* (Leicester: Fox Spirit Press)

'Ghost Estate, Phase II'. 2014. In: Kate, Hannah (ed.) *Hauntings*, 2014 (Manchester: Hic Dragones Press)

'Coming Back'. 2014. In: Wearing, Adele (ed.) *Girl At The End Of The World* (Leicester: Fox Spirit Press)

 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge'. 2013. In: Kate, Hannah (ed.) *Impossible Spaces* (Manchester: Hic Dragones Press)

Relevant Timeline 1990-2015

1990   Mary Robinson becomes first female President of Ireland.

1991   Ireland signed up to the Maastricht Treaty (the Treaty on European Union); one of the conditions is that Ireland's anti-abortion legislation would remain.

1992   Killings of civilians continue in Northern Ireland. January: civilian attack by IRA; February: civilian attack by Loyalists.

1993   March: IRA bombing in Warrington, England. October: Two civilian attacks, one by the IRA, one by Loyalists. December: Downing Street Declaration signals beginning of the political peace process in Northern Ireland.

1994   August: IRA ceasefire in Northern Ireland. October: Loyalist ceasefire in Northern Ireland.

1995   150th anniversary of the Great Famine.

1996   IRA breaks ceasefire. February: Attack on Canary Wharf. June: Attack on Manchester.

1997   May: British Labour government comes to power. July: New IRA ceasefire. Divorce becomes legal in Ireland, under certain conditions but is not recognised by the Catholic Church.

1998   April: Good Friday agreement signed. New Northern Assembly created. August: Dissident splinter group the Real IRA bomb Omagh, Tyrone, killing twenty-nine people.

2000   Turn of the millennium, beginning of Celtic Tiger period of prosperity in Ireland and of Irish mass speculation in housing.

2001   September: 9/11 occurs in the US.

2002   Ireland's currency becomes the Euro. A referendum to tighten up anti-abortion laws is defeated by a narrow margin.

2005   Cork city in Ireland becomes European Capital of Culture.

2006   February: Republican riots in Dublin are triggered by the Unionist 'Love Ulster' parade. April: More than 120,000 people turn up to mark the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising.

2007   Financial downturn begins globally. September: Irish government agree to guarantee Irish banks in the face of the 'credit crunch'.

2008   Global financial crash. Economic collapse of Irish housing bubble.

2009 Phrase 'ghost estates' is first used by broadcaster and economist David McWilliams in relation to unfinished and abandoned housing estates in Ireland. The Irish government establishes the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA) as the national agency for handling the housing crisis. The austerity period begins with a government announcement of €2 billion cut in public services and public sector pensions. February: The Irish government announces plans to rescue the Allied Irish Bank and Bank of Ireland. In the same month, there is a massive protest in Dublin about the government's response to economic downturn. In the same month there is also a civil servant protest. June: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that Ireland is suffering the worst recession of any advanced economy. November: 250,000 public sector workers go on strike to protest budget cuts. In the same month, a report by the Commission of Investigation claims that the Catholic church in Ireland had deliberately covered up clerical child abuse.

2010 NAMARAMA protest art exhibition takes place in Dublin. The Saville Report into Bloody Sunday is published and finds that none of the Derry victims were carrying weapons. British Prime Minister David Cameron apologises on behalf of the British Government. Derry becomes City of Culture. November: Ireland makes a formal application for a bailout. In the same month, an Austerity Budget is unveiled and protested against through public demonstrations held in Dublin.

2011 *Achill-henge* is constructed by dissident builder Joe McNamara. July: Occupy Dame Street peaceful protests against government and bank handling of the economic crisis starts outside Central Bank in Dublin and runs until March 2012. The Cloyne Report into abuse in the Cork diocese is published.

2012 March: Civilian protest march in Dublin against the Austerity Household Charge. October: Savita Halappanavar dies in University Hospital Galway after being refused an abortion.

2013 Pro-life vigils and marches held in Ireland. Report on abuse in Magdalen Laundries published. Public protests are held to mark the imposition of a new household tax.

2014 Centenary of the Great War. January: The chairman of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) announced that property crash was over. Limerick city becomes Ireland's First National City of Culture. June: A mass grave containing nearly 800 children's bodies in Tuam is discovered and is reported on nationally and internationally. September: The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry investigate allegations of abuse at Kincora and Rubane. November: Large public Water Tax protest held.

2015 Preparation for centenaries ensues to mark the rise of Irish independence. April: 'The Road to the Rising' festival takes place in advance of the 2016 celebrations of the centenary of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence. May: Marriage Equality Act is passed by public referendum.

Abstract

This thesis investigates the resurrection of the Gothic home as a powerful symbol in contemporary Irish fine art practice from 1990 to 2015, figuring large in the work of important Irish artists Aideen Barry, Alice Maher, Dorothy Cross, Patrick Jolley, Anthony Haughey and Michael Fortune. This current re-emergence of the Gothic home has been provoked and stimulated by contemporary crises that have in turn acted to aggravate much older, underlying Irish anxieties in relation to home. It reveals these Gothic homes as *revenant spaces*, echoes of dark domestic images and situations that recur throughout Irish history and memory, from Big Houses, to Famine cottages, to Magdalen Laundries, to ghost estates. The works discussed here are rooted in both modern anxieties and a traumatised past; contemporary art acts as a *trigger* that unleashes buried traumas of home within the Irish psyche; layered associations of home with danger, warfare, colonialism, and eviction. The Gothic homes of contemporary Irish art embody the expression of the *Heimlich* within the *Unheimlich*; they are concerned with concealed repression, with uncanny revelation and return. This domestic art of these *Unheimlich* homes is identified as Gothic in terms of its aesthetic, its expression, and its concerns. These problematic homes position dark domesticity within the dissident mode of the Gothic, offering a counter-narrative to normative visions of home and dominant narratives of history and politics. This thesis valorises these multifarious contemporary representations of dark domesticity, seeing them as a powerful addition to the canon of creative practice on Irish domestic Gothic. In doing so, it enlarges the definition of Irish Gothic in order to embrace and value the vivid contribution of fine art practice to the Gothic as a genre.

List of Illustrations

180. Ibid.
181. Tracy Fahey (2015) *The contested site of Wildgoose Lodge*. Photograph.
182. *The Attack on the Lynch Family* (1841). Illustration from *The Newgate Calendar, Part III* (1800-1842)
183. *The Oath on the Altar* (1933) Illustration from *Wildgoose Lodge*.
184. Tracy Fahey (2014) *Wildgoose Lodge*. Site photography
185. Image from *Impossible Spaces* anthology (2013).
186. Ibid.
187. Tracy Fahey (2012) *Wildgoose Lodge: The Tree* (2012). Phototext series.
188. Tracy Fahey (2012) *Wildgoose Lodge: The Stones*. Phototext series.
189. Tracy Fahey (2012) *Along the Road*. Phototext series.
190. Tracy Fahey (2012) *Parknamurder Cross*. Phototext series.
191. Tracy Fahey (2012) *The Curse of the Four F's*. Phototext series.
192. Tracy Fahey (2012) *Glyde Court* (2012). Phototext series.
193. Tracy Fahey (2014) *The Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge*. Location photography.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid.
197. Ibid.
198. Ibid.
199. John Fahey (2014) *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge public meeting, Aclint Community Centre*. Photographs.
200. Ibid.
201. Tracy Fahey (2015) *Ambrose Finn outside his workshop*. Photograph.
202. Tracy Fahey (2015) *The remains of Pat Devan's house behind the workshop*. Photograph
203. *The only known contemporary drawing of Wildgoose Lodge by Townley Filgate's niece*. Exact date unknown. From the Wildgoose Lodge Archive, Dundalk County Library.
204. Jim McArt (2013) *The Burning of Wildgoose Lodge*. Painting.
205. Tracy Fahey (2015) *McArt indicates the alternative site of Wildgoose Lodge*. Photograph.
206. Tracy Fahey (2015) *The field containing the alternative site of the Lodge*. Photograph.
207. Pat Drumgoole (2012) *Myths and Legends of Cooley, etc*. featuring 'The Wild Goose Lodge' (Monologue). CD cover. Photograph by Tracy Fahey.
208. Ibid.
209. Jemmy Daley (1984) *Epic poem*. Photograph by Tracy Fahey.
210. Seamus Farrell (2008) *Neo Ruin/Irish Folly*. Temporary sculptural installation.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> The Gothic is rightly, if partially, understood as a cyclical genre that reemerges in times of cultural stress in order to negotiate anxieties for its readership by working through them in displaced (sometimes supernaturalized) form (Hurley 2002: 194).

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the resurrection of the Gothic home as a powerful symbol in contemporary Irish fine art practice over the last twenty-five years: from 1990 to 2015. This thesis examines the reasons for this prevalence of Gothic homes in Irish contemporary fine art practice, and points to these homes being *revenant spaces*: echoes of domestic images and situations that recur throughout Irish history. It takes the Gothic to be a transnational, interdisciplinary study of the marginal, the liminal, the dispossessed and the unspoken, but focuses on the underexplored area of fine art and the Gothic, and in particular, that of Irish fine art and the Gothic. Contemporary Irish art produced from 1990 to 2015 is alive with problematic images of home that overwhelm the viewer with feelings of anxiety. This resurrection of the Gothic home is not new, but its current re-emergence in the last twenty-five years has been prompted by certain contemporary circumstances that have in turn acted to aggravate much older, underlying Irish anxieties in relation to home. Gothic visions of home were already circulating in the 1990s: a decade that saw both the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine (*An Gorta Mór*) and the last large campaigns of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland. Ideas of nation as home and nation as home have also been highlighted since 2010, with the commencement of a decade of centenaries, celebrations of historic landmarks in the path to Irish independence.

In 2015, artists, historians and politicians alike are considering the problematic process of memorialising the traumatic events of the Easter Rising (1916), the War of Independence (1919-1921) and especially the Civil War (1922-23) which divided communities, families and homes. Fifteen years into a new millennium and Ireland is still irretrievably haunted by the past. In contemporary Ireland, notions of home are still overlaid by national memories of colonial ownership, historical dispossession and civil unrest. Home is a recurrent symbol, setting, site and metaphor in contemporary Irish art practice. It traditionally represents domesticity, intimacy, family life and ownership, but more often in contemporary Irish art, it is represented as a problematic and contested space. The powerful, national memories of loss, war and trauma have abnormalised Irish ideas of home. These abnormal reactions to home are depicted in the art of 1990-2015; these vivid fears, buried secrets, repressed desires and silenced narratives of the Gothic home are depicted again and again in the work of contemporary Irish artists: Alice Maher, Rita Duffy, Michael Fortune, Aileen Lambert, Connolly Cleary, Martina Cleary, Marianne Keating, Daphne Wright, Michele Horrigan, David Creedon, Yvonne Cullivan, Willie Doherty, John Kindness, Patric Coogan, Philip Napier, Aideen Barry, Dorothy Cross, Amanda Coogan, Cicely Brennan, Patrick Jolley, Anthony Haughey, Elaine Reynolds, Paddy Baxter, Eamon Crudden, Vera Klute, Kim Haughton, Valerie Anex and Seamus Farrell. Within the oeuvre of these artists, home appears consistently as a Gothic site of anxiety. Home, in these works, is often exemplified as problematic and contested; its boundaries frequently transgressed by economic, political and cultural forces.

This Irish Gothic home is a cultural product of both past and present anxieties. This thesis therefore aims to analyse the home as the logical locus of the Gothic in contemporary Irish culture, while tracing the roots of this expression back through history, culture, memory and folklore. It sets out to dissect the different forms of the Gothic home through fine art

projects that reference otherness, trauma, memory, haunting and the uncanny. In doing so, it also hopes to rewrite the definition of Irish Gothic in order to create a more comprehensive understanding that embraces and values the contribution of fine art practice to the Gothic. It looks at how an understanding of home is at the heart of a national, regional and local Gothic in Ireland, a communal understanding of otherness constituted by shared community memories, history, customs and sites.

Fig. 1   Alice Maher (2003) *Palisade***. Photograph from** *Portraits* **series.**

Alice Maher explores how we react to the contested home through her *Portraits* series of 2003. *Palisade* (2003), part of this series, offers an extraordinary cross between Renaissance portraiture and Surrealist art (Fig. 1). In *Palisade*, the artist presents herself surrounded by a defensive wall of stakes, a structure normally erected during war to protect the domestic dwellings within. Here the artist has literally become the home; she is both protected and imprisoned within her palisade. Maher's use of defensive building is reminiscent of both

folkloric methods of home protection, explored in *Chapter One*, and of colonial fortifications discussed in *Chapter Two*. This use of surrealism to express ideas of the Irish Gothic home is explored in *Chapter Three.* Maher's preoccupation with this melting, surrealistic mode of transformation leads to an *Unheimlich*, or uncanny, image of home. This idea of home as a place where the familiar has grown unfamiliar and strange is explored in Jentsch's *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906), and Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919). Maher equates the idea of the home with woman, with Freud's 'first home', the womb, which he describes as: 'an *Unheimlich* place…the entrance to the former Heim of all human beings' (Freud 1919: 944). Maher's unusual representation of women stems from the uniquely Irish experience of female repression, discussed in detail in *Chapter Three*, and emblematised in contemporary Irish art through feminist disruptions of the domestic in the work of Maher and other artists like Barry, Cross and Coogan. Indeed, Humphries (2008) sees Maher's work as symptomatic of the contemporary Irish use of domestic symbolism to reflect deeper notions of home:

> …in these *Portraits*, Maher appears to be trying to retrieve something from her upbringing, as she embeds herself into material memorabilia from her childhood rural environment, heavily laden once more with religious iconography…By literally covering her torso and face with these talismans, it is as though the physical alignment to material mnemonic associations, she can return home, if not by clicking her ruby red slippers, by creating herself as art, an art that ultimately seeks the domestic to reflect memory. In other words, the artist has created a new language for the self via domestic iconography. (Humphries 2008: 46)

Maher's *Palisade* refers to both a range of domestic anxieties, and to wider concerns about home to do with issues of power, transgression and memory. This complex range of reference typifies the approach to home taken by contemporary Irish artists, who imbue this domestic subject matter with an aura of danger, dissolution and doom. Over the course of this thesis, I examine these works to trace the precedents for these dark visions in art, culture, politics, history and memory. In *Chapters One* to *Four*, I look at Gothic images of home interpreted by a range of Irish artists that deal with specific areas of folklore, colonial concerns, female anxieties and the contemporary housing crisis of 2008-2015. This thesis sets

out to analyse these multiple manifestations of the Gothic home, siting them in relation to present societal concerns, namely cultural anxiety and economic disaster, but also in relation to the shadow of legend, postcolonial and historical trauma, the threat of the ruin, and the survival of memory. In addition to analysing these works, *Chapter Five* also offers a parallel, practice-led investigation of the process of making a fine art project based on an Irish Gothic story and the collection of its counter-narratives and secret histories.

The history of the Gothic itself is a history of resurrections, of the recovery and reactivation of forms. Indeed, the birth of the Gothic is linked to the Gothic Revival, itself a reanimation of older principles of architecture. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a textual and artistic lexicon of Gothic was created, a language of dungeons, doubles and distressed damsels. Since then, revivals of the Gothic in fine art, literature and other creative media have occurred periodically, inspired by changing cultural, economic, political and social circumstances. What is interesting is how these revivals differ from each other, tied as they are to a particular set of conditions that have stimulated the Gothic to flourish. As Spooner comments, 'like Frankenstein's monster, these revivals seldom take exactly the same shape they possessed before. The notion of revival can be seen to imply a reappropriation and reinvention of previous forms rather than a straightforward repetition' (Spooner 2006: 11-12). For the purpose of this thesis, I will look specifically at a remarkable example of one of these revivals or reappropriations, that of Irish art from 1990-2015. I will look at the dark versions of Irish home that emerge over these twenty-five years in terms of what they tell us about nationhood, homeland and physical and mental constructs of the home, but also in terms of how these visions are triggered by past and present anxieties, causing an upsurge of angst, fear and national insecurity. This thesis illustrates this unique Gothic resurgence in Ireland by examining some specific tropes that emerge from 1990-2015; interrelated themes of anxiety, space, identity and liminality that centre on contemporary

visions (or re-visions) of what the Irish home symbolises in the twenty-first century; a home haunted equally by memories of a problematic political and colonial past, and a fraught social and economic future.

This *Introduction* sets out the focus and parameters of the research question. It defines Irish Gothic as the specific sense of otherness that emanates from Irish culture, history and geography, and that is expressed through creative practice. This sense of cultural and national otherness arises from Ireland's rich folklore of strange stories, its troubled history, its liminal geography, and its problematic postcolonial sense of identity. This otherness is both a construct of alterity in relation to Englishness, but also expresses the distinctively Irish roots of the Gothic through art, literature, folklore and interdisciplinary approaches to sites and stories. This *Introduction* also elaborates on notions of home in its many manifestations, physical, historical and temporal. It links these ideas to the central concept of the revenant Gothic home in Ireland. This section also highlights methodologies used in analysis of the thesis that are suggested by the fine art examined, including theoretical approaches that explore the nature of home as site of memory, site of trauma and site of the uncanny. The central thesis of the *Introduction* is based on an argument made in my chapter 'Resurrection: A Gothic Revival in Irish Contemporary Art' in *The Gothic Compass: New Directions in Scholarship and Inquiry* (Routledge 2015), that these Gothic homes arise as a response to contemporary economic, social and cultural crisis in Ireland. In the same chapter, I also posit that representations of the home in fine art mirror the uncertainty and anxiety that pervades contemporary domestic space; a space problematised by financial uncertainty and questions of ownership, and haunted by the ghost of postcolonial dispossession. The section on Irish spaces and terrains also stems from a chapter on '[Im]possible Spaces; Strange Sites, Stranger Stories in Irish Contemporary Art Practice' in *Irish Gothic* (Cambridge Scholars, forthcoming) that marks the Irish landscape as both a physical and metaphorical realm of

legend. This *Introduction* provides an expanded version of these arguments, and frames the Irish Gothic home as a site of recurrence, a site of disintegration and a site of danger, all topics that are investigated further in the five succeeding chapters.

These five chapters of this thesis aim to support these objectives in terms of examining the pervasiveness of failed, contested and traumatised homes in Irish contemporary art practice and scrutinising specific case studies in Irish fine art practice, seeing them as revenant images that echo older concerns about Irishness and home. Irish art is rife with images and narratives of a Gothic domesticity; the work of Barry, Maher, Duffy, Fortune *et al* stands as testament to this. The different ways in which these artists articulate the core anxieties and uncertainties of Gothic domestic space are explored throughout different chapters using a structured method of examination laid out at the end of the *Introduction*. However, before examining the specific methodologies and arguments used, the first point to outline is the definition of the central research question of the thesis.

Origins of Project; Gaps in the Gothic

This thesis was triggered by the sheer amount of vivid and evocative images of the Irish Gothic home expressed from 1990-2015 by important Irish artists including Alice Maher, Rita Duffy, Michael Fortune, Willie Doherty, John Kindness, Aideen Barry, Dorothy Cross, Amanda Coogan, Patrick Jolley and Elaine Reynolds. The concerns and anxieties expressed by these artists echo a tormented domesticity that is unmistakeably Irish in origin, and that refers to a range of historical, cultural and folkloric forms of contested and transgressed homes. This thesis sets out to contextualise and explain this work, and in doing so to apply the term 'Gothic' confidently to Irish contemporary art practice, and to establish the place of 'home' in contemporary art practice within the canon of Irish Gothic. The Gothic home in

contemporary Irish art practice is often portrayed as *Unheimlich* or uncanny. In the art practice of the Irish artists cited, home is also represented as a place of permeability and of cultural otherness, or alterity. It is the site of buried memories and repressed histories. It is the place where counter-narratives of history are shaped and transmitted. Botting has discussed this idea of Gothic itself as shadowing the forces of modernity: 'with counternarratives displaying the underside of enlightenment and humanist values' (1996: 1-2). The contemporary Irish home is a space of uncertainty, of anxiety, and even of terror. Images of the Gothic home also permeate the work of contemporary Irish writers, from the brooding house of *The Book of Evidence* (John Banville, 1989), to the nightmarish Monaghan homes of *The Butcher Boy* (Patrick McCabe, 1992), and to the claustrophobia of *Room* (Emma Donoghue, 2012). In *Broken Harbour* (Tana French, 2012) and *The Spinning Heart* (Donal Ryan, 2012) both writers also use the contemporary Gothic trope of the Irish ghost estate as settings for their novels.

The process of identifying the subject of this thesis arose from an investigation into definitions of Irish Gothic offered by various authors and publications. Chief among these are W. J. McCormack's articles, 'Irish Gothic and After, 1825-1945' (1991) and 'Irish Gothic' (1998), Jarlath Killeen's *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth-century* (2005), his articles 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction' (2006) and 'Irish Gothic Revisited' (2008), Luke Gibbons' *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization and Irish Culture* (2004) and *Transformations in Irish Culture* (1996), Richard Haslam's article 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach' (2007) and his book chapter 'Irish Gothic' (2007). All these writers operate on a consensus that Irish Gothic is different from other national forms of Gothic. All privilege the written word (mostly in the form of fiction, though Gibbons cites reports, letters and other marginalia) over oral discourse in evaluating the tales of the Gothic and how these form an Irish Gothic tradition (or mode). This thesis

proposes to address the current gaps in researching Gothic studies. These gaps are identified as follows, the first one being the most significant for this dissertation:

McCormack, Killeen and Haslam all omit fine art and the visual arts from their discussions; this is a large gap in their analyses. Gibbons however, widens his discussions in *Gaelic Gothic* (2004) to include cartoons from Punch, and his *Transformations in Irish Culture* (1996) also considers the work of artists Alice Maher and James Coleman in relation to postcolonialism (but not to the Gothic). This set of omissions offers a very narrow definition of the Gothic, which is internationally regarded as a transdisciplinary study. This thesis argues for a wider definition of Irish Gothic that can usefully incorporate a richer frame of reference to involve fine art practice and lived culture as well as textual sources. The visual culture of the Gothic is not only as a parallel creative form that illuminates the written tradition, but is a vital source of Gothic in itself. There is also a general failure to connect Irish Gothic with contemporary manifestations of the Gothic, except in the case of Haslam who mentions the idea of such a tradition existing in contemporary writing; he cites Seamus Deane, Neil Jordan and John Banville. However, he omits mention of Patrick McCabe, Emma Donoghue, Eilis Ni Dhuibhne and Anne Enright, and fails to reference ideas of the Gothic in other creative practices. There is also a lack of recognition of the contributory factors of memory, folklore and traditions in the Irish Gothic tradition. Of these writers, only Haslam (2007) discusses the importance of folklore within the 'Irish Catholic Gothic' canon (he cites John and Michael Banim, James Clarence Mangan, Gerald Griffin and William Carleton but omits Patrick Kavanagh), but there is no attempt to offer a wider understanding of *how* such a 'native' or vernacular Gothic might manifest in other creative contemporary practices. This reconsideration of folklore as key to Irish Gothic is deliberated in some detail in *Chapter One: The Home of Folklore*. Finally, while all these writers on Irish Gothic cite post-colonialism as an important trope in Irish culture, it is not explicitly linked with ideas of

trauma, hauntings, ruin and the Irish home, as it is in *Chapter Two: North and South: [Post] Colonial Notions of Home*.

There is also a gap in terms of critical writing on Irish art and the Gothic. Despite excellent texts like Fionna Barber's *Art in Ireland since 1910* (2013) which offers an in-depth analysis of how the forces of nation and modernity have shaped twentieth and twenty-first century Irish art, and Dorothy Walker's *Modern Art in Ireland* (1997) which looks at the existence of an Irish tradition within modern art, there are no substantial texts devoted to the idea of the Gothic in Irish art. In fact, in terms of current art practice in Ireland, there has been reluctance to quantify a body of fine art work or fine art practitioners as 'Gothic', despite the prevalence of Gothic motifs and themes in contemporary Irish art. In fact, the only explicit links to a Gothic tradition have been made in the case of Aideen Barry who self-identifies in interviews as a 'Gothic' artist. Curator Cliona Schaffrey has produced some interesting essays on the nature of space and place in contemporary art, such as *Place(s) Without Place* (2007) on Felicity Clear, *Pantofflier* (2008) on Vera Klute and *The House Projects* (2007) on Aideen Barry and Dominic Thorpe, all of which reference ideas of the domestic uncanny. This theme is explored further in *Chapter Three: Women who can't seem to get out of the house': Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny*. The idea of a gendered space in Irish art is investigated by Jane Humphries who has written several excellent articles about artist Alice Maher and her visions of a disrupted domesticity including 'The Emergence Of A Domestic Avant-Garde In Contemporary Irish Art: The Paradoxical House/Home' (2008) and 'Re(writing) the domestic into the everyday' (2010). In fact, it was Humphries who first signalled the significance of the domestic as a 'new' arena of interesting experimentation in Irish contemporary art practice:

> By establishing a domestic aesthetic, artists sought to highlight and explore the multiple signifiers entrenched in domestic space and iconography, by subverting traditionally held assumptions of the role of women within the home and thereby, it is argued, established a

challenging, innovative art discourse. It is proffered that this phenomenon materialised in Irish art from the late 1980s onwards, partly as a reaction to these changes and as a reaction to women's traditional association to the home, which was particularly contradictory and contentious in the Republic of Ireland. The paper suggests a 'turn to the domestic' for Irish artists in some instances pre-dated their British contemporaries. (Humphries 2008: 3)

Humphries explores this statement in her article through an analysis of Maher's work read with reference to Bachelard's ideas of home, with some additional examination of the work of Irish artist Maud Cotter and of English artist Rachel Whiteread. Agrest *et al* (1996) in *The Sex of Architecture* argues that the grand narratives of modernism have ignored domestic space, due to its association with female space. This idea is explored more fully in *Chapter Three*. However, this thesis takes this idea of Irish gendered domestic space, and extends the survey of it to include the contributions of male artists to this discussion. The dissertation also uses this starting point to examine this interpretation of home in Irish culture as a reinvention of the home as a Gothic space within Irish contemporary art. The intensity of focus on dark images of home in contemporary art practice since 1990 is the result of a complex national mix of folklore, history, female oppression, housing excesses and crises, and the memory of trauma; a mixture of conditions specific to Irish culture in that they arise from a particular set of local, regional and national circumstances.

However, some of the most interesting writing on the Irish contemporary home has come from sources not traditionally utilised in art writing such as sociology and journalism. There has been some stimulating writing about the fraught nature of the home in contemporary Ireland by sociologists and geographers from the National Institute for Spatial Analysis such as Cian O'Callaghan, Rob Kitchin, Justin Gleeson and Karen Keaveny. O'Callaghan's 2013 essay *Ghost Estates: Urban Geography after NAMA* is of especial interest. Due to the topical nature of the ghost estates, this phenomenon has also been documented by journalists such as Conor Pope and Edel Kennedy, while Fintan O'Toole has made explicit links between contemporary manifestations of the home and the Gothic

tradition (O'Toole 2011). In *Chapter Four: [Re] animating the Ghost Estates*, I draw together these disparate texts to provide a reading of contemporary art work that reflects on the nature of the ghost estates and on their contribution to ideas of the Irish Gothic home. This thesis sets out to draw together artists who have not previously been considered in conjunction with each other. It examines their work under certain themes in the course of the thesis chapters; themes that reflect different manifestations of the Gothic home in their work and that reflect the prevalence of folklore, anxiety, ruins, haunting, memory, trauma and shadows of the Irish cultural, economic and historical past. This has been a lengthy and complex process. To complicate matters, few Irish artists who produce these Gothic images of home have written about their work, with the exception of Aideen Barry; most of their insights recorded here stem from interviews carried out across the last twenty-five years. This thesis also contains reflections on a project with art collective Gothicise in *Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*; this seeks to open up, interrogate and reflect on the process of making Gothic art about home. This process is discussed in the next section of the *Introduction*.

Foundations: Prior research conducted on the Irish Gothic Home

This thesis is the culmination of investigations conducted since 2007 into the idea of Irish domestic space as intrinsically Gothic (see *Conference Papers* and *Practice-Led Research* in the front matter). For the purpose of this thesis, Gothic is defined here as an accepted area of academic study that is interdisciplinary, transcultural and transnational in nature, spanning the study of literature, film, TV, cultural and subcultural studies, and performing and visual arts. Although there are common tropes, subjects, and features of the Gothic across the world, it also has distinct cultural and national representations, depending on the region of the world

from which it emerges. Mapping the Gothic as global, national and local is useful in terms of charting how the genre defines itself in different locations; as a reflector of general Gothic themes but also as mapping its interaction with regional interests; local stories and sites, folklore and dialects. The idea of a cultural mapping of the Gothic is also useful not only in identifying regional characteristics of the Gothic, but in creating a system of wayfinding or interpretation that allows a richer reading of the cultural products produced in this context, a kind of cultural geography of otherness. Using these considerations to examine and map Irish fine art, the place or concept that kept recurring was the Gothic home, the most potent intersection of memory, site, story, folktales, superstitions and trauma. This research journey is mapped through the details of my papers, publications and invited lectures outlined in the front matter of the thesis. However, in a thesis analysing creative practice it was also appropriate to reflect on my own relevant creative practice, therefore this section also outlines the particular practice-led research conducted into this project through working with the fine art collective *Gothicise*[1]. I set up this Limerick-based collaborative in 2010, and act as its principal director. The name 'Gothicise' obviously derives from the Gothic. It is a play on words, the idea of 'making Gothic', which can mean both the consideration of a subject in light of Gothic themes, but also the idea of making projects that are in themselves Gothic. To date it has carried out four complete site-specific, interactive projects (*ghostwalk/ghosttalk* (2010), *The Double Life of Catherine Street* (2011) (Fig. 2), *A Haunting* (2011) (Fig. 3), *Waking St. Munchin* (2014) (Fig. 4)). These are projects that play with ideas of doubles, resurrected rituals, unreliable narrators and folk Gothic narratives. Gothicise's fifth project, *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* started in 2012, and will continue into 2016, while a sixth Gothicise project (*Death Café Limerick*) will commence in November 2015.

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[1] Gothicise website available to view at www.gothicise.weebly.com

Figs. 2-4 **Gothicise (from left to right):** *The Double Life of Catherine Street* **(2011);** *A Haunting* **(2011);** *Waking St. Munchin* **(2014). Performance pieces.**

Gothicise has a floating membership, depending on the nature of its project. These projects have always been concerned with memory, the interplay between past and present using methods of social engagement to create interactive, participative experiences. As a collective we work with sites and stories, investigate how they intertwine, and examine what arises from these intersections. *Chapter Five* of this thesis focuses on a detailed analysis of the fieldwork of Gothicise in relation to one of these projects, *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*, and on what this project tells us about the Irish home in terms of memory, uncanny recurrence and historical trauma. This project considers dissident stories relating to the ruined and traumatised home of Wildgoose Lodge. It is a memory project, which focuses on the counter-narratives that emanate from both a real historical incident of 1816, and from a Gothic story by William Carleton, entitled 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman' (1830), and its later variant, 'Wildgoose Lodge' (1833). The echoes of this two-hundred-year old incident still resonate as secret family stories held in local and community memory. This project, which uses autoethnographic methods of collecting these family stories, considers the role of memory-work in reconstituting and revoicing the silenced history of the local community. Key to this project has been the recording and preservation of family versions of the story of Wildgoose Lodge.

Running parallel to this fine art research is my creative writing practice, which focuses on the dissonant realities of domestic space. Since 2013, I have published eleven

short stories on the theme of the uncanny Irish home, and on its position as a liminal space that reflects both past and present; a permeable space that is open to manifestations, hauntings and echoes of the folkloric past. These stories form a single-author short-story collection: *The Unheimlich Manoeuvre*, currently with editors in Boo Books Press. These stories, many of which developed as parallel projects to the thesis, include 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' (2013) in the *Impossible Spaces* anthology (ed. Hannah Kate, Hic Dragones Press), which is quoted in *Chapter Five* as part of my autoethnographic research, and which appears in *Appendix A*.

So what conclusions have this interdisciplinary research on the Gothic nature of domestic space led me to? The very duration of my research through various modes from theoretical writing to creative practice has borne out my initial instinct that this subject bears repeated and energetic investigation through interdisciplinary methods. Research for all of these papers, chapters, invited lectures, fine art projects and short stories has continued to deepen my conviction that Irish domestic space can be constituted as Gothic space. Since first embarking on this study in 2007, Ireland has experienced the economic crash of 2008, which has further complicated and exacerbated the nature of the Irish relationship with home. This complex and fraught relationship has given rise to a large number of interesting fine art projects, which explore the anxieties and traumas associated with these strange spaces. Although there is a significant amount of work produced in contemporary Irish art that reflects on the othered nature of the Irish home, this work has not been actively categorised or discussed as Gothic. The subject of this thesis therefore aims to build on a keen and continuing interest in the Irish Gothic home and on a conviction that a substantial work on this subject is both timely and relevant. It seeks to address the gaps in research into the Irish Gothic home, both critical and practice-led, and to offer an expanded definition of the Gothic within Irish culture. It also sets out to explain the nature of the Irish home as a recurrent

presence in fine art practice, so often represented as an uncanny, traumatic space redolent of memory and of questions of identity. The thesis specifically examines the current resurrection of the Gothic home, which has resurfaced in contemporary art practice parallel to a sharp rise in national anxiety to do with ideas of home and community, and echoes some common concerns and tropes in contemporary international Gothic art. Before it does so, to provide a suitable context, it is necessary to map the nature of contemporary Gothic art at an international level.

Contemporary Gothic Art: An International Overview

Over the last twenty-five years, Gothic as a trope in visual art practice has been reenergised within an international context with a proliferation of work dealing with innately Gothic themes of abjection, loss, trauma, alienation, traces and ruins. Fine art, defined here as art produced for aesthetic rather than functional purposes, is a flexible, responsive, and interdisciplinary practice. Contemporary Gothic art springs from its own aesthetic tradition of the Gothic, but also responds to, and complements, other, parallel disciplines of literature and film. Fine art also challenges contemporary societal values and mores using visual, aural and textual modes. It offers a new and interesting platform for viewing the Gothic. Like film, fine art practice, incorporating lens-based media and documentary modes of working, offers an extended aesthetic dimension, a different language and vocabulary of expression, and a new way to explore Gothic themes and tropes. Exciting and provocative work by artists such as Gregor Schneider, Louise Bourgeois and Tacita Dean have transformed the visual landscape and language of the Gothic and translated it into a contemporary setting. Books such as Catherine Spooner's (2006) *Contemporary Gothic*, Gilda Williams' (2007) *The Gothic: Documents of Contemporary Art* and Francesca Gavin's (2008) *Hellbound: New Gothic Art*

have all explored the emerging themes of this art and probed the reasons for this eruption of Gothic tropes in contemporary fine art practice. In these books, Spooner and Williams examine this contemporary revival in terms of modern anxieties; Williams cites as key to contemporary Gothic the experience of living in the shadow of the millennium and through the seismic aftermath of 9/11. David Punter has contended that Gothic is connected with 'the turn of centuries, as though the very attempt to turn over a new leaf unavoidably involves conjuring the shadow of the past' (Punter 1999: 2). Gavin, though arguing against the fin-de-millennium theory (Spooner 2006: 21), also moots the theory of new Gothic art being a response to what Michael Moore describes as '[T]he culture of fear' (Moore cited in Gavin 2008: 6); contemporary society's uneasy relationship with terrorism, paedophiles, serial killers, war and environmental disaster. Spooner maintains that contemporary anxieties *inform* the Gothic rather than activating it: 'Gothic provides a set of language and a set of discourses with which we can talk about fear and anxiety, rather than being reducible to whatever fear happens to be promoted by the media at any given time' (Spooner 2006: 30). This thesis also agrees with the idea of the Gothic as an evolving counter-narrative, as identified by Botting (1996: 1-2) that continues to address these ideas of 'fear and anxiety'. However it also analyses contemporary anxieties as *triggers* that unleash buried traumas of home within the Irish psyche; historical associations of home with danger, warfare, colonialism and eviction.

The international contemporary Gothic resurgence in fine art practice has been characterised by several key exhibitions. In the course of this thesis, I will refer to mainly Irish shows in order to illustrate and explain how artists have addressed national and individual themes of the Gothic home. Exhibitions have always acted as a snapshot of movements and trends in fine art, a drawing together of thematic strands among artists. In 1997 there were two such significant shows of Gothic art. The 1997 exhibition *Gothic:*

Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston featured work by the Chapman Brothers, Gregory Crewdson, Cindy Sherman, Mike Kelley, Robert Gober and Douglas Gordon (Fig. 5). The accompanying catalogue also boasted a collection of contextual essays by Gothic scholar Anne Williams and Gothic novelists Joyce Carol Oates and Patrick McGrath that ranged in subject matter acrossliterature, art, cinema and music that referred to previous incarnations of the Gothic, linking these to contemporary fine art practice. The introductory essay to the 1997 catalogue by Christoph Grunenberg: 'Unsolved Mysteries: Gothic Tales from Frankenstein to the Hair Eating Doll' explicitly linked the show to both the approaching millennium and a notion of a global Gothic resurrection. As Grunenberg put it: 'Gothic presents contemporary art that displays a strong pre-millennial fascination with the dark and uncanny side of the human psyche and attempts to relocate it within the context of a revival of Gothic sensibility in many cultures today' (1997: 217). In the same year, *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* opened in London to massive acclaim, launching the Young British Artists (YBA) on the international scene, as well as featuring profoundly Gothic work by Damien Hirst, Mark Quinn, Ron Mueck, Mat Collishaw and Rachel Whiteread (Fig. 6). Brash, confrontational and spectacular, the show grabbed headlines and challenged viewers with its spectacle of abjection, dissections and bizarre intersections. Preoccupations with millennial angst, global dangers and bodily vulnerability provide the context for the content of these two exhibitions. Both *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art* and *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* are redolent with icons of body horror, abjection and strange spaces that centre on anxieties that probe core societal values, notions of cultural identity and global stability. To quote McGrath on this topic: '[M]any of the dominant themes and motifs of the Gothic – masks, monsters, grotesques, doubles, ghosts, madness, intoxication, dreams – speak to this instability of identity' (1997: 156).
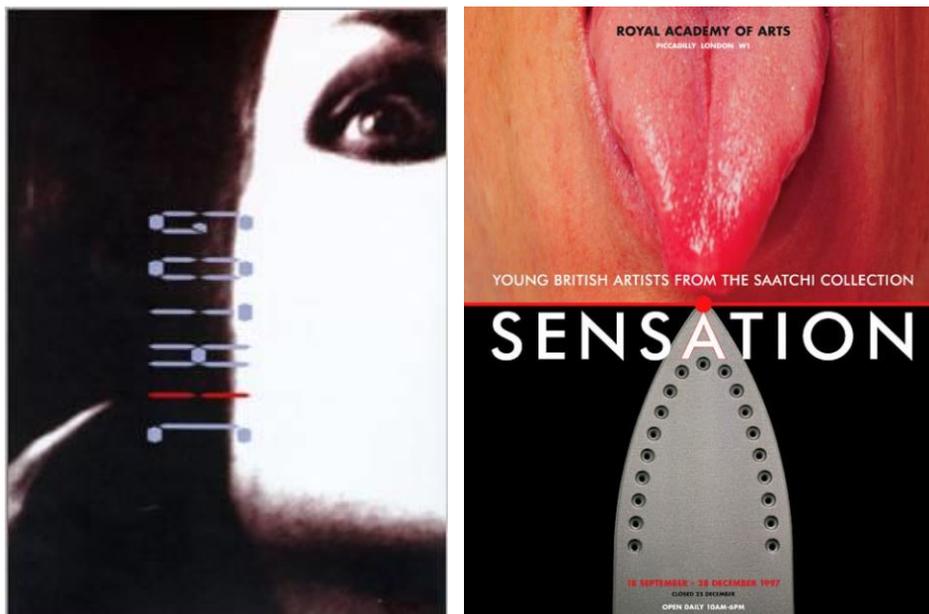
Figs. 5-6   **From left to right; *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art*, the 1997 exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, the 1997 exhbition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Catalogue covers.**

The Gothic Nature of Contemporary Irish Art

McGrath's term, 'instability of identity', is especially relevant to an examination of visions of the Gothic home that emanate from Irish contemporary fine art practice; art that was produced during a time of anxiety, flux and transformation in Irish society. Unlike the international wave of work dealing with the vulnerability of bodily integrity and dissolution and instability on a global scale, Irish Gothic art is different; it focuses on a crisis that is triggered by events both contemporary and historical. This is a crisis called 'home'; a sense of confusion as to what constitutes home within a series of Irish national, cultural, social and familial contexts. The contemporary Irish home is filled with memories: personal and familial as well as historical, and its most recent memories are coloured by current anxieties about well-being; as individuals, communities, and as a nation.

The most resonant images of dysfunctional domesticity in Ireland are the empty homes that stand on the ghost estates around the country. These empty homes analysed in *Chapter Four: [Re] Animating the Ghost Estates* symbolise the Irish home as a site of contemporary crisis. They also highlight the problematic relationship between the individual home and the state through their contested ownership. A disturbing number of modern evictions recently carried out evoke the revenant shadow of the Great Famine and the dispossession of the native Irish; a topic more fully discussed in *Chapter Two: North and South: [Post] Colonial Notions of Home*. Contemporary upheavals are coloured by ancient memories of trauma and by a set of national wounds that refuse to heal. The Irish home has long been an *Unheimlich* or uncanny one, shadowed by the darkness of colonial appropriation. Traditionally the Irish home is a transgressed and invaded one, destabilised by the Penal Laws of 1691 and their enforcement of a history of short leases and impermanent tenancy by the native Catholic Irish. The idea of the home and of home ownership has been, and continues to be, of huge emotional import to Irish people. The dark domesticity that pervades current portrayals of the Irish home is a legacy of home as transgressed site. From earliest times, houses were seen as linked with fairy-lore and the dead (ring-forts) and with rites and rituals to keep dangerous influences out. With the beginning of the occupation of Ireland in the medieval period, the colonial house took the form of a castle, then later, the tower-house, both forms that were revived on a grand scale during the later Gothic Revival period; forms that also spelled out the hostile relationship between conqueror and conquered. The Irish house holds resonances of colonialism (The Big House and its relationship with the territory), trauma (Famine Villages, sites of evictions, houses burned down) and alienation (asylums, anonymous and deserted estates). What happens when a home fails? Over the course of the next five chapters, I explore homes in fine art and in contemporary culture that have fallen into ruin, become dysfunctional, disintegrated and, in some cases, which have

almost completely disappeared. I look at the dark legacies of folklore and superstition that still pervade domestic spaces explored by artists such as Michael Fortune, and at home itself as a challenging and even dangerous space, particularly for women, as represented by artists Patrick Jolley, Aideen Barry and Dorothy Cross. I examine the traces and memories these homes leave on a traumatised landscape, in both physical and paranormal terms. I locate the modern phenomenon of the ghost estates explored by Elaine Reynolds and Anthony Haughey within contemporary culture but also within the tradition of the ruined home in Irish history as examined by Martina Cleary and David Creedon. In short, this thesis views the Gothic home as a revenant space within Irish culture, a space of inevitable return, a place of memories, traumas and historical difficulty.

Home, in the work of these artists, can therefore be seen as a recurrent symbol, setting, site, and metaphor in Irish contemporary art practice. Home generally represents what Bachelard terms 'felicitous spaces' of domesticity, intimacy, family life and ownership (Bachelard 1958: xxxv). However, in Ireland there is a recurrent version of the home as problematic and contested, a version that has been valorised in contemporary representations. In this art, home is a place of potential and metaphorical imprisonment, of permeability, of violence. It is both a place to be defended, and a place to attack from within. It is a locus of Gothic activity, of real and invented histories, of memory and of repression. It is a place where anything can, and does happen. In contemporary Irish art, these homes often appear as Gothic sites of anxiety. They are often presented as problematic and contested. Their boundaries are transgressed by economic, political and cultural forces. Their ownership can be in doubt. The safe space of the home becomes a surreal space of uncanny return. Subversive household rituals within these homes are enacted like commemorative rites. From early legends to contemporary re-imaginings, home is an ambivalent space, evoking both terror and creativity. As Aideen Barry puts it in an interview with Bean Gilsdorf: 'I think one

of the things that enables me to make work, is that I am never at ease, I never feel I am at home and I am rarely comfortable where I am. This causes me to constantly question why that is, why do I not belong and how can I address these feelings' (Gilsdorf 2011: 1).

Homeland: A Gothic History

The cataclysmic effect of the contemporary housing crisis in Ireland has been extensively described by many political and economic commentators; however, to comprehend it fully, is necessary to first understand the complex and problematic relationship that exists between Irish people and land. As a post-colonial country, with ancestors who were debarred from owning land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under Penal Laws and other acts of dispossession, Ireland has a positive mania for home ownership, a kind of *land hunger* (a deep desire for home ownership) that runs through its core. Within the cultural history of Ireland, this relationship with the concept and actuality of home is even more intense, precious and problematic. Colonial history is written by victors and seeking to reconstruct Irish history is difficult as in many official records and representations the 'native' Irish have been othered despite representing the majority of the population. A postcolonial recognition of what is marginalised or dispossessed lies at the central core of Irish culture. 'History' as Joyce aptly put it 'is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (1961: 34). Contemporary Ireland is still haunted by a history of oppression, colonization, plantations, battles and rebellions as outlined in *Chapter Two*. Similarly, Ireland is also haunted by its geography, given both its liminal position on the edge of Europe and its own internal political geographies of division, from a nation of medieval kingdoms through to the contemporary political divisions between the North and South of Ireland. Irish Gothic is preoccupied with mapping and attempting to draw borders; it is intensely geographical, although the landscapes

it maps are often *terra incognita*, shaped by narratives rather than modelled by geographers. In this history of literature and art, Ireland perpetually appears and reappears as an in-between, liminal space. This tradition was established by the initial supernatural account of Ireland in Cambrensis' *Topographia Hibernia* (1185) which famously depicts Ireland as a strange island. Geographic and historic alterity are key to an understanding of Irish Gothic. As Wilde famously once said 'I am not English, I'm Irish – which is quite another thing' (Wilde 1892: 947). Irish artists take this alterity, or cultural otherness, as a starting point and connect this tradition to the anxieties and tensions of home to produce unforgettable work that ranges from contemporary ruins to fairy-forts to traumatic scenes of confinement, conflagration and danger.

In Ireland, the influence of the Gothic as a cultural mode has been an enduring one. The Gothic significance of the failed, ruined, or dispossessed home is a common trope throughout the history of Irish Gothic. Scenes of evictions are found in Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and landscapes of ruined villages in the wake of the Great Famine are found in both *Carmilla* (Le Fanu 1872) and *The Hunger* (Mildred Darby 1910). Links between the Big Houses in Ireland and colonial anxieties are made explicit in texts such as Maturin's 'Leixlip Castle' (1825) and Le Fanu's 'Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess' (1839). The association between home, native unrest and supernatural revenge flourishes in tales by Hodgson such as *The Whistling Room* (1910) and *The House on the Borderland* (1908). In Irish art, running parallel to these depictions of home, nineteenth-century paintings such as *An Ejected Family* by Erskine Nicol (1863) and *An Emigrant Ship, Dublin Bay, Sunset* by Edwin Hayes (1853) offer a melancholy vision of the reality of homelessness in the wake of national disaster, albeit softened by a Victorian sentimentality. During the twentieth century, the home remains a common subject in fine art. The domestic setting is treated as a conventional subject by impressionist William Osborne and by classical painter William

Orpen. However, the familiar forms of home soon become a canvas for experimentation in the increasingly abstract work of Norah McGuiness and William Scott. This investigation of form is offset by the misty romanticism of the 1960s work of Terence P. Flanagan and Patrick Collins, and their gentle expressionistic use of paint to signal nostalgia for an older, more mystical Ireland. It is only later, in the 1970s, that home becomes used as a symbol for conflict. This struggle for national and individual identity characterises the work of political artists such as Michael Farrell, Patrick Ireland and Robert Ballagh. At the same time, Francis Bacon produces some of the most compelling Gothic homes in Irish twentieth century, twisted and dark interiors in which boneless, pale protagonists, from popes to rent-boys, twist, writhe and utter airless screams. Meanwhile writers such as Kavanagh and McGahern also produce dark, brooding reflections on home, that are infused with a grim and unyielding Catholicism. Kavanagh's epic poem *The Great Hunger* offers a counterbalance to romantic pastoral visions, with its stark, unflinching yet beautiful descriptions of the hot anguish at the heart of rural bachelorhood, the devastating loneliness at the heart of the rustic home.

However, fine art visions of the domestic that emerge post-1990 are filled with a new sense of direction. Although frequently referencing the traumatic history of Irish homes they tend to shy away from religious reference, opting for a more secular, humanist perspective. Post 1990, this Gothic art of the home tends to reject the use of conventional media such as painting, instead utilising the verisimilitude of photography, lens-based media and combined media to signal a new frankness, urgency and directness in the diverse discourse of home in contemporary practice. Homes are represented as liminal spaces in the work of Aideen Barry and Dorothy Cross, as indeterminate spaces, which are pervaded by surreal images and subverted roles as discussed in *Chapter Three*. Home is presented as a transient and temporary space by artists such as Yvonne Cullivan whose work focuses on traces and memories of 'rambling' houses, previously the centre of Irish rural communities. Homes

appear as haunted watersheds of history and paranormal anxieties in the work of Martina

Cleary as examined in *Chapter Two*. Paradoxically, the return of this trope of the Gothic

home also speaks to a national desire to find coherence and unity in Ireland's fragmented

history and psyche. As Steve Bruhm explains, the Gothic also acts to unify narratives and

experiences:

> We crave it [the Gothic] because we need it. We need it because the twentieth century has so
> forcefully taken away from us that which we thought constituted us – a coherent psyche, a
> social order to which we can pledge allegiance in good faith, a sense of justice in the universe
> – and that wrenching withdrawal, that traumatic experience, is vividly dramatized in the
> Gothic…We do not tell one story, we tell many, even as all of them are knitted together by
> those familiar, comforting, yet harrowing Gothic conventions. (Bruhm 2002: 273)

This desire to knit past and present together is also present in the popular form of the

memory project. In Ireland, these memory projects are most often related to oral history,

many examples of which are found as part of the Oral History Network[2]. Increasingly, fine

artists are turning to memory projects as a medium for socially-engaged projects that focus on

the process of communal remembrance and meaning-making. Art projects such as Smashing

Times' *The Memory Project* draw on stories and memories of home, family and community

as a basis for performance. In *Chapter Five*, the Gothicise project *Remembering Wildgoose*

Lodge is examined as emblematic of these type of projects. Home is, therefore, not only a

subject for representation, but also an area for investigation through collaborative projects,

and even as a site for creating and displaying artwork. Curated projects such as Aideen

Barry's *Subversion and the Domestic* shows in 2007 as part of *House Projects*, Michael

Fortune's ethnographic works; *Our House Project* (2006), *Granny's* (2005) and *The Kitchen*

Sessions (2008-2009), Stephen Brandes and Bridgid Harte's *Superbia* (2003) as part of the

Breaking Ground project in Ballymun (Fig. 7) and Deirdre Morrissey's exhibition on

domestic surveillance *Livin' In A Box* (2007) (Fig. 8) have all sited specific shows in homes

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[2] Projects available to view at http://www.oralhistorynetworkireland.ie/projects/

(often in the homes of the artists or curators). This causes home to gain an expanded definition or function as gallery. Home therefore becomes not just the subject but also the locus of art; with the advent of socially-engaged art, it becomes a logical site of art practice itself in the twenty-first century.

Figs 7-8   **From left to right; Stephen Brandt, Brighid Harte (2002)** *Superbia***, Deirdre Morrissey (2007)** *Livin' In A Box***. Both installations.**

Home: A Brief Overview

From the caves onwards, homes are where man has sought shelter. However, home is much more than a physical space. Homes are primal sites: the earliest signifiers and sites of lived experience. Home, therefore, can be read as both a form and as a psychological response to that form. We record within homes our feelings about the world outside. Bachelard has observed the close parallels between man and home: 'On whatever theoretical horizons we examine it; the house-image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being' (1958: 10). The idea of home therefore presents a complex and intimate topic for spatial analysis by artists, writers, geographers, historians, folklorists and philosophers. Home has been central to studies in perception, memory, trauma theory, architecture, space, place, phenomenology and topo-analysis. It forms the locus of narratives and serves as character,

setting and metaphor for tale-telling. In this section, the physical nature of the home is examined, and how this environment affects the individual; also considered are the psychological, emotional and normative states that we associate with home.

'Home' is a term most commonly used to denote a physical dwelling place. A home is structured to keep those within it safe, and to protect them from the elements without. A home acts as a visual signifier of ownership, roots, family, security, whether it is a house, a hut, a trailer, or a tent. Its significance in lived practice is evidenced in the amount of proverbs that focus on the benign nature of the house, from the English sayings: 'Home is where the heart is', 'Home is where the hearth is', 'Home Sweet Home', 'There's no place like home', 'East, west, home's best' and 'Consider yourself at home'. There is also an Irish equivalent: '*Nil aon tintean mar do thintean fein*' (There's no hearth like your own hearth). Homes are also significant in their absence. Being apart from the home can cause *Heimweh*, literally, homesickness. The writings of Freud and Jung illustrate how the homes of childhood endlessly re-present themselves as dream scenarios. Bachelard, whose image of home is always a comforting one, writes of this inevitable return: 'A nest-house is never young...we might say that it is the natural habitat of the function of inhabiting. For not only do we come back to it but we dream of coming back to it, the way a bird comes back to its nest' (1958: 99). Indeed, writers from Jung to Bachelard to Perec view the physical home as a metaphorical extension of self, equating different aspects of the house/home with different emotional states and states of mind. The physical nature of this relationship with home is intense; inhabitants carry with them images of rooms, furniture and gardens that bring a sense of comfort.

Home, as a term carries with it a wide variety of meanings. It can be a dwelling place. It can be a permanent or temporary space. It can be a space constructed, or reconstructed, through memory. It can consist of open and liminal spaces. It can be a ruin or a void. It can

be a traumatic space that is repressed. It can be a theatre of stories emanating from the heart(h) of the home. It can be a watershed of history and culture. Home can be used to describe a primary site of identity formation. Home can indicate a family home, an orphanage, or other communal dwelling place. It can be used in the context of a native geographical environment to signify a community, a parish, a county and a nation. It can also indicate a place, a site, or a situation where one feels 'at home'. However, in all of its contexts, 'home' is a concept that is central to how people define themselves; be it linked to individual identity, family identity, cultural identity, or national identity. For Heidegger (1956) the dwelling place is a significant component of human identity, a kind of internal compass. Relph (1976), writing on Heidegger, remarks: 'We can change places, move, but this is still to look for a place, for this we need as a base to set down Being and to realise our possibilities – a *here* from which the world discloses itself, a *there* to which we can go' (1976: 39). Home therefore can also be a portable concept; it may signify a variety of different locales. Dylan Trigg supports this view: '[T]he twofold motion between place and body thematizes the centrality of place in our reflective conception of self. We carry places with us' (2012: 84). Collins (2009) also agrees with this idea of the home as an unfixed space:

> [A]s a site of exploration of self, and of the relationship between self and other, the house cannot be perceived as a fixed space. Like the poem itself, the house in its accretions of layers of meaning, in its ghosts of previous inhabitants and remembered experiences, facilitates the inter-relationship of past and present. It foregrounds issues of enclosure and freedom and raises questions concerning kinship and sexual relationships. Furthermore it opens debates on identity and belonging that are central to any consideration of the dynamic between individual and national identity, both culturally and politically. (Collins 2009: 142)

Home, therefore, is more than a physical place; it is also a mental state. It constitutes what we perceive as normative. It endows us with values against which we test and judge the wider world. The home forms our first experience of boundaries; of a perimeter that creates within it a space of safety. However, this space also encompasses forbidden zones, and acts

as a set-piece for primal scenes; scenes of terror as well as comfort. Within this space, we first experience comfort and domesticity; but also our earliest experiences of discomfort, negative feelings, anger, discord. Home is the first place where we start to draw boundaries and map spaces between it and the outside world (the macro-version of 'what is mine and what is not mine') and within the home itself (the micro-version of 'what is mine' and 'what is not mine'). While the home perimeter is fixed, with permeability controlled through exits and entrances, the spaces within it are more difficult to define. Within it, lines interweave and spaces overflow; past and present intermingle, rooms dissolve into memory-rooms, inhabited by items that trigger recollections, theatres that endlessly re-enact scenes from an earlier life. Freud's reading of home as place of primal experience in *The Uncanny* (1919) suggests that this site features not only our first experience of the *Heimlich*, but also our first experience of the *Unheimlich*. We encounter within it ideas of secrecy, concealment and private spaces, as well as notions of recurrence such as *déjà vu*, and uncanny experiences such as strange dreams and fairy-tales.

The return to home is a concept central to memory. Memories permeate the very structure of our homes. Within our lives and our communities, the home functions as a memory image or memory palace, a trigger for collective social memory, for associated images, and for communal narratives for all those who have shared the space. Lang sees the home as structure that makes sense of actions and memories: 'A building is a kind of memory [...] that provides a lasting framework for one's own actions and for those of others' (Lang, 1985). Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958) introduced the idea of phenomenological readings of space and architecture, a notion that celebrated not only in literature but also in architectural theory. In architectural terms, phenomenology is based on the experience of building materials and forms, their sensory properties, and the notion that architecture and the objects it contains can be emotional, evocative and imaginative. Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes*

of the Skin (2005) and Peter Zumthor's *Thinking Architecture* (1998) both relate the idea of experience and sensory memory to the creation of architectural spaces. Memories of home are famously celebrated in literature by Marcel Proust and by Walter Benjamin, memories that correspond to Bachelard's notion of the comforting 'nest house', that provide sensory information, descriptive images, and a warm, comforting narrative of early experience (Bachelard 1958: 99).

Contemporary international artists deal with this convoluted topic of home. Artists use home as a potent memory-image, as a repository for uncanny experience and a recurrent space of trauma. Louise Bourgeois' *Cells* (1989 - 1993) replays her childhood anxieties endlessly in claustrophobic spaces. This autobiographic use of space is also echoed in Gregor Schneider's labyrinthine constructions of houses that are filled with unexpected walls, obstacles and strange spaces. Bourgeois and Schneider's attempts to reconstruct childhood homes and situations through their work lead to the creation of uncanny zones, shadowed by dark childhood memories. Likewise, Whiteread's visions of home represented in works such as *House* (1993) and *Ghost* (1990) with their dense, filled moulds of poured concrete, represent the physical infill of memories in domestic space, while simultaneously denying the spectator access to this space. All three artists subvert Bachelard's sunny reading of the home as a safe space, a place of dreaming (Bachelard, 1958: 99). The homes they represent are darker, more complex sites of memory and experience. Recent works by Portuguese artist Nuno Cera offer a systemic view of the destruction of modernist apartment blocks and the haunting of these blocks by sinister white-clad figures. In a post 9/11 culture, it is hard to resist a contemporary cultural reading of Whiteread and Cera's spaces as symptomatic of the disintegration of home and the familiar in modern society, where the integrity of the home has been breached, and life within it atomised by conflict, alienation and the replacement of physical artefact by the virtual construct. In his *Twilight* series (1998-2002), photographer

Gregory Crewdson evokes his own uncanny past through the liminal world of photography. Spooner (2006) cites an essay by Rick Moody that links these images to a Freudian reading of Crewsdon's childhood: 'Moody uses this incident to suggest Crewdson's interest in the Freudian uncanny, in '*something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light'* (Spooner 2006: 49). However, all of these artists share a fascination with the uncanny, a sense of the haunting quality of memory. When we investigate the work of parallel artists within an Irish setting, we see that the richness of context leads to the accelerated production of representations of the contemporary home. This context, this volatile cocktail of cultural, social, historical and economic factors creates a heady set of representations of the Irish home that range from the surreal to the contested, from the angry to the elegiac.

There's No Place Like Home

A contributory cause to this twenty-first century crisis of identity in Ireland in relation to home is the shifting sands of cultural identity during the rise of a homogenous culture of prosperity in the Celtic Tiger era of 2000 – 2008. It is important to recognise the seismic shift that occurred in Ireland during this time-period. Ireland, hitherto a small, fiscally-poor country became the home of multinational companies, whose investments brought a seemingly endless stream of finance into the country. For the first time in its history, Ireland was rich, and its people responded accordingly. Ireland was seized with a mania for home improvement on a national scale. City infrastructure was reorganised, huge estates were built, and motorways began to criss-cross the country. In the midst of this prosperity, fine artists such as Sean Lynch began to examine the dark underside of this improvement by exposing what was being lost consequently. Central to Lynch's notion of home and nation is a sense of cultural geography, a sense of place. His *A preliminary sketch for the reappearance of Hy*

Brazil (2007) is an artist book which describes his attempts to reconstruct the whereabouts of the island of Hy Brasil through historical records and the artist's photography (Figs. 9-10). Its geography is spectral, shifting; despite the substance of location, the site is often unsubstantial. Like much of Lynch's work, this is site-specific but the location of the site referred to is uncertain. The misty photography lends the location of the shoot an air of unreality; the project is haunted by the once-location of this island. The whole project has an air of gentle melancholy about it. Rather than a search for a physical object, it becomes a search for a place in time. This 'site nostalgia' or desire for a departed place leads Lynch to an attempted reconstruction through photography of this phantom island; like Punter's definition of the Gothic he seeks 'to attempt new constructs of the landscape around us, to map its geographies and to interpret the symbolism of its remains' (Punter 1999, 2).

Figs. 9-10   Sean Lynch (2007) *A preliminary sketch for the reappearance of Hy Brazil.* **Artist book.**

This sense of a disintegrating or disappearing culture is also echoed in Yvonne Cullivan's *Meanwhile* (2011) a gentle, melancholy look at a fragmented rural society in Westmeath. Cullivan uses texts taken from conversations with locals together with photographs of abandoned 'rambling houses' to create a narrative of the decay of these local centres where people would traditionally gather, tell stories and socialise (Figs. 11-12). Her poignant collection of quotes and photographs of abandoned or disused spaces forms a powerful narrative of loss. However, as *Chapter One* explores, despite the impact of

globalisation, and the consequent erosion of a distinct identity, and a sense of community, home is still strongly shaped by history, folklore and tradition. This sense of the ruin as a recurring motif in Irish culture is more fully explored in *Chapter Two*, with discussions of work by contemporary Irish artists David Creedon, Martina Cleary and Michelle Horrigan. This anxiety, latent in national identity, home and culture, was further exacerbated by the spiral of crisis that followed the global financial crash of 2008.

Figs. 11-12   **Yvonne Cullivan (2008)** *Meanwhile*. **Artist book.**

Revenant Spaces and the Contemporary Ruin

The most outstanding legacy of the financial crash, which began in 2008, was the direct and immediate impact on the housing market, resulting in over 300,000 houses lying idle across the country. The saga of these ghost estates of Ireland is itself a Gothic drama of wealth, greed and ruination is a theme explored in more detail in *Chapter Four*. These empty houses serve as the supreme example of not only the ruined home, but also the failed home. Repeatedly, over the last seven years, since this economic collapse, artists have been inexorably drawn to these ghost estates. Within and without these Gothic spaces, artists enact a variety of commemorative ceremonies, bodily rites and other forms of animation to bring us back to confront these spaces of uncanny return. Dillon in his 2011 essay on ruins offers an

explanation of why artists feel drawn to these spaces, as he puts it: '…the ruin is a site not of melancholy or mourning, but of radical potential – its fragmentary, unfinished nature is an invitation to fulfil the as yet unexplored temporality that it contains' (2011, 18). Many of these works that are centred on these estates, including Kim Haughton's photographic essay *Shadowlands* (2010), focus on the use of lens-based media to capture the surreal nature of the estates, with their rows of uncanny, abandoned houses that mimic their mundane inhabited counterparts (Fig. 13). This use of documentary-style photography borrows from the aesthetics of contemporary protest groups such as the Occupy movement and their photographic protest-placards. It is important to see these contemporary homes in the context of revenant spaces. The financial disaster and economic collapse of 2008, followed by a national wave of anxiety, repossessions and fear, echo famous housing failures of the past such as the rash of evictions during the Great Famine of 1845 and the hotly-contested homes fought over during the Land Wars of the nineteenth-century (Fig. 14). This agrarian unrest is documented and discussed in detail in *Chapter Five*. This legacy of disintegration from historic to contemporary ruin is documented in both *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Four*.

Figs. 13-14   **(From left to right): Kim Haughton (2007)** *Shadowlands*. **Photograph; Big Mountain Production (c. 1890)** *Irish Eviction Scene circa 1890*. **Photograph.**

What impact has this disruption of home had on the Irish psyche? What happens when this place of comfort and security is subverted? In this thesis, I argue that due to these dark echoes

of the Gothic home that exist in Irish society, history and folklore, contemporary anxiety acts to resurrect these concerns. In order to examine the impact of the fragmented home, an uncanny situation in which comforting signifiers of home become alien and frightening, I will analyse several different manifestations of the home as strange space. This will include examining home as a dangerous space needing protection, home as an atomised and disrupted space, home as colonised space, home as contemporary ruin and home as site of historical and local trauma. These homes are seen as evocative of the innate Gothicism in Irish identity, the dissonance between unpalatable reality and the effort to avoid it. However, as this is a visual medium, this art is also analysed in terms of its aesthetic qualities.

The Gothic Art of Home

Is there a visual element to this Irish art of dark domesticity that clearly identifies it as 'Gothic'? In her chapter in *The Gothic World*, Gilda Williams pinpoints the problematic issue of identifying art that is truly 'Gothic'; namely the conflation of Gothic art with art that is concerned with a Halloween aesthetic of skulls, coffins and vampires. Williams writes of what she terms as a defining aesthetic of the Gothic that runs counter to the clean lines and logical processes of modernist work: 'The Gothic vision presents a dark picture of haunted, insalubrious and unresolved circumstances, situations that remain thoroughly at odds with optimistic or forward-looking cultural frameworks' (Williams 2013: 423). This idea of a fundamentally 'Gothic' aesthetic is an intriguing one, and one that we can apply to the Irish art selected for examination in this thesis. Why is this art Gothic? What characteristics does this art share? Firstly, this work representing home, or ideas of home, tends to be representational. This is also the case with the majority of artists selected for discussion by Williams, Spooner and Gavin. This representational tendency lends the work immediacy for

the viewer, and enables easy identification with the subject expressed. The artworks discussed in this thesis are broadly figurative or mimetic; they offer immediate, intelligible narratives. This is not an aberration within the Gothic. As Williams says:

> The Gothic is inclined towards broad communicability through highly engrossing stories, not abstract idealizations aimed at an initiated few…The Gothic relies on narrative to communicate the particular haunting underway, loading materials with traces of that meaning. (Williams 2003: 423)

The art considered in this thesis may therefore be deemed as typically Gothic in that it communicates ideas and anxieties that relate to home. This concept of a narrative is key to the Gothic, especially the idea of a narrative from the past that recurs and informs the present. This art is also preoccupied with the uncanny communicated through the language of Surrealism and juxtaposition. This idea of using recognisable forms, or traditional forms amalgamated in a surreal way marks what Foster (1999) terms 'the Return of the Real' in his eponymous book. In other words, this mode signals the uncanny return of traditional modes though avant-garde contemporary art practice. This art is also concerned with ambiguity, in-betweenness, uncertainty, like materialisations of contemporary Gothic in other comparable disciplines like literature, film, theatre. This fits in with Williams' idea of an aesthetic that runs counter to modernism. As Williams points out: '[A]s an aesthetic, the Gothic might be understood as the extreme, almost caricaturish Other to the modernism of a Clement Greenberg or Theodor Adorno' (Williams 2003: 423). The Irish art considered in this thesis is therefore concerned with ideas of representation and narrative, with surreal juxtaposition, uncanny recurrence and ambiguous space.

The art considered in this thesis broadly uses two main media. There are several artists (Barry, Duffy, Maher, Farrell) who explore three-dimensional modes of making in terms of sculpture and combined media. These works tend to focus on surreal juxtapositions of past and present forms. There is also a very significant focus on the use of lens-based

media (photography, film, stop-motion animation), often presented as part of installations. Not only is this a mode endemic in global art practice, but it is also intimately associated with voicing uncanny spectrality in contemporary art. The artists examined in this thesis use this form for diverse reasons. In *Chapter One* Michael Fortune and Cleary Connolly capture transient folk narratives through film. In *Chapter Two* artists Dorothy Cross and Martina Cleary photograph the world of the traumatised and haunted home. In *Chapter Three* Aideen Barry uses stop-motion animation to mimic the uncontrollable world of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, while in *Chapter Four* Haughey, Anex and Haughton use documentary photography, both analogue and digital, in order to capture the uncanny nature of the ghost estates. This use of lens-based media captures a kind of temporality, a fleeting moment, with the moving image in particular lending itself to spectral effects. Lens-based media, especially film, captures the uneasy, flickering instability of the Gothic, through the super-imposition of the present on the past, and of one state upon another. This idea of an uncanny return is voiced by Foster in his *The Return of the Real*: 'what produces a present as different, and how does a present focus a part in turn?' (Foster 1999: xiii). In this Gothic artwork, the past leaks through and informs the present. This idea of recurrence is also tied to notions of national memory. Core to this art of the Irish Gothic home is the idea that current evocations of the home reflect older manifestations of the home in Ireland, both consciously and unconsciously. Through the forms of the present, the older concerns of Ireland's Gothic past return to haunt contemporary culture.

Methodologies Used

As this is an interdisciplinary thesis, it required a combination of appropriate methodologies. The final section of this *Introduction* discusses the proposed methodologies and approaches

and outlines how they are utilised and referred to in the succeeding chapters. The methodologies used in this thesis are suggested by the work of the artists examined. This fine art work, on repeated analysis, starts to fall into natural categories, where home is mirrored in different ways. It is considered as a space with memories of folklore and superstition (*Chapter One*), as a colonial ruin with overtones of haunting, memory and loss (*Chapter Two*), as an embattled and surreal place (*Chapter Three*), as a contemporary ruin and paradigm of economic and cultural failure (*Chapter Four*), and as a traumatised space that functions as a memory-image of local distress (*Chapter Five*). Although different manifestations of the home are scrutinised under different categories, at their core these different versions of home have something in common, they are all *recurrent versions*; therefore the thesis carries at its core a fundamental recognition of the uncanny, and theories of uncanny space and revenant memory. Each chapter also demands the examination of specific theories in relation to social memory, collective memory, trauma theory, feminist theory, or ethnography in order to analyse appropriately these different categories of interpretations of the home in fine art practice.

The thesis also uses key works on the *Unheimlich*; Jentsch's *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906), Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919) and Royle's *The Uncanny* (2003) and relates these to specific examples drawn from Irish fine art practice. While not completely accepting a Freudian reading of home, this thesis supports Royle's notion of the uncanny as a concept that is hugely significant for contemporary culture. It seeks to examine both aesthetic and psychoanalytic qualities of the uncanny space in domestic settings; the idea of home as an uncanny space runs as a theme throughout this dissertation. Home carries with it both connotations of the German term *Heimlich*, a space that is at once familiar and reassuring, but that is also closed and concealed from view. Home can also be *Unheimlich* (uncanny) a place of triggered memories and strange sensations of déjà vu, a revenant space. The Gothic home

is the ultimate example of the *Heimlich* within the *Unheimlich*; it is concerned with concealed repression, with uncanny revelation and return. *Chapter One* looks at the uncanny echoes of folklore that linger in contemporary art practice. The manifestation of the double and of nervous, repetitive behaviours is referenced in *Chapter Three* and illustrated by the work of Aideen Barry, Patrick Jolley and Dorothy Cross. The uncanny presence of the ruin and its psychological resonance is explored in *Chapter Two*, while *Chapter Four* revisits the ruins of contemporary ghost estates as revenant spaces within Irish history. *Chapter Five* is based on a practice-based investigation of the return of hidden and repressed counter-narratives of a Gothic event and its interrelationships with a famous Gothic story.

Although this thesis focuses on strong resurrections of the Gothic house in contemporary culture, it recognises these as echoes of previous Gothic homes in Irish history and culture. These depictions can be traced back to dark manifestations of the domestic in old Irish tales, customs and traditions. *Chapter One* therefore explores different notions of folk memory through readings of collective memory explored in Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) and in Halbwachs' *Collective Memory* of 1925. This chapter analyses the survival of these representations which are preserved through the commemorative rites and bodily practices explored by Connerton in *Social Memory* (1989) and through narrative communication and community identity as explored by Fentress and Wickham in *Social Memory* (1992). *Chapter One* also specifically focuses on legends and their preservation through the medium of ethnographic art. Each chapter deals with a different type of haunting or memory-survival. The thesis uses these theories as ways in which to view the survival, transformation and interpretation of folk stories and practices in *Chapter One*, and their manifestation through domestic themes in fine art practice. *Chapter Three* looks at the collective Irish female memory of domestic space as a space of confinement, made manifest through uncanny and abject art. *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Four*

examine how ruins and divisions evoke problematic notions of postcolonial memory and revenant spaces through readings of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1993), while *Chapter Five* offers tangible evidence of the persistence of memory of a Gothic home through the collection of family counter-narratives in the locality of historical trauma as part of an original memory project.

The thesis also investigates the problematics of domestic space in trauma theory especially in relation to notions of post-colonialism, cultural anxiety and female repression. The different chapters deal with the trauma arising from the survival of traumatic memory and its expression through fine art. *Chapter One* examines folklore as a reflection of traumatic homes. *Chapter Two* looks at recurrent postcolonial trauma in the form of ruins and hauntings in the South of Ireland, and in terms of divisions and contested territories in the North of Ireland. *Chapter Three* analyses the historical and religious frameworks underlying contemporary female trauma. *Chapter Four* sees ghost estates as profound articulation of economic and domestic trauma. Finally, *Chapter Five* uses autoethnographic, qualitative, and practice-led methodologies to conduct an engaged analysis of four to five generations of historical trauma haunted by tales of a home burned down during a bloody episode of the Land Wars in 1816. *Chapter Five* will also utilise practice-based research, or arts-based research, specifically the harnessing of ethnographic methods to conduct a research into a specific domestic context, and to illustrate and disseminate these findings through fine art practice. This collaborative site-specific fieldwork will examine home as constituted through history, fiction, memory and local legend. It uses qualitative research, interviewing key members of the community who are stakeholders in this project. These qualitative methodologies involved the use of questionnaires and recorded interviews. The information and consent forms, the questionnaires, the completed questionnaires and transcripts of the interviews are appended to the thesis in *Appendices B-H*. The dissertation therefore explores

areas of loss, trauma, memory and the uncanny by relating them to appropriate theoretical frameworks and to the Gothic work of specific Irish artists. The next section of the *Introduction* explains how these chapters expand on these key topics.

Thesis Outline: Mapping the Chapters

The thesis is composed of seven sections: the *Introduction*; *Chapter One: The Home of Folklore*; *Chapter Two: North and South: [Post] Colonial Notions of Home*; *Chapter Three: 'Women who just can't seem to get out of the house': Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny*; *Chapter Four: [Re] Animating the Ghost Estates*; *Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* and *Some Conclusions*.

   Chapter One: The Home of Folklore deals with the fundamental overlap of folklore, the Gothic and contemporary art practice in relation to boundaries, narratives and transgression. It looks at selected fine art pieces that portray Gothic notions of home, and traces these characteristics back to their origins in folklore, specifically in legends and in superstitious customs. It examines how legends arise in relation to the home, and how they survive through fine art practice today. It seeks to examine ethnography within fine art practice and within its relationship with folklore and the Gothic. It analyses the artwork that ensues not only as a reflection of the Gothic home, but also in relation to the translation and dissemination of the Gothic in fine art. It also explores how the canon of 'Bog Gothic' (O'Mahoney 2003) relates to ideas of local or vernacular Gothic constituted by this art. *Chapter One* links in with the *Introduction* to discuss a prominent aspect of revenant Gothic spaces: the links between tales from folklore and representations of the home in contemporary Irish fine art practice. It contemplates psychoanalytic approaches to folklore

popularised by Dundes in its reading of key works by Alice Maher, Rita Duffy, Connolly Cleary, Sean Lynch, Michael Fortune and Aileen Lambert to support the position taken.

Chapter Two: North and South: [Post] Colonial Notions of Home explores the trope of the divided home in Ireland and its relationship to history, politics, memory and trauma. It centres on ideas of colonialism and postcolonialism in its focus on key art-works that explore the resonance of ruins, divisions and contested territories in society, both past and present. It investigates complex issues of memory and mapping in relation to ruins and remains from Big Houses to Famine cottages. It examines the role of fieldwork, documentary photography and paranormal investigation within the frame of fine art practice. It references a range of writings on the ruin from Rose Macaulay to Brian Dillon. Case studies considered in this chapter include work by artists Willie Doherty, Martina Cleary, Yvonne Cullivan, David Creedon, Michelle Horrigan, John Kindness, Rita Duffy, Patric Coogan and Philip Napier.

Chapter Three: 'Women who just can't seem to get out of the house': Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny examines ideas of contested and gendered space in domestic settings; and the consequent subversion and slippage in roles that may occur in this space. It focuses on notions of domestic trauma and spatial phobias, the interplay between these, and the expression of these through fine art practice. It centres on liminality and the in-between, and examines ideas of atomisation and disintegration within female spaces, relating them to contemporary societal issues of Church and State colonisation of the female body, characterised by Freud as the 'first home' (Freud 1919: 944). It investigates domestic concerns and the symbolic significance of native objects and appliances within the home. In doing so this chapter will reference ideas of surrealism, of Freud, Jentsch, Rank and Royle's writings on the uncanny and of Kristeva's writing on the abject. Artists considered in this chapter include Aideen Barry, Patrick Jolley, Cicely Brennan, Dorothy Cross, Amanda Coogan, Rita Duffy and Alice Maher.

Chapter Four: [Re] Animating the Ghost Estates examines the contemporary phenomenon of the ghost estates as both Gothic contemporary sites of anxiety (the failed home represented en masse) but also in relation to older Irish cultural memories of dispossession and ruin. It therefore ties in with ideas explored in *Chapter Two*, but focuses on ideas of the new ruin, the anticipated ruin and the premature ruin. These houses appear as uncanny homes, complete yet incomplete: their disappearing commodity leading to loss of function. Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1994) is utilised here as a frame within which to read these ghost homes. Artists considered here include Anthony Haughey, Aideen Barry, Paddy Baxter, Eamon Crudden and Vera Klute.

Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge forms the practice-led component of the thesis. This chapter takes the form of a reflection on arts-based research undertaken by the art collective Gothicise, of which I am the principal director, using embedded ethnography to conduct research into a specific domestic case-study of social memory, trauma and haunting. The project takes a famous Irish Gothic short story; 'Wildgoose Lodge' (Carleton 1833) based on a real-life historical incident in Louth, in the north-west of Ireland, and examines how traces of this traumatic event still echo locally. It looks at how these memories have been partially silenced, both by the community, through a recurrent fear of voicing the story publicly, but also through exclusion from 'official' narratives of the incident, both factual and fictional. It examines the sense of void left by traumatic incidents, and it analyses the counter-narratives that arise and are transmitted within family homes. It outlines the challenge of locating original narratives, of the slow process of trust-building and of the facilitation of the reconstitution of community memory. *Some Conclusions* consists of a brief discussion and analysis of findings; a reflective analysis of emerging research conclusions. It summarises the main argument, offers a considered

reflection on the contribution that the thesis makes to the field, re-states the main findings, and outlines further research that could be usefully undertaken into this area.

By analysing a range of explorations of Gothic tropes and concerns, this thesis displays the range and diversity of Gothic fine art practice within the national context of Ireland. It examines the reasons why the form of the Gothic home is so powerfully resurrected in contemporary Irish art practice. It looks at how fine art offers a different vantage point from which to view the Gothic, ultimately leading to potential new interdisciplinary directions in Gothic scholarship. It also sets out to explore how this practice-led research conducted by artists leads us to a new understanding of Gothic as it emerges from national and contemporary contexts. It proposes to widen the current definition of Gothic to include representations of the Gothic in the Irish visual arts. It takes the Gothic as intimately connected with crises and a rise in national anxiety, and aims to represent this wave of Irish art as embodying a significant resurrection of the Gothic home. It looks at how this art has considerably added to the canon of Irish Gothic culture. It defines within this contemporary art a type of unique Otherness based on the distinctively Irish roots of the Gothic. More than just another revival of the Gothic, this art offers a fresh, flexible, and invigorating view of the genre of domestic space, and of how this is explored within the context of the Gothic. Interestingly, this case study of Irish Gothic in a sense refutes Gavin's contention that turning to dark themes in art distracts from the everyday and gives the viewer a sense of control (Gavin 2008: 6). Conversely, these representations of dark Irish homes highlight the 'everyday Gothic' (Beville, Piatti-Farnell 2014) of domestic spaces. It compels the viewer to engage with the disturbing notion of the *Unheimlich* home. In focusing on the home as a specific locus of anxiety, these Irish artists continue to produce a remarkable body of work that actively contributes to the genre of Gothic art, as well as providing a commentary on postcolonial disquiet, capitalist culture, neoliberal economics, and cultural

history, and offering an insight into anxiety disorders exacerbated by domestic roles. This thesis aims to build on research conducted into this area since 2007, and to continue this research through the dissertation with the object of working towards several projects that will continue beyond the thesis. These are discussed at the end of this document in *Some Conclusions*. Above all, however, this thesis aims to interrogate and analyse manifestations of the Gothic home in Irish contemporary fine art practice and to valorise these representations as a resurrection of the Gothic in Irish culture. It sees these contemporary Gothic homes as shadowy echoes of a dark past, as profoundly revenant spaces that have haunted, haunt and will continue to haunt Irish culture.

Chapter 1: The Home of Folklore

To examine thoroughly the interactions between folklore and the Gothic is beyond the scope of this book, but it may prove a natural sequel. (Harris, 1994: 20)
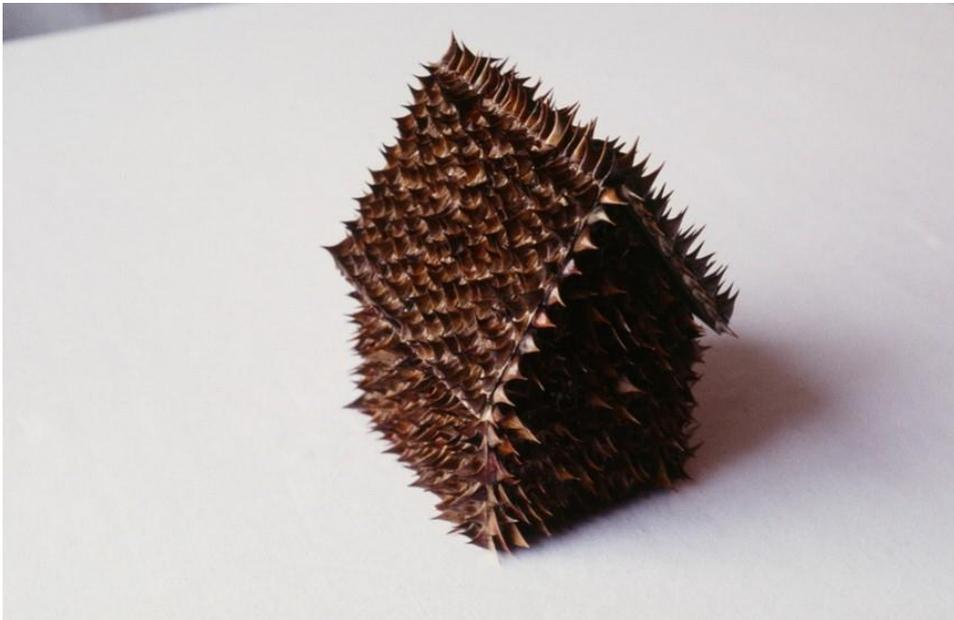
Fig. 15.   **Alice Maher (1995)** *House of Thorns*. **Sculpture.**

In 1995, *House of Thorns* (1995) (Fig. 15) was created by artist Alice Maher for a group exhibition called 'Compulsive Objects'. This tiny home is completely covered with rose thorns, which press together to form a spiky, repellent coating. The house is a paradox; its size and fairy-tale connotations suggest a plaything, but the thorns prevent this possibility. While the form of the piece suggests home, the diminutive scale excludes the possibility of occupancy. This is a heavily protected space; a space designed to conceal. It locks within it the secrets of ancient rituals, charms and protections. Maher's homes are contested zones;

according to Humphries (2008) they are 'charged places and do not represent the home as a neutral space but explore the house/home as a sign that subverts the commonplace association that the domestic is a place of comfort' (Humphries 2008: 38). Maher's piece references a mix of fairy tales, Irish stories and household icons. There are obvious references in this work to the tale of Sleeping Beauty, or, more explicitly, to its variant, *Little Briar Rose* (Grimm and Grimm, 1812:70-74). Rose thorns are also an iconic image of suffering and hardship, according to legend, appearing only on briar roses after the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. This piece also offers a clear reference to the Christian icon of the crown of thorns, a symbol of suffering in the Passion of Christ. Implicit in the image also is an obvious reference to the famous Sacred Heart painting prevalent in Irish homes, an icon discussed later in the chapter. The thorns themselves also bear special significance for Maher. She associates them with her own home; they were collected near her childhood home in County Tipperary, and she uses these natural materials repeatedly in her work to simulate ideas and fantasies of childhood. This house of thorns is also destined to decay, quite literally. Maher's work has a fascination with entropy, here amplified in her use of organic materials, which causes her pieces to disintegrate over a period of time. Maher's subversion of the traditional home is amplified by this deliberate use of organic materials, associated with the gender stereotype of the 'natural woman'. However, *House of Thorns* represents home and nature as double-edged weapons that protect and confine. It illustrates beautifully the idea of *Heimlich* secrets of the interior space contained within the *Unheimlich* outer form of the home, a topic that will be returned to in more detail when considering the home as a contested and gendered space in *Chapter Three*. Through all of these fascinating layers of reference, one clear message emerges. This *House of Thorns* is a strange home, a space of folklore, an *Unheimlich* space.

Folklore casts long shadows. This chapter, *The Home of Folklore* sets out to examine the effect of folklore on contemporary Gothic art in Ireland, relating these current versions of dark domestic space to older versions of Gothic homes in folk legends, rituals and superstitions. It takes the concept of Irish home discussed in the *Introduction* and focuses on one aspect of these revenant Gothic spaces; the link between these contemporary depictions of the home and the Irish folklore and superstitions that survive in contemporary culture through the agency of social memory. Other aspects of these revenant Gothic homes are discussed in successive chapters; namely, the impact of colonialism, the effect of confinement, the divided and haunted ruin, both ancient and modern, and the recurrent trauma of memory. Recurrent fine art and literary iterations of the Irish home posit it as a problematic and contested place, as a site of anxiety and terror.

Where do these Gothic homes stem from? Critics such as Killeen in his book *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth-century* and essays 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction' (2006) and 'Irish Gothic Revisited' (2008) and McCormack in his 'Irish Gothic and After, 1825-1945' (1991) and 'Irish Gothic' (1998), have both looked to the Gothic revival in Ireland as the font of these uneasy spaces, the dark homes of Stoker, Maturin and Le Fanu. In this chapter, I argue that the oldest appearance of these strange places is instead found in Irish folklore, specifically manifested through legends and superstitious beliefs that relate to the home. Many of the Gothic homes in contemporary Irish art practice can be read as an illustration of earlier tropes of dark domestic space in folklore, transmitted to contemporary culture through tradition, collective memory as examined by Durkheim (1912) and Halbwachs (1925), and social memory as outlined by two eponymous books, Connerton's *Social Memory* (1989) and Fentress and Wickham's *Social Memory* (1992). After contextualising this survival of Irish folklore relating to the home, I will further explore this link between the Gothic home and folklore by examining relevant

works by contemporary Irish artists Alice Maher, Rita Duffy, Connolly Cleary, Michael Fortune, and Aileen Lambert and their use of folklore in terms of imagery, metaphor and materials to create Gothic versions of home. In the work of these artists, home appears as an uncanny space: a site of strange narratives, transformation and cultural otherness. In this analysis, I will pay special attention to the different modes of folklore that each artist embodies in their reconstitution of Gothic homes, including the use of fairy-tale motifs, the retelling of legends, and the allusion to superstitions. Finally I will examine the ethnographic practice of collecting contemporary versions of these legends in a way that both links the modern hearth with the ancient hub of tale-telling, and creatively blurs the lines between fine art and folklore itself to create a form of vernacular Irish Gothic. Firstly, it is necessary to consider definitions of two crucial terms used throughout the thesis.

'Irish folklore' referred to in this chapter is taken here to constitute elements of traditional Irish culture, the oral tales, customs and superstitions that we collectively refer to as folklore. Folklore itself is considered here as a precursor of later Gothic tales, concepts, and images. This chapter examines Irish folklore in terms of its influence on contemporary art practice, referencing Dundes's ideas of folklore as a living entity and his idea of 'psychoanalytic folkloristics' (Dundes 1989). In Ireland, folklore developed in terms of traditions, rites and rituals, growing and evolving as a discourse of otherness within a colonial context. As O'Giollain states: '[T]he notion of folklore was predicated on the recognition of cultural difference: folklore belonged to the "others"' (O'Giollain 2000: 164). McDowell (2012: 253) agrees that '[A] sense of the "folk" as culturally other pervades certain Gothic texts'. Irish folklore, within the context of colonial culture appears as a counter-narrative, or as a series of 'little-narratives'. This idea is supported by Lyotard, whose *The Postmodern Condition* describes the idea of *grand* and *petit* narratives:

> Let us say at this point that the facts we have presented concerning the problem of the legitimation of knowledge today are sufficient for our purposes. We no longer have recourse

to the grand narratives—we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. But as we have just seen, the little narrative [*petit recit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science. In addition, the principle of consensus as a criterion of validation seems to be inadequate. It has two formulations. In the first, consensus is an agreement between men, defined as knowing intellects and free wills, and is obtained through dialogue. (Lyotard 1984: 60)

The nature of this association between folklore and the Gothic is particularly pertinent in the case of superstitions and of legends, both local and migratory, and their lasting relationship with visual art practice.

'Irish Vernacular Gothic' (Fahey 2014a: 153) is the term I have chosen to describe the specific sense of otherness that derives from shared Irish cultural and folk memories that enshrine rites, stories and rituals which hold a special and specific meaning for peoples of their community of origin. It is a culturally-produced and locally-recognised form of 'living Gothic' (Beville, Piatti-Farnell 2014), preserved through collective memory. It is bound up in rites, observances, re-enactments and retellings, all of which represent ways in which social memories are retained and transmitted as explored in *Chapter Five*. In this chapter I consider the art of Maher, Duffy, Connolly Cleary and especially Fortune and Lambert, as part of this tradition of Irish vernacular Gothic. I also examine how vernacular Gothic narratives and images are relayed and disseminated through socially-engaged methods of contemporary fine art practice.

So how does folklore connect specifically with national and local manifestations of the Gothic in Irish art? Folklore and the Gothic are related through a myriad of connections concerning narrative, otherness and function. Stacey McDowell (2012) in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* specifically links folklore to the Gothic tradition; the Gothic, she says, deploys folklore as 'a narrative framework upon which a range of modern fears can be expressed' (McDowell 2012: 253). Day (1985) also agrees with this correlation of the Gothic with characters drawn from folklore: 'Another convention of the Gothic atmosphere is the

presence of the supernatural or monstrous; we know we have entered the Gothic world when we begin to encounter vampires and demons' (1985: 34). This chapter specifically explores folklore as both precursor of, and an influence on, the Gothic tradition in Ireland. The early Gothic short stories of Maturin, Le Fanu, Banim and Banim and Griffin are filled with explicit references to Irish folklore and feature figures drawn from Irish traditional folk tales. Examples of this are found in 'Leixlip Castle' (Maturin 1825), 'Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess' (Le Fanu 1839), 'The Fetches' (Banim and Banim 1825) and 'The Brown Man' (Griffin 1827). 'Leixlip Castle' is possibly the most interesting of these tales. It is typically Gothic in its structure, prefaced by a note claiming that the events recounted took place in Maturin's own family, but the text is infused with archetypes and superstitions drawn from the dark traditions of Irish folklore. An elderly Irish servant, Collogue, persuades the heroine to take part in unnameable rites to summon her future bridegroom, with awful, predictable results. Even the tale ends on the most Gothic of notes, the cry of the unreliable narrator, the teller of folk tales: 'I know not what the truth may be/I tell the Tale as 'twas told to me' (Maturin 1825: 10). Likewise, there is a strong tradition of folklore and folk references in Gothic work by Irish fine artists. Artists of the Celtic Renaissance (the *fin de siècle*) such as Jack B. Yeats (*There Is No Night*, 1951), Harry Clarke (*The Elf Hill*, 1904) and Beatrice Lady Glenavy (*Heroes of the Dawn*, 1914) all depict strange and sometimes savage scenes steeped in imagery of native Irish folktales. This direct link between folklore and the Gothic continues through to the present day and the practice of contemporary Gothic writers and artists. Neil Jordan's novel *Mistaken* (2005) and his film *Ondine* (2009) both draw on Irish folk tales and ghost stories as their inspiration. Patrick McCabe's novels *Carn* (1989), *Emerald Germs of Ireland* (2001) and *The Stray Sod Country* (2010) all combine dark themes of murder with folklore and small-town life to create a genre dubbed as 'Bog Gothic', a form of Gothic associated with dark tales of rural Ireland that derives from the work of earlier

writers such as Patrick Kavanagh (O'Mahoney 2003:1). This survival of folklore in creative practice is interesting not only in terms of what it tells us about the past, but about the values and traditions that were considered worth preserving into the present. Folklore therefore forms part of our collective social and national identity. Padraic Colum, in his 'Introduction' to *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales* of 1912, points to the value of folklore as a repository of the lived past: 'We have another past besides the past that history tells us about, a past which is in us, in individuals, more livingly than the recorded past. It is a past in which men slowly arrived at self-consciousness while building up the community, the arts and the laws' (Colum 1912: 2).

Contemporary Irish art is laced with Gothic themes relating to identity, politics, bodies and homes. Manifestations of the classic Gothic trope of the uncanny home that appear in contemporary Irish art can be linked with Irish folklore. Alice Maher's sequence of *Portraits* (2003), where the artist presents her head and shoulders surrounded by mounds, palisades and fortifications, offers visual allusions to Irish fairy forts and burial sites. Contemporary artist Rita Duffy draws on the folktales and country rituals she witnessed as a girl to create a fearful yet magical world of rural sites and stories. Aileen Lambert and Michael Fortune also draw on the history of the Irish home in lived practice as a container of social memory, legend and protective folk rites. Fortune and Lambert and collaborative artists Connolly Cleary also offer an interesting perspective on the physical and psychological place of folklore in contemporary urban as well as rural society. In visual art practice, the uncanny Gothic home appears as a place of real and invented histories, of memory and of repression. Theories of personal and collective memory can be applied to analysing these images of home in terms of their reference to folklore, folk traditions, history and legends. Collective memory theorised by Durkheim (1912) and Halbwachs (1925), and social memory discussed by Connerton (1989) and Fentress and Wickham (1992) may be used as lenses through which

to view the survival, transformation and interpretation of folk stories and practices and their manifestation through domestic themes in fine art practice.

Folklore Matters

Images and interpretations of the Gothic home in fine art practice are therefore often seeded from folklore. In Ireland, the culture of superstitions, stories and codes was transmitted primarily through folklore or, in Irish, *béaloideas* (which signifies 'oral tradition'), tales passed down from generation to generation. However, the Irish language began to decline in importance throughout the seventeenth century, with the increasing influx of wealthy English settlers. From the late nineteenth-century, under British rule, the official language of Ireland became English. Therefore many of the great Gothic 'Irish' texts: *Dracula* (Stoker, 1897), *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Maturin, 1820) and *Uncle Silas* (Le Fanu, 1864), are the product of Anglo-Irish writers, writing in English. To this day, ideas of Irish Gothic remain irretrievably haunted by these Gothic Revival novels. These novels are characterised by the measured, elegant writing of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, who shared kindred obsessions with the tropes of alienated visitors, haunted or cursed houses and surrounded castles. In these narratives, the distance between protagonist and setting is highlighted by the novelists' depiction of another, deeper, earlier, underlying culture from which they are excluded, linguistically, culturally and socially. However, while this was happening, the Irish language continued to thrive and simultaneously became the main means of transmitting indigenous culture and history through oral narratives: a kind of Irish vernacular Gothic previously discussed, a native and locally recognised form of 'living Gothic'. Even in the most Anglo-Irish of Gothic novels, the idea of oral folklore permeates the text. The fluent but fragmented nature of folktales, their style of stories-within-stories, is recalled in official Gothic texts such as the diary entries of

Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* (1897), the story-within-story motif used to such effect in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), and even the device of the unreliable narrator in modern Gothic novels as Robert McLiam Wilson's *Ripley Bogle* (1989). However, folklore is not only a shadowy presence within Anglo-Irish texts; in its own right, it represents a native Irish counter-narrative to these English novels. The Gothic stories of folklore function as a subversive, dissident mode. This mode of dissemination is crucial; these were tales told in the home (inaccessible to the Anglo-Irish) and through the medium of the Irish language (impenetrable to non-Irish speakers).

These tales were systematically collected by the Irish Folklore Institute (1930-1935), the Irish Folklore Commission (1935–1971) and the Department of Irish Folklore in University College Dublin (1971 – present). The informal transmission of folklore was also facilitated well into the twentieth century by the existence of 'rambling houses', or '*céilí* houses'; particular houses in communities that performed a social function, places where people would gather to sing, play music and tell stories. Cullivan's project *Meanwhile*, discussed in the *Introduction*, focuses on the disintegration of these rambling houses as a symbol of a changing community. However, the gradual disappearance of these houses with the advent of television and the diminishment of their community function did not signal the end of the folk tradition; rather, as Fortune suggests in *Bud Mack's Hill* (2012) and other ethnographic art collections, the contemporary home has remained a locus of tale-telling. These tales told and re-told in Fortune's work are recalled and transmitted not only through using forms of social memory explored by Connerton in *Social Memory* (1989), or through the creative arts, but through actual *lived practice*, through the siting and arrangement of houses, and the act of telling and re-telling tales in the home.

This chapter examines the interplay between folklore and fine art practice in contemporary society. The home in folklore features as the site of tale-telling, as a focus of

protective rites, and as the setting for legends. Home often appears in these legends as a site of danger, anxiety and transformation. Here it is interesting to consider Gomme's traditional classification of folklore (1883) into major divisions, namely 'Traditional Narratives', 'Traditional Customs', 'Superstitions and Beliefs' and 'Folk Speech'. In this chapter, I will examine two of these sub-divisions as having the most relevance to the overlapping fields of folklore and fine art practice in relation to the home; namely the sub-set of *Legends* as part of 'Traditional Narratives', and *Superstitious Practices and Fancies* as a sub-set of 'Superstitions and Beliefs'.

Traditional Narratives: Legends

Of all of the sub-categories of folklore, possibly the most germane to the Gothic is the idea of legends. It is useful to consider Timothy Tangherlini's (1994) definition of legends at this point.

> Legend, typically, is a traditional, (mono) episodic, highly ecotypified, localized and historicised narrative of past events told as believable in a conversational mode. Psychologically, legend is a symbolic representation of folk beliefs and reflects the collective experiences and values of the group to whose tradition it belongs. (Tangherlini 1994: 2)

According to Tangherlini, legends are fantastical tales told as truth. Irish Gothic tales and Irish folk legends have many features in common. They both feature unreliable narrators, improbable tales presented as truth, psychological archetypes, monsters, dreams, visions, supernatural sites, and a paradoxical obsession with both boundaries and liminal spaces, both physical and spiritual. This can be seen by examining a small selection of *migratory legends* (Christiansen, 1977:1), master-myths that appear across several cultures, but examined here in light of the Irish variants of the tales. Both legends and Gothic stories evidence a desire to map the uncharted territory of the liminal, to examine the limits at which the possible and the

impossible dissolve into one *Unheimlich* whole. The use of wild borders and frontiers is observed by Harris (1994) in mapping the overlap between folklore and the Gothic: 'These topographical tensions [found in Gothic literature] are reminiscent of folk legends where supernatural beings also police the borders between wild and civilized locales' (1994:19). These legends are fluid, adaptable tales that focus on forbidden, transgressed space and liminal areas, all of which feature strongly in portrayals of the domestic in Irish art practice.

One of the major functions of legends was to map boundaries. This preoccupation with boundaries is an old one, and part of an ancient obsession to define the liminal space of Ireland. This concern is carried through to contemporary culture, especially in relation to the Border that separates the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland. As explored in the *Introduction* to this thesis, home has many meanings, one of which relates to national identity, from which expressions of identity and notions of home both derive. Representations of Ireland, as an in-between space, as an isolated island, date back to the twelfth century and the Welsh monk Giraldus Cambrensis' Irish travelogue: his famous *Topographia Hibernia* (1185) in which he depicts Ireland as an 'other' country of incest, monstrosity, slothfulness, blood-drinking and cannibalism. In the introduction, Cambrensis comments unhappily:

> I know however, and am persuaded shall have to write some accounts which will seem to the reader either utterly impossible, or quite ridiculous. But, with the help of God, I will insert nothing in my book the truth of which I have not elicited with the greatest diligence either from my own firm belief or the authentic testimony of the most trustworthy men, who have lived in the districts of which I write. (Cambrensis 2000: 32)

These 'trustworthy men' are unreliable narrators; in fact, Cambrensis' descriptions of the native Irish read like a definition of the Gothic itself: 'This race is inconstant, changeable, wily and cunning. It is an unstable race, stable only in its instability, faithful only in its unfaithfulness' (Cambrensis 2000: 76). *Topographia Hibernia* tells tall tales acquired from various sources, of bearded women, wolf-men, a speaking cross. These strange tales, though

patently untrue, may be one of the first written examples of Irish folktales recounted to an outside source. As part of his fascinatingly unreliable narrative, Cambrensis gives over pages of descriptions of uncanny islands; an island of the ever-living, an island of the dead, and an island that no female can set foot on. This notion of Ireland as an imaginary island, one that is lost, imagined, or reimagined, continues to be a motif that runs strongly through contemporary Irish art in the work of artists like Martin Healy, Fergal McCarthy and Sean Lynch, part of the Irish preoccupation with boundaries and perimeters of an island nation.

However, the most important of these boundaries considered here are those that exist inside and outside the home. The home forms our first experience of boundaries; of a perimeter, that creates within it a space of safety. However, this space also encompasses forbidden zones, and acts as a set piece for primal scenes, scenes of terror as well as comfort. If, as Freud claims, the womb is the first place where we experience the *Heimlich* and the *Unheimlich* (Freud 1919: 944), it follows that the home is the place where we first start to draw boundaries and map spaces between home and the outside world and within the house itself. Legends associated with the house explore the darker side of domestic space and the peculiar events that unfold within it. These legends expose the contested nature of the Irish home, which is shown through these legends to be permeable: open to historical, supernatural and transgressive forces. Folk legends reveal homes that are definitely *Unheimlich*. These homes pre-shadow later Gothic manifestations in contemporary Irish art, through the work of Maher, Duffy and Fortune, which reflect a preoccupation with notions of story, site and repetition. In order to analyse fully these strange spaces in contemporary art practice, it is also useful to reflect on the original relationship of the home with superstitions and beliefs that relate to dark elements of fairy lore and folktales. As Dégh comments in *Narratives in Society: A Performer-centered Study of Narration*; '[T]he legend tells us we can never be

safe because extranormal powers may interfere with our lives at any time. The earth we know as our home is not entirely ours…' (Dégh 1995: 124).

Superstitions and Beliefs: Superstitious Practice and Fancies

Harris explains that the 'traditional legend presents to its audience a sense of pervasive and perennial threats' (Harris 1994: 5). These threats from supernatural beings could only be countered by use of protective rites, based on the accumulation of superstitious beliefs, and the transformation of these beliefs into rituals designed to protect. This is borne out by Dégh's assertion of the necessity to protect against the threats of legends: '[S]peaking the language of concern, fear and pain, legends reveal the desperate attempts people make to escape – to survive on the planet Earth or beyond – by finding irrational solutions, or by rationalising the irrational' (Dégh 1995 442). It is no accident that most of these superstitious practices revolve around the idea of the home. This is most probably because home is where people traditionally go to in order to be safe. In pre-Christian Ireland, houses were built for shelter not only from the elements but also from supernatural forces. From earliest times, houses have been linked through legends with fairy-lore and the dead and with rites and rituals enacted in order to keep dangerous influences out. Fairies in Ireland are not fey creatures of Victorian whimsy; they are the *na Sidhe*, who are quite a different matter. They are full-sized, pale, hostile creatures; among their number is the banshee ('bean sidhe') which literally translates as 'fairy-woman'. Na Sidhe were believed to be descendants of the *Tuatha De Danann* (people of the goddess Danu) who had lived in ring-forts, later renamed 'fairy forts'. However, these forts also incorporate burial mounds, tumuli and cairns, leading to a conflation of na Sidhe with ghosts and the undead (O'hOgain, 1991). The most dangerous

place of all to build a home was on a fort, the super-imposition of the human domestic space over the uncanny dark space of the fairy home would spell certain disaster. These fairy forts are described in several entries in the Schools Collection of 1935, a collection of Irish schoolchildren's accounts of local stories by the Irish Folklore Commission. A typical story tells of mysterious music heard at a fort: 'My father went into the fort above at Collins' house. When my father was coming out, he heard a noise. He stopped to hear the noise and it was the fairies that were playing the music' (F. Abberton 1935). Ominous interactions between fairy forts and human beings are also mapped in ethnographic collections by folklorist and storyteller Eddie Lenihan. These cautionary tales include 'A Pregnant Woman Goes into a Fort', 'A House Built Between Forts', 'The Fairy house', 'Planting on a Fairy Path', 'Electricity Poles moved from Fairy Path' and 'Man Gets Warning from the Fairy Wind' (Lenihan and Green 2008: 136-171).

Sean Lynch's *Latoon* (2006) is a video piece featuring the story of the fairy whitethorn bush at Latoon in County Clare as told by Lenihan (Figs. 16-17). This bush is still famous in the locality of Latoon as a place for trooping fairies to congregate before going into battle. This video piece shows Lenihan protesting in 1999 against the destruction of the bush, when it, and a portion of the locality, was scheduled for demolition by an imminent road scheme. The story of Lenihan's passionate defence of the bush spread, featuring in The New York Times and on CNN, and pressure of the campaign meant that the road-builders changed the route of the road to save the bush. Lynch is not only interested in the fate of the bush in *Latoon* but in the wider reading of the situation, where a casual approach to planning laws has led to the destruction of the natural beauty of the spot. Above all, Lynch, whose work holds a reverence for tradition, historical artefacts and Irish culture, praises what he terms Lenihan's celebration of the folklore tradition in the face of out-of-control planning laws. As he put it in an interview with Judith Raum (2007):

The area itself has been much altered in recent years, not only by the motorway through it, but by an out-of-control, booming Irish economy that has created a disorganized suburban settlement. With lax planning laws, large bungalows are scattered around the landscape with the local city about twenty minutes' drive away. This rapidly-growing pattern of dwelling has concreted over much of the folklore of objects and places of the locality, a now-frequent occurrence in an Irish context'. (Raum 2007, 1)

Figs. 16-17   Sean Lynch (2006) *Latoon***. Film stills.**

However, despite these attempts to reclaim mystical sites as building sites, much of this site-specific folklore still survives today. There is a strong tradition in Ireland of the careful building of homes. According to superstitions, it was important to avoid placing it on or near any site that would be associated with fairies, like the lone hawthorn at Latoon. The siting of the house was considered very important; one of the most serious considerations was to site it well away from fairy activity. Folklorist Bob Curran's contemporary retelling of 'Come Home', a traditional tale from County Laois, explicitly references the idea of the land of the fairies having a residual, dangerous memory: 'Maybe it's nothing more than a *memory* that the land holds. This was supposed to be *a fairy place* – a house should never have been built there' (Curran 2008: 104). This need to situate a home in a safe space, far away from the fairies, is referenced in multiple variations of the migratory legend *Removing a Building Situated over the House of the Fairies* (Christiansen 1977: 99) characterised as Migratory Legend 5075, and abbreviated as ML 5075. Folklorist Kevin Danaher explicitly warns:

'Worst of all was to build a house on a fairy-path, for all kinds of ill-fortune plagued the unlucky occupants, from constant and horrible noises in the night to bodily injury to man and beast. The wise man made sure to select the site of his house with that in mind' (Danaher, 1964: 92).

However, even if builders managed to avoid siting a house on a dangerous or liminal space (fairies were believed to congregate not only in forts, but also in 'in-between' places such as crossroads or parish boundaries), the home itself would still need strong protective charms. Most of these are physical rites, and some of these are silent. Curran remarks in his afterword to traditional folk tale 'The Rabbits' Rock': '[I]n many parts of Ireland the notion of silence is paramount when dealing with the supernatural…Words and sounds, it is assumed, had some sort of negating supernatural power of their own which would thwart all best efforts of humans to deal with fairy powers' (Curran 2008: 33). Curran documents the role of silence in the sinister courtship ritual of 'The Dumb Supper'; a rite that he claims can result in excommunication (Curran 2008: 271-289). This idea of silence and fear as endemic qualities of the Gothic home is explored further in *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Five*. However, the spoken word in the home is also important, and is linked with powerful incantations. The need to protect the home from malignant forces calls for charms to be uttered, and for cautionary tales to be transmitted from generation to generation.

Home is Where the Heart(h) Is

It is worthwhile considering the role of the hearth in the preservation of folklore. This was the focal point of the home, from which tales were traditionally transmitted. In ancient Irish crannogs, huts, and later, cottages, the hearth was literally the central part, the heart(h) of the home, placed there so all parts of the home could benefit from warmth and light. The hearth

would have initially been venerated for its life-preserving heat and provision of the facility for cooking food. However, the status of the hearth grew and become more complex as folkloric traditions and superstitions began to evolve around it. Many legends attach to the importance of keeping the fire lit, even to the extent that if a family moved home, live coals were taken from the old home to put in the new one (Lyons, 2013). It was such an important place that a fragment of an old hearth was often incorporated into the building on a new one. This hearth was also regarded as a significant place in folklore, a place to be protected; under the flagstone of the hearth is where good luck charms and sacrificial animal remains have been found throughout Ireland in Dublin, Meath and Westmeath as cited in Lyons (2013). From early Irish culture through to the twenty-first century, the hearth was the hub of the home; it is the place where folktales were collected by the Irish Folklore Commission and it remains a place where stories are told and retold. The significance of the hearth is also considered in detail in *Chapter Five*, which deals with the transmission of a set of folktales concerning a Gothic home.

Many rural Irish homes are still mapped today by domestic charms and rituals that have explicit links with older rites initially devised to protect homes from fairy invasion. Angering the fairies was believed to result in many unfortunate effects, among them poltergeist activity, animal ailments, human sickness and death, so every attempt to placate them was made (Danaher 1964). Water that feet were washed in was kept and sprinkled outside the house as a protective charm, for according to folklore, the fairies were fastidious and would stay away from these contaminants (Lenihan and Green 2003). These stories act as cautionary tales where slovenliness within the house or failure to perform domestic rites in a satisfactory manner attracts punishment from the fairies. This also ties in to the practical custom of keeping pollutants outside the house. There are many legends attached to events that unfold when the house is polluted, contaminated with dirty footwater, pooling blood or

faeces. For when a pollutant enters the house, it allows the trespass of malignant intruders and the chaos they may bring. This house is disrupted and becomes a site of anxiety. A *Heimlich* space of secrecy is transformed into an *Unheimlich* one of strange disruptions.

The advent of Christianity to Ireland, from around 432 AD, did not entirely dispel these protective customs. If anything, it preserved these rites within a fresh lexicon of Christian imagery and mythology. It even added new rituals such as the bloody festival of Martinmas, celebrated on the eve of the 10th of November in honour of St. Martin of Tours by slaughtering the weakest animal or fowl in the farmyard and smearing its blood in the corners of rooms to invoke protection for the home (Ó Súilleabháin 1957: 256-61). New, protective, Christian icons were added to the Irish domestic space: the Sacred Heart, the Child of Prague, the Padre Pio image, the St. Benedict medal, and the holy water stoup. In Ireland, social memory, as defined by Connerton (1989), works to preserve these legends around protective ritual though commemorative rites that are still enacted within homes. Many of these are domestic rites that have emerged from folklore, been Christianised, and are still observed through custom and practice. In Ireland, Christianity, with its rituals, becomes a kind of living repository for superstitious and cautionary folk customs (or *piseogs*). These hybrid pagan-Christian rituals carried out within the home ensure that folklore lives on through bodily rites, and that it becomes instinctive and reflexive. In his *Irish Folk Custom and Belief (Nósanna agus Piseoga na nGáel)*, Seán Ó Súilleabháin explains how rituals guarding against fairies become Christianised, and how holy water became a replacement for the pollutant of urine:

> As it was feared that the fairies were always trying to take off newly-born male children, as well as women in child-bed (to nurse them in fairyland), every effort was made to protect both mother and baby from abduction of this kind. Some of the means used were: Brat Bhríde (St. Brigid's cloak: a cloth exposed on the eve of her feast), oatmeal (given to the mother when the baby had been born), urine (sprinkled in the room); a piece of iron or a cinder (aingeal) concealed in the baby's dress; the tongs placed across the cradle; unsalted butter placed in the baby's mouth; a red ribbon tied across the cradle, and scores of other similar talismans. Holy water was, of course, in later times regarded as being very efficacious in preserving both mother and child. (Ó Súilleabháin 1967: 30)

Homes are blessed by priests; just as in an earlier era, people threw out dirty foot-water to keep the house free from fairies. The St. Bridget's Cross, woven from rushes, still decorates the houses of many elderly people in Ireland. It is traditionally put up to protect a house from fire, with St Brigid herself being the ancestor of the sun goddess, Brid, traditionally associated with fire and the hearth. The threshold, which marked the perimeter of the home, merited special protective rituals. Blessed medals of St. Benedict, with the inscription *Vade Retro Satana* ('Step back, Satan'), are put under carpets and rugs close to the front door to protect the entry point to the house, just as in earlier times cockerels were buried at the threshold, or even earlier, when live animals were interred within the walls (Lyons 2013). Connerton (1989) has discussed the significance of these kind of performative rites as ways in which memory lingers in lived practice, and we can consider them as equally significant for creating the Gothic sense of otherness that pervades the Irish home in contemporary culture. We will now consider how artists draw from these legends, rituals and traditions to create pieces that are distinctively Irish and Gothic.

This blend of legend and Gothic, past tales and contemporary culture forms the cornerstone of the work of contemporary artist Michael Fortune. His artist book *Around The House* (2010) represents a collaborative archival project, a collection of photographs taken around the houses of pupils of Coláiste Abbain and Ramsgate Community School, both situated in County Wexford, in the south-east of Ireland. The photographs, taken by the students, offer an insight into vernacular systems of design and decoration in rural domestic spaces, and the repository of mixed Catholicism and superstition that is still evident there. Teresa Colfer's *Font at the Front Door* (Fig. 18) illustrates the importance of blessing oneself with holy water when leaving the house as a protective charm. *Nanny's House, Ballyhack* (Fig. 19), a photograph by Karen Ryan, offers a close-up of two vernacular domestic Irish

tropes: the Sacred Heart icon with a St. Brigid's Cross tucked behind it, a double method of Catholic protection invoked in the home. Similarly, Tara O'Connor's *Sacred Heart by the television* offers the incongruous contemporary juxtaposition of a home computer with a large Sacred Heart painting. The Sacred Heart icon mentioned earlier in the chapter in the discussion of Maher's *House of Thorns* is a familiar sight in many Irish houses, a generic image with a red light burning beneath. It features Christ exposing his heart surrounded by thorns, an image associated with the twelve promises of the Sacred Heart (appropriated into Irish culture from mystic revelations to a French saint in the 1670s). This connects the image with the idea of protection; the ninth promise of the Sacred Heart being 'I will bless every place where an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured'. The Sacred Heart functions therefore as an icon of luck and protection, just as the four-leafed clover or the horseshoe did previously. In fact, the horseshoe makes an appearance in another image by Karen Ryan, *Padre Pio with Horse Shoe and Horse* (Fig. 20). The horseshoe and horse refer to the traditional use of iron in folklore to repel fairies and witches, the old tradition of the lucky horseshoe, and the careful storage of this luck inside the house (the horseshoe is hung with ends pointing upwards to act as a container of luck). St. Padre Pio was an Italian monk venerated in Ireland for his manifestation of stigmata, his ability to bi-locate and above all, for his miraculous healing powers experienced at first hand by Irish pilgrims to Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. Through its candid images, *Around the House* reveals a wealth of visual information about the prevalence of superstitions and charms in contemporary society. Fortune's collaborative methods used here and the ethnographic considerations underlying them will be examined in some detail later on in this chapter.

Figs. 18-20. (From left to right): Teresa Colfer (2010) *Font at the Front Door*; Karen Ryan's *Nanny's House, Ballyhack*; Karen Ryan's *Padre Pio with Horse Shoe and Horse*. From Michael Fortune (2010) *Around the House* project. Artist book.

Contemporary Irish artists reference images of anxiety, disruption and transgression that cling to these folk legends in order to create pieces that position home as an uncanny space. These Gothic works are infused with Irish folklore, in their subject matter derived from legends and superstitions, in their use of the folkloric notion of 'little-narratives' (Lyotard 1984: 60) and in their attempts to map impossible stories onto possible sites. The first of these artists I will discuss is Alice Maher, who creates images of strange, embattled homes that invoke both folk rituals and a Gothic sense of transgression and disruption.

The Art of Transformation

Alice Maher exhibits a continuing preoccupation with the function of folk legends in establishing boundaries within the home. Her sculptural piece, *Staircase* (1997), a set of wooden, thorn-studded steps, repels the possibility of both intimacy and access (Figs. 21-22). Maher's frequent fabrication of diminutive objects throughout her oeuvre (like her *House of Thorns* discussed earlier) suggests an implicit link with the 'wee folk' or the fairy folk. Her site-specific work *Cell* (1991), on the other hand, uses natural materials on a large scale to create an impenetrable tangle of briars that wrap around in a circular fashion, in a manner that evokes the palace of the Sleeping Beauty (Fig. 23). The name of the piece, and the site in

which it was constructed (the historic Kilmainham Gaol, home to generations of Irish rebels) both suggest a feeling of fairy-tale confinement mingled with allusions to a more troubled and uneasy space.

Figs 21-23. **Alice Maher (from left to right): *Staircase* (1997); *Staircase* as part of *Acre* (1997) and *Cell* (1991). Sculptural installations.**

Maher's ice-bed sculpture of 2003, *Mnemosyne*, brings together themes of memory and recurrence (Fig. 24). Maher frequently and fluidly references Greek, Roman and Irish mythologies in her work. The name *Mnemosyne* derives from the Titan mother of the Muses, the goddess of memory, remembrance and time, This large ice-bed was first displayed in Brighton and was reconstituted for her 2013 IMMA retrospective, *Becoming*. Here the bed becomes a site of memory, a place in the home where events from birth to death take place. It also acts as a living metaphor for memory itself, which ebbs and flows, remembers and forgets. *Keep* (1993) uses architectural forms to create a cautionary, fairy-tale space (Fig. 25). *Keep* is constructed from hair, which Maher collected from barbershop floors in Belfast, which was tied and knotted together into thick ropes and suspended from a steel frame. Its distinctive form references ancient Irish keeps, and alludes to the Rapunzel myth, to Irish legend (particularly the migratory legend, *The Seal Woman and her Skin*), and also to seminal works of Gothic fiction such as *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Monk. Keep*'s feminist overtones are discussed later, within a gendered reading of Maher's work in *Chapter Three*.

Figs. 24-25. **Alice Maher (from left to right):** *Mnemosyne* **(2003);** *Keep* **(1992). Sculptural installations.**

This idea of home as a place to be defended, of home as a place of danger, also runs like a seam through Maher's work, especially through her sculptural pieces based on children's clothing. *Berry Dress* (1994), *Bee Dress* (1994) and *Nettle Coat* (1996) all emphasise how familiar objects can become potentially dangerous ones (Figs. 26-28). Maher's work often has a strong autobiographical bent, referencing her own childhood in rural Tipperary. *Berry Dress* and *Bee Dress* relate to other pieces linked with notions of childhood, transformation and magic such as *The Thicket* series (1991). However, the eponymous *Berry Dress* (Fig. 26) is composed of rosehip berries fastened to the dress with sewing pins, forming a wickedly sharp lattice of needles inside the dress itself. Sean Kissane has identified this dress as both a version of the Iron Maiden and as a variation of the trope of the *vagina dentata* (Kissane 2012: 25). The tiny *Bee Dress* (Fig. 27) was made in a similar vein using clusters of dead stinging bees, cotton and wire to form a dress that Maher explicitly relates to the world of witchcraft and folklore: 'I imagined a mantle made of living creatures. All my familiars in the world' (O'Shea, 1997). These pieces relate to Irish traditions and culture and are rich in reference to the dark underside of folklore. As Morris

puts it: 'Nettles, berries, brambles and thickets all locked into a temporal shape, shifting: sculptural changelings beneath which stings or grief are hidden' (Morris 2013: 85). In describing her *Nettle Coat* (1996) Maher also responds directly to the Irish folktale of the Children of Lir in an interview with Katy Deepwell:

> The little jacket from the stinging nettles is like this. If you imagine wearing it, you could be transformed into another being. The source is the fairy story "The Children of Lir". It's about children who were changed into swans by their wicked stepmother…There's another version in Grimm's "The Swan Children" in which the daughter is set the task to save them by weaving each of them a mantle from stinging nettles which she throws over the swans. I prefer this version. I made this little jacket, and it is full of the notion of change and the power of magic garment. (Deepwell, 2005a: 130)

This piece is a small woven coat, made of nettle, pins and hanger (Fig. 28). The materials are chosen to recall the Grimm version of the story, to subvert the notion of clothing as comfortable, and to mirror the elaborate nature of the plan woven by the wicked stepmother with the careful stitching of this strange garment. Maher's transformation of the mundane artefacts of the domestic in this surreal, supernatural fashion is supremely Gothic. This idea of surrealism as part of a Gothic aesthetic has been discussed in the *Introduction* and is taken up in some detail in *Chapter Three*. Maher's work, in many ways, fulfils the original function of folkloric tales; through her depictions of dark domesticity, she continuously works to subvert home as a welcoming space. Maher defines boundaries using repellent materials, using striking mnemonic visual devices to inscribe them in memory. She references stories of danger and transgression and translates strange stories from folklore into forms that are at once ancient and modern.

Figs. 26-28.   **Alice Maher (From left to right):** *Berry Dress* **(1994),** *Bee Dress* **(1994) and** *Nettle Coat* **(1996). Sculptures.**

The Art of Interpretation

Alice Maher's work illustrates the ambivalent role women play in Irish legends of domestic space. *Chapter Three* focuses on the deconstruction of contemporary art works that depict women as passive and confined, a trope aligned with the oppressive role of the Irish Church and State since the 1930s. However, before doing so, it is interesting to note the active and often transgressive roles women play in earlier, pre-Christian legends. The house of folklore is threatened from without from invasion by fairy folk, banshees and other supernatural beings as well subverted within by women who reject their domestic role. In these legends, the role of the woman in domestic space is ambivalent. Within these tales, she is the nurturer, the protector, the mother. However, in many legends, the woman also subverts the idea of 'natural order'; she is aligned with the archetypes of the witch, the banshee, the fairy-woman and the changeling. The creation of these characters leads to a subverted and subversive home, where familiar territory grows hostile. Within this hostile house, the penalty for transgression could be high. In 1895, in a chilling, real-life variant of the migratory legend *The Changeling*, a woman called Bridget Cleary was burned alive in her own hearth in

Tipperary by her husband Michael Cleary who insisted that his wife was a changeling, and that he was therefore innocent of murdering his actual wife whom he believed had been abducted by the fairies. In fact, he and his mother had tortured Bridget Cleary for three days to try to force her (the alleged changeling) to return his wife. To this day, this powerful story of alleged doppelgängers and domestic horror is immortalised in a local children's rhyme, which poses the conundrum: 'Are you a witch or are you a fairy, / Or are you the wife of Michael Cleary?' This sinister story and the primitive belief that gave rise to it are also captured in other migratory legends. *The Witch as Hare* (MLSIT 3056) is a migratory legend that focuses on the idea of the aberrant woman. In this Irish variant of the master legend, a hare suckling milk from a cow is surprised by a huntsman and then wounded by his dogs. Later in the story, the hare disappears into an old woman's cabin. When the huntsman enters, the hare has disappeared but he notices blood dripping from the old woman's side; she is both witch and hare. The witch's defilement of her own domestic space with blood-pollutants marks her out as a transgressor of the boundaries of home and she is punished by the male figure of the huntsman. Although in folktales the witch is sometimes represented as a folk healer like Biddy Earley or Moll Anthony, she is often more malevolent. She is the 'Other' of Irish folklore, the evil protagonist who propels the drama towards its inevitable end, as Khair describes:

> …the Other remains the lynchpin of all perceptibly 'Gothic' action. It is when the Other enters – as Satan, demon, orphan, the outsider, vampire, ghost, non-Christian gods, sexually dangerous women, racially different characters etc. – that the action of most Gothic narratives really commences. And they usually end with the predictable destruction or containment of this Otherness. (Khair 2009: 6)

Folklorist Deirdre Nuttall (1998) has commented of the archetype of the witch in Irish legends: 'Feminine qualities that are not safely contained, invisible, in a domestic environment, become overt and thus offensive' (Nuttall 1998: 38). However, the witch's

malice is often limited to domestic affairs such as concocting potions, laying charms, and (as is the case in these legends), in shape-shifting and transformation.

In Irish contemporary art, this tension between female archetypes and gendered, societal roles is also explored and articulated by artist Rita Duffy. This chapter looks in some detail at her interpretation and retelling of the migratory legend of *The Seal Woman and Her Skin* (ML 4080), a tale comparable to *The Witch as Hare* in terms of its subversive protagonist. In Duffy's art, home is a Gothic space, transgressed and divided by the forces of politics and contrary narratives, as explored in a further examination of her work in *Chapter Two*. For Duffy, homes are liminal zones and open to sudden and subversive transformations; she is fascinated by borders, boundaries and strange spaces. In her work, Duffy is influenced by two key factors: her own life in Belfast, a contested political zone and site of conflict; and her mixed upbringing between Southern and Northern Ireland, which resulted in her feeling 'in-between' two cultures (Deepwell 2005: 44). Duffy's divided loyalties, towards Offaly in the South and Belfast in the North, are further explored in *Chapter Two*. *Arctic Circus* (2012-2013) is an exhibition of Duffy's work that ran in West Cork Arts Centre and which illustrates Duffy's response to Irish, Scottish and Norwegian variants of the migratory legend *The Seal Woman and Her Skin* (Figs. 29-30). This story features the theme of women taken or imprisoned by supernatural forces; in Irish folklore these abducted women are described as 'put in on', 'struck', or 'swept' (Wallace, 2013). *Arctic Circus* featured a body of work completed on a three-month residency in Norway and during a trip to the Arctic Circle. Duffy has a deep interest in identity, culture and storytelling as evidenced in her description of the work: 'The images I worked on are in response to stories gathered from all around Ireland. These were stories I heard as a child' (Deepwell, 2005b: 132). The story tells of a 'merrow' or mermaid from *Tir fo Thoinn* (the Land Under the Sea) who is trapped by a fisherman into marriage by dint of stealing and locking up her seal-skin. On recovering it, she abandons her

husband and children to return to the sea. This tale is told in a variety of locales around Ireland. One of the strongest variants is found in the West of Ireland, in County Mayo, where, according to folklorist T. J. Westropp, a specific family, the Kinealys, are descendants of the original Seal Woman (Westropp 2000: 236). The story uses the trope of the imprisoned woman found in both folklore and the Gothic. It is a story that can be read as a representation of female frustration and of entrapment within marriage. The act of entrapment by the husband can be read as punishment for otherness meted out by the patriarchy. Like many Gothic tales, it is also a story of transformation, both physical and metaphorical. The Seal Woman's dramatic repudiation of her home and children can only be explained by her shape-shifting; she literally becomes a different being in order to escape her domestic role. In Irish folklore, these shape-shifters are represented as transgressive characters that represent women who live outside the preordained 'normal' roles of woman in society.

In *Arctic Circus* (2011) Duffy works with a variety of media to interpret the story of *The Seal Woman and her Skin*. Her very title evokes Bahktin's (1984) notion of the carnivalesque; it draws together the famous Irish circus ('Duffy's Circus') with the Arctic Circle where she was inspired to make many of these pieces. Like Maher, Duffy's work is at once ancient and contemporary. The influence of her domestic environment during her Scandinavian residency informs her work. Pieces from this show include expressionist canvases depicting powerful, archetypal female figures struggling through Arctic landscapes but also an intriguing set of small sculptures made of soap, like scrimshaw pieces traditionally carved by sailors from bone. One of these small sculptures, *Growl* (2011), features a shape-shifter; a woman who appears to be in the process of transforming into a bear, her splayed hands sprouting bear claws (Fig. 29). However, for the purpose of this investigation the most interesting work in this show is *Mantel* (2011), a stretched seal-skin tent, suspended on willow poles, within which played a selection of collected and recorded

folk tales (Fig. 30). The name itself carries echoes of a medieval cloak and the mantel of the hearth, the traditional site of story-telling in the home. The sound-piece for this installation was the result of collaboration with storyteller Nuala Hayes and musician Ellen Cranitch. Although constructed in a gallery space, this piece offered viewers the chance to experience a peculiar domestic space, normative in the Arctic, but strange here in both the context of Ireland and of the gallery setting. The act of telling and listening, though artificially constructed through the digital recordings, replicates the oral transmission of the original tales. Visitors to this show became participants in the culture of oral folklore, re-enacting the role of the listener. These behavioural requirements of sitting in the tent, of listening, and of passively receiving the transmission of the tales all point to Connerton's (1989) idea of how social memory is transmitted through bodily rites and repetition. The variety of folk tales recorded were drawn from Norwegian, Scottish and Irish culture; presented together they enable an understanding of the nature of migratory legends, which appear, with variations, from country to country. This installation also allowed visitors to experience the sensory engagement of hearing the tale of *the Seal Woman and her Skin* within a domestic space made of seal-skin, enacting the feeling of confinement in the tale, and adding a level of authenticity to the audience experience.

Figs. 29-30.   Rita Duffy (2011) *Arctic Circus* **(from left to right):** *Growl* **(2011). Sculpture;** *Mantel* **(2011). Illustration of installation.**

The Art of Engagement

Folklore is endemic in Irish lived practice, preserved through the practice of commemorative and bodily rites (Connerton, 1989). This folkloric legacy has resulted in a library of narratives, images and rituals related to domestic strangeness. This legacy is referenced in the production of contemporary Gothic fine art which responds to these tales and to traditions preserved through memory. Analysis of the work of Duffy and Maher shows that fine art can work to preserve elements of folk traditions by referencing them in the creation of Gothic artefacts. Dark tales of domesticity shape contemporary Gothic visions of the home in the work of both artists. Both artists work in an informed and sensitive manner with these ancient folk tales, translating them into contemporary visual culture. In the case of Maher and Duffy, their response to their subject matter can also be framed within discourses of gender and identity. Both artists make profoundly Gothic work that is informed by lived experience and the social memory of tales and their tellers. Maher views her work as a continuance of tradition; she updates the cautionary nature of the tales and makes them explicit within her own idiomatic lexicon of visual images. Duffy translates archetypes into her work, and illustrates their story through a variety of visual means. Both are strong champions of folklore and work to translate these dark tales into contemporary settings and to reference their original function as cautionary tale and as mappers of boundaries.

Fine art can also bring folkloric themes to different audiences through exhibitions and other forms of dissemination. The siting of work within a gallery space raises questions about the transmission of these tales. It offers a way in which a fine art practice can work to transmit folk practices and narratives. Much Gothic art is still largely situated within the gallery space and accessible primarily to the community which frequents these places, which can be an inhibitor for democratic and natural modes of dissemination. Maher's sculptural

installations have appeared in parks and other negotiated public spaces. Duffy also uses certain aspects of ethnography in her collaborative work such as *Mantel* (2011). Recently, both Maher and Duffy have experimented with lens-based media, which offers more accessible methods of display, and is more readily absorbed through the everyday democracy of photography and film in popular culture. However, these works are for the most part still sited in. and mediated by, a gallery setting.

The evolution of social practice in art has offered new and exciting ways for artists to engage outside the traditional venues of galleries and art schools. This is captured in this chapter as a methodology used by Lynch, Fortune and Lambert, Connolly Cleary, and later, in *Chapter Five* as the foundation for a complete project; *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge.* Social practice is an approach to art that involves engaging with communities of interest and documenting the result. It is collaborative, democratic, and involves a sharing of knowledge between experts in art and experts in the subject of investigation. Commentators like Claire Doherty in her *From Site to Situation* manifesto (2004) consider social practice as revolving around the drawing together of communities using space as a physical means of establishing a common locus. An understanding of socially-engaged art is pivotal to a full understanding of how folklore, the Gothic and visual practice can come together in an animated and egalitarian way. Socially-engaged art in Ireland has conducted a lively dialogue with folklore through the work of artists such as Sean Lynch that actively explore strange, liminal, Gothic spaces in Ireland. The art of social practice seeks to involve the public in mutual collaboration; it has been related to other engaged forms of fine art, 'other terms that share some kinship with social practice: activist art, social work, protest performance, performance, ethnography, community art, relational aesthetics, conversation pieces, action research' (Jackson, 2008: 136). Of all of these methods, it is *ethnographic art practice* that is the most relevant form when we discuss the way that folklore engages with contemporary Gothic art,

as ethnography is the research of peoples and cultures and also the main mode of studying folklore. This chapter has already examined the works of artists who have interpreted old Irish tales and customs, reviving them within a contemporary context, in new and interesting ways. In the work of many contemporary artists including Maher and Duffy there are definite echoes of folk memory in dark stories with domestic themes. However, ethnographic art considers folklore in the sense of a living entity. This connects with Dundes's notions of folklore as eternally new, continually evolving, and instinctively responding to new circumstances, as outlined in his *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (Dundes 1975). This is an exciting way to consider folklore as a contemporary practice, existing side by side with evolving fine art practice. Ó'Giolláin also claims that folklore has been reinvented by new translations and transmutations:

> The point is that the continuity of traditional cultural elements is not necessarily compromised by embracing, rather than resisting, modernity…part and parcel of the unavoidable and necessary engagement that every living tradition makes with change…(Ó'Giolláin 2000: 2).

The last case study of this chapter therefore focuses mainly on the ethnographic art-work of artists Aileen Lambert and Michael Fortune, whose art is based around notions of collecting, preserving and disseminating folklore. Fortune and Lambert's work can be seen as a 'living Gothic'; working with living traditions that stitch themselves through history and culture to emerge in the present day, their elements changed, but their roots evident. This is a kind of local Gothic that bubbles from the ground in the hidden springs of holy wells and from the strange superstitions that cling like cloth scraps round sacred rag-trees. This idea of local Gothic as a collection of counter-narratives is more fully explored in fieldwork conducted for *Chapter Five*. These stories possess a darkness of otherness found in shared stories, heard in pockets of the country, stories of pure terror, distinct, regional, and set in a specific locale. These are stories about forbidden places, behavioural codes transgressed, and rites not followed. They appear as fireside tales and re-appear as urban legends. In the work of

ethnographic artists such as Michael Fortune, we find the line between fine art practice and folklore itself almost disappearing. The ethnographic art practice of Fortune presents exciting possibilities for both folklore and fine art practice in terms of participation and audience. This art is made in collaboration with community participants, it is screened in the communities of production as well as in galleries, and it acts to revive and foreground pockets of culture that might otherwise lie undiscovered; therefore this chapter sees it as the most significant of all modes of current fine art practice in referencing folklore in contemporary culture.

Michael Fortune's practice is based around *ethnography*, the collection of folktales, customs, curses and rituals. Most of his interest derives from his own upbringing in rural Wexford, as part of a community suffused with superstition and folk traditions. His video piece, *We Invented Hallowe'en* (2010) bears witness to authentic folkloric roots of his practice (Figs. 31-32). This piece is composed of five films that play recorded events of Hallowe'en night in Wexford, each year from 2005 to 2010. Across these films, generally displayed simultaneously playing on five monitors, viewers watch the artist's mother, a middle-aged woman, as she dresses up in a series of elaborate, home-made costumes, panting and coughing with effort as she does so. The artist, her son, is silent, his bobbing video camera following her as she treads and re-treads the same path through the darkness of the October twilight to her own mother's house, where, in film after film, year after year, she ritually fools her into thinking she is one of her own great-grandchildren. These video pieces portray in detail this Fortune family tradition, itself based on the Irish folk practise of *guising* or disguising at Hallowe'en, a practice that is regarded by folklorists to be an attempt to confuse the spirit world on this liminal night when the dead are popularly supposed to walk. In *We Invented Halloween* (2010) Fortune uses the specific method of *autoethnography*; a fusion of artist autobiography and ethnography that will be explored in more detail in *Chapter Five*. Autoethnography can pose problems of communication; if the context is too

specific it can be self-indulgent, or incomprehensible (Foster 1995). However, in this piece, Fortune achieves a balance of embedded ethnography and dispassionate observation. Fortune presents this intimate family ritual without emotion, sentimentality, or even commentary. His absence from the frame is of note, with only a few sidelong glances from his family revealing the presence of the camera. These film pieces are presented as evidence of the survival of these folk traditions in cultural memory and, crucially, as evidence of how folklore can mutate and evolve within the home to create new and strange customs in everyday life.

Figs. 31-32.   **Michael Fortune (2005-2010)** *We Invented Halloween*. **Film stills.**

Many of Fortune's commissions are through public art schemes and local art commissions. Some of these projects are carried out with young people in schools and homes, some with older people in their homes, in social situations or residential care; the resulting work, most often in the form of DVDs, is often housed in a mixture of community archives, galleries and folklore collections. Specific examples of these projects are *Spoken Treasure* (2006), *That's What We Were Told, Anyway…* (2006), *That's True, You Know* (2005), *A Walk In The May Dew* (2007), *Eggs in the Drills* (2008), *Half for You, Half for Me* (2010), *Following the Whitethorn* (2010), *Never pick a go-go off the ground* (2010) and *The Fall of the Leaf* (2010). Fortune focuses on working with specific sites and communities in order to collect stories and rituals that inform their communal identity. This is one of the most interesting intersections of all, when histories, stories, and memories converge to create the

kind of 'local Gothic' already discussed; a shared counter-narrative with a clear and direct link to the folklore it draws from. This kind of Gothic, though it manifests in cities, is more frequently found in rural areas, where memories are long, stories bear telling and re-telling, and the tales are reinvented to take on new forms and encompass new references. It arises from part-folkloric superstition, part-Catholic mysticism and is centred around memories of land, contested ownership, significant sites and the stories that arise from them and around them. The ethnographic practice of artists such as Fortune will form part of the basis for the fieldwork methodologies developed for use in *Chapter Five*. Fortune's use of online video platforms like Vimeo and YouTube to show film pieces have also brought his work to new and diverse online audiences. Aesthetically, his films seem naïve in technique; he often uses handheld cameras to signify veracity, his presentation style is plain and he uses a still focus to signify a detachment from the aesthetics of fine art film. His film narratives may appear as art with the artist missing, but his authorial presence, though invisible, can be seen through his editing and his selection of stories for the finished films. The method of filming sets up an immediate relationship between the speaker and the viewer that mimics the traditional dynamic of speaker and listener in the act of tale-telling. Sweeney comments of this process of transmission: 'The storyteller and the listener established the dynamic between performer and audience in Irish homes around the country. Stories were passed on and elaborated as they were transmitted by word of mouth (bealoideas)' (Sweeney 2009: 25).

Bud Mack's Hill (2012) was produced for Trans-Art Cavan and funded by The International Fund for Ireland, The Arts Council and Cavan County Council. This piece offers a deadpan montage of children, filmed in kitchens across Cavan as they tell stories of banshees, of a mysterious horse-cat apparition and even of an entity that manifests through repeated viewings of the 1993 film *Hocus Pocus.* In the film, the modern kitchen replaces the hearth as a site of strange stories. Fortune uses a fixed-frame to create a relaxed,

conversational atmosphere. This work foregrounds the folk culture of storytelling, situating home as a site of terror associated with the traditional transmission of horror through fireside tales. The films capture a distinctive atmosphere of Irish Gothic, a kind of homely *Unheimlich*. Gothic may be about otherness, Fortune seems to say, but it is a *shared* otherness, within a community, forming part of local, regional and national identity. Within the rural setting of *Bud Mack's Hill* (2012) the survival of folk stories appears as a natural thing, the small community locally have passed on these stories from generation to generation. They are a testament to individual memory recalled by the subjects, based on the larger collective memory of the community and a social memory of repetition. These vernacular Gothic tales survive in Ireland as part of a living Gothic tradition; despite the competition offered by television, internet and other sources, there is still a healthy tradition of storytelling and oral culture in Ireland. This sense of a very particular type of local Gothic, endemic to a specific rural area relates to the idea of 'Bog Gothic'. O'Mahoney uses the term to denote a rural, small-town archive of stories that hold a very particular meaning for local residents; this relates to ideas of local or vernacular Gothic constituted by ethnographic art.

This is not to say that the Gothic home is native only to the countryside. The work of architects-turned-artists Anne Cleary and Denis Connolly (known collectively as Connolly Cleary) also testifies to this idea of a living tradition of folklore in urban Irish settings. Their enormous film project *Moving Dublin* (2008-2009) illustrates the persistence of memory and folktales in spite of the contemporary growth of urban sprawl in Dublin (Figs. 33-34). In this psychogeographical, site-specific series of films pieces, Connolly Cleary map the strange underside of Dublin as a site of stories and of remnants of an earlier culture. This project is linked to ideas of urban space as a container of legend and old tales; and as a site of new urban legends that evolve from these. It is socially-engaged and publicly presented. It is also psychogeographical and site-specific. Connolly Cleary are fascinated by the passage of time,

and the accelerated growth of a city that now covers the 'old' countryside around Dublin. In this they are influenced by their own architectural training in Paris and exposure to ideas by de Certeau (specifically in relation to his 1984 essay, *Walking In The City*), Guy Debord, the Situationists and other seminal writings on psychogeography. *Moving Dublin* is a hymn to the city as home; it highlights the uncanny nature of city environment and explores the dark layers of folklore that underlie contemporary urban reality. Most interesting are the pieces from *Moving Dublin* that are based on the collected stories of *seanchai* (storyteller) Malachi Hogan. Film pieces contained in *Holy Turf* such as *Ghost Story* utilise Hogan's folklore narratives drawn from his book *Malachi Hogan Remembers* as recounted to George A. Little. Connolly Cleary's aim was to construct a sense of the history and stories of the city leading to some extraordinary filmic juxtapositions. Hogan's *Ghost Story*, a tale of being followed home by a mysterious, headless stranger, is recounted in the drab daylight of a modern housing estate as well as among more pastoral settings (Figs. 33-34). Connolly Cleary want to show the viewer the underlying reality beyond contemporary appearances: '[B]ut this once pastoral plain at the base of the mountains is not an ordinary place, no place really is. Through the physical reality of today, we glimpse another reality, a complex mixture of the humdrum, myth, association and memory' (2009: 45). The filmed segments physically document the walks taken by Malachi Hogan, and the sites of his stories, while the voiceover by German actor Florian Schneider aims at 'creating anthropological distance and emptying it of its stage Irish potential' (2009: 45). This fascinating work probes the notion of city memory: the idea that the old stories survive and take new forms. In *Chapter Two*, Connolly Cleary's *Moving Dublin* film pieces are further considered in light of the legends of the Hungry Grass and their significance in illustrating concerns during the Irish Great Famine of 1845-47 (*An Gorta Mór*).

Figs. 33-34.   **Connolly Cleary (2007-2008)** *Ghost Story.* **Film stills from** *Ghost Story* **as part of Moving Dublin project.**

The Banshee Lives In The Handball Alley (2004-2005) a film piece by Fortune in collaboration with partner Aileen Lambert, is also situated in the urban environment of Limerick city (Figs. 35-36)[3]. The tales told in this piece: of the Green Lady, the Death Coach, the headless coachman, the banshee and other incredible characters, all testify to the remarkable survival of legends among young people in urban communities in Ireland. Interestingly, the headless coachman also appears in several stories by Le Fanu, a testament to his adolescence spent in Abington, County Limerick. These films detract from the common assumption that folklore in Ireland is somehow disappearing; on the contrary, these films expose these Gothic stories as constantly evolving to incorporate references to urban landmarks and icons of contemporary culture. These works also bear out Dundes's (1975) assertion that folklore continues to be a living, breathing entity. As McDowell comments: '[F]olklore is also lived in an organic sense. It is always reshaping and amassing, a culture-wide game of Chinese whispers, and it still exists today in urban legends, gossip and conspiracy theories.' (2012: 252). As in Connolly Cleary's piece *Holy Turf*, Fortune and Lambert map the surreal and subversive stories and customs that are related, adapted and transmitted, all within the broad parameters of what we constitute as home.

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[3] This piece is viewable at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X764d7yCQFs

Figs. 35-36.   **Michael Fortune and Aileen Lambert (2004-2005)** *The Banshee Lives in the Handball Alley***. Film stills.**

However, it is within Fortune's own home that the most potent memories and outlandish folktales lie. *My Grandfather was taken by the Fairies* (2006) features recordings of Fortune's mother (the star of *We Invented Halloween*) and of other family members as they reminisce about strange and supernatural stories told about locals from their community in rural Wexford. The camera pans slowly around Fortune's mother's kitchen as it captures the ordinary domestic space which contrasts beautifully with the bizarre stories that the protagonists recount to camera. Fortune's work is endlessly curious about these tales that constitute social memory as well as folklore, yet his gaze is detached, appraising; he is a true ethnographer. As Tuck says of him: 'His art practice continuously works to documents social memories of folklore and map its evolution…Fortune's work neither eulogises progress nor sentimentalises the past…. His work provides a document of the carnivalesque of the everyday, of hybrid fictions in which memory is both partial and repetitive' (Tuck 2007:1).

Conclusions: Towards a Lived Practice

Folklore is a key element in the formation of national, regional and local identity. It signifies belonging and a deep connection with tradition: 'The way you see me now is the way I really am, and it is the way of my forefathers' (Erikson 1963:129). Folklore acts to map and define local boundaries in the home and without. Dundes agrees, adding to this the value of folklore to community identity:

> Not only does folklore serve as a kind of autobiographical ethnography, a mirror made by the people themselves, which reflects a group's identity, but it also represents valuable data which is relatively free from the outside observers' bias…Folklore gives a view of a people from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in…It is important to recognise that folklore is not simply a way of obtaining available data about identity for social scientists. It is actually one of the principal means by which an individual and a group discovers or establishes his or its identity. (Dundes 1989: 34-35)

This folkloric identity is still part of national identity in contemporary Ireland. It infuses domestic rituals, the placement of objects, and superstitions in the home that linger into the twenty-first century. This domestic location of the darker elements of folklore is illustrated in an article by Corinne Purtill of the *Global Post* reporting on local calls for a bungalow in Lixnaw, County Kerry to be demolished after it became the site of five violent and accidental deaths ('This Irish cottage may really be haunted by violent fairies').[4] This article features an interview with local publican Paddy Quilter who describes the idea of a curse or a *piseog* being cast on the home

> In the old days, they called it piseog,' Quilter says, a Gaelic term (pronounced pi-shawg) meaning superstition, voodoo or anything suggesting a supernatural power at hand. 'There were a lot of piseogs and ghosts before electricity came in.' It's a word someone might use to explain an unusual or unsettling phenomenon — the mysterious deaths of five residents of a single cottage, for example. (Purtill 2014)

This folkloric identity is realised in Irish art through ideas of the Gothic home: a home that both preserves and transmits important tales and rituals of Irish folklore. Artists draw on

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[4] Article viewable at
http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/ireland/141029/ireland-haunted-house-lixnaw-piseog

a range of memories, from personal to collective, to create images of dark domesticity drawn from Irish folklore. The function of counter-narratives and secret tales in folklore is echoed in the tradition of Gothic fine art today; these fine art images often represent cautionary tales; they warn the viewer that home is a more complex space than it might initially appear by presenting it as a space problematised by history, culture and economic anxieties. In *Chapter Five* we will explore in more detail this function of the Gothic counter-narrative as cautionary tale. The artists chosen for investigation in this chapter all interact with dark domestic folk tales in different ways. Alice Maher's *House* (1995), *Berry Dress* (1994), *Bee Dress* (1994), *Nettle Coat* (1996), *Mnemosyne* (2003), *Cell* (1991), and *Staircase* (1997) all reflect traditional narratives and also issues relating to boundaries and transgression in folk tales. The pieces by Rita Duffy completed for *Arctic Circus* (2011) reference a specific migratory legend, the *Seal Woman and Her Skin*, through a mixture of paintings, sculptures and installations. Translations of dark domesticity into fine art practice not only display roots in folklore, but can also illuminate and translate folk legends. Connolly Cleary's focus on the folktales of Malachi Hogan in their *Moving Dublin* (2008-2009) shows how even urban projects are influenced by the underlying sense of traditional tales and customs. Michael Fortune's *The Banshee Lives in the Handball Alley* (2004-2005) in collaboration with Aileen Lambert, and his *We Invented Halloween* (2011), *Around the House* (2010) and *Bud Mack's Hill* (2012) have an ethnographic focus that is closely aligned to the act of folklore collection itself. In Michael Fortune's work, home is restored to its ancestral role in terms of setting for tales. His substitution of the modern kitchen for the hearth translates this site into contemporary culture. From this traditional locus of tale-telling in sites in Limerick and Cavan, emanate strange stories with casts of Gothic characters.

Through this practice of ethnographic art, collective memories of folklore (Durkheim 1912, Halbwachs, 1992) are preserved, but also *transformed*, added to, changed, adapted for

modern society, and preserved as a vernacular, living Gothic. This vernacular Gothic art also works to disseminate these dark tales and their variants in contemporary society through site-specific work based in domestic settings, using democratic media such as film and propagating these tales, motifs and characters in local and community spaces. Through all the modes of fine art explored in this chapter, from Maher's transformation of fairytales into sculptural pieces, to Duffy's translation of legends told in childhood, to Connolly Cleary's interpretation of domestic urban space as evoked by indigenous folk tales, to Fortune's ethnographic art practice, the Irish home is seen as a repository of folklore, folk practices, legends and superstitions. Fortune and Lambert's work is particularly successful in evoking the contemporary traditions and ritual practices that stem from these old folktales and are firmly enshrined in lived practice. In the work of these artists, memory acts as a repository of folkloric images, tales and customs, but in all cases, fine art acts as a catalyst for the re-interpretation and re-imagination of these domestic visions as profoundly Gothic. The influence of folklore helps explain part of the unease and anxiety that stems from depictions of the home in contemporary fine art practice. In folklore, home is a space that urgently needs protection from malignant forces. The outside becomes somewhere to be feared, the inside somewhere to be hidden and concealed; the very illustration of the *Unheimlich* in relation to the home. However, this idea of recurrence is not only germane to folklore. Like Alice Maher's *Staircase* (Figs. 21-22), the evolution of the home in Irish history represents a difficult and often painful journey, as through the forces of colonial oppression, home itself becomes an infinitely more complex and Gothic space. In the next chapter, *North and South: [Post]Colonial Notions of Home*, we explore how these Irish counter-narratives of the Gothic home develop further in a series of historical and cultural contexts.

Chapter 2: North and South: [Post]Colonial Notions of Home

 In Ireland, the Gothic, with its necromantic interest in the transmission of things—property, capital, curses, guilt—across generations, has had precisely the effect of "worrying old wounds" (Backus 1999: 243-44).

Fig. 37: **Willie Doherty (1987)** *Home.* **Black and white photograph with text.**

A rough landscape of stones fades into a mist that rises up and obscures the horizon. The

shards of rocks are overlaid with Willie Doherty's characteristic, sans serif, white text that

reads: 'Lost Perspectives. Ancient Stones. Home.' This terse set of phrases sprawled across

the surface of *Home* (1987) evokes Doherty's recurrent obsession with the Irish landscape,

ingrained as it is with a ruptured history, disfigured by trauma and weighed down by political

divisions (Fig. 37). Although reminiscent of the work of Richard Long, Doherty's vivid

photographic pieces are insistently Irish in theme. The significance of *Home*, in this context,

goes far beyond the concept of the individual or family home; it widens to include a national

definition of homeland. Doherty's work consistently examines the contradictions and complexities of attempting to create a nationally agreed notion of home in a country that has been invaded and colonised, and that still remains partitioned. He challenges us to form this definition of home in a way that embraces both Northern Irish and Southern Irish perspectives. He asks how we can agree on an idea of home in a present that both maintains a distance from the pre-colonial past ('lost perspectives, ancient stones') but that also resonates with raw and urgent political and religious tensions. Home, in Doherty's pieces, is a place where the past forcibly recurs, which is haunted by the ghosts of colonialism and darkened by shadows of conflict. His liminal landscapes are often infused with fog and dusk, lending them an ambiguity and uncertainty. This sense of in-betweenness imbues his work and is frequently aggravated by his avoidance of signposts and identifying marks in the landscape, so that the viewer is often abandoned without direction, a stranger in a strange land. Doherty's work is further problematised as a product of his Northern Irish upbringing; it needs to be read not only in the context of colonial resonance, but construed in the shadow of twentieth century ethnic, religious and nationalistic conflict and the lasting scars that this leaves on the landscape. As David Punter points out in his 'Introduction' to *Postcolonial Imaginings*, postcolonialism is predicated on the notion of a series of uncanny returns (Punter 2000: vi). Northern Irish Gothic art, even more than Southern Irish Gothic art, is infused with this tragic sense of recurrence, which presents the viewer with a series of *Unheimlich* returns to different epochs in the timeline of the same contested territory. Doherty's art is characteristic of the striking and polemic responses provoked by not only by the inevitable return of past and distant conflicts, but also, more immediately, by the contemporary residue of recent sectarian conflict. Throughout this chapter, we will constantly return to this difficult and divided notion of home and homeland emblematised in Doherty's work, and his ideas of split identity and haunted landscapes that are also teased out by a succession of artists

including Dorothy Cross, Martina Cleary, Marianne Keating, Daphne Wright, David Creedon, Michelle Horrigan, Rita Duffy, Patric Coogan, John Kindness and Philip Napier. These artists all consider the idea of splits and divisions as they attempt to define home and identity as somewhere in-between Northern and Southern, Catholic and Protestant, Big House and cottage, an elusive space somewhere between an ever-recurring past and an ever-changing present.

Chapter Two: North and South: [Post]Colonial Notions of Home, therefore, focuses on the idea of national (re)constructions of the Irish home and Irish identity in contemporary visual culture. It looks at how these core concepts of home and identity are problematised equally by colonial shadows and the changing and complex strands of postcolonial identity. This chapter considers the recurrent theme of the thesis, the resurrection of the Gothic home, which is referenced as a site of superstition and ritual protection in *Chapter One: The Home of Folklore,* as a dangerous place for women in *Chapter Three: 'Women Who Can't Seem To Get Out Of The House': Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny*, as an unstable and haunted commodity in *Chapter Four: [Re] Animating the Ghost Estates* and as a repressed and recurrent space of trauma in *Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*. However, this chapter focuses specifically on the idea of the Gothic home in Ireland as split, endangered and contested. It views home as a place and as a concept, both of which suffer from sharp divisions in several political, historical, cultural and social contexts. It attempts to set out how Irish notions of home are informed by the precarious, fractured and divided domestic spaces that emanate from colonial rule, Penal Laws, the trauma of the Famine, the Land Wars, and more recent sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. The readings taken of the works discussed are therefore predicated on the idea of the fractured Gothic home in relation to colonial shadows, postcolonial identity, ruin and haunting. This fractured notion of identity is one familiar to many Irish artists and writers, who seek to define the changed character of

Ireland constituted by its postcolonial situation. Indeed, Field Day critics such as Deane and Gibbons contend that postcolonial readings constitute the most appropriate lens through which to analyse contemporary Irish creative practice. This chapter both utilises and questions this approach through its examination of the notion of home in the different contexts of Northern and Southern Irish culture and through its evaluation of the chronological nature that McEvilley posits as the four stages of culture formation (the precolonial, the colonial, the uprising and the postcolonial distance) in postcolonial society (McEvilley 1994: 13). This discussion focuses on the singular lack of national agreement in Ireland with regard to the current stage of culture formation, and the further complication of this issue by the partition of Ireland in the 1920s and the discrimination, sectarianism and communities of antagonism in Northern Ireland that emerged because of this.

Chapter Two is therefore divided into two sections: as the term *[Post] Colonial* in its title suggests, it questions the notion of postcolonialism as a blanket appellation to the significantly divided island of Ireland. The first part of this chapter (*Hungry Ghosts, A House Divided* and *Paranormal Domesticity*) considers the legacy of colonialism in the Republic of Ireland through the contemporary mediation of homes from the colonial period (the Big Houses and cottages), as seen through the lens of artists Cleary, Cross, O'Kelly, Wright, Keating, Creedon and Horrigan. These remediated homes offer a microcosm of the difficult political and social contexts from which they emerge, and reflect the split and contested nature of Irish culture during the colonial period. Understanding the impact of this extended colonial period (nominally from the Norman invasion of 1169 to the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922) is crucial to comprehending the contemporary Irish passion for alterity, for defining Irishness as anything but Englishness. The homes of the conquered native Irish (the traditional form of the rented estate cottage), take on a dense political, emotional and charged significance when considered in the light of the restrictive Penal Laws of 1691 that

rendered impoverished Irish homes as transitory places and also in light of the context of the national and domestic Gothic trauma induced by the Great Famine of 1845-47. In its examination of the colonial past, this chapter also seeks to explain some of the artistic approaches to home that are characterised by ideas of silence, trauma and forgetting; a theme that is also taken up in *Chapter Five* with reference to the Wildgoose Lodge memory project. It also considers the homes of colonial authority (the Big Houses) in terms of their visual presence in contemporary Ireland. It examines how these homes, many of them abandoned, have become inhabited by spectres of the colonial past and it considers how these significant sites are resurrected in contemporary culture as tourist sites, picturesque ruins and haunted houses. The second part of this chapter *((Northern) Irish Gothic, Splitting Image* and *Floating Home)* reflects on the rawer, visceral sense of contemporary Gothic found in representations of national identity and ideas of home by Northern Irish artists. The idea of Gothic as a dissident mode of art is also explored in the context of Northern Irish Gothic. These sections examine the paintings of Duffy, the installations of Napier, the crafted mosaic and sculptural work of Kindness and the photographic and film work of Doherty in terms of their reflection of a more recent past of divisive and violent warfare. They also consider the fractured home in the context of guerrilla warfare and in light of the divisions that arise from a society polarised by religious and cultural difference.

Both parts of the chapter define these colonial and postcolonial images of home as Gothic. The art that evolves from these contexts conforms to the general definition of contemporary Gothic Irish art outlined in the *Introduction*. In terms of aesthetics, this art is representational and surreal. It offers a narrative that embodies Gothic tropes of oppressive power, haunting, ghosts, ruins and trauma. It signifies the uncanny return of the repressed, that consistent dialogue between past and present that produces contemporary notions of home. The idea of Gothic as a dissident mode is also important here. This idea is aligned with

the counter-narratives of folklore as examined in *Chapter One* and *Chapter Five.* It is also explored in *Chapter Three* and *Chapter Four* where artists' interpretations of the Gothic home are analysed as images of protest. Schultz (2010) agrees with this definition of Gothic as a counterpoint to dominant narratives. He sees the Gothic as a tradition that runs counter to the mainstream, and which helpfully illuminates the splits and divisions in both Irish identity and in native notions of home. As he puts it:

> Gothic, as a theoretical lens, can also heighten our awareness of re-emergent cultural factors (colonial trauma, gender and sexual discrimination, political insularity) that originally led to the Irish artist's dual aesthetic and political identity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Schultz 2010)

This sense of an aesthetic and political split, of divisions that run deep as part of both Irish history and the Irish artistic tradition, is central to this chapter as we consider how notions of the fractured home manifest in late twentieth and early twenty-first century art. As both the *Introduction* and *Chapter One* discuss, in most contexts home is generally regarded as a 'felicitous space' (Bachelard 1954: xxxv). However, within a Gothic context, home is more frequently represented as a subverted site, a space of concealed secrets and a place of dysfunctional domesticity. As Ellis remarks of the Gothic genre, 'it is the failed home that appears on its pages' (Ellis 1989: ix). Within a postcolonial context, home and identity are often coloured by notions of fear, dispossession and transience; home is capable of simultaneously becoming a place of comfort and a place of fear. Recognition of the colonial identity of Ireland's past and the repercussions of colonial rule is key to understanding several key concepts that underlie this thesis, just as an understanding of folklore was key to understanding the references used by artists in *Chapter One*. Among these key concepts is the notion of 'land hunger', an urgent mix of fear and desire that characterises Irish feelings about land and home ownership. This phenomenon of 'land hunger' and its detrimental effects are also explored in some detail later in the thesis, in *Chapter Four*, in relation to the

spectacular housing excesses of the Celtic Tiger era of 2000-2008 and the contemporary phenomenon of the ghost estates, while in *Chapter Five* the roots of this desire for land is explored further in the context of the agrarian warfare of the nineteenth-century.

Hungry Ghosts

In her *Endarken* film piece of 2001 (Fig. 38), Dorothy Cross reveals a static image of a ruined Famine cottage which becomes slowly blotted out with a growing dark spot that eventually covers the entire screen (Fig. 39). Rugoff construes the function of the black spot as opening up the image to wider readings:

> …in interrupting the photographic clarity of the image and its implicit assertion of a seamless reality, it opens up alternative fields of meaning. As the dot spreads across the image like a traumatic stain, it de-familiarises the homely scene and renders it suspicious. It replaces the harmonious picturesque prospect that we first view…with an ambiguous landscape, a site haunted by hidden or absent meanings. (Rugoff 2005:70).

Given Cross's tendency towards surreal references incorporating wordplay (discussed at more length in *Chapter Three*), the significance of this darkening screen can be read as an allusion to multiple meanings of the words 'spot'. It may denote the punning phrase 'blind spot', or Stevenson's literary trope of the black spot signifying death (Stevenson 1883), or even the idea of the Famine as a 'black spot' on Irish history, an unspeakable haunting legacy of abandonment and eviction that clings to these cottage buildings. The Great Famine (*an Gorta Mór*) of 1845-47, during which over two million Irish people died or emigrated as a result of the failure of the potato crop, can itself be read as a Gothic event; an epic tale of tragedy that provides a dramatic climax in the narrative arc of colonial history in Ireland. Brendan Bradshaw (1989) refers it as a pivotal event, even a 'holocaust' in the traumatic history of Ireland. He describes this as part of a long process in Ireland:

> …seared as the record is by successive waves of conquest and colonisation by bloody wars and uprisings, by traumatic dislocations, by lethal racial antagonism, and, indeed by its own nineteenth-century version of a holocaust. (Bradshaw 1989: 338)

Cross's Endarken can be read as a paradigm of postcolonial art; it resists colonial narratives and attempts to voice the unspeakable. It fulfils what Boehmer terms are the conditions for postcolonial culture, when 'decolonization demanded – and still demands – symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings (Boehmer 2005:3). In Cross's work, these dominant meanings are subverted; the image of the cottage offers a direct refutation to the omnipresent tourist image of the thatched cottage, instead linking the ominous spread of the black spot with the desolate legacy of ruined Famine cottages in the Irish landscape.

Figs. 38-39:   **Dorothy Cross (2000) *Endarken*. Film stills.**

Why does Cross feel the need to claim the cottage as a Gothic symbol? This is because, both nationally and internationally, the form of the cottage is almost synonymous with an idealised version of Irish domesticity. There are many commercial entities which have conspired to create this false image. Here we will consider only two as emblematic of the main; a 1957 postcard of Connemara, County Galway by photographer John Hinde and the Doagh Famine Village in County Donegal. Hinde's postcard (Fig. 40) could not be more stereotypically Irish in terms of its imagery; into the tiny frame of the postcard photograph he has managed to include a thatched cottage, a donkey, a creel of turf, farmers in nineteenth-

century attire, traditional stone walls, and a bizarrely blue Atlantic ocean. Highmore says of Hinde's postcard photography: '[T]heir very vividness gives them a strange, dreamlike quality that provides mnemonic jolts and fleeting glimpses of lost time. Hinde postcards recast the times and places of the past as Technicolor daydreams' (Highmore 2007: 2). In *Transformations in Irish Culture,* Gibbons ruminates on the popularity of John Hinde's images of the cottage as a picturesque icon. These postcards, he contends, represent more than an idyllic landscape. He argues that, given their original purpose, these postcards also served as carriers of 'emotional shorthand' (Gibbons 1996: 40) that tells us about the painful nostalgia experienced by the Irish diaspora and the resultant diasporic desire to consume domestic images of an idealised past. On a whole other level of surrealism, the Doagh Famine Village (Fig. 41) on the island of Doagh, off the coast of Donegal, offers a resurrection of the form of the Famine village as a contemporary, jolly, tourist experience. Visitors to the website[5] are exhorted to 'enjoy the *craic*' (fun) during their visit. The site goes on to claim that '[D]ifferent to any other tourist attraction in Ireland the Famine Village depicts life in Ireland as it was, uncommercialised, interdenominational interspersed with humorous anectdotes [sic] of Irish life.' This incongruous juxtaposition of Famine village and humorous anecdotes is strange, as are the images on the website that depict smiling visitors to this Famine memorial tucking into refreshments in the cottage-style canteen. Most surreal of all is the information on the Famine village's annual winter transformation into 'Santa's Island'. Just as the viewers' disbelief reaches its height (imagine the Jewish Museum in Berlin offering such delights!), a trawl through the website reveals that that this is not in fact an actual Famine village. Doagh Famine Village was created from the remains of a village vacated in 1983. Both Hinde's postcards and the Famine Village therefore function as perfect

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[5] Website viewable at http://www.doaghfaminevillage.com/

examples of the second level of domestic *simulacra* (Baudrillaud 1981: 6), contemporary images of home that mask and denature their original historic meaning.
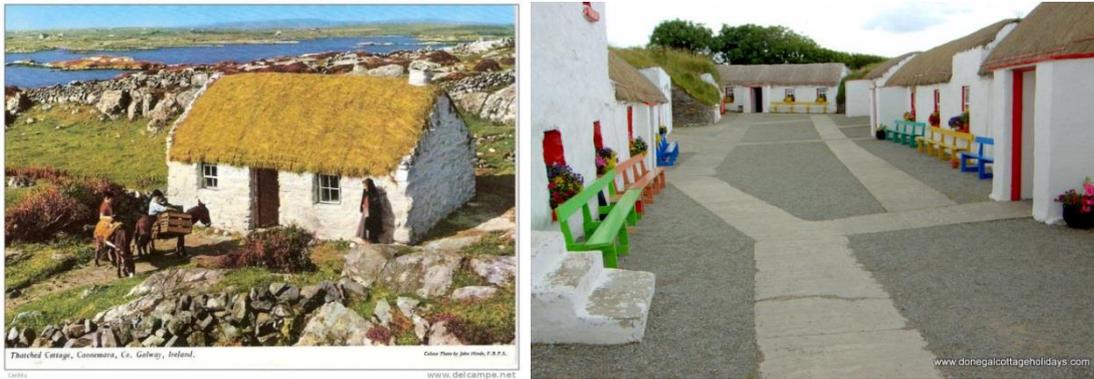
Figs. 40-41: **(From left to right): John Hinde (1957)** *Thatched Cottage Connemara, County Galway* **(1957). Postcard;** *Doagh Island Famine Village Tourist Attraction*. **Website photograph.**

An understanding of the original historical context of the cottage in the Irish cultural landscape is vital to appreciate why contemporary ideas of home in Ireland are so problematised by ideas of possession. The cottage, far from being a tourist attraction, is more properly construed as a domestic site of trauma in Irish history. The cottage home was the site of evictions and dispossession through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (as briefly discussed in the *Introduction*). Today, the proliferation of ruined cottages in the Irish landscape stands a bleak *memento mori* of colonial land practices, and, as *Chapter Five* discusses, of the Irish agrarian conflicts of the late nineteenth-century. The most devastating passages in the history of the Irish cottage are to be found in the 1840s, with the advent of the Great Famine of 1845-47. Even reading the census figures of that period reveals the stark truth about the picturesque cottage. In 1841, just four years before the Famine, over forty percent of Irish families lived in fourth-class accommodation (one-room only), and only seven percent in houses of more than three rooms. Forty years later, in the census of 1881,

there were still some 215,000 cottiers recorded as living in single-roomed cabins with mud

walls and thatched roofs. As Perry (2013) correctly observes:

> The quaint, thatched Irish cottage that fills the pages of so many tourist brochures and internet sites has long been seen as a traditional heavily romanticized symbol of Irish cultural life. Such images co-exist of course, with images of the Irish labourer's cottage (*bothan scoir*) usually a single room with thatched roof and mud floor, as an historic indicator of poverty and famine. (Perry 2013: 70)

In the 1910 postcard *Outlook* (Fig. 42), the Irish cottage photographed appears run-

down and dishevelled, the windows unglazed, the doorway propped up by pieces of wood,

with utensils and furniture scattered carelessly in the front yard. This display of indifference

to the aesthetics of home is part of the long legacy of the Penal Laws, a system of laws

designed to suppress the Catholic majority and Protestant dissenters, and to convert them to

the acknowledged 'official' religion of Church of Ireland. The Penal Laws were introduced in

1691 and were added to over successive years, with the last Laws only finally repealed in

1920. For hundreds of years, these laws governed the behaviour, franchise rights and rights to

home ownership for the Catholic majority in Ireland. Particularly of note in this legislation is

the *Act to Prevent the further Growth of Popery* (1703) which actively curtails any notion of

land rights for Catholics:

> Sec. 6. Every papist shall be disabled to purchase any lands, or any rents or profits of lands, or any lease of lands, other than for a term not exceeding 31 years, whereon a rent not less than two thirds of the improved yearly value, at the time of making such lease, shall be reserved during such term. And all estates or terms or other interests acquired after the 24th of March, 1703, other than such 31-year leases, by or on behalf of papists, shall be void. (*Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery* 1703)

Given this damning curtailment of home, and this limiting of home and land ownership to a

thirty-one-year period, the slovenly air that pervades the 1910 postcard *Outlook* is more

easily understood. When the idea of the dynastic home is abolished home becomes a

transitory place, a place to be relinquished to colonial landlords, to be moved on from, to be

evicted from. Home, for these cottiers, therefore became a space that could never be permanently owned, settled in, or passed on to an heir. Colonial legislation acted to erase notions of legacy, family history and pride in home ownership. Contemporary accounts from the nineteenth-century underline the awful precariousness of tenancy:

> If they do not pay their rent at the proper time, they are liable to be turned adrift, even in the middle of the night, into the bleak road, without a shelter, and with their helpless wives and children. No notice is necessary; no notice is given (Kay 1880: 305).

These Penal Laws also restricted the passing of property to a single child, ensuring that the populous Irish families were faced with the practice of increasing subdivision of property, which inevitably led to the creation of multiple, tiny plots of land that could only grow the most profitable crop: the potato. When the European blight of 1845 descended, this monoculture proved fatal for small farmers: although a similar blight affected crops in France in the same year, famine there was averted by the variety of crops grown. Ireland had no such comfort. In just three years, over two million people had abandoned their Irish homes to face death or emigration.

Fig. 42: *Outlook* **(1909). Postcard from the collection of Maggie Land Blanck, Pa, US.**

This notion of ruin as reminder, as Famine artefact, resonates in the work of Alanna O'Kelly. With the 150th anniversary of the Famine falling in 1995, the 1990s saw the production of several commemorative works by O'Kelly and others, including Rowan

Gillespie's *Famine* (1998) and John Behan's *Famine Ship* (1998). O'Kelly's phototext *The Country Blooms, a Garden and a Grave* (1992) offers an impressive corpus of photographic works based on the Irish Famine (Fig. 43). The name is taken from Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), and explicitly links the tragic paradox of death and life within the context of the Famine:

> While, scourged by famine, from the smiling land
> The mournful peasant leads his humble band
> And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
> The country blooms -- a garden and a grave! (Goldsmith 1770).

Using photographs overlaid with text, O'Kelly produced a phototext series that memorialised the Famine landscape of cottages and graves. This coincided with the production of a more pointed film piece *No Colouring Can Deepen the Darkness of Truth* (1990) that mourns the legacy of the Famine in an interlinked series of images ranging from mountains, a rock church, water, graves, breastfeeding and fields (Fig. 44). These images are overlaid with the voice of traditional singer Mairead Ni Dhomhnaill chanting place-names, singing, and keening (*caoineadh na mairbh* – the lamenting of the dead). Like Cross's *Endarken*, or O'Kelly's *The Country Blooms, A Garden and a Grave*, this is an example of postcolonial Gothic art, but here O'Kelly breaks the taboo of silence that clings to the colonial past. O'Kelly's use of mourning performance, split-screen presentation and liminal images all speak to her idea of home as a place marked by history and needing to be reclaimed. *No Colouring Can Deepen the Darkness of Truth* recalls Wisker's definition of *postcolonial Gothic* as a form that 'uses Gothic tropes: silence, liminal spaces, ghosting, identity, split selves, metamorphosis' (Wisker 2013: 512). Khair contends also that the postcolonial and the Gothic are connected by 'a discussion of the problematics of narrating the Other' (Khair 2009: 3). O'Kelly's work also speaks to the haunting, undead quality of

these ruined homes, and their place not only in the Irish landscape but also in psychological

construct of home in Ireland.
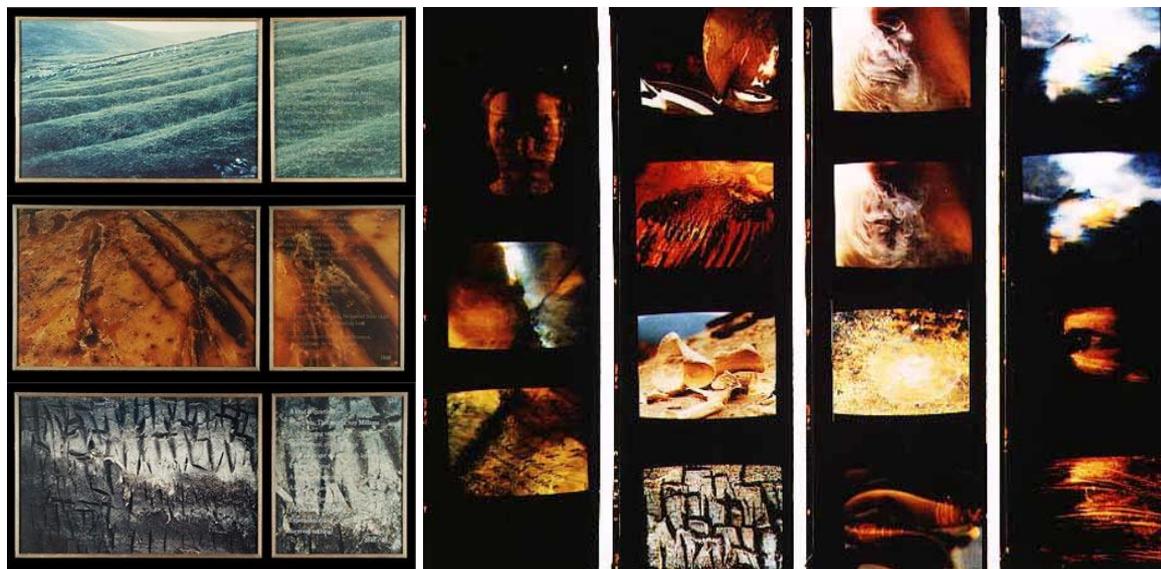
Figs. 43-44: **Alanna O'Kelly (From left to right):** *The Country Blooms, A Garden and a Grave* **(1992). Photomontage;** *No Colouring Can Deepen The Darkness of Truth* **(1990). Film stills.**

O'Kelly speaks of her determination to memorialise the Famine in the face of silence

that still surrounds it:

> When I was growing up nobody ever talked about the Famine, it only kind of lived in people's minds as a certain tone. I always understood it to be a shame, a confusion, a very dark place. My mother wouldn't talk about it. My grandmother wouldn't dream of talking about it, but I think my generation can talk about it, about the families, the love and the loss. People were buried with no name, no identification, no marking, the graves are everywhere in the landscape. (Deepwell 143)

We have already touched on the idea of silence and fear in folklore in *Chapter One* (Curran

2008). This problem of silence, which O'Kelly articulates, both in her interview with

Deepwell and through her film piece, is interesting in the context of the paradoxical

omnipresence of the Famine past, and the silence surrounding it. This association of silence

with the Famine is a point explicitly made by Beville and McQuaid (2012): 'As such, it is a

national trauma that has come to be bound by silence. We are faced with the issue of how it

may be both possible and valid to narrate a disaster of such profound scale' (Beville and McQuaid 2012: 15). One of the few novels of the Irish Famine is Macken's *The Silent People* (1962), which starts with the verse: 'We are the Silent People/ How long must we be still/ To nurse in secret at our breast/ An ancient culture?' (Macken 1962: i). This idea of enveloping silence makes sense in terms of the dreadful quietness left in the wake of emigration, the literal disappearance of voices from the Irish population. Ó Gráda (2013) also refers to the silence of the Famine years in relation to allegations of famine cannibalism. To support his argument, he quotes Perry Curtis on this topic: 'the silences surrounding cannibalism are almost deafening enough to arouse suspicion' (Curtis 1999: 14). He also cites several cases of survivor cannibalism and corpse consumption raised in Irish courts in the 1840s:

> Mr. Dopping, Resident magistrate, stood up and addressing the Court said, that he felt bound to explain to the Court that he knew of this case. He had been told that the prisoner and his family were starving when this offence had been committed. One of his children had died and he had been credibly informed that the mother ate part of its legs and feet after its death. He had the body exhumed and found that nothing but the bones remained of its legs and feet. A thrill of horror pervaded the court at this announcement. There was deep silence for several minutes, during which time many a tear trickled down the cheeks of those present. (Galway Vindicator 1848, cited Langan-Egan 1999: 12)

This horrific tale (note the language used which has more in common with a Gothic novel than a court report: 'A thrill of horror pervaded the court at this announcement… There was deep silence for several minutes') was one of several recounted and recorded in court transcripts during the 1840s (Ó Gráda, 2013). It appears that during the Famine years, cannibalism, once the inspiration for satire in the form of Jonathan Swift's' A Modest Proposal' of 1729, became a grim reality. The breaking of this taboo would have had profound moral and cultural significance. It makes sense that this act, and the legacy of this act, would be cloaked in silence. This atmosphere of silence surrounding the Famine also, of course, reminds us that this period of prolonged trauma, of death, starvation, eviction, forced emigration and home dispossession in Ireland, is still relatively recent. There are older people

in Ireland whose parents lived through the era of evictions in the late nineteenth-century, and whose grandparents were alive during the Famine. As Gibbons comments: 'Ireland is a First World country but with a Third World memory' (Gibbons 1996: 3), pointing out the relatively short span of time between the era of Penal Laws, the Famine, the agrarian wars and twenty-first century Ireland. This point will be further underlined in *Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* in tracing trans-generational stories through a memory project. Cronin (2010) discusses the unwillingness of subjects to engage in oral memory projects about the Famine; she concludes that 'such "porosity of memory" may be due as much to people's unwillingness to remember as to their inability' (Cronin 2012: 4). However, both Cross and O'Kelly take up the challenge of addressing this silence of the traumatised home in their work: Cross in *Endarken* by replicating the silence as the image of home darkens to extinction, and O'Kelly in *No Colouring Can Deepen The Darkness of Truth* by breaking the silence with a defiant act of keening. This notion of silence and trauma is one that is revisited later in the chapter in connection with Northern Irish art, and also in *Chapter Five* in connection with secret family stories of the ruined home of Wildgoose Lodge

The Famine cottages that still exist, primarily on the west coast of Ireland, stand abandoned today in remote areas, falling into ruin. Just down the road from Doagh, in the same county of Donegal, is the abandoned Famine village of Port, a silent, tumbledown pile of stones (Fig. 45). The original houses have fallen into ruin, and the land once occupied by families is now grazed by sheep. Likewise, in Achill Island, the ruins of Slievemore village (Fig. 46) stand testament to a mute, traumatic past. The silence that clings to these stones is profound. The fact that these ruins are left to stand unaltered is interesting. There appears to be an unwritten and unspoken prohibition on dismantling the remains of Famine cottages, given the national avoidance of building on or beside them. Perhaps this is due to custom and practice during the Famine years, when deserted homes would be avoided for fear of

contracting the prevalent fever. Perhaps this custom also arose due to the traumatic nature of the remains, and their function as a *memento mori* of the Famine. If so, this presents an eerie similarity to the edicts surrounding the numerous fairy forts in Ireland, as discussed in *Chapter One*, and to the cautionary tales of Wildgoose Lodge discussed in *Chapter Five*.
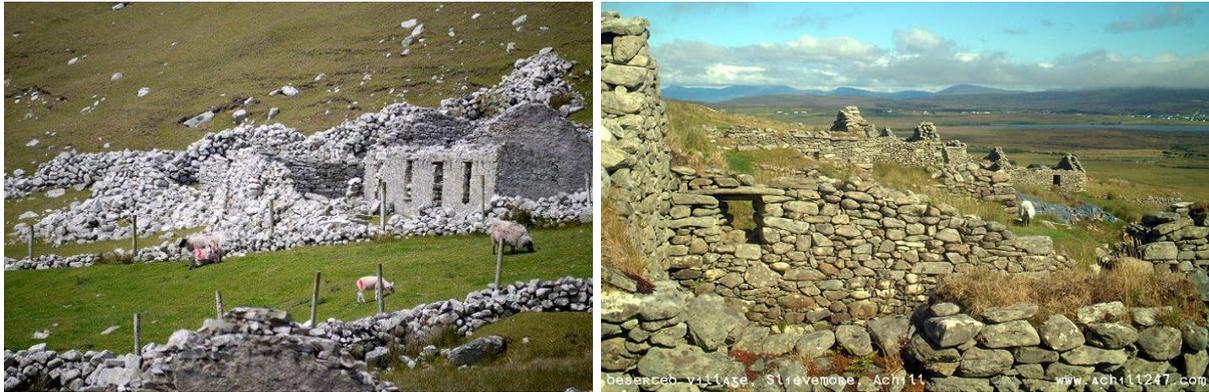
Figs. 45-46: **(From left to right): Port Famine village, County Donegal; Slievemore Famine village, Achill Island.**

In fact, even Irish folktales are strangely silent on the subject of the Famine, perhaps still a subject too unspeakable to form the basis of popular tales. The only legend that is completely germane to the Famine is that of 'The Hungry Grass' (*An Féar Gortach*), which is a derivation of the old legend of 'The Stray Sod'. Both tales tell of people who become 'turned around', usually when out walking at dusk or at night, and are then doomed to wander around in circles, unable to find their way home until they turn their coats inside out. The versions recorded of 'The Hungry Grass' (Lenihan and Green 2003, Curran 2008) claim that this stray sod is characterised by queer, flattened, yellow-green patches of grass. The popular agreement among folklorists is that this version relates to the Famine, and that these patches of grass mark sites by the roadside where homeless evictees lay down and died of hunger during the Famine (Harvey 1998). The name of the tale, 'The Hungry Grass', may also be a reference to the practice of eating grass to stave off hunger pangs during the worst deprivations of the Famine. This legend is the subject of an eponymous film piece by

Connolly Cleary, *The Hungry Grass* (2008-2009) (Figs. 47-48), which is part of their large *Moving Dublin* (2008-2009) series of films discussed in *Chapter One*. *The Hungry Grass* is based on the legend retold by the famous Dublin *seanchai*, Malachi Hogan. It functions as a lament for the loss of old tales and historic sites in the wake of the contemporary proliferation of Dublin's urban sprawl, and of the commodification of the historic remnants in the style of Doagh Famine Village and Hinde postcards:

> In the flurry to create a new Dublin for a new modern Ireland we buried most of South Dublin's memories, a process that is now being duplicated all over Ireland. Our politicians, planners and developers at best fossilize, at worst steam-roll over the stuff of memory. If buildings, streets and historically significant places do survive, they are rarely part of a continuous urban fabric, but are preserved as relics or fetishes – charming anecdotal memories to peddle to public and tourists alike. (Connolly Cleary 2009)

Here Connolly Cleary's aim is to juxtapose past and present, replacing the verdant slopes walked and narrated by Malachi Hogan with monotonous rows of identikit houses (Fig. 11) and shots of the M50 motorway (Fig. 12). The specificity of the landscape is gone; this sense of contemporary alienation from Irish cultural and traumatic history is further enhanced by Connolly Cleary's choice of voice actor to narrate the tale over the film piece:

> We hesitated as to whether we should use Malachi's story, worried at the risk of finding ourselves peddling the same anecdotes, and finally we recorded the story with a friend, a German actor, who reads aloud the words with an unmistakably foreign timbre, creating anthropological distance and emptying it of its stage Irish potential. (Connolly Cleary 2009)

It is appropriate that, even in the telling of this story, the native Irish voices are silenced. Like the legend itself, alive with ghostly presences that confuse and misdirect, it seems that the spirit of the Famine is destined to be most fully remembered in the awful silence of trauma. It seems that the spectres that haunt the cottages deserted during the Great Famine of 1845-47 are the homes themselves, homes that maintain a quiet but persistent presence in Irish art. These homes, abandoned, permeable, dismantled, no longer fulfill the function of home, but now function rather as monuments to themselves.

Figs. 47-48:   **Connolly Cleary (2007-2008)** *The Hungry Grass*. **Film stills from** *Moving Dublin* **project.**

A House Divided

In 2013, a new set of prints were added to the collection in the eighteenth-century print room in Castletown House. These *Famine Screen* prints by Marianne Keating (2013) form part of '*Prelude Speaker: Contemporary Castletown*': an exhibition of sixteen contemporary artistic responses to the context of Castletown House in the Kildare countryside. The exhibition, organised in conjunction with the Crawford Art Gallery and the Office of Public Works, also featured other site-specific pieces by Sarah Browne, Daphne Wright, Patrick Jolley and the mock-gastronomic art trio Domestic Godless (Fig. 49). Keating, a printmaker, responds directly to the conceit of the Castletown Print Room, created in 1765 by Lady Louisa Connolly as a genteel way for the ladies of the house to showcase favourite their prints by cutting out engravings and mezzotints and pasting them onto the walls. Keating takes this elegant room with its Louis XVI furniture as a starting point, and creates a triple-panelled dressing screen covered with nineteenth-century engravings of piteous Famine scenes of eviction and destitution (Fig. 50). *Famine Screen* works perfectly as a satirical and subversive piece, at once interacting with and reacting against the context in which it was made and presented.

Figs. 49-50: (From left to right): Poster for *Prelude Speaker: Contemporary Castletown*, 2013; Marianne Keating (2013)*Famine Screen*.

Keating's *Famine Screen* reminds us of the contrast between the elegant pursuits of the Anglo-Irish, and the grim reality of the Famine cottages surrounding them. The continuing dominance of Castletown in the landscape, today the headquarters of the Irish Georgian Society, the largest of the Big Houses and the finest example of Palladian architecture in Ireland, also reminds us of the enduring legacy of the colonial homes still scattered throughout the Irish landscape, both North and South of the border. 'The Big House' is the common phrase used to denote any large country home built by the colonial Anglo-Irish Ascendancy from about 1690-1790, following the decisive defeat of the Jacobite army by Williamite forces at the Battle of the Boyne. The Anglo-Irish inhabitants who built these houses during the subsequent hundred-year period of relative peace were descendants of English planters. Their hybrid upbringing meant they lacked a solid identity; they were torn between worlds, being neither English nor Irish, but something in between (Hall, 1929). The Big House, built on colonised and contested land, was a powerful symbol of colonial rule:

> [I]t was the headquarters from which land was administered and power organised. It was a showcase, in which to exhibit and entertain supporters and good connections…It was an image maker…It was the visible evidence of his wealth. It showed his credentials. (Girouard 1978: 2-3)

These homes are extraordinary anomalies, oases of luxury in a colonised and impoverished land. It is no accident that the first Gothic Revival structures in Ireland, built in hostile territory, are the fortified forms of sham castles that would become the new architectural idiom of these 'powerhouses' of colonialism (Girouard 1978). Davenport-Hines has pointed out that this use of the castle as an earlier colonial form of building constituted a deliberate appropriation of the traditional architectural form associated with power and authority in Ireland (Davenport Hines 1998). Excellent examples of these sham castles (which sometimes conceal an earlier medieval core), include Charleville Forest, Malahide Castle, Leap Castle, Birr Castle and Tullnally Castle. Not only Gothic in form, but Gothic in nature, these Big House can be constituted as *Unheimlich* homes, homes that often posit an uncanny return to the Norman castles of the earlier colonisers in both intent and form,

Many of these houses were therefore designed as mock-strongholds, to mimic earlier castles. However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there is a proliferation of elegant Gothic follies found in the Irish countryside. One of the most unusual is the aristocratic fantasy of Swiss Cottage (Figs. 51-52). Designed in 1810 for Lord and Lady Cahir by the Prince Regent's favourite architect, John Nash, Swiss Cottage is a fine example of a cottage *ornée*. This form was a staple of the Romantic tradition, a 'humble' cottage in which aristocrats could play comfortably at being peasants. Although a small building, the cottage contains two staircases, the 'official' staircase and the hidden servant staircase, which preserved the illusion of the peasant fantasy. Architecturally, the idea of the native Irish as 'Other' manifests itself in the separation of domestic spheres within the walls of the pleasure-house. This fantasy of the cottage *ornée* when contrasted with the stark nineteenth-century reality of the Famine cabins also signifies the yawning divide between the rich and the poor. Given that Lord and Lady Cahir were normally resident in London and Paris, it also

illustrates the singular lack of connection between the aristocratic settlers and the territories over which they ruled.

Figs. 51-52: **John Nash (1821) Swiss Cottage. (From left to right): Exterior; Interior, saloon.**

This division between appearance and reality is also evident on examination of the architectural follies of the Big Houses: the gateways, outbuildings, monuments and make-believe cottages built as winsome fantasies by the Anglo-Irish landowners. Instead of having an existing house completely rebuilt in the Gothic fashion, many homeowners opted to include *ad hoc* Gothic embellishments: turreted battlements, magnificent stables and crenellated farmyards. In one superb case of Gothic folly at Ballysaggartmore, Arthur Keily, driven by envy of his brother's sham-Gothic castle Strancally, built a magnificent gate and lodge that were so splendid and expensive that there was no money left for the main house (Fig. 53). Sometimes these Gothic follies reveal equally Gothic stories. The Jealous Wall (c. 1760) is a Gothic sham-ruin built by Robert Rochfort, Earl of Belfield to block the view of his brother's adjacent (and larger) home of Tudenham Hall (Fig. 54). It is gigantic in scale (standing three stories high and running fifty metres in length); a monument to the towering rages of a man who once locked up his own wife for twenty-one years in Belvedere House as a punishment for bearing a child to his brother.

Figs. 53-54:   (From left to right): *Ballysaggartmore* (1761-67); *The Jealous Wall* (c. 1760)

The ultimate reminder of the divided nature of these homes is found today in Castleward House on the shores of Strangford Lough in County Down. A famous local curio, Castleward House provides the best architectural example of the schizophrenic nature of home in the Great Houses of Ireland (Figs. 55-56). The house itself was built from 1761-1767 (Reeves Smyth 2010) and is the extraordinary result of a commission by Lord Bernard Ward, a devout fan of Neoclassicism, and his wife, Lady Anne Ward, who was obsessed with the Gothic. 'He wants taste', warned 18th century diarist Mrs. Delaney, 'and Lady Anne is so whimsical that I doubt her judgement' (Llanover 1862: 21). However, the unknown but adaptable architect of Castleward facilitated what is described as 'a remarkable architectural and matrimonial compromise' (O'Brien and Guinness 1992: 142). While the front of the house is serenely Classical (Fig. 55), the back of the house offers the visitor the radical surprise of a fully articulated Gothic façade complete with ogee arches, pointed windows and decorated pinnacles (Fig. 56).

Figs. 55-56: *Castleward House* **(1761-67). (From left to right): Classical exterior, front; Gothic exterior, rear.**

The interior of the extraordinary house is similarly divided. The rooms to the front of the house are decorated with scagolia columns and classical stuccowork (Fig. 57). The rooms to the back are a feast of Gothic Revival splendour: a library of pointed arches, complete with a secret panel that opens to a short internal passage between rooms, a saloon with ogee mantel and elegant panelling, and, most infamously, Lady Anne's boudoir which boasts a wonderful and extraordinarily inappropriate ceiling that swamps the tiny room (Reeves Smyth 2010: 105) (Fig. 58). In an unusual post-script to the story, in 1766, just five years after the build had commenced, Lady Anne left her home to live in Bath, leaving Bernard Ward to enjoy the extraordinary home that they had divided so scrupulously. Like the sham Gothic construction it is, it is stylistically confused, combining Gothic Revival and neoclassical, the rational and the irrational. The sharply differentiated external and internal domestic spaces of the house act as a visual reminder not only of the stylistic differences between husband and wife, but also of the binary oppositions and tensions that define the Gothic Great House: those of Protestant and Catholic, Ascendancy and native Irish, landlord and tenant. Like Swiss Cottage, Castleward also functions as a sharp reminder of the enclosed fantasy of the Anglo-Irish Big House in the eighteenth-century.

Figs. 57- 58: *Castleward House* **(1761-67) (From left to right): Classical hallway; Gothic boudoir.**

Daphne Wright's *They've Taken to Their Beds* (1997) offers an unusual take on the topic of the Big House in contemporary art (Fig. 59). Wright, herself of Protestant Anglo-Irish descent, is conscious of her own identity and heritage in contemporary Ireland as distinctly 'Other' within the hegemonic discourse of revised postcolonial history. As Barber puts it: 'this disjuncture became a source of a number of sculptural installations dealing with the uncanny qualities of domestic space' (Barber 2013: 248). Wright's sculptural installation *They've Taken to Their Beds* presents a frail array of painted tinfoil forms delicately suspended from a metal frame. At first glance, this delicate array of tendrils and roses resembles a decorative, eighteenth-century interior, like Lady Connolly's Print Room (Fig. 50). On closer inspection, the tendrils part to display dead birds dangling from the branches, an abject weirdness that counters the initial impression of elegance. Wright's work, at once demure and shocking, shatters the bubble of aristocratic fantasy and overlays it with a hint of savagery. Linking appearance and reality, frailty and savagery, Wright deftly unites the fundamental dichotomies of the Big House. Here the Anglo-Irish powerhouse is seen as haunted by the ghosts of slaughter and the shadows of colonial crimes: 'Rather than the benign assertion of authority, the meanings of the 'Big House" are here restaged as horror and decay' (Barber 2013: 249).
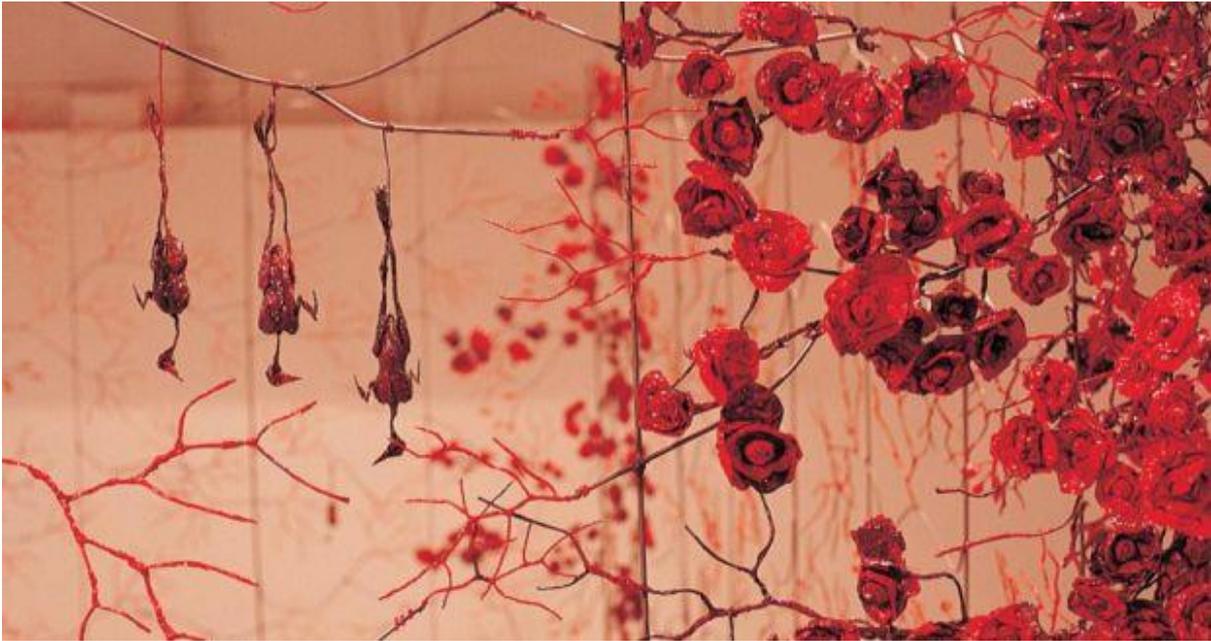
Fig. 59: Daphne Wright (1997) *They've Taken to Their Beds*. **Installation of tinfoil, metal, paint.**

Paranormal Domesticity

Gothic tales proliferate around these *Unheimlich* homes constituted by the Big Houses. Native Irish folk tales discussed in *Chapter One* offer an outsider perspective on the Big House, which was the setting for one of the most popular migratory legends of eighteenth-century Ireland, *The Cardplayers and the Devil* (ML3015). Eighteen variants of this story set in different Big Houses of Ireland tell of a mysterious visitor who seeks refuge within on a stormy night, joining the family in a game of cards. A dropped card under the table leads to the frightening discovery that the visitor's legs terminate not in the expected feet, but in cloven hooves; he is, in fact, the Devil. As Nuttall (1998) remarks:

> In Irish variants of ML 3015, the Devil is frequently a readily identifiable symbol of the Protestant gentleman, which is to say a member of the oppressing or privileged classes. He may be depicted as having an English accent. He is invariably well-dressed. He is charming and well-mannered. He is so very similar to the gentry that they fail to realise for a long time that there is anything amiss. (Nuttall 1998: 36)

The variant of the story that exists in Loftus Hall (Fig. 60) is particularly interesting. This version tells of the frantic summoning of a Catholic priest who lays his magical possessions (his gloves, his coat, his Bible) in the doorways and windows, forcing the Devil to burst through the roof and leave a hole that according to local legend today, cannot be mended (Nuttall 1998) (Fig. 61). It is a dissident narrative that slyly celebrates the downfall of the colonial class, with its transgression of the colonial home, and the appropriation of power by the Catholic priest.

Figs. 60-61: *Loftus Hall* **(c. 1760): (From left to right): Façade; Hole in roof.**

There are also recurrent glimpses of the Gothic nature of the Big House in Anglo-Irish literature, starting with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and continuing in representations of these homes by J. Sheridan Le Fanu and Charles Maturin. The Gothic nature of the Big House is also highlighted in H. R. Hodgson's short story 'The Whistling Room' (1910) featuring Carnacki, the paranormal investigator, who is called in to find the source of alarming sounds emanating from a room in the fictive Iastrae Castle. In this story the ostensible owner (the American, Tassoc) appears in the story as a temporal, alien presence, which the older, pre-colonial Irish house rises up against through the spirit of a tortured Irish jester.

Paranormal investigation also forms the basis for Martina Cleary's photographic series of 2008, *Things That Go Bump in the Night* (Figs. 62-63). This series was constituted as a result of eighteen months of patient field work as Cleary researched the Big Houses and then made multiple visits to the sites to observe and photograph the spaces. Of particular interest to Cleary was creating archival visual documentation of Big Houses that have strong associations with the paranormal: Leap Castle, Charleville Forest and Woodlawn House. Her lens-based mapping of Charleville Forest (Fig. 62) records, for example, the drop in internal location temperature she experienced on the famously haunted staircase. Other observations of paranormal activity in Charleville Forest noted by Cleary include 'Presence on or around the staircase. Image of face-like form picked up by digital camera while shooting in a room adjacent to the stairs' (Cleary 2008).

Cleary's documentation of Leap Castle refers heavily to ideas of the uncanny, as the house is reputedly haunted by several ghosts and an elemental. The site was shot by Cleary from the outside only due to her own personal reaction to the internal space described in her fieldwork notes (Fig. 63) which describe Leap Castle as the '[M]ost oppressive site visited in 18 months of work. Did not photograph while inside the building' (Cleary 2008). Leap Castle, County Offaly is perfectly poised at the intersection of Irish literary and architectural Gothic. It illustrates a trope common to early Gothic novels, that of the architectural space of the castle as a site of psychological terror. A classic example of a small medieval structure enclosed by a Gothic Revival shell, Leap was inhabited by female Gothic novelist Mildred Darby, and it is the source of some of the most bizarre tales of hauntings in Ireland. Seymour's *True Book of Irish Ghost Stories* (1914) documents various diverse hauntings that have taken place there, the identity of Leap subsumed under the pseudonym 'Kilman Castle'. In 'Chapter III: Haunted Houses In Mogh's Half' Seymour describes it as 'perhaps the worst

haunted mansion in the British Isles' (1914: 94). Seymour himself visited the castle in 1914,

escorted by Mildred Darby where he records an impressive assembly of spirits present:

> There is as well a miscellaneous assortment of ghosts. A monk with tonsure and cowl walks in at one window of the Priest's House, and out at another. There is also a little old man, dressed in the antique garb of a green cut-away coat, knee breeches, and buckled shoes: he is sometimes accompanied by an old lady in similar old-fashioned costume. Another ghost has a penchant for lying on the bed beside its lawful and earthly occupant; nothing is seen, but a great weight is felt, and a consequent deep impression made on the bedclothes. (Seymour 1914: 97-98)

If this 'miscellaneous assortment' of ghosts were not enough, there is an even more famous

Leap ghost, an 'elemental': a spirit usually defined as a powerful but primitive ghost-force

that is based in a specific location, here, in Leap Castle. Darby was interested in the occult

and wrote of her experiences with the Leap ghost under the pseudonym Andrew Merry in an

article for the *London Occult Review* (1908):

> Suddenly, two hands were laid on my shoulders. I turned round sharply and saw, as clearly as I see you now-a grey 'Thing', standing a couple of feet from me, with it's [sic] bent arms raised as if it were cursing me. I cannot describe in words how utterly aweful [sic] the 'Thing' was, it's [sic] very undefinableness rendering the horrible shadow more gruesome. Human in shape, a little shorter than I am, I could just make out the shape of big black holes like great eyes and sharp features, but the whole figure-head, face, hands and all-was grey-unclean, blueish grey, something of the colour and appearance of common cotton wool. But, oh! so sinister, repulsive and devilish. My friends who are clever about occult things say it is what they call an "Elemental."

> The thing was about the size of a sheep, thin, gaunt and shadowy in parts. It's [sic] face was human, or to be more accurate, inhuman, in it's [sic] vileness, with large holes of blackness for eyes, loose slobbery lips, and a thick saliva-dripping jaw, sloping back suddenly into it's [sic] neck! Nose it had none, only spreading, cancerous cavities, the whole face being a uniform tint of grey. This too, was the colour of the dark coarse hair covering its head, neck and body. It's [sic] forearms were thickly coated with the same hair, so were its paws, large, loose and hand-shaped; and it sat on it's [sic] hind legs, one hand or paw was raised, and a claw-like finger was extended ready to scratch the paint. It's [sic] lustreless eyes, which seemed half decomposed, and looked incredibly foul, stared into mine, and the horrible smell which had before offended my nostrils, only a hundred times intensified, came up to my face, filling me with a deadly nausea. (Darby 1908: 308)

Cleary's emotive and instinctive responses to the house are recorded not only in her

field notes, but in the form of a large black spot which partly obscures the house itself, the

same method also used by Cross in *Endarken* to suggest, variously, unspeakability, the blind

spot and the black spot of death (Fig. 27). Cleary's documentary use of lens-based media is particularly interesting, film and photography being the media used by ghost hunters in order to capture paranormal phenomena. Cleary, with her interest in spectral photography, has taken this methodology, and fused it with her archival impulse to record and document spectral traces in homes, turning this paranormal investigation into a fine art project. *Things That Go Bump in the Night* highlights the paranormal aspect of the Great House where the collapse of the powerhouse has created a power vacuum filled by its new paranormal identity.

Figs. 62-63:   **Martina Cleary (2008)** *Things That Go Bump in the Night* **series. (From left to right):** *Charleville Forest*, *Leap Castle*. **Fieldwork photography.**

In the twenty-first century, most of these Irish Big Houses have fallen into ruin. The death of the Big House is in itself a tale of Gothic collapse, where the homes appear as doomed and alienated buildings destined for destruction. The symbolic house-burnings in the early twentieth century during the Irish War of Independence destroyed the physical shells of many of the houses, while the Great War and the cost of upkeep caused others to disappear. Ireland's lack of a National Trust equivalent (the only operative society that tries to address the upkeep of these houses is the privately funded Georgian Society), has meant that the only houses to survive are those that have remained in private ownership. Even these houses, like Charleville Forest, are faced with staggering maintenance costs just in order to remain standing. In essence, the story of the Great House begins in symbolic division and ends in literal division; in the twenty-first century, these homes are finally becoming assimilated into

the landscapes they once dominated, joining with the pre-colonial lexicon of ruins of Neolithic tombs, tower houses and stone crosses. In this, they are joined by the Famine cottages and by the crumbling ruins of other homes abandoned by successive waves of emigration since the 1840s. It is no wonder that given the longevity of these ruins that contemporary Irish art still reflects these forms as symbolic of the fragmented, national vision of home, subject to the forces of conquest, colonisation, eviction, famine and emigration. David Creedon's photographic project and book *Ghosts of the Faithful Departed* (2012) also examines the theme of ruin and desertion in his work, with special focus on the aftermath of ordinary family homes abandoned between 1949 and 1989, when over 800,000 people were forced, due to adverse economic circumstances, to emigrate from Ireland (Figs. 64-65). Creedon offers a commentary on the lives of these people who were left behind in Ireland at this time:

> …those who stayed had to suffer continued hardships, isolation & social exclusion. The rural communities were decimated by the impact of emigration… Now in a new millennium these people have passed on and their homes stand as a monument to a bygone age. (Creedon 2012: 3)

Creedon's photographs focus on the traces and physical artefacts of memory that remain when the home has become redundant. His work captures a world of chipped statues and peeling walls; forlorn mementoes of former occupation.

Figs. 64-65:　　　**David Creedon (2008)** *Ghosts of the Faithful Departed*. **Photographs.**

However, as Cleary's work illustrates, these homes have also been claimed by paranormal investigators and granted a new identity as haunted houses. Several of these homes have been revived as tourist attractions, as haunted spaces to be consumed by TV programmes and novelty tours, and investigated by professional and amateur ghost hunters. The popularity of this potent mix of Big Houses, haunted sites and the mournful aesthetic of decay can be seen in the consistent popularity of books on haunted Big Houses of Ireland. These books include *Abandoned Mansions of Ireland* (2010), *Abandoned Mansions of Ireland II* (2011) and *Haunting Ireland* (2014) by Tarquin Blake published by Collins Press and the *Vanishing Ireland* series (Volumes 1-4) by Turtle Bunbury and James Fennell, published by Hatchette Press Ireland. These books are handsomely bound, lavishly photographed, and focus on documenting a style of architecture and a way of life that is disappearing from contemporary culture, a symptom perhaps of the *ruinenlust* or 'ruin lust' described by Macaulay in her 1953 book *Pleasure of Ruins*. A survey of the wave of consumerism inspired by spaces reactivated by paranormal investigation is beyond the reach of this thesis. It is interesting nonetheless to note in relation to Loftus Hall, the site of the *Cardplayers and the Devil*, that the famous hole in the roof that the Devil passed through, far from deterring visitors, now forms a popular part of Loftus Hall's 'After Dark' tourist initiative. These 'After Dark' events include the *Nightfall* guided interactive tours, paranormal lockdowns and other Halloween events. The ghosts that haunt the Big Houses today may therefore be viewed as a construct of consumerism and as an example of legends exploited for commercial gain. It seems that in the case of the Big Houses, the ruins have been re-inhabited by ghosts of uncertain provenance, a strange mix of local legend and contemporary consumerism.

In reading contemporary art responses to the Gothic domesticity of the colonial past, from the grim realities of the Famine to paranormal investigations of the Big House, these

works, especially Keating's *Famine Screen*, appear to support a postcolonial reading. Theoretically the Irish experience would seem to encompasses McEvilley's four stages of postcolonial culture formation: the idyllic pre-colonial period; a time of colonisation and subsequent oppression; a coherent national uprising against colonial identity that attempts to recover a sense of identity; and finally, a time of synthesis of society and culture that can only occur once sufficient time has passed and a sense of distance has been gained on the colonial period. In her *In Ruin Reconciled* (2010), Michelle Horrigan brings together the Big House, the cottage and the ruin as three central tropes of the colonial period. In her evocative thirteen-minute film of Curragh Chase House, which deftly draws together and reconciles past and present, the different strands of colonial and postcolonial experience. In Horrigan's piece, the camera slowly pans across the crumbling structure of Curragh Chase house, which was inhabited by the de Vere family from 1650 until 1941. The images of ruin contrast with a script reconstructed from memoirs of poet Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) and of his grandniece Joan de Vere (1913-1989), that describe the original beauties of the house. In a clever twist, Horrigan has used local actors, whose ancestors would have inhabited the tenant cottages, to recite passages from these memoirs, thereby giving voice to these muted tenants, or, at least, to their descendants. This exemplifies Wisker's reading of postcolonial Gothic as a process of *revoicing*:

> Postcolonial Gothic exposes deep-seated fears of Otherness born of questioning self, identity and visions of security which rely on exclusion of anything threateningly different. The Other is at first exposed as a perceived terror, then recreated as equal and different, revoiced by the very different perspectives and stories of the once colonized. (Wisker 2013: 511)

Horrigan describes the piece as a mix of 'architectural legacy and space, post colonialism, and the remnants of past lives' (Horrigan 2010). In this thematic blend, we also have an illustration of McEvilley's 'fourth stage' of postcolonial culture formation: the synthesised present where the spectres of coloniser and colonised, master and servant have been laid to

rest. This would seem to agree with Punter's notion of the Gothic as a force for reconciliation between past and present: 'It is the "rise of the Gothic" he tells us, that 'provides us with a benchmark against which to test our accommodation with the ruin, a language in which to address our ghosts' (Punter 1999: 2). To an extent, this model works in the Republic of Ireland, as seen by the international participation of Irish artists in the global art market, with works made by artists resident outside Ireland such as James Coleman, Gerard Byrne and Andrew Kearney, many which have been made without reference to a specific Irish context. However, in many depictions of home by Irish artists, there is a persistence of colonial legacy in the form of the spectre, the ghost and the paranormal apparition. The spectral lens of Cleary, for example, would argue that this idea of haunting persists into the present. However, in the broader island of Ireland, this problem of reconciliation is larger, especially given the term's political connotations in the context of Northern Ireland. As Anne McClintock puts it:

> The term 'post-colonialism' is in many cases prematurely celebratory: Ireland may at a pinch, be 'post-colonial', but for the inhabitants of British-occupied Northern Ireland, not to mention the Palestinian inhabitants of the Israeli occupied Territories and the West Bank, there may be nothing 'post' about colonialism at all. (McClintock 1994: 294).

In the next section, in considering the nature of home in a Northern Irish context, it is necessary to explore these conflicting identities of the state, and the different ways in which Northern Ireland itself is categorised variously as both part of Britain and as an occupied territory.

(Northern) Irish Gothic

Figs. 66-67: **Willie Doherty (2007)** *Ghost Story*. **Film stills.**

If ideas of home in the Republic of Ireland are haunted by the elegant spectres of the Anglo-Irish and the hungry ghosts of the Famine, the shades of Northern Ireland are altogether more savage and more recent. The shadows of traumatic street conflict, bombings and protests in Northern Ireland haunt homes, busy streets, shopping centres and idyllic landscapes. Doherty's photographs and film pieces reflect on the absorption and accretion of past traumas in the landscape: in urban alleyways (Fig. 66) and along rural roads (Fig. 67). His *Ghost Story* of 2007, shown at the Venice Biennale in the same year, takes viewers on a shadowy twilit route through the roads and streetscapes of Derry. As the Steadicam camera moves along, Northern Irish actor Stephen Rea narrates the hidden *souterrain* of trauma that underlies the deserted landscapes navigated. Speaking of this piece, Barber affirms this link between trauma and haunting: '[T]rauma as a continued presence within the hinterlands of consciousness is figured through the sense of a haunting which regularly recurs' (Barber 2013: 276). The sense of home that emerges from the context of Northern Ireland is a fractured one: an idea of home and homeland founded on this return of the repressed. Home, in this context, holds within it the ghosts of a colonial past of oppression, repression and dispossession. It also holds within it a contested and bloody recent history of internal ethno-nationalist warfare (Mitchell, 2013: 5) during almost thirty years of the Troubles (*Na*

Trioblóidí) of 1969-1998. This combination of recent and distant traumas inspires a distinctly Gothic voice in Northern Irish art. As Moynahan puts it: '[T]he Gothic seems to flourish in disrupted, oppressed or underdeveloped societies, to give a voice to the powerless and disenfranchised' (Moynahan 1994: 111). This divided nature of Northern communities is reflected in their perception of home as a place of community and tribal allegiances (as in the works of Kindness and Duffy), but also as a place of occupation, its territory mapped by British surveillance (echoed in the work of Doherty and Duffy). Although this thesis focuses on art produced from 1990-2015, it is important to note that the Gothic nature of contemporary Northern Irish work became apparent in the 1980s, the troubled decade of hunger strikes and sectarian violence.

Duffy's 1988 *Belfast Gothic* (Fig. 68) offers a suburban parody of Grant Wood's famous *American Gothic* (Fig. 69). Here Duffy replaces the gaunt farmer and his sister of the original with a casually dressed couple and their baby, the Gothic window of the original with a Victorian stained glass door and the pitchfork of the original with a gardening fork. The order of the sitters is reversed and the two adult figures wear clothes that proclaim their divided loyalties in a divided city, she in green, he in red, white and blue. The name itself refers to Duffy's vision of these suburban Belfast homes as inherently Gothic, their suburban domesticity disturbed by the steady accumulative effect of paramilitary and sectarian violence. The title also refers to the fame of the High Victorian Gothic architecture of the city. This evocation of everyday horror as emblematic of Belfast life is typical of her early work. As Duffy said of this period: 'I wanted my art to engage with what was going on around me at that time' (Savage 2010).

Figs. 68-69: **(From left to right): Rita Duffy (1988)** *Belfast Gothic***; Grant Wood (1930)** *American Gothic***. Paintings.**

Fellow Northern Irish artist John Kindness agrees with this:

> I suppose I went along with the agenda in art school up to a point, but when you found yourself in a lecture on the intricacies of Minimal Art and the building was rocked by an explosion that might have taken lives in a civilian shopping area, that agenda came under scrutiny. (McAvera 2013: 82)

This articulated need for art to respond directly to the context of its production is reflected in the work of Duffy. This supports Gibbons' claim that '[C]ultural representations do not simply come after the event, "reflecting" experience or embellishing it with aesthetic but significantly alter and shape the ways we make sense of life' (Gibbons 1996: 8). This alignment of art with the need to respond to the urgent context of violence, danger and discrimination in Northern Ireland is important to understand in the analysis especially of Northern Irish Gothic art, especially in relation to work produced during the Troubles, between 1969 and 1998. This kind of immediate, responsive art that reflects subjective views of contemporary political and social concerns is seen throughout this thesis as a characteristic of Irish Gothic art. This also reflects one of the functions of Gothic art, to form a counter-narrative to hegemonic notions of political and social order, a theme that runs throughout this thesis.

The sense of 'everyday Gothic' (Beville, Piatti-Farnell 2014) expressed in Duffy's *Belfast Gothic* also finds an echo in the work of contemporary Northern Irish fiction. Schultz (2010) in his article '"Give it Welcome": Gothic Inheritance and the Troubles in Contemporary Irish Fiction' points to the repeated use of the child narrator in Northern Irish novels, citing Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996) and Anna Burns' *No Bones* (2001). Both Deane and Burns use the innocent protagonist to present a harrowing and Gothic account of repressed secrets and trans-generational violence within contemporary landscapes. 'By focusing on the domestic consequences of the Troubles, specifically trauma experienced by children, both authors imagine a new generation of haunted individuals struggling to re-gain self-possession' (Schultz 2010). It is important here to note that the period of the Troubles was an era of domestic disturbance; it was an era of guerrilla warfare whose battleground was the streets and homes of Belfast. This idea of home as site of paramilitary activity is vividly illustrated in the work of Patric Coogan. His 1987 painting *6.10, 1987* (Fig. 70) illustrates the stark domestic reality of homes during the Troubles. The streetscape he presents is deserted and ominously silent. The eerie calm of Coogan's painting is shattered by the marks of domestic transgression – the ruined home, the shuttered window, the upturned chair and the loose plank scattered in the street. As Barrett puts it: 'It could have been a study of abandonment and dereliction, but, as Coogan has painted it, it has sinister overtones; something nasty may happen; it is still early evening' (Barrett 1991: 218).

In the stillness of this image, we are reminded of Beville and McQuaid's equation of silence with unspoken and unspeakable trauma. This raw image of Gothic trauma induced by guerrilla war, this scene of the home ruined by political violence, also chimes in with Wisker's notion of postcolonial Gothic as a reservoir of pent-up feeling. As she puts it: 'The richness of historically and culturally contextualised and affected contradictions, and the energies bursting from denials and silences, are familiar in the Gothic' (Wisker 2013: 511).

This effect of impending doom in Coogan's image is enhanced by the unexpected presence of furniture from inside the home (*Heimlich*, safe) which has been rudely expelled onto the street, and which now appears at once familiar and unfamiliar (*Unheimlich*, frightening), divorced from its normative context of home.

Fig. 70:   **Patric Coogan (1987)** *6.10pm, 1987*. **Painting.**

This dual identity of homes as at once places of danger and of safety is discussed by Schultz (2010) with reference to Jeffrey Glenn's essay 'Children of The Troubles: Our Lives in the Crossfire of Northern Ireland' (1997), where Glenn refers to home as a 'suburban stronghold' (Glenn 1997: 68). As Schultz comments of Glenn's domestic paranoia: 'Glenn's variation on this common childhood anxiety of 'monsters under the bed' highlights the particular paranoia caused by Irish paramilitary violence that threatened to erupt into domestic spaces' (Schultz 2010). Home, therefore, in this Northern Irish context emerges as a place of dubious safety, at once a place of refuge and a place of anxiety.

Splitting Image

This complicated dual perspective in Northern Irish Gothic (home as *Heimlich*, home as *Unheimlich*) haunts the heart of Doherty's work. Doherty's *The Other Side* (1998) presents the city of Derry/Londonderry in a deliberately confusing way. His photographs achieve this dual vision through the juxtaposition of conflicting text and image, a Surrealist tendency in contemporary Gothic art that is also discussed in *Chapter Three*, and that is explicitly referenced in work by Dominic Thorpe explored in *Chapter Four*. In *The Other Side* (Fig. 71) the artist offers a pointed view of a landscape that disorients viewers with its clash of text and image. 'East is North' declares the overlaid text, referring to the division of the city along the east and west banks of the river, a fact and image immediately recognisable to inhabitants of his native Derry but incomprehensible to outsiders. This is indicative of the type of 'vernacular Gothic' discussed in *Chapter One*, involving a signification of home and its singular peculiarities in a form that can only be decoded by insiders of a community. Burns and Lundh (2013) summarise this deliberate encoding in their review of the piece in the context of Doherty's 2014 show *Unseen* in the City Factory Gallery, Derry:

> Double-edged in its meaning, the statement simultaneously codes the local geography and points toward the centuries of colonialism that have spun the compass around and around, turning up down, left and right. Befitting of a city with at least two names—the official and colonial Londonderry and the colloquial and earlier Anglicization of the Irish name Doire, or Derry—the city's landscape, and therefore Doherty's image, are split across two sides of a river. In the most simplistic terms, society is finally separated along the binary ideological lines of Catholic/Nationalist/Republican versus Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist, dualities that are always complicated in Doherty's practice. Here they are even implied in this particular vantage point. *The Other Side* seems to give us a visual overview of this city's conflicted heritage, but the text disorients the viewer's position, leaving us to wonder which side is which. (Burns and Lundh 2013)

As ever, with Doherty, text and image alike are layered with levels of meaning. The phrase 'The Other Side' also signifies the Gothic underbelly of the innocent topography of city and hills that conceals a turbulent and military history within its landscape.

Fig. 71:   **Willie Doherty (1988)** *The Other Side*. **Black and white photograph with text.**

The notion of landscape as reservoir of the past is also key to understanding Doherty's work. His *Disturbance* (2011) features a brown exposure of raw earth amid rough bogland (Fig. 72). This image conjures up the trope of Irish prehistoric bog burials and the idea of earth as repository for buried history. However both the title of *Disturbance* and the ominous, dark scarring of the countryside hint at a more contemporary political reading: of unmarked graves dug by paramilitary organisations and found in remote Irish landscapes both North and South of the Irish Border. The recovery of the bodies of the Irish 'Disappeared' (the victims of paramilitary violence during the Troubles) is ongoing since 2001; the most recent discovery was in 2015. Doherty's image of lingering trauma sinking into the battlefields of Northern Ireland is reminiscent of Wisker's definition of postcolonial Gothic:

> '[T]he landscapes and urban territories of the colonizers and the colonized are each imprinted with the living memories of horrors and dehumanizing behaviours which established and maintained colonial and imperial oppressions and regimes' (Wisker 2013: 512).

Doherty's work, of which *Disturbance* is representative, is very much influenced by the context of its production in Northern Ireland and exhibits a continued concern with the traces that human political and social trauma leave on the land. By mapping landscape through photography and video pieces, Doherty aligns this exercise with a consciousness of

surveillance, borders and territories that are continually contested, appropriated and reclaimed, from pre-history to contemporary culture.

Fig. 72: **Willie Doherty (2011)** *Disturbance*. **C-print mounted on aluminium**

Another artist who shares Doherty's concerns with identity, surveillance, traces and mapping is Rita Duffy. Her *Unearth* of 1997 (part of her *Banquet* series of the same year), displays her keen interest in the metaphorical use of the physical forms of landscape to illustrate the different layered histories and political strata of Northern Ireland (Fig. 73). Both Doherty and Duffy are interested in the idea of Gothic as a secretive and dissident narrative. Their work offers rebellious, dissident images that hint at darker counter-narratives of Gothic hidden histories. Like Doherty's *Disturbance*, Duffy's piece hints at *Unheimlich* recurrence; that which was buried and repressed returns, and continues to return. The physical archaeology presented by these buried strata can be linked to the methodology of social archaeology, used by socially-engaged artists like Jeremy Deller. Duffy uses the traditional form of painting, but the presence of the lens is repeatedly indicated in her work. *Unearth* is topped by a watchtower, inspired by the omnipresent British Army watchtowers that still dot

parts of the Northern Irish landscape, providing striking visual images of surveillance. Like their predecessor of the castle keep, these watchtowers appear as contemporary Gothic structures of colonial control (Fig. 74). These towers were synonymous with armed presence of the British military in Northern Ireland; this architecture of surveillance engendered a sense of watchfulness and unease in the Northern Irish community. Duffy says of this work: 'These paintings are an act of surveillance, and as such, they are about the whole nature of looking' (Duffy 2005). This *Banquet* series of 1997 includes several paintings on linen (a material Duffy often uses due to its association with the Belfast industry and its female work force). Another piece in this series is *Fortress* (1997) which also reflects on the idea of occupation, of the difficulties inherent in creating a home in a site of conflict (Fig. 75). Like *Unearth* of the same series, *Banquet* again draws on visual reference from the once-active watchtowers of her native Northern Ireland to create a surreal, panoptical image that recalls the possible return of political and public surveillance. Duffy's siting of this surveillance within a domestic setting provides another level of unease. The structure of the home in this image has disappeared; the furniture sits awkwardly within the military structure, topped by watchtowers. In such situations of surveillance, she seems to say, the traditional safety and perimeters of home dissolve. Like Farrell's *Neo-Ruin/Gothic Folly* of 2008 (Fig. 219) and Coogan's *6.10, 1987* (Fig. 76), the inside and the outside of the home become conflated, the *Heimlich* becomes *Unheimlich*.

Figs. 73-75: **Rita Duffy (From left to right):** *Unearth* **(1988). Drawing; Photograph of Watchtower;** *Fortress* **(1997). Oil and wax on linen.**

Although from Belfast, Duffy spent summers in the Republic of Ireland on her grandmother's farm in County Offaly. The divided nature of her home city of Belfast is further complicated by her assumed additional identity of Irish as well as Northern Irish. As Duffy says herself:

> I was twelve before I honestly realised I was from Belfast, such was the incredible connection between my mother – from the south and Catholic – and her five sisters, and probably exaggerated enormously as we lived in Stranmillis, a Protestant working-class area. We never assimilated or were accepted in the community. (Deepwell 2005: 44)

This confusion at the heart of both Duffy's identity and her sense of home, has led to her determined focus on the duality of Northern Irish life and the sectarian divides that exist within it. Central to the artist's idea of divided home loyalties is her perception of home as a Gothic space, a divided place built on contested land. Her *Clearing* (1997) explicitly references notions of colonialism (Fig. 76). *Clearing* is a pun; it not only signifies the actual clear area in the woods represented in the painting, but also the historical clearances that took place during and after the Famine, when the land was 'cleared' of the native Irish in order to create larger areas of arable land by re-joining subdivided plots (Foster 1994). Duffy clarifies these double meanings in an interview of 2005:

> I also made a series of images of houses, inside and outside the walls at that time. They are old enclosures surrounding a bit of land. *Clearing* for example, is a whole group of little houses in a forest thick with tress. It's about trees being cut down in a forest for a new settlement, which is part of the ancient history of Ireland, the ancient history of lots of places in the world, the Americas for example, or where colonisers went to settle. (Deepwell 2005: 46-47)

This idea of the contested home also resonates in her later sculptural piece, also named *Fortress* (2010) (Fig. 77). In this work, Duffy again highlights the vulnerability of home, and how home becomes constituted in colonial territory:

The simplified fortified structures capture a contested space that has a naïve quality. Each wall and turret, strategically placed, secures and defends. The territory within and without is well defined. Here in a clearing amid the dark forest, a walled structure of bronze and copper, holding secure a field of salt. Salt we know is the residue of tears, the preserver of life and a symbol of peaceful protest. The place we call home becomes emotional territory; a landscape invested with all the shared memories and community experiences, sad and celebratory. The precious little golden house stands well polished amid the "salt of the earth" holding the all important centre ground. (Duffy 2010: 34-35)

Duffy's *Fortress* (2010) with its encircled and isolated home conjures up an echo of the past; the form of the alienated and besieged home in Irish history, which ties in with the theme of the Big House and the particular resonance of plantations, settlements and clearings within Northern Irish history.

Figs. 76-77: **Rita Duffy (From left to right):** *Clearing* **(1997). Oil and wax on linen.** *Fortress* **(2010) Bronze castings, copper plate, salt and painted wood.**

In Duffy's work, therefore, Ireland is a country of ancient divisions and early colonial histories (illustrated in *Clearing* (1997) and *Fortress* (2010)), but this past is also overlaid with the signs of a recent colonisation, featuring the subjugation and surveillance of homeland, as in *Fortress* (1997) (Fig. 75).

In analysing Northern Irish art, it is important to deal with the legacy of colonialism, and also to engage directly with the segregated and divided nature of the Catholic Republican and Protestant Unionist communities north of the Border. Much of the early work of artist John Kindness from the 1980s is predicated on reflecting on these differences, focusing on

the splits and divisions in his native Belfast. His oeuvre is typified by his tongue-in-cheek characterisation of sectarian violence in his *Monkey Town Besieged by Dogs* series of 1985 (Figs. 78-79). This series of works, including chalk drawings and netsuke pieces, was influenced by nineteenth-century *singeries* (paintings of monkeys as humans), images of performing animals and even popular Rupert the Bear illustrations (McAvera 2013). It mischievously depicts monkeys as Loyalists and dogs as Republicans. Kindness slyly undercuts the pomposity of religious and ethnic symbolism to focus simply on the animalistic nature of sectarian antagonism. His use of humour is remarkable, yet Kindness sees this as a normal reaction to his cultural context of Belfast. In an interview of 2013, McAvera posed a question to John Kindness: 'Almost everything you do has humour in it. Yet outside of caricature, there is remarkably little humour in the art world. Why?' To which Kindness retorted 'I think you have to ask the humourless bastards why that is' (McAvera 2013: 82). Kindness' work is riddled with dark comedy, something he regards as a quintessentially Belfast characteristic. As he says – '[B]lack humour is something I think Belfast people can't help: finding some element of mirth in almost every situation. (McAvera 2013: 83). This dark humour is emblematic of the genre of 'Comic Gothic', discussed by Horner and Zlosnik in their article 'Comic Gothic' (1999) and their later book *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2005).

Figs. 78-79:   **John Kindness (1985)** *Monkey Town Besieged by Dogs*. **Chalk drawings.**

It is this same sense of deep community division that also pervades Kindness' *Sectarian Armour* (1994) (Figs. 80-81). *Sectarian Armour* is a jacket that has transmuted into contemporary armour through use of materials (gilded steel and brass), using mannered forms borrowed from the classical mode of Greek vase paintings. The front of the jacket divides neatly in two, each half representing the ethnic and religious divisions of Northern Ireland; one side decorated with pigs, shamrocks, harps and an image of the Catholic Madonna, the other with bulldogs, roses, crowns and a portrait of the Queen (Fig. 80). However, the reverse of the jacket-armour (Fig. 81) reveals the sinister consequences to this division, a funeral procession that is also divided neatly in half, Loyalist trappings on one side, Republican trappings on the other. At the base of the jacket lie two skeletons; one still grips a pistol, acting as a grim *memento mori* of the inevitable end of conflict. *Sectarian Armour* constitutes part of the collection of the Imperial War Museum, and perfectly illustrates the mission of the Museum, to illustrate and translate the effects of war. In his work, using a mixture of humour and pathos, Kindness focuses on the traumatic impact of guerrilla warfare on the domestic lives of civilian population of Northern Ireland during the Troubles, and on the repercussions of this conflict into the present.

Figs. 80-81.   **John Kindness (1994)** *Sectarian Armour*. **Etched, gilded steel & brass**

Floating Home

The art of John Kindness is rooted in a deep sense of place; his compassionate and satirical works are infused with a strong 'genius loci'; that spirit of place that stems from the unique position of both Northern Ireland and his native Belfast in geography, history and culture. Kindness refers to his childhood in Belfast as a constant source of inspiration, furnishing him with a set of observations that inform much of his subsequent art:

> Something that always interests me is what artists did as kids: so many biographies jump from birth to further education but the alchemy starts much earlier. I grew up, like Louis MacNeice, between the gantries and the hills, overlooking the waterworks, in Brookvale Avenue, an urban place that had access to wildness or semi-wildness. When you can observe nature and your fellow humans: that teaches you quite a lot about both. (McAvera 2013: 82)

In his *Belfast Frescoes* series (1995), Kindness created large panoramic panels that resonate with a sense of gentle nostalgia. In one panel, Kindness captures the early morning hush of his home with a vivid inscription: 'Early in the morning there was a cigarette that moved around the house, it was my father getting ready to go to work' (Fig. 82). The quiet harmony of this image is offset by an illustration of a teapot and teacup, both emblazoned with images of the Titanic, that famous Belfast-built ship that tragically sank on April 14 1912. This image alludes to the artist's father who was employed as a shipbuilder, and of course to the larger story of the ship itself. Gibbons (1994) has pointed out how the *Unheimlich* nature of the doomed ship is concealed within the homely images:

> The link between the innocent detail of the cigarette and the imperial icon of the ocean liner is forged by the sustained visual pun in the border of the image, in which the smoke of the cigarette is gradually transformed into the fog and mist which concealed the iceberg on the ship's fatal journey. (Gibbons 1994: 179)

Fig. 82: **John Kindness (1995)** *Belfast Frescoes*. **One of a series of twenty lime frescoes on slate.**

The *Titanic Belfast* museum, which opened in 2012, has worked hard to position the icon of the doomed ship as central to Belfast culture. *Titanic Belfast* is sited on the original Harland and Wolff shipyards, the building base of both the Titanic and its sister ship Olympic. This 'Titanic Quarter' was planned from 2001, the land put aside for this enormous visitor experience (MacAlister 2001). Like a more tasteful version of the Doagh Famine Village, or the haunted experience in Loftus Hall, *Titanic Belfast* also profits commercially from a re-examination and re-interpretation of traumatic history. In this touristic context of historic simulacra, we see homes presented as icons of disaster, famine and paranormal activity. These national ideas of the traumatic home engage with commerce to collude in representing a recurrent version of the Gothic home, where the past is artificially reconfigured in the present. The Titanic's popularity as a historical and tragic narrative has increased since the eponymous Cameron film of 1997, and the non-sectarian nature of the tale has lent it a welcome neutral narrative in a context sensitised to ethno-religious overtones. However, the story of the Titanic is also directly linked with ideas of a divided home and with the divergence between above and below decks, between first and third

classes. The territory of the ship therefore becomes a mirror of social difference, and it transforms into a contested, floating home.

The Titanic, therefore, is the last in a line of *Unheimlich* homes considered in this chapter: an uncanny, floating home that held within it the people of the split and divided nation who sailed on it. It also constitutes an unstable home in the amorphous, in-between space of open sea (Fig. 83). Ireland as an island nation has had a long and ambivalent relationship with the sea, both as destroyer of life and as provider of food. It has a history of monastic travels, fatalistic expeditions, phantom islands, the slave trade and the Famine coffin ships, those notoriously ill-built and crowded ships of the 1840s that carried Irish emigrants, both alive and dead, to different regions of the world. In Irish folklore there are countless sailors' tales told of strange territories off the coast of Ireland and bizarre happenings at sea (Curran 2008). However, of all these Irish tales of the sea, surely the most memorable is the tragedy of the Titanic. The allegedly 'unsinkable' ship built in Belfast that foundered on an iceberg at sea has become a tragic icon, popularised in history, monument and film. Like Cross's *Ghost Ship* (1998), a flickering, phosphorescent evocation of a ship at sea (Fig. 84), the mountainous spectre of the Titanic has animated responses in the work of contemporary artists from Kindness to Napier to Duffy.
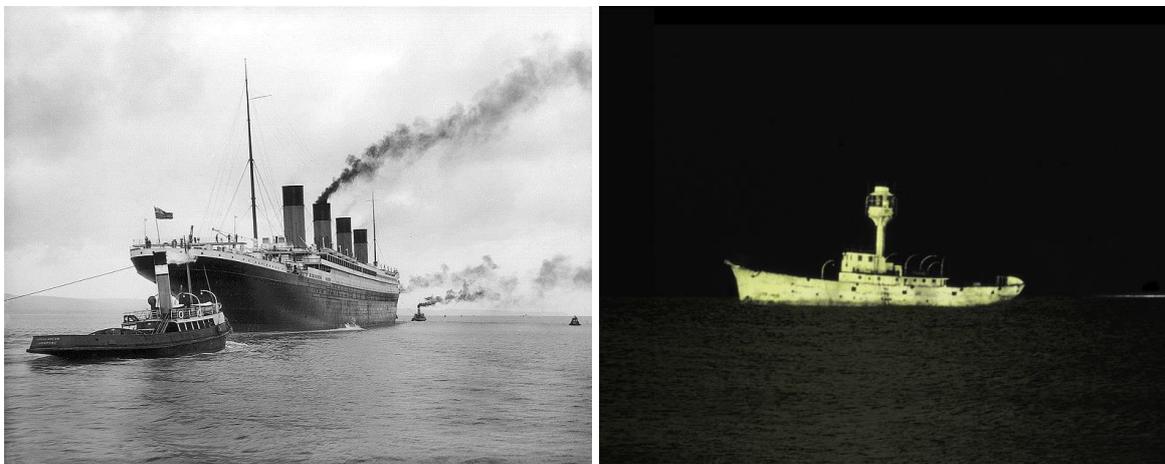
Figs. 83-84: **(From left to right):** *Titanic Leaving Belfast* **(1912). Photograph; Dorothy Cross (1998)** *Ghost Ship***. Installation.**

However, the story of the Titanic is also bound up in family narratives and constructions of home as seen in Kindness' *Belfast Frescoes* and Duffy's *Legacy* (2010). In *Legacy*, Duffy succumbs to an archival impulse that unites her various interests: the colonial past, family history and the history of conflict in Belfast. Duffy's *Legacy* (2010) is a body of work based around the Titanic but also around Duffy's family documents and histories as they relate to this iconic ship (Figs. 85-86). For this 2010 exhibition, she produced a sequence of archival works from her own family history relating to the Titanic. Duffy's idea for incorporating her own family experience into this grand Belfast narrative stemmed not only from her direct family experience (her father was one of the only Catholic shipbuilders in the Belfast yard), but from her experience researching the project in the Public Records office, where she discovered documents that someone had subsequently 'revised' with their own comments. This led to her creation of family palimpsests, where her family archival documents are overlaid with images to suggest the accretion of information over an extended time-span. This process of working also evokes the simultaneous continuation and revision of family accounts of a universal story, a methodology further explored in the memory project that constitutes *Chapter Five*.

As well as these family documents, Duffy created a series of finely detailed ink and graphite drawings that map the relationship between the ship and the conditions of the colonial Belfast site of its production. This is illustrated in Duffy's *Titanic After Goya* (2010) (Fig. 85). This chalk drawing refers to Goya's etchings: *The Disasters of War* and *Los Caprichos*, created after the Spanish artist's experience of the Napoleonic wars in 1790s Spain. The echo of these eighteenth-century etchings, with their tortured bodies and screaming faces, combine with the distinctive shapes of the ship shown in cross-section and

the invasive form of the iceberg to create a complex, multi-layered image of historical trauma:

> Darkness, psychological turmoil and nightmare terrain from 1790s Spain is now layered on the sinking vessel. Duffy here seems to be engaging with Goya's artistic mission to show just how the sleep of reason produces monsters (and paramilitaries and icebergs). Her re-contextualising and cross-referencing of history points to the universality and eternal recurrence of human tragedy, conflict and struggle. (Savage 2010)
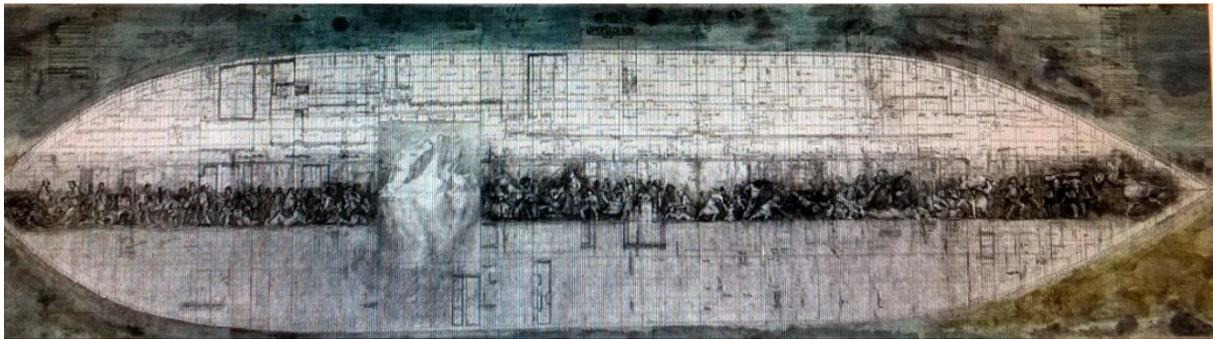
Fig. 85:   **Rita Duffy (2010)** *Titanic After Goya*. **From** *Legacy* **series. Ink and graphite.**

While Duffy's *Titanic After Goya* connected the floating home of the Titanic with Goya's horrors of war, its companion piece *Heart of Darkness* (Fig. 86), maps the colonial nature of the ship by referencing Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899); his polemic novel of death, colonisation, madness and trauma. Just as the novel exposed the terrors of colonialism in a stark and explicit manner through the persona of the maddened and savage Kurtz, Duffy's drawing exposes the dark nature of the ship as a floating colonial home. From the dark interior of the ship emerges not only the recurrent form of the iceberg but also the figure of George V, resplendent in his ceremonial dress. Over the ship resonates the last words of Kurtz: 'The horror! The horror!'
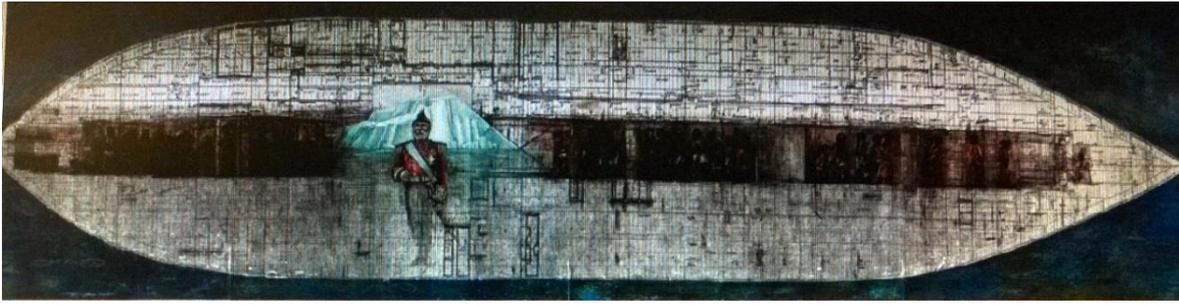
Fig. 86: **Rita Duffy (2010)** *Heart of Darkness*. **From** *Legacy* **series. Ink and graphite.**

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* offers a plethora of melancholy images of lost voyages. One of these cited is the Franklin Arctic expedition (also referenced in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*), in which the HMS Terror and the HMS Erebus were lost, frozen in the icy wastes of an attempted Arctic passage. Belfast artist Philip Napier in his *Unpacking the Terror* show at The Dock, Roscommon (2011) created a series of installations that reflect the ambiguous whereabouts of these missing ships lost in the North West Passage (Figs. 87-88). Like the ill-fated Titanic, these ships function in Napier's research as signifiers of both historic mystery and contemporary commercialism.

Figs. 87-88: **Philip Napier (2011)** *Unpacking the Terror*. **Installation and photography.**

Unlike the hushed stories of the Famine, or the bitter sectarian wars of Northern Ireland, the tale of the Titanic is seen as a neutral narrative that nevertheless reflects the colonial legacy

of the country and its impact on the fractured sense of home that still permeates Irish culture. The Titanic, therefore, functions as an enormous, universal narrative that also conceals within it the tragic nature of home in Northern Ireland; it is a story of family tragedies, loss, division and separation. The tale of the Titanic can be seen as a continuance of the Irish tradition of the stories of loss concerned with the sea, as part of the melancholy romance literature around lost ships. It also connects to the tradition of folklore and loss built up around the precariousness of Irish existence as an island at the edge of the Atlantic. This importance of a strong narrative is key to the sense of storytelling core to Irish notions of home, as discussed in *Chapter One*. Foster emphasises the significance of tales in shaping a sense of history: 'Again and again in Irish history, one is struck by the importance of the narrative mode, the idea that Irish history is a "story", and the implications that this carries about it of a beginning, a middle and the sense of an ending' (Foster 1994: 4-5). This tale of the Titanic lingers and recurs in a most *Unheimlich* fashion in contemporary culture, largely due to its function as an icon of doom. However, the Titanic as interpreted by Duffy and Kindness, also serves as a reminder of the multiple narratives that co-exist in any historical story, of how the grand narratives of history are interpreted and sometimes contested by a more Gothic, nebulous world of family stories and altered accounts. This idea of counternarratives of personal reminiscence as opposed to official historical texts is returned to in greaterdetail in Chapter Five. As such, these Gothic counternarratives from the Famine to the Titanic allow us to critically consider historical events in a contemporary context. As Schultz (2010) puts it:

> The gothic provides us with both the theoretical framework and precise language for discussing Ireland's historical ghosts, and for placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Moreover, the Gothic points us to sites of imaginative reinvention of Ireland's historical narrative and cultural myths, giving iconic historical events new social meaning in the present… (Schultz 2010)

Conclusions: Waiting for a Thaw

This chapter considers in more detail the notion of national identity already discussed in the *Introduction*. While *Chapter One* refers to the idea of folklore, especially legends, as shaping ideas of Irish Gothic, and of their reflection in contemporary fine art practice, this chapter has examined how this sense of national identity is also shaped by history, both ancient and modern. It looks at how Gothic ideas of the home in contemporary Irish culture are shaped by the legacies of colonialism, the deprivations endured under colonial rule and the restrictions on home created by the Penal Laws. This idea of home as a contested space in history is also examined in *Chapter Five*, in its exploration of agrarian warfare, the burning of Wildgoose Lodge and the traumatic aftermath of this incident. It also emphasises the metaphorical significance of the ruin, which is further explored in links with *Chapter Four* through its consideration of the impact of the recent ruin on contemporary culture, economy and art. Some of the Irish depictions of home in contemporary art practice explored in this chapter can be read as confidently postcolonial, with artists such as Horrigan and Keating preoccupied with revoicing and revising histories. However, many of the works discussed here are haunted by the past, by the shadows of colonialism and conflict, as evidenced in the spectral themes explored by Cleary and Doherty. Artists of the North of Ireland are also concerned with recent sectarian conflict, traumatised by the same histories they seek to revise. This sense of inevitable return is echoed in Wisker's definition of postcolonial Gothic:

> Postcolonial locations and mindsets cannot avoid the Gothic because they are laced with the history and memories of the colonial and imperial past and these return, repressed, silenced, denied, leaking out of the material circumstances of the contemporary. (Wisker 2013: 512).

In Rita Duffy's ambitious *Thaw* project (2005 - ongoing) the haunting metaphor of the Titanic draws together various skeins of family, community and national identity. It is appropriate to consider this project as the last in a line of artworks, both colonial and

postcolonial, that haunt this chapter. In 2005, Duffy announced an ambitious proposal: to

form *Thaw Ltd.*, a company focused on towing an illuminated iceberg from Greenland and

mooring it off the coast of Belfast, where it would be allowed to melt (Fig. 89). In a post-

conflict era, Duffy's determination to engage with the narrative of division stands out. In an

interview with Christafis, Duffy comments:

> A huge big mountain of ice seems to be the most eloquent way of describing where we are.
> There is a certain type of madness in Northern Ireland society, a denial of what has happened
> to us. Maybe it's time to come out of denial and confront what has sunk us. (Christafis 2005)

Duffy's energy and vision for this project, which she sees as a necessary and powerful

symbol of sectarian reconciliation, is unabated. In 2015, she continues to host meetings to

discuss the possibility of driving this project onwards. For Duffy, this process will mirror her

hopes for a thaw in attitudes in Belfast society of the post-conflict era, a place still mired in

separations and divisions. *Thaw* aims at catharsis; its current failure to materialise is a

speaking testimony to the lingering divisions in Northern Irish society:

> As time passes the immediacy of violence, suspicion and paranoia subsides. Different
> contours begin to dominate the political landscape of the North; a place of reconstruction,
> where city and country become reconfigured according to a logic of economic necessity, and
> history is once more remade in the image of current imperatives. These negotiations with the
> past permit its stories to be told in a different way; that which was buried becomes exhumed,
> previous certainties become open to question. (Duffy 2005)

However, in an intriguing postscript, *Thaw* has since materialised in a different guise. In 2014

Duffy produced another project, also titled *Thaw*; a set of surreal products designed for *Siopa*

Sealadach, a pop-up shop on the Falls Road, created in co-operation with the West Belfast

Partnership. The objects on sale, including *B-Special Honey*, *Disaffected Disinfectant* and

Peas Process, all illustrate Duffy's dextrous coupling of the humdrum contents of the

suburban food cupboard with the Northern Irish language of political anxiety (Fig. 90). In this

work, she, like John Kindness, illustrates the domestic resonance of political divisions in

Northern Ireland. In its entirety, *Thaw* functions as a fascinating dual project in terms of identity. The original project of floating the iceberg home to Belfast presents an interesting failure, the complex and continuing negotiations undertaken by Duffy illustrating at once the desire and the impossibility of full reconciliation within the still-divided ideas of home, family, community and nation in Northern Ireland. *Thaw's* second incarnation as the *Siopa Sealadach* takes this notion of division and expands it to include Duffy's concern with feminist art, with household items, and with their association with the female sphere of home. Her work acts as a subversive counter-narrative to the 'official' voices of post-conflict Ireland which she sees as deeply problematic on both a political and feminist level:

> We have a deeply misogynistic, patriarchal society here in Northern Ireland. Women's voices really need to be heard here…I was born female and therefore women's issues and feminism seem obvious and important concerns for me as an artist (Savage 2010).

Figs. 89-90:   **Rita Duffy (From left to right):** *Thaw* **(2007). Mixed Media;** *Thaw* **(*Peas Process*) (2014). Installation.**

The legacies of Big Houses, Famine cottages, Penal Laws and Northern conflict resonate in the following chapter as we continue to explore the notion of colonisation and its after-effects in Irish society. From the divided historical spaces in the Republic of Ireland to the more contemporary political divisions in the North of Ireland, the notion of home as a Gothic space still pervades: a space of danger, loss, fear and silence. This fragmented notion of home is

also explored in *Chapter Three* which focuses on how the Gothic space of home also functions as an intensely female space. This chapter examines how this space and the female bodies occupying it are both controlled and colonised by legislation enacted by Church and State. Here, Duffy's *Siopa Sealadach* with its surreal shelves of produce is mirrored in the passionate and polemic art of Aideen Barry, Dorothy Cross, Cicely Brennan, Amanda Coogan and Patrick Jolley as the grim and gendered legacy of history continues to leak into and damage notions of home in contemporary Ireland.

Chapter 3: 'Women who just can't seem to get out of the house';

Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny

> …[T]he literature produced by women confronted with such anxiety-inducing choices has been strongly marked not only by an obsessive interest in these limited options but also by obsessive imagery of confinement that reveals the ways in which female artists feel trapped and sickened both by suffocating alternatives and by the culture that created them. (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 64)

Figs. 91-92:   **Aideen Barry (2011)** *Possession*. **Film stills.**

A woman peers through her letterbox, her terrified eyes scanning the hostile landscape outside. Inside the house, however, the terrain is equally unwelcome; her home is an uncanny, uncertain place represented in a state of perpetual flux. Cupboards and drawers fling open of their own volition, cups spin around and chairs sink into the floor. The female protagonist at the centre of this poltergeist activity responds to this surreal domestic space by manifesting strange and repetitive behaviours. In a desperate and doomed desire to achieve

domestic perfection, she tries to suck up dust like a hoover (Fig. 91), to tan her arms in the

oven (Fig. 92), to shave her legs on a disappearing chair (Fig. 93), to cut grass with scissors

attached to her hair (Fig. 94), to slice bread with a garage door, to change her clothes over

and over and to bake and eat in a frenzied fashion. All is to no avail; she ends up being

consumed by the home within which she is confined, a perpetual prisoner of her own mental

and physical distress. This vivid live-action animation is *Possession*, Aideen Barry's short

film of 2011, a dramatic exposition of spatial anxiety, female confinement and uncanny and

abject behaviours. These striking images of domestic imprisonment and the surreal, anxious,

and even hysterical responses to confinement that the protagonist exhibits recall both the

eighteenth-century interests of Irish Gothic novelists such as Regina Maria Roche, Sydney

Owensen and Maria Edgeworth and the nineteenth-century Gothic preoccupations of the

Brontë sisters and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Possession*, in short, functions both as a

contemporary exemplar of the genre of *female Gothic* (Moers 1976) and as a striking

illustration concept of the domestic uncanny (Jentsch 1909, Freud 1919, Royle 2003).

Figs. 93-94: **Aideen Barry (2011)** *Possession***. Film stills.**

Barry's film is at once a straightforward parable of female confinement and dark domesticity,

but it also presents us with an ontological confusion: the many different and possible

meanings of the word 'possession'. Is the home in the film a possession? Is it the woman

within it? Are the objects in the home possessed? Is she possessed? Is the house? Or are

women, house and objects all possessed of some sinister spirit that animates them like

automata in this jerky stop-motion fashion? And *who* is the possessor? Gilbert and Gubar's

discussion of woman imagined as house, and the consequent ambivalent relationship between

self and home, is relevant here: 'Moreover, conditioned to believe that as a house she is

herself owned (and ought to be inhabited) by a man, she may once again but for yet another

reason see herself as an object' (Gibert and Gubar 1983: 88). Barry has also commented on

the multiple meanings of *Possession*:

> Possession implies ownership, it also could be to be possessed, in a spiritual, paranormal or
> supernatural way. I don't believe in ghosts but I do believe people are possessed, or have been
> possessed over the past ten years in Ireland. 'We lost the run of ourselves', you hear that a lot,
> or 'what possessed them to...' is often discussed as a means of understanding the manic way
> we built, bought, and bludgeoned ourselves into over-building. (Andrews 2011)

Possession trembles with a barely-restrained, pre-verbal anxiety; it functions as a silent

scream communicated through attempted actions, facial expressions and bodily responses.

This film piece echoes the confusion experienced by trauma sufferers, which locks them into

what Bloom (1999: 6) terms 'speechless terror'; a state where words and images separate.

Possession resonates with images of dangerous domestic spaces and the surreal behaviours

that they induce. It sites home as a place where cognitive dissonance reveals itself through

anxious repetitions: as a space where the repressed always returns. In her work, Barry

consistently plays with themes of nervousness, imprisonment, hysterical behaviours, phobic

reactions, surreal objects and the metamorphosis and even obliteration of women within

domestic spaces. Barry's Gothic homes with their atmosphere of confinement, uneasiness

and repression have been characterised as a manifestation of 'unstable domesticity' (Gilsdorf

2011). Her dysfunctional domestic spaces draw upon a rich range of references from Jentsch

(1906), to Freud (1919), to Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892). Barry's work resonates with

ideas of the Gothic and the uncanny, preoccupations that she returns to repeatedly. As she says, 'I'm really interested in Freud's notion of the *Unheimliche*, the uncanny, something that can be familiar and strange at the same time' (Gilsdorf 2011). Barry's art speaks of spatial phobias, mental illness and the unease of female confinement. Like other contemporary Irish artists, such as Cross and Maher, she uses a form of surrealism to express these problematic spaces and the people and objects within them. The homes she depicts are unsafe places, constantly in a state of flux, threatened by forces of social pressure from without and forces of mental anxiety from within. They are plagued with questions of ownership, legitimacy and belonging. *Possession* is just one of many works of Irish art produced from 1990-2015 which deals with notions of dispossession and uncertainty that lie within the strange space of the Irish Gothic home, a place composed paradoxically both of crushing boundaries and of vertiginous, liminal spaces.

This chapter considers the contemporary Gothic home as a dysfunctional gendered place where 'the terrors of boundaries and boundedness contradictorily merge' (Sencindiver 2010: 8). This emphasis on confinement, constraints and ensuing related phobias makes a female Gothic (Moers 1976) reading of these spaces entirely relevant. Female Gothic as a literary genre is characterised by the shifting boundaries and claustrophobic spaces of domesticity. It also considers how these difficult spaces simulate metaphors of problematic patriarchal structures. A clear argument can be made to locate the genre of female Gothic not only within the literary canon, but also within the history of visual art practice, a tradition forged by both the female Surrealists and by explicitly feminist art by artists such as Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro and the Gorilla Girls from the 1970s onwards. In the work of Barry and other contemporary Irish artists, home manifests repeatedly as an uncanny place, a world of female disorientation and disassociation from Freud's 'first home', the womb, which he describes as: 'an *Unheimlich* place…the entrance to the former Heim of all human

beings' (Freud 1919: 944) to contemporary domestic spaces. The Gothic nature of the Irish home recurs in the nervous, repetitive actions and the weaponised domestic objects of Barry, in the claustrophobic, atomised spaces filmed by Patrick Jolley, in the eerie, sexualised furniture of Dorothy Cross, in the fierce, dark waves of Cicely Brennan, in the hair-shrouded sculptures of Alice Maher and in the agonised and abject performances of Amanda Coogan.

This chapter continues to build the case for contemporary Irish art practice as the site of resurrection of the Gothic home. In this section of the thesis, the Gothic home appears again as a pivotal concern in contemporary Irish art, but this time its recurrence is explored in relation to manifestations of the domestic uncanny. It explores how spaces of home are defined as confined, liminal and even dangerous spaces, especially for the women within them. This examination of domestic space as a potentially hazardous space within contemporary culture has strong connections with the thesis as a whole. This chapter supports and expands the notion of home as a site of peril already explored in *Chapter One*. It examines the idea of the unsafe home and contextualises its abject and uncanny forms within the canon of female Gothic. It also relates to the haunting legacy of colonialism explored in *Chapter Two*. This chapter scrutinises a similar history of colonisation; specifically it examines the colonisation of the female body and home by both State and Church, and looks at how the psychological effects of these constraints resonate in images of domesticity within contemporary Irish art. Finally, the location of the home as a site of possession and consumption initiates the discussion of the development of these uncanny spaces into fully-fledged 'ghost estates' (McWilliams 2009), and the resonance of these physical developments in contemporary art; an argument that is further developed in *Chapter Four*. This chapter discusses selected works by Aideen Barry, Dorothy Cross and Patrick Jolley as tangible manifestations of female Gothic within the domestic uncanny, also referring to other contextual works by Amanda Coogan, Rita Duffy, Alice Maher and Cicely Brennan. The

development of the idea of the uncanny is central to this thesis. This chapter offers a detailed examination of the idea of recurrence within female Gothic and domestic spatiality, just as the other chapters of the dissertation explore the notion of uncanny return within different definitions of the home offered by contemporary art practitioners.

This chapter also centres on trauma, but specifically on the distress that manifests in relation to a confined, uncanny and abject domesticity. The closer we scrutinise Irish contemporary art, the stranger its portrayals of domestic space seem, especially in relation to the home as female space. The sheer volume of work produced by Irish artists that site home as a dark and threatening space for women is perplexing. Furthermore, these concerns illustrate a surprisingly close connection with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic preoccupations with home as a site of female domestic confinement. Even more puzzling, this outpouring of contemporary anxieties in the tangible form of home cannot really be identified as part of an international trend; in fact, comparable artists like Tracey Emin, in works like *Tent* (1995) and *Bed* (1999), position home as a site of defiance, where objects associated with home are subverted as a celebration of independence from domestic trappings and rituals. Likewise, Rachel Whiteread (in works like *Ghost* (1990) and *House* (1993)) explores negative domestic spaces as physical objects to communicate ideas of home as monument that expresses the impressively tangible quality of domestic memories. Only in the agonised, autobiographical (re)constructions of Louise Bourgeois' *Red Rooms: Parents* (1999) and *Cells* (1989-93) do we find a parallel for this Irish outpouring of apprehension, fear and anger in relation to female domestic space. In order to offer an explanation for this recurrence of historic Gothic concerns, this proliferation of work concerned with fear and female domesticity, this chapter reads the Irish contemporary art work examined as located within several key canons of work: within the tradition of female domestic art; within the

history of Irish feminism; and within contemporary, problematic discourses of gender and the body in Irish society and culture.

The key to unlocking these multiple anxieties in relation to female space lies partly in an understanding of how the uncanny operates in the context of Irish history, culture and memory. The uncanny signifies the return of the repressed; in this case, it is the recurrence of the Irish Gothic home, which has been resurrected in contemporary art practice. This recurrence of troubled domestic spaces through surreal manifestations of the uncanny is significant. This chapter traces the uneasy relationship between women, Church and State in Ireland from the establishment of the constitution in 1937 to the present day, and the repeated return of this relationship in contemporary culture. This relationship is expressed through the uncanny repetition of national issues of body, sexuality and ownership through contemporary media discourse. However from the point of view of this thesis, it is also expressed through art that explicitly uses abject discourse to map the gendered landscape not only of the home but of the female body. The chapter examines how this Irish Gothic art itself is linked with the uncanny, specifically, to the trope of the *Unheimlich* home and the *Heimlich* secrets contained within it, and how this is illustrated by the return of the dark, repressed nature of the home in Ireland. The concept of the uncanny is examined in relation to ideas of contested space and repetitive actions in domestic settings and the consequent subversion and slippage in roles within the context of home. In this uncanny, liminal space of the home, ordinary domestic objects become subverted, surreal and even cybernetic when exposed to this charged domestic space. These uncanny situations and images are underpinned by the use of various tropes such as involuntary actions, doubles and automata. The surreal objects produced by this art, these functionless, malfunctioning, or metamorphosed objects, become expressions of domestic unease, where the physical realities of the home become warped and transformed. This chapter links Surrealism as the original mode of art used to describe these

uncanny images with the simultaneous rise of early psychoanalysis, and applies a psychoanalytic perspective to reading this work. To summarise, therefore, in this chapter home is examined as a place where the uncanny return is linked with Irish female history and notions of the repressed past. It is a place where this inevitable recurrence is characterised by phobias made manifest, by the imprisonment of female protagonists, and by the disruption of spatial and behavioural norms inside these Gothic homes.

Figs. 95-96: **(From left to right): Dorothy Cross (1997)** *Storm In A Teacup*. **Installation; Meret Oppenheim (1937)** *Object*. **Sculpture.**

Surreal Homes

Cross's film piece *Storm In A Teacup* (1997) offers an excellent example of way in which contemporary Irish artists use Surrealism to translate ideas of domestic danger by subverting objects, rituals and settings associated with the home (Fig. 95). In Cross's 1997 piece, a boat rises and falls on the ocean, as men huddled in a *currach* navigate the stormy waters of a shark hunt. These flickering black and white images are taken from the staged shark hunt in the 1934 film *Man of Aran*. The projected images are framed by the most unlikely of objects, the most demure of all domestic images, a cup and saucer. Cross has often used the shark as a symbol of male aggression, and the containment of the male energy and turbulence within the delicate tea-cup is a comment on domestic violence that is enacted within the 'safe' space of

the home in Ireland. The form of the piece and its subversive nature suggests one of the most famous icons of Surrealism, Meret Oppenheim's *Object* (1936), or, as it is known by its colloquial title, *Breakfast in Fur* (Fig. 96). While Oppenheim's work is concerned with sly, sexual connotations, her teacup posed as an overt symbol of the female genitalia, Cross is more interested in connecting the frail form of the teacup with ideas of a dangerous Irish domesticity. In order to examine contemporary Irish artworks in detail, it is important to recognise how this work reflects the preoccupations of female Gothic and the problematic history of women in Ireland, and to recognise how this work presents a return to the concerns and forms of Surrealist female art.

In the works of Barry, Cross and others, this contemporary use of Surrealism in Irish art is striking; it offers a transformative and revitalised approach to the style, while still maintaining its original function of being 'above' realism, of seeking the reality beyond the surface. Surrealism is an art movement that established itself in the 1920s, and continued to maintain a strong presence in the Western art world until the 1960s. It is influenced by the work of artistic precursors who were interested in ideas of the uncanny, the bizarre and the strange manifest in painterly reality: Bosch, Goya, Fuseli, Bocklin, Moreau, Rousseau, and Munch (Alexandrian 1978). Duchamp's Dadaist oeuvre also influences it, especially *Fountain* (1917), *LHOOQ* (1919) and other 'readymades', which played with titles that contradicted the physical art object. Breton famously described Surrealism as 'a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be - the greater its emotional power and poetic reality' (Breton 1924). The relationship between this art movement and psychoanalysis is widely acknowledged by Alexandrian (1978), Fuller (1980) and Lusty (2007).

The almost simultaneous birth of psychoanalytic practice and the Surrealist movement is not coincidental. Breton had been so impressed with Freud's early psychoanalytic writings that he travelled to Vienna to meet him in 1921. 'Breton indicated that the aim of the movement was "the marvellous" and preferably the marvellous in contemporary life, inspired by the symbolism of dreams, whose latent content was revealed by psychoanalysis' (Alexandrian 1978: 48). Early psychoanalysts such as Freud and Jung and the Surrealists shared a kindred desire to question dominant orders, to reach beyond the superficial and the obvious, to facilitate the revelation of long-held secrets and to interrogate underlying truths that lay behind the façade of the conscious mind. There are also direct links between the Surrealist movement and Lacan; indeed Lacan actually published some of his controversial doctoral thesis in the Surrealist periodical *Minotaure*. His famous *Dialogues* betray his early Surrealist leanings, typified as they are by his provocative play on words and his interest in unpacking and reassembling language just as the Surrealists dismantled and reimagined artistic conventions. The methods employed by the early psychoanalysts and the Surrealists naturally differed; psychoanalysts choosing to question clients in a systematic manner in order to reveal concealed truth, while the Surrealists, as Breton put it, harnessed the force of 'pure psychic automatism' (Breton 1924) to capture the essence of their own unconscious minds. However, this mutual desire for a latent, hidden secret that will inevitably resurface and the dark nature revealed by this resurrected truth lends both early psychoanalysis and Surrealism a shared interest in the *Unheimlich* or the uncanny.

The uncanny itself is a psychoanalytic concept, based as it is on pioneering work by Jentsch (1906) and Freud (1919). Jentsch lays out many of the basic tenets in his *Zur Psychologie Des Unheimlichen* (*On the Psychology of the Uncanny*) on which Freud built his subsequent definition of the uncanny and its various manifestations (the recognition of the uncanny effects through invisible illnesses, wax figures, dolls and automata). In his 1919

essay Freud enlarges and contextualises Jentsch's analysis by framing it within the 'the return of the repressed'. He links the uncanny with strange manifestations of repressed secrets in the form of surreal images, adding to Jentsch's canon with the inclusion of doppelgängers, the confusion of animate and inanimate objects, corpses and fears linked to both castration and blindness. The *Unheimlich* is, by its nature, concerned with the home (*Heim*), as is its antonym, *Heimlich.* Indeed, Freud readily admits that the haunted house lies as the centre of the concept of the uncanny, a home haunted not only by spectres, but also by memories, secrets and anxieties that recur repeatedly. Royle (2011) agrees: '[B]ut the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation…It can consist of a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home' (Royle 2011:1). Indeed the very concealment of the word *Heimlich* within the word *Unheimlich* is a neat analogy of this mingling of secrecy and the revelation of secrecy contained within the concept of the uncanny. As Freud puts it, '*Heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *Unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *Heimlich*' (1919: 4). Surrealism is the artistic language of early psychoanalysis and it offers the first artistic translation of the concept of the uncanny into fine art. Surrealist art gave artists such as Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Remedios Varo and Dorothea Tanning a coded mechanism through which to discuss both individual and communal secrets. In Irish contemporary art practice, Surrealism becomes a coded language for discussing female Gothic spaces, a way of saying the unsayable, of revealing the *Heimlich* secrets at the heart of *Unheimlich* manifestations. This notion of the unspeakable, the marginal and the dispossessed is central to the conception of the Gothic itself. This psychoanalytic idea of something concealed then revealed, or of something buried that returns, is core to Surrealist art. Surrealist art, inherently based on principles of juxtaposition, is perfectly placed to capture the paradoxical nature of the uncanny described by

Masschelein: 'In the case of the concept of the uncanny, we are faced with a paradoxical situation. Although the history of its conceptualisation can be clearly traced because it is a relatively young concept, the uncanny has gradually come to signify the very problem or even impossibility of clearly defined concepts as such' (Masschelein 2003: 1).

Surrealism is also germane to articulation of the *abject*, especially to its manifestation through 'modification either of speech (parapraxes etc.) or of the body (symptoms) or both (hallucinations)' (Kristeva 1982: 7). Although Kristeva is firm in her differentiation of the uncanny and the abject, she acknowledges that a link exists: 'Essentially different from "uncanniness," more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory' (Kristeva 1982: 5). In Irish art, the abject mainly manifests through Surrealist distortions of both the body and the mind. This close connection between Surrealism, psychoanalysis, the abject and the uncanny home offers a strong case for a psychoanalytic reading of this Gothic and Surrealist Irish artwork. As Bruhm puts it: '[T]he Gothic can be readily analysed in terms of psychoanalysis, for many the twentieth century's supreme interpreter of human compulsions and repressions' (Bruhm 2002: 261).

Figs. 97-98: **(From left to right): Remedios Varo (1960)** *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst.* **Painting; Dorothy Cross (1992-95)** *Freud's Couch***. Sculptural installation.**

Two of the most interesting commentaries on the relationship between women, art and psychoanalysis are found in the work of Surrealist artist Remedios Varo (1908-1963) and Irish contemporary artist Dorothy Cross. Varo's *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst* (1960) is direct in its engagement with both Surrealist art and psychoanalysis (Fig. 97). A veiled woman stands in a little walled courtyard outside her psychoanalyst's office, her veil slipping to reveal another, 'secret', head beneath her clothes, one hand holding the wizened spectre of her father's head, about to drop it down a well. The link with psychoanalysis is spelled out through text, with Freud, Jung and Adler's initials inscribed on a little plaque beside the door. However, the still-swaddled figure of the woman, the enclosed nature of the courtyard and the inevitable return of the repressed all point to her freedom from her secrets being of a temporary nature. The ghost of her father is almost certain to re-emerge. The space she occupies is still haunted by the spectre of her father. It is still not completely *her* place. Contemporary Irish artist Dorothy Cross's (1992-95) sculptural piece *Freud's Couch* offers a complex, surreal and satirical take on the relationship between psychoanalysis, sexuality, women and art (Fig. 98). The actual couch belonging to Freud is the most famous exhibit in the Freud Museum in Hampstead, London, a fetishized object covered with luxuriant Iranian rugs and chenille cushions. Here Cross interprets this object, which is associated with Freud's office and his home, as an abject, strange object that evokes multiple meanings. Taken from her famous 'udder' series of the 1990s which applied natural materials of cowhide, udders and teats in the (re)construction of household objects, *Freud's Couch* is a direct reference to the years of Jungian psychoanalysis experienced by Cross during the early 1980s (Warner 2005: 25). The structure of the piece reflects her interest in Jung's idea of the anima/animus; the penis cast in Irish Waterford glass that lies innocently on the couch balances the breast-like object of the teated pillow. The identification of therapy with nurturing is underlined by the use of the teats, as are the many satirical associations with Freudian analysis, the

158

sexualisation of the infant, and the problematic nature of Freudian theories from a feminist

analysis. Kristeva's theory of the abject is also relevant here. Cross deliberately uses a range

of natural materials divorced from their original, living context. The abject materials of cow-

skin and teats are arresting, not only in their symbolic nature, but also in terms of the

Lacanian play on words they provoke which opens the piece up to multiple meanings and

uncanny resonances. These materials 'stir associations both local and universal: of the foul

and the sweet, the sacred cow and the poor cow, the Irish farmyard and the Magna Mater'

(Warner 2005: 27). Lyndenberg (2005) has noted the punning use of the word 'udder' in

connection with feminist readings of Cross's work:

> Cross first began to explore the return of the repressed in relation to gender and sexual
> identity, most notably in a series that came to be known as her 'udder' works. During the
> 1990s, Cross covered a variety of familiar objects with cowhide, udder and teats intact. Using
> sexual ambiguity as a deconstructive tool, she cleared a path within each gender stereotype
> for the return of the repressed other / udder. (Lydenberg 2005: 5)

However, this image is also strange in terms of the physical space it occupies. The couch

itself is levitating, suspended on a wooden framework that confines it, almost like a

transparent box. This surreal transformation of household furniture, the gendered identity of

the home, and these overtly psychoanalytic images are all themes returned to later in the

chapter.

Figs. 99-100: **(From left to right): Dorothea Tanning (1943)** *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. **Painting;**
Dorothea Tanning (1970-3) *Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202*. **Sculptural installation.**

However, this tradition of exhibiting uncanny objects, happenings and manifestations in the domestic interior is also an artistic tradition stemming from the early works of the female Surrealists. Remedios Varo and Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012) both choose to examine images of women within limited and circumscribed spaces. This relates to the status of women in the Surrealist movement in the early twentieth century; more commonly viewed as muses and sexual beings. This constriction of role and the sexual nature of the male gaze led female artists to regress to older themes drawn from mythology, and to mask concerns expressed through images of confined and gendered spaces. *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (1943) by Tanning offers an intensely Freudian image (Fig. 99). Two young, possibly pubescent girls stand in the liminal space of the corridor. They are firmly encased in the landscape of a dream; there is no logic to this universe. One girl lies against a door, her clothes torn open to the waist, as if violated, the other, hair wildly extended from some invisible and site-specific gale stands staring at a huge sunflower, broken off and lying on the floor in front of her. Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams* construed flowers as a representation of the female genitalia (1901), their overlapping petals a signifier of the secret aperture beyond. It is easy to read this hallway as a liminal space in time in which this violent sexual confrontation occurs, as a distorted dream. Tanning, in a letter of 1999 revealed her own interpretation of this image.

> It's about confrontation. Everyone believes he/she is his/her drama. While they don't always have giant sunflowers (most aggressive of flowers) to contend with, there are always stairways, hallways, even very private theatres where the suffocations and the finalities are being played out, the blood red carpet or cruel yellows, the attacker, the delighted victim.
>
> At night one imagines all sorts of happenings in the shadows of the darkness. A hotel bedroom is both intimate and unfamiliar, almost alienation, and this can conjure a feeling of menace and unknown forces at play. But these unknown forces are a projection of our own imaginations: our own private nightmares. (Carruthers 2011: 146)

Carruthers (2011) interprets the Surrealism of Tanning within a resolutely Gothic context. In her *Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202* (1970-73), the 'neutral' space of the hotel appears as a strongly gendered space that alludes to the female Gothic tradition through the uncanny device of bodies emerging from the walls (Fig. 100). In Tanning's work, danger always come from within, it is triggered by memories and the return of the repressed. This danger is seen especially as a female danger, as a destructive force that can harm, both physically and mentally, the protagonists of her work. Tanning's idea of female confinement, its equation with fear and harm, and its frequent coupling with notions of mental illness, hysteria and neurosis, is also core to ideas of the uncanny domesticity of the Gothic home in Irish art.

Domestic Gothic

The idea of an uncanny, gendered space is one familiar from both the literary and filmic tradition of the Gothic. It is impossible to read the work of Barry without reference to the literary Gothic trope of the confined woman: a trope celebrated since the evolution of the Gothic novel. This notion of domestic space as liminal and unsafe is found in literary and artistic genres of women represented in perilous states in the home such as the classic Gothic trope of the imprisoned woman, a much-revived staple theme from Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1763) onwards. This trope of the confined and speechless woman is also a staple of early Gothic novels by Irish female writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Consider for example the fate of Sir Kit's Jewish bride in Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) where, after a disastrously brief honeymoon period, she is banished to her room, where Kit keeps her imprisoned for seven years. It is likely that Edgeworth was aware of the narrative echo this tale offers (Lorenzo's sister is thus confined in Lewis' 1796 *The Monk*), and she would certainly have been aware of the famous Irish scandal of 1743. This scandal, mentioned in *Chapter Two* in relation to the Jealous Wall, is the story of the Earl of Belfield

and how he confined his wife to her home for twenty-one years for the crime of infidelity.

Female guilt and punishment are also rife in the work of Roche who pioneered the beginning

of the genre that we recognise as female Gothic today; in her work women are acutely

accountable for the domestic terrors that unfold in their her narratives. For Siobhan Kilfeather

'Roche is most concerned to examine the overwhelming sense of responsibility and guilt

which afflicts women. When there are murders they always come from within the family, and

are generated by lust, greed and fear' (Kilfeather 1994: 43). It is no wonder that fiction of this

period emphasised the power-relations between women, the family and the state. As

Kilfeather remarks:

> Gothic fiction enables Irish writers to address anxieties about speech and silence, to accuse
> the state and the family of psychological terrorism without having to propose a program of
> reform. …Above all, perhaps, it raises the question of how far women can be said to give
> consent to their locations within home and nation, and it is not surprising that when Mary
> Wollstonecraft, whose stay in Ireland had so many gothic overtones came to fictionalise the
> dilemmas suggested in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* she did so in a gothic novel.
> (Kilfeather 1994: 44)

However, the social roots of the genre of domestic Gothic are generally located in the

mid-nineteenth-century. This period saw the evolution of the term 'domesticity' itself, a time

when spaces of work and spaces of home became separate and gendered, with male identity

bound up with spaces of work, just as female identity became associated with spaces of

domesticity (Hartnell-Mottram 2013: 184). This limitation of sphere and the consequent

narrowed nature of a domestic identity meant that, for women, home became their defining

place: a closed and enclosed space. Writers on gendered architecture and cultural geography

such as Beatriz Columnia (1992) and Doreen Massey (1994) have critiqued this patriarchal

equation of domestic space with women. Agrest *et al* (1996) in their provocative collection of

essays, *The Sex of Architecture* argue that this separation forces a feminist re-examination of

what Agrest terms 'long-suspect 'truths': that man builds and woman inhabits; that man is

outside and woman is inside; that man is public and woman is private' (Agrest *et al* 1996: 5).

Perkins Gilman argued that this limitation of women to the domestic sphere proved crucial to

the growth of female anxieties and phobias in the late nineteenth-century; that this

confinement within the home was linked to repression and mental deterioration:

> It is not that women are really smaller-minded, weaker-minded, more timid and vacillating,
> but that whosoever, man or woman, lives always in a small, dark place, is always guarded,
> protected, directed and restrained, will become inevitably narrowed and weakened by it. The
> woman is narrowed by the home and the man is narrowed by the woman. (Perkins Gilman
> 1903: 227)

Kate Ferguson Ellis (1989), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1983), Eugenia C.

DeLamotte (1990) and Maggie Kilgour (1995) have all written about the impact of this

repression on the consequent writing of the period, especially on women's writing, citing the

striking proliferation of images of imprisonment and enclosure that recur within it. This is

especially true of those literary moments of transformation where internal anxieties erupt and

take physical Surrealistic form: the jaundiced, sulphuric wallpaper with its crawling women

in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the strange light in the Red Room that horrifies the titular heroine

of *Jane Eyre*, and the horrid physicality of the ghostly Cathy's wrist rubbed bloody against

the broken glass of the window in *Wuthering Heights*. During these pivotal moments, the

home transforms abruptly from a space of comfort to a space of terror, revulsion and

imprisonment.
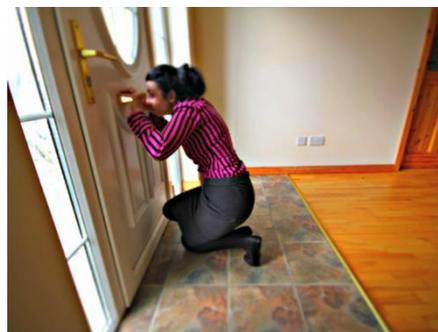
Figs. 101-102:   (From left to right): Aideen Barry (2011) *Possession.* **Film stills.**

Barry's *Possession* (2011) with its emphasis on boundaries through threshold images of the doorways, windows, exits and entrances (Figs. 101-102) illustrates the unease that stems from confinement. Female Gothic, as DeLamotte aptly put it, is riddled with 'women who can't seem to get out of the house' (DeLamotte 10); this is also true of the recurrent protagonists in Barry's work. It is worth returning to Ellis' idea of the Gothic home as failed home: 'it is the failed home that appears on its pages, the place from which some (usually "fallen" men) are locked out, and others (usually "innocent" women) are locked in' (Ellis 1989: ix). Barry's vision of the home is a profoundly unstable one. It presents consistently as a domestic heterotopia, a space that is liminal yet enclosed, recurring yet repressed, secretive yet hysterical. It vibrates between states, appearing both concealed and open; it is often terrifying and overwhelming. Barry's *Heterotopic Glitch* (2008), a piece carried out with Anne Ffrench, several red-clad women are sealed within plastic spheres, which then move across a body of water, propelled by the jerky, repeated movements of the women within, who can activate the spheres but cannot escape from the strange limbo they have been trapped in (Figs. 103-104). In this work, the spheres become representations of home as subversive sites where women within them demonstrate: 'resistance to an ideology that imprisons them even as it posits a sphere of safety for them' (Ellis, 1989: x).

Figs. 103-104:   **Aideen Barry (2008)** *Heterotopic Glitch***. Photographs.**

The nervous energy of these protagonists of *Heterotopic Glitch* is replicated in Barry's live action films where she uses stop-motion animation to simulate continuous movements of the body. Barry cites the early influences of eastern European animations by Jan Lenica, Jan Svankmajer and Walerian Borowczyk, saying: 'The aggression and anxiety in these films really informed my aesthetic and my motivation with material and technical application' (Gilsdorf 2011). Her world is a feverish, uneasy one, human protagonists within it jerk like marionettes; they levitate, mutate and even disintegrate. This strange, charged relationship between home and woman sets up a tension that reverberates through Barry's domestic landscapes and manifests itself through constant flux, anxious, repetitive rites and surreal metamorphoses. Home in Barry's work becomes a place inscribed by rituals and symbolism. Her protagonists of *Possession* and *Heterotopic Glitch* appear like frantic flies buzzing on a windowpane, as their rites, preparing food, cleaning, tidying, all escalate into a state of panic. Barry admits, speaking of these nervous repetitions: 'A lot of my work borders on conversations on "hysteria"' (Andrews 2011). Using the trope of the imprisoned woman and the threatened home, Barry creates female protagonists who are constantly depicted as operating in a liminal zone. These troubled figures enact nervous rituals, simulate domestic rites, but cannot escape from the strange limbo in which they are trapped. Again, there is a clear link between Barry's work and nineteenth-century women's writing redolent of 'spatial imagery of enclosure and escape, elaborated with what frequently becomes excessive intensity' (Gilbert and Gubar 1983: 83).

Fig. 105:   **Aideen Barry (2007)** *Levitating*. **Film montage.**

Barry's video piece, *Levitating* (2007) was born out of this experience, this attempt to reconcile the domestic ideal with the dissonant reality (Fig. 105). It offers an unsettling glimpse as to how *Heimlich* ideas of home, order and domestic harmony can become subverted and *Unheimlich*. *Levitating* features the artist as protagonist in a live-action animation as she enacts household rituals. Barry engages in a succession of humdrum activities; she shops, irons, drags out the bins, but as she does so, she appears to be hovering in the air, a profoundly artificial creature (Fig. 105). *Levitating* explicitly refers to the process of its creation; it is a simulation of levitation. In reality, this was the carefully achieved result of using motion-camera capture of Barry jumping while completing chores, and then painstakingly editing the piece so that she appears to glide through the air like an uncanny Stepford Wife. Barry's work is a testimony to her determination to control every aspect of her work by doubling herself in this uncanny fashion, so that she works simultaneously both behind and in front of the camera.

Barry's protagonists (almost always herself) suffer from a sense of dislocation, mental as well as spatial. In *Possession* Barry's use of jerky, stop-motion animation speaks to an instability at the core of these protagonists: an instability of both body and mind. These rituals mark a desire for protection and perfection. Running at the core of this nervous behaviour, and of this instability, is the idea of *cognitive dissonance*. The constant restlessness that infuses Barry's work exposes the domestic environment as a liminal space fraught with complex emotions. Festinger's first tenet of cognitive dissonance states that '[T]he existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance' (Festinger 1957:3). He also points out: 'When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance' (Festinger 1957: 3). In Barry's work however, this simple equation becomes fraught with problems; when your own domestic space becomes the trigger for anxieties, how do you avoid it? This conundrum is expressed succinctly by Barry: 'I think one of the things that enables me to make work, is that I am never at ease, I never feel I am at home and I am rarely comfortable where I am. This causes me to constantly question why that is, why do I not belong and how can I address these feelings' (Gilsdorf, 2011). According to Freud, this sudden emergence an invisible illness is the uncanny made manifest. A sufferer from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Barry is frank about her own problematic relationship with the domestic and the nervous behaviours that manifest because of it:

> A lot of my work borders on conversations on 'hysteria'. Hysteria has been described as "unmanageable emotional distress". This interest arrived from me being diagnosed with OCD [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] in 2006. I was under enormous emotional distress trying to fit in with the new 'modern living' of Celtic Tiger suburbia. I wanted to fit in with everyone in my housing estate in Claregalway, and would be up all night cleaning and manicuring my house. Then I didn't get enough sleep, then I needed to clean because I was so anxious because I hadn't enough rest...the inevitable vicious circle (Andrews 2011).

Figs. 106-107:   **Aideen Barry (2011)** *Possession.* **Film stills.**

The recurrence in *Possession* (2011) of the twin tropes of spray-cleaning and hand-washing also echo Barry's own Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (Figs. 106-107). They highlight her domestic anxieties about cleaning and the deep unease incited by the model of the ideal housewife. The washing of hands is a recognised cathartic and therapeutic ritual of cognitive dissonance, an attempt to cleanse the self of contradictory impulses. Kristeva recognises this impulse to control dis-ease: 'In the symptom, the abject permeates me, I become abject. Through sublimation, I keep it under control' (Kristeva 1982: 11). However, Barry's repeated rituals are performed in a kind of void; there is no sense that their performance will help the performer achieve internal equilibrium. When interviewed in 2011, Barry clarified this, adding that neither these rites, nor her own remarkable outputs of work prove particularly therapeutic:

> I don't think it's cathartic. I don't think it relieves the anxiety, I think that's always going to
> be there. I had to acknowledge that a couple of years ago, I just recognize the signs and I
> know how to control it so that it doesn't spiral completely out of control. I think the best part
> is to acknowledge that it exists. Mental illness is a taboo subject in Ireland. (Gilsdorf 2011)

Barry's domestic works, infused with an eloquent unease, speak to the timelessness of the female Gothic tradition of confinement and agitation, not only in art, but also in literature. She recognises her work explicitly within the context of the historic, female Gothic tradition:

> My film and animation works reference the subverted female characters in texts from Irish
> literary figures such as Bram Stoker and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, aligned with theories of

philosophers who are preoccupied with the notion of unnatural human behavior, playing with the blur between what is imagined and what is perceived to be; "the contemporary Gothic". (Barry 2009)

Even so, even given this Gothic identification, it seems strange that Barry's work relates so closely to nineteenth-century concerns of domestic Gothic: hysteria, confinement, invisible illness and anxiety.

Figs. 108-110:   Aideen Barry (2010) *Afternoon Tea.* **Performance.**

Afternoon Tea (2010) is a case in point that highlights the strange commingling of past and present within the genre of Irish female Gothic (Figs 108-10). This is a performative piece that took place in Limerick City Gallery of Art, where the artist, formally dressed and presiding over a table of her own home-cooked cakes, invited random members of the audience to come and take tea with her. The demure performance was undercut not only by the transposition of this domestic ritual into the public space of a gallery (which itself constitutes an *Unheimlich* home) but also more vividly by the uncanny nature of the tablecloth that lay beneath the perfectly baked cakes (Fig. 110). On this tablecloth, Barry had embroidered a figure of herself as a Shiva-style monster, armed with spray cleaner. The contrast between the artist's demure 1950s dress and conservative appearance and the warlike nature of her self-portrait is pointed; Barry represents herself simultaneously as both domestic goddess and domestic warrior. An incidental but amusing aspect of the official photography documents the visible unease experienced by invited participants in this traditional but

subversive action (Fig. 109). *Afternoon Tea* not only illustrates the secret fears that OCD

domestic rites evoke in the home but also conjures up anxieties caused by the correlation

between dirty house and bad mother in the world of advertising. Just as Cross did, in her

Storm in a Teacup, Barry covers her barbed message of troubled domesticity with an overlay

of the gentle, humdrum ritual of tea-drinking. But why this concealment? Why is this female

anxiety expressed in this coded way? When viewed in the light of the current troubled

relationship in Ireland that exists between feminism, the Free State and the Catholic Church

this secretive mode of art starts to make sense.

No Country for Young Women

In 1937, the Constitution of the Irish Free State was drawn up. This contained Article 41, an

article never repealed, that firmly classed women within the domestic sphere, just as the

separation of workspace and living space did in nineteenth-century Britain. This Article

(reproduced below) explicitly states in Section 41.2.1: 'In particular, the State recognises that

by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common

good cannot be achieved'. Section 41.2.2 generously undertakes to 'endeavour to ensure that

mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their

duties in the home.' Small wonder that Catherine Nash (1993) contends that women are left

out of the patriarchal Irish concept of the new state; they are, after all, constitutionally

invisible, restricted to the home:

> ARTICLE 41
> 1.1   The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of
>   Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights,
>   antecedent and superior to all positive law.
> 2.   The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority,
>   as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation
>   and the State.

2.1   In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2.2   The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

3.1   The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.

A history of Irish feminism is problematised by the fragmented Irish and English traditions that exist within Ireland: 'The wrongs of women are inseparable from the wrongs suffered by the Irish people, and this entwining of feminist and nationalist discourses is the most distinctive features in the evolution of Irish feminism' (Kilfeather 2005: 98). Historically, women were associated with key nationalist movements such as the evolution of Catholic emancipation in the 1820s and the formation of the Women's Land League in the 1880s. Women had been active in the *Cumann na mBan* (the women's group of the Irish Volunteers) and fought side by side with men in the Irish Citizen Army (founded 1913), an act that led to equal franchise rights in the consequent establishment of the Free State in 1922, six years before female franchise became law in Britain. So what changed so radically in the relationship between women and the State between the 1920s and 1930s? After the establishment of the Free State, the Catholic Church became a powerful influence, reasserted as the official religion of the people. Reacting against its long repression under the Penal Laws, which only relaxed with the advent of Catholic Emancipation in 1828, the Church began a meteoric rise to power that led to its theocratic influence on the formation of the Constitution. With the inherently patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church, there was a striking lack of consideration of the rights of women within its growing structure. One of its first actions in the 1930s was to promote the Marian cult extensively through granting officially sanctioned approval to sites of Marian apparitions. This cult was cemented by Church approval; the famous Lourdes apparitions of the Virgin in 1858 were officially sanctioned in 1862, with the visionary Bernadette Soubirous canonised in 1933. Likewise, the

series of apparitions at Fatima in 1917 were also ratified in 1925. Most influential of all were

the Marian apparitions at Knock in the West of Ireland in 1879, which were successfully

investigated by Church Commissions in 1879 and 1936. This outbreak of Marian fever in the

1930s led to the positioning of the figure of the Virgin Mother as the ideal woman; the

paradoxical, simultaneous nature of her maternity and virginity was held up as an impossible

ideal to which Irish women should aspire.

Figs. 111-112: **(From left to right): Dorothy Cross (1993)** *Virgin Shroud***. Sculpture;** *Statue of the Virgin*
from Ballinaspittle grotto, Cork.

In *Virgin Shroud* (1993) (Fig. 111) Cross presents us with a cloaked form, reminiscent

in both name and form of mass-produced statues of the Virgin endemic to churches, grottoes,

schools, hospitals and homes in Ireland (Fig. 112). These statues are most visible in roadside

grottoes that commemorate the French apparitions at Lourdes. The specific statue shown in

Fig. 112 was also associated with a series of Marian apparitions (now officially debunked)

that took place in Ballinaspittle, Cork in 1985, the so-called phenomenon of the 'Moving

Statues'. The form of the statue is significant; in medieval Europe, statues of the Virgin were

often hollow, opening to reveal figurines of the Holy Family hidden within, in a secret,

female space. This hidden room relates to Kristeva's notion of 'female space' (Gilbert and

Gubar 1983:88), but also to the later, problematic notion of woman as vessel that still infuses Irish reproductive discourse. *Virgin Shroud* also reflects specific ideas of folk recurrence in Ireland traced in *Chapter One: The Home of Folklore*; in this case the pagan origins of goddess worship in Ireland recurring in the heavily-disguised form of a Marian statue, with the teats forming quasi-horns on the head of the figure. The animal hide is draped over a wedding dress which belonged to Cross's grandmother signifying a rebellious reclamation of goddess worship from the Catholic religion by an older, darker, pagan tradition. As Kilfeather comments: 'mariology was often imported to loosen local ties to older and potentially more subversive modes of religious observance such as those associated with wakes, patterns and holy wells' (Kilfeather 2005:106). The cloaking of the figure is reminiscent of shrouded Catholic statues during the Church season of Lent that signify mourning, but also, significantly, the act of cloaking strips this pagan goddess of her identity. As Warner comments:

> She has no face, no identity; this maiden has disappeared into biology. She is also a bride, draped in the wedding train of Dorothy Cross's maternal grandmother under the cowhide. This is a fierce act of defiance: a bride going to the slaughter; a bride as future ghost in which a young girl sings of her wedding dress becoming her winding sheet. (Warner 2005: 26-27)

In the early twentieth century, the Catholic Church not only presented women with an impossible ideal, but it also began to create defined, though highly circumscribed, spaces for women within its structure. The Legion of Mary was founded in 1921 and functioned originally as an organisation that aimed to prevent female sex workers plying their trade. This presented a marked divergence from a previous Irish female organisation concerned with female sexuality, the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in the 1860s that actively campaigned to end the harassment of female sex workers by the police. Despite the overarching patriarchal structure of the Church, there were still vital roles within played by women, most commonly as nuns inside that most traditionally Gothic of

locales, the convent. These nuns of several orders, The Sisters of Mercy, the Order of the

Good Shepherd and The Sisters of Charity ran, among other organisations, Magdalen

Laundries for 'fallen' women, industrial schools and orphanages mostly tenanted by the

offspring of these 'fallen' women'. The Magdalen Laundries, named for Mary Magdalen,

reformed prostitute-turned-saint of the New Testament, became the most Gothic of domestic

spaces in Ireland: the harsh, religious alternative to the family home in Ireland. As Killeen

puts it in his discussion of Irish Gothic: 'In recent years Gothic imagery has been used to

characterise the 1940s and 1950s, and its industrial schools and Magdalen laundries have all

been imbued with an aura more common to the horror film than the history book' (Killeen

2006). This committal of unmarried pregnant women by their families into unpaid labour in

these Laundries, effectively recast these imprisoned women as slaves. This equation of the

confinement of pregnancy with literal confinement offers a real-life illustration of the trope of

the imprisoned women in early Gothic novels and makes a persuasive connection with the

female Gothic tradition. An estimated 30,000 women were confined in these Magdalen

Laundries between 1965 and 1992 (Roberts 2003). Ailbhe Smyth uses the discourse of

colonialism to characterise Irish women as 'dispossessed': 'Irish women are twice

dispossessed. Disremembered. Unremembered. No body, so to speak. No past to speak of.

Unremembering our history of absence, sign of our existence' (Smyth 2001: 427). Kilfeather

concurs with this reading: '[L]iterary and cultural critics have subjected Irish culture to a

variety of feminist readings that have been particularly attentive to the 'double colonisation'

of Irish women' (Kilfeather 2005:112). The consequent trauma induced for the individual and

for the nation has been seismic. Magdalen Laundries were the subject of an official

government report commissioned in 2011 under the aegis of Senator Martin McAleese, and

produced in 2013; they also featured in several television documentaries and one full-length

feature film, *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002, dir. Mullan). The experiences of the women of the

Magdalen Laundries also form the basis for a six-hour performance piece by Irish artist Amanda Coogan.

Figs. 113-114:   Amanda Coogan (2008) *Yellow*. Photographs from performance.

For this 2008 durational piece, *Yellow*, performed in the Oonagh Young Gallery, Dublin, Coogan sat barefoot, wearing a long yellow skirt that concealed a large bucket of soapy water. Throughout the performance, Coogan repeatedly dowsed the skirt into the bucket, lathered up the material into foam, scrubbed the fabric, clenched the foaming material between her teeth, and exhibited the skirt to the audience (Figs. 113-114). Like Barry, Coogan is interested in the constitution of the uncanny through repetitive actions of 'ordinary' household rituals. Just as in Barry's *Possession* and *Levitating*, Coogan's *Yellow* memorably evokes the nervous female agitation elicited by these repeated rituals of cleansing: 'The continual scrubbing of her skirt recalls the repetitive hand washing motions of someone who suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder and exhibits the desire to cleanse oneself but is thwarted by an inability to complete the task satisfactorily' (Antosik-Parsons 2010: 9). As with Coogan's other works, repetitive actions are repeated to an almost unbearable degree over hours of continuous performance, thereby stripping them of any

mundanity and reconstituting them as extraordinary actions. This abject ritual (especially the dribbling of soapy water from the mouth) is centred both on repetition and on an attempt to speak the unspeakable. In this case, Coogan is attempting to bring about a kind of change, to offer a different way of seeing:

> The abject, mimed through sound and meaning, is repeated. Getting rid of it is out of the question—the final Platonic lesson has been understood, one does not get rid of the impure; one can, however, bring it into being a second time, and differently from the original impurity (Kristeva 1982: 28).

Here the artist is not only commenting on the unending nature of household chores traditionally performed by women, but making explicit reference to the forced labour of the Magdalen inhabitants in the infamous Laundries. As a piece, this is powerful and haunting. The obvious weariness of the artist during the later hours of the performance offers a empathic insight into the plight of the hapless women incarcerated in the Magdalen Laundries, committed to these prisons by their families, their shame hidden from public view, which thereby 'perpetuated the fiction of Irish cultural purity' (Smith 2004: 232).

Figs. 115-117: (From left to right): Alice Maher (1992) *Keep*. Sculptural installation; 14th century International Gothic figure of Mary Magdalene in St. John Cathedral in Toruń; Alice Maher (1999) *Ombres*. Sculptural installation.

The hair sculptures of Alice Maher play with a similar theme. Her *Keep* (1992) uses the abject material of discarded hair gathered from Belfast barber shops to create a spectacular tumble of knotted locks that falls over seven feet to the floor (Fig. 115). As previously indicated in *Chapter One*, the work references both the fairy tale of Rapunzel and the trope of the enclosed woman in its form (the keep of a castle) and offers a direct allusion to the Christian saint Mary Magdalene whose hair miraculously grew following her conversion in order to cover her nakedness (Lloyd 2012) (Fig. 116). Her *Ombres* series of drawings continues this theme, offering a contemporary image of the Magdalen cloaked in chair (Fig. 117). The artist has commented on the subliminal link between her work and the systemic abuse of women in the Laundries: 'I was making the work but in an unconscious space... almost as though the work was responding to what we now know was going on. The institutions. The children passing in line. We knew what was going on. We didn't enquire about what was going on' (Morris 2012: 96).

Instructed to aspire to virgin maternity, prevented from the means of contraception, and removed from society if pregnant, the terrible consequences of this repressive regime were powerfully illustrated in the Ann Lovett case of 1984. In the midland town of Granard, County Westmeath, a pregnant fourteen-year old hid away in a grotto (like the one shown in Fig. 112) in order to give birth in secrecy. Lovett had hidden her pregnancy from her family and friends, and in a final tragic twist that could have come straight from a Gothic novel of the eighteenth-century, she and her baby died in childbirth in a grotto celebrating the unmarried mother of Christ. There was a flood of national outrage that the stigma of public unmarried pregnancy had caused this teenager to conceal her pregnancy, and to die rather than reveal her secret (Maguire 2001: 344). Coogan's *The Fountain* of 2001 offered a provocative artistic reaction to this traumatic episode. On stage in the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Coogan urinated in front of a large audience in a performance that in its absurdist nature referenced Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), his famous display of a urinal in a Dadaist exhibition, but also challenged audience perceptions of the private and public nature of the female body (Dunne 2005: 6). Of all the works considered here, *Fountain* is the most purely abject, a powerful questioning of bodily integrity: 'I expel *myself,* I spit *myself out,* I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*' (Kristeva 1982: 3). Coogan's performative action of urination is a physical translation of Kristeva's notion of waste expulsion as an act of resistance. As Kristeva intended, the action of abjection also engenders a sense of acute confusion on the part of the viewer. By exposing her own private act of urination to the public gaze, Coogan's defiant act confronted the audience with a demand that Ireland reconsider the concealment of bodily 'secrets' such as pregnancy. Her work offers a forthright attack on such modes of secrecy, leading by example as she lays her body bare to the viewer. Insubordinate performative actions like *Fountain* illustrate Coogan's rejection of a culture of female concealment and confinement within

178

either private home or public asylum. In using her own body as a site of performance, Coogan's body becomes a canvas where female freedom is inscribed, thereby giving these performances a peculiar strength and resonance:

> This work has an autobiographical function, in that it not only reveals universal themes of significance to the artist but, given the intimacy of the canvas, it also betrays personal preoccupations, and signifies the artist's own relationship with the body and bodily practices. The use of the human body as canvas brings an intense physical and emotional proximity to the piece. (Fahey 2014b)

Coogan's work is also a protest, it is designed to force a reconsideration of the Irish female body. As Antosik-Parsons puts it: 'Coogan's art reveals suppressed bodily realities that destabilise hegemonic cultural representations of the "Irish woman" (Antosik-Parsons 2010: 8).

In 2015, abortion is still illegal in Ireland. The eighth amendment to the Constitution made in 1983 acknowledges the right to life of the unborn, and 'with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.' This has ensured a prohibition on abortion, and a right to life to the unborn that supersedes the mother's rights, until the foetus is capable of surviving outside the mother's body. The colonisation of women's bodies by state legislation has continued to yield a succession of hard cases including the 1992 X-case where the government attempted to prevent a raped and pregnant fourteen-year old travelling to the UK for an abortion. Since then, enforcement of the eighth amendment in medical ethics has resulted in the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar in October 2012 at University Hospital Galway in Ireland, the attempted suicide in 2014 of Miss Y, an immigrant woman unable to access a termination, and a recent case in December 2014, of an unnamed woman whose life was prolonged on life support after she had been pronounced clinically dead and against the wishes of her family because she was fifteen weeks pregnant. (She was later taken off life

support in the same month following a public outcry in the media.) This disturbing notion of

woman primarily as reproductive vessel, as a mere domestic object runs like a dark

undercurrent to these unfortunate cases. It also helps explain the frustration evidenced in

images of female domesticity in contemporary Irish art and explains the staunchly feminist

desire for corporeal control that lie behind many of these images. As Barry said in an

American interview of 2011:

> Feminist theory is as important now as it's ever been. Remember that in Ireland, we didn't
> have a sexual revolution the way you did here [in the US]. People forget, but birth control
> only became legal in Ireland in 1995, we only got divorce eleven years ago. But it's beyond
> Ireland, it's global. All the references that I had when making the animations, you can totally
> see them in Desperate Housewives, women who are married to their property and who play a
> role in a restrictive society. Not much has changed in that regard, so a comment has to be
> made. (Gilsdorf 2011)

Figs. 118-120: **Dorothy Cross (From left to right): Two companion pieces from *Resurrection/Mantegna*
(1995). Photograph and sculpture; *Trunk* (1995). Sculpure.**

Within the context of this repressive legislation and the national ideal of the

virgin/mother, expressions of female sexuality in Irish art can inevitably be construed as acts

of defiance. The two images represented in Dorothy Cross's *Mantegna: Resurrection* (1995)

reclaim the pre-Christian power of the matriarchal image (Figs. 118-119). *Mantegna:*

Resurrection represents Cross herself in the famously foreshortened position of Mantegna's

Dead Christ in his *Lamentation of Christ*; her genitalia form the shape of the traditional crucified figure of Christ missing from the cross in the companion piece. Her posture also reflects Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* (*The Origin of the World*), his close-up view of the female genitalia displayed between splayed legs. However, while Mantegna's prone Christ represents death, Cross's reclining figure offers a potential resurrection through a powerful combination of sexuality and maternity. This image also recalls Freud's notion of the female body as the uncanny 'first home'. In his 1919 essay he describes the female genitalia as 'an *Unheimlich* place…the entrance to the former Heim of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and at the beginning' (Freud 1919: 944). This sexual context is also key to reading Cross's *Trunk* (1995) which in both its form and structure suggests a guilty secrecy latent within Irish female sexuality. The wooden trunk stands open and revealed within it is a pair of slightly soiled knickers with a cow's teat sown into the gusset to mimic the female clitoris (Fig. 120). The concealed nature of the underwear, and the exposure of this hidden secret, has deeply Freudian and uncanny connotations. The shameful *Heimlich* secret is exposed, and the image becomes uncanny.

Maher's work is also preoccupied with the feelings of shame engendered in women by the Church. In an article of 2012, she makes explicit the link between her work and its reflection of rituals designed to shame the female body. 'My own mother was churched [a ritual of blessing and purification performed on women after giving birth]. She was aware of the degradation. I wasn't making art in response to all this, and yet, when I look back the work was breathing it all in' (Morris 2012: 96). This idea of female sexuality and even childbirth as something sinful and hidden ties in perfectly with the complex and coercive relationship between Irish women's bodies and the Church and State also explored by Coogan. In *Trunk* and other works by Coogan, Maher and Barry under discussion, Ireland is reimagined as a place where confinement in all senses of the word becomes equated with

domestic imprisonment, the female condition, official legislation and religious teachings. The female body, Freud's 'first home', becomes a site of danger, imprisonment, concealed sexuality and trauma.

Figs. 121-122: **(From left to right): Aideen Barry (2008)** *Vacuuming in a Vacuum*. **Still from film. Rita Duffy (2011)** *Levitating*. **Painting.**

Read in this context, Barry's 2007 work *Levitating* takes on another set of possible meanings (Fig. 105). Levitating is not only a physical act, it relates to mystical events where saints allegedly hover in the air in a state of rapture. In psychoanalytic terms, the phenomenon of floating in dreams is often related to the aftermath of significant trauma, especially in the case of repressed shock that has recurred. Cross's *Freud's Couch* (1992-95) is also represented as levitating, symbolising the pain it has absorbed by osmosis from patients. The distress evoked by institutions like the Magdalen Laundries, and by the State and Church colonisation of the female body, constitutes a national female trauma that keeps recurring through media discourse. The levitation of Barry's protagonist, suspended in space, can convincingly act as a representation of trauma and anxiety through the act of *psychological disassociation*, through leaving one's body to distance the self from the source of suffering. In Barry's case, this source of suffering is the Gothic home that induces her OCD issues. The strange, jittery xylophone soundtrack (a single note, repeatedly sounded) increases the pre-verbal anxiety of the piece. As Bloom puts it: '[W]ithout words, the

traumatic past is experienced as being in the ever present "Now"' (Bloom 1999: 6). Barry's

2008 *Vacuuming in a Vacuum* also relates to this idea of separation from the home as site of

distress. In this work, Barry presents herself as the protagonist who has mutated into a half-

woman, half-hoover drifting in space (Fig. 121). Here Barry has replaced the familiar setting

of home with the emptiness of a NASA gravity chamber, a further disassociation with the

domestic chores that both consume and attempt to define her. This act of levitation, and the

profound disassociation with home that it symbolises, relates to ideas of fear and Gothic

spatiality discussed by Sencindiver (2010) who contends: 'the Gothic comprises a

psychopathological space; it invariably registrars the adverse psychic after-effects on its

perturbed victims who, unable to make navigate or make sense of their garbled environment,

are rendered helpless in spatial systems beyond their control' (Sencindiver 2010: 1-2).

Female levitation also features in several Gothic novels concerned with themes of women in

troubled homes. In Barbara Comyns *The Vet's Daughter* (1959) the central character Alice

levitates after the ordeal of an attempted rape, a talent she harnesses in order to escape home:

'Nothing could be worse than home' (Comyns 1959: 90). Another striking example of this

profound disassociation is found in Tana French's contemporary Irish novel *The Secret Place*

(2014). Set in the unlikely, prosaic world of Dublin's affluent suburbs, *The Secret Place*

features girls who discover they can float, suspended in the air after a traumatic event (the

shocking murder of a peer). Rita Duffy's *Levitating* (2011) also relates to this unusual trope.

Duffy's piece, part of her *Arctic Circus* (2001) exhibition, depicts a female figure clutching

her heavily-bandaged head, in a bed that is fantastically suspended within an icy Northern

landscape (Fig. 122). The bandaged wound of Duffy's protagonist would suggest the

aftermath of injury, while her literal, physical escape from home to a different country would

fit with the idea of disassociation. In both cases, the trauma induced is clearly domestic in

nature.

A Dangerous Place

A towering wave of black water breaks against the frail figure of a woman, battening her back against bare walls. She struggles upright again, only to be caught by a second wave, which sends her spinning, eyes closed, hands splayed as she staggers for the safety of the wall behind her (Fig. 123).
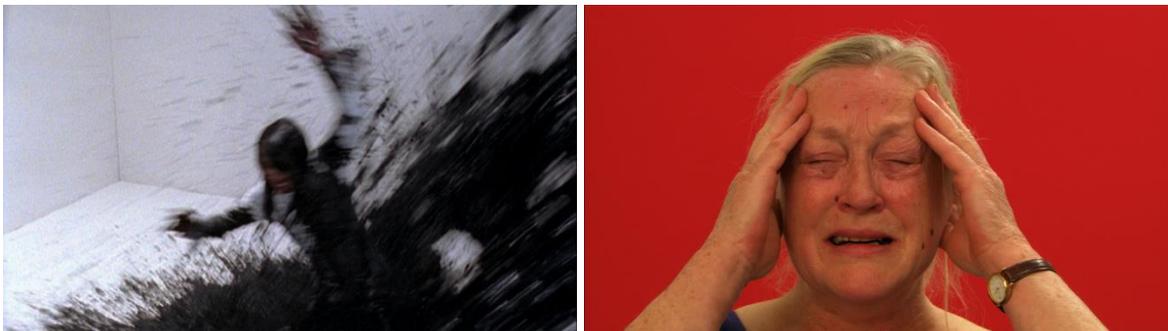
Figs. 123-124: **Cicely Brennan (From left to right):** *Unstrung* **(2007);** *Black Tears* **(2010). Film stills.**

Cicely Brenan's 2007 video piece *Unstrung* is not easy to watch. The inevitability of the waves, their brutal lashing of the female protagonist, and her repeated falls, all induce an almost hypnotic horror in the viewer. The waves of black water offer an uncanny metaphor of destruction and doom, while the iterative nature of their rise and fall also evoke notions of depression and confinement. Brennan's *Melancholia* of 2005 had already introduced the idea of black liquid into her representations of women's bodies; this work featured a thick, viscous black liquid that seeped from the body of the female protagonist onto a sheet beneath; the abject nature of the corpse underscored by the visible leaking of liquid from the body. Brennan's eight-minute film *Black Tears* of 2010 further reinforces this abject reading, the source of the dark liquid revealed here as tears (Fig. 124). Like Coogan, Brennan is

concerned with exposing private domains in the public sphere in order to question our ideas of what should be concealed and revealed. Her focus on the *Heimlich* nature of female pain is also positioned within a historical context, as Leach (2011) remarks: '*Black Tears* references the lost Irish tradition of keening', just as O'Kelly did in her 1992 piece discussed in *Chapter Two*, *The Country Blooms, A Garden and a Grave*. Like Cross's *Storm in a Teacup*, Brennan's concerns in *Unstrung* are to do with the contained violence of the domestic landscape. There is a surreal aspect to her work, and while the black, breaking waves evoke the contemporary Gothic seascapes of Irish artist Gary Coyle, her terrain is resolutely domestic. This articulation of immediate danger in art that speaks about contemporary female experience reflects the ongoing concern that home constitutes an unhealthy and sinister environment for women. Brennan, Duffy, Barry and Jolley all overtly consider the idea of dangerous domesticity and the possible consequences for the women who inhabit this space.

Figs. 125-126:   **Rita Duffy (From left to right):** *Sofa* **(1998). Sculpture;** *Metamorph* **(1999). Painting.**

Duffy's *Sofa* (1998) offers the viewer the paradoxical sight of a life-sized red, richly textured sofa, which, on closer inspection, is composed of a myriad of lethally sharp hairpins (Fig. 125). The artefact most closely related to ease and comfort, the sofa, is subverted by using women's hairpins to reimagine an object that literally no one can feel 'at home' on. Its very form subverts the utility of this *Unheimlich* object. *Sofa* is transformed through the art of making from a humdrum domestic piece of furniture to a surreal, metaphorical object. Duffy,

whose polemic political art was explored in *Chapter Two* is characteristically blunt about the relevance of feminist art to her Northern Irish context:

> We have a deeply misogynistic, patriarchal society here in Northern Ireland. Women's voices really need to be heard here. One thing I am continually coming back to is the realisation of just how difficult women's lives are here. When you have a society that is dominated by violence and pinned so firmly in the dogma and imagery of Christian patriarchy – this fundamentalist, God-is-a-man head-space – it's inevitable that women will be marginalised. We still have a residual sense that the little wife should be at home dealing with the babies. I was born female and therefore women's issues and feminism seem obvious and important concerns for me as an artist. (Savage 2010)

Duffy's *Metamorph* series of 1999 exhibits the same mix of politics and domesticity; the series includes frequent images of guns, deactivated and smothered by tea-cosies (Fig. 126). Yet again, the act of tea-drinking, that traditional ritual of Irish domesticity acts to conceal the *Heimlich* secrets within the home, just as Cross contained the masculine violence of a shark hunt in a teacup and Barry subverted the genteel atmosphere of afternoon tea with her tablecloth of embroidered cleaning wars. In fact, while Duffy presents household objects as transformed into uncomfortable objects, Barry goes one step further. Her vision of the home is of an acutely precarious space. Like Duffy, her preoccupation with the surreal also manifests itself in the creation of strange hybrid object. However, in Barry's work home is literally a battlefield, pregnant with danger; it is a space where ordinary domestic objects fuse with lethal objects to become weaponised. The surreal objects that infest her animated homes present a recurrent fascination with home as a perilous place, especially for the women therein.

Figs. 127-128:   **Aideen Barry (From left to right):** *Spray Grenades* **(2008);** *Minefield* **(2010). Sculptures.**

In 2008, Barry started to make a new series of work based on the notion of danger in the home; her *Weapons of Mass Consumption* series, which looks at the uncanny nature of the home revealed through the objects within it. Barry sees this reimagining of ordinary objects as surreal fantasies as part of her innate Gothic tendency towards metamorphosis: 'Yes, I'm definitely looking at the domestic object and turning it into something fantastical, turning the garage door into a bread cutter and so on...That's also informed by the gothic' (Gilsdorf 2011). This body of work features *Spray Grenades*, a physical amalgam of a grenade and a cleaning spray (Fig. 127). *Spray Grenades* offers a witty take on both the obsession with cleaning that forms part of the socially-ordained domestic role, and also on the futile nature of the twenty-first century 'war on terror'. In this work, the sinister, metaphorical significance of the objects colonises their physical form. Barry explains: '[T]he spray grenades were a way of merging advertising on "the new war" which is the war on germs. I took the familiar grenade and also the familiar cleaning spray and bastardized them together to create this seductive object' (Gilsdorf 2011, 2). In these pieces, art and science meet and breed strange new hybrids. *Spray Grenades* are emblematic of Barry's use of Surrealism. Their simultaneous repulsive and attractive qualities are also reminiscent of Duffy's inviting images like *Sofa* that, on closer inspection, are also sites of domestic discomfort. This notion of objects with a sinister function is also germane to Barry's

Minefield (2010) a later addition to her *Weapons of Mass Destruction* series. *Minefield*

continues the idea of the constructed object caught between stages of transformation; these

are metal mines, the tips of which are modelled on the nozzles of spray cans (Fig. 128). These

Weapons of Mass Destruction are linked with the idea of abjection; their indeterminate state

and their mixture of beauty and danger disturb the viewer with their ambiguity of purpose.

Their abject nature induces perplexity, even confusion in the viewer. 'It is thus not lack of

cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What

does not respect borders, positions and rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'

(Kristeva 1982: 4). These objects also form a kind of seductive Gothic: they are aesthetically

pleasing objects that are horrific in nature and function. The real horror of these objects lies

precisely in their attractiveness; they are designed as beautiful and dangerous objects to

seduce and attract viewers. For Barry's domestic landscapes are not just imbued with a fear

of the past or present, but a fear of the future. Her dystopian visions may be filled with

objects in the process of transformation that reference deadly weapons in their nomenclature

and form, but they also reference the wider potentiality for hybridity, and even monstrosity in

those who use these objects.

In Barry's work, the Gothic space of home is frequently fraught with a sense of

danger evoked by strange objects, but even more so, by hybrid beings, collisions of woman

and machine, an army of unique cybernetic organisms that populate her work and that subvert

its domestic context. This notion of medical and mystical fusion also relates to Barry's

interest in scientific, surreal and Gothic creations, from Shelley's creation of the monster in

Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus, to Flann O'Brien's half-man/half-bicycle hybrid

created by the exchange of atoms in *The Third Policeman*. This plays with the definition of

cyborg as strange fusion of machine and flesh.
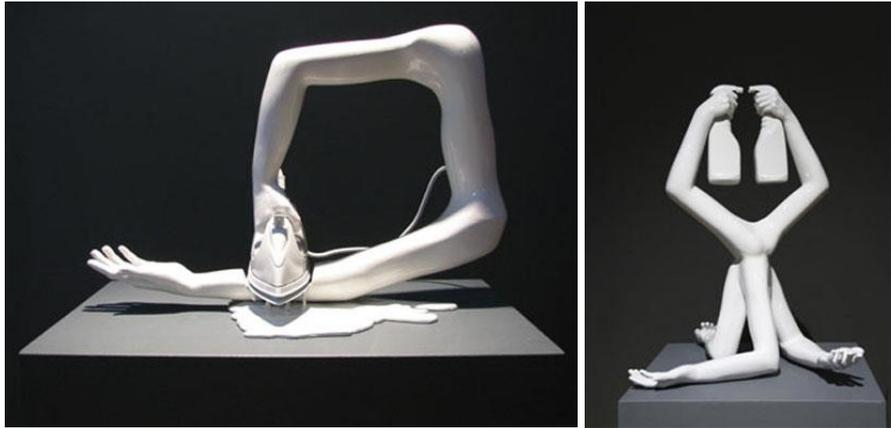
Figs. 129-130:   Aideen Barry (2011) *Flibbertigibbet* **series. Sculptures.**

Cyborg bodies are presented in the *Flibbertigibbet* series of 2011. The term 'flibbertigibbet' is defined variously as 'female fool', 'silly, talkative person', 'nervous woman', or simply as a term to denote senseless, repetitive chattering. These pieces reflect on the latent instability of the female body within the strange domain of the home. They also illustrate Kristeva's (1982) idea of the abject; referring to parts of the body, which appear to have become separated from the main, or which have acquired a sinister life of their own. One of Barry's hybrid creatures is interstitial, half-arm, half-iron, its limbs presented at impossible angles (Fig. 129), while the other cyborg appears as half arm, half cleaning spray (Fig. 130). The arms appear as abject, elements cast off by the body, appearing to act with a life of their own. The element of danger is also present in this work as the amalgamated object threatens its own pliable human flesh with caustic sprays and heated irons, presenting us with a disquieting narrative of self-harm. It is no wonder that Barry herself positions her work in the realm of 'domestic horror' (Andrews 2011).

Domestic danger is also key to understanding the art of Patrick Jolley. Like Barry, Cross and Duffy, Jolley negotiates the threatening space between apprehension and fear by using a series of uncanny, surreal and abject images. A recurrent theme in his work is of brutal transformation of the home through acts of destruction, with spaces and protagonists

alike subjected to fire, falling, ice or water. The photographic series *Here After* (2004), set on an abandoned housing estate, features articles of furniture represented in free-fall within the building (Fig. 131). Jolley cut holes in the ceilings of the disused apartments to allow him to film beds, chairs and tables dropping internally from floor to floor to end up smashed, almost unrecognisable; objects of domestic use transformed into *Unheimlich* objects. The film piece *Fall* (2008) continues this theme of dropping and falling objects as Jolley revisits the notion of the object and the void. The idea of falling in a domestic setting is inextricably linked with the classic Gothic story by Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839) which is regularly referenced by contemporary artists and critics such as Rachel Whiteread and Jonathan Jones in relation to Gothic domesticity. Even more compelling is Jolley's *Burn* of 2001, a film installation in which he records the burning of a house, its furniture and its inhabitants. The faces of the protagonists are blank; they seem unaware of their fate (Fig. 132). One man even appears to welcome the conflagration, dowsing himself and his surroundings with what appears to be a can of petrol. De Olivera and Oxley cite Bachelard in describing the surreal combination of mundane surroundings and terrifying transformation that is *Burn*: 'It is cookery and it is apocalypse' (Bachelard 1964: 7). This surreal tendency is also played out in *Sog* (2007), a work that uses the horror-film trope of the infiltrating virus to colonise a home, a device common from *The Thing* (1982) up to contemporary home infection narratives like *Right at Your Door* (2006). In *Sog*, infection leaches out of the walls and sinister red slime emanates from under the wallpaper to cover furniture, floors and eventually the inhabitants themselves in viscous liquid (Fig. 133). As in *Burn*, the inhabitants of this home appear impervious to the slow-moving nemesis that surrounds them.

Figs. 131-133:   **Patrick Jolley (From left to right):** *Here After* **(2004);** *Burn* **(2001);** *Sog* **(2007). Film stills.**

However, of all Jolley's work, it is the film *Sugar* (2005) which offers the most penetrating view of the idea of domestic anxiety related to female confinement. Described by Sullivan (2005) as 'a striking postnarrative, Gothic horror masterpiece', *Sugar* is a nightmare made flesh, a hallucinogenic, disturbing film that distorts the spatial boundaries of home, and offers a powerful realisation of the abject and the uncanny within domestic space. The plot is neatly summarised in Jolley's publicity information:

> A woman comes out of a refrigerator, crawls across the floor, opens the heating vent and exhumes a corpse – her own. From this crisis point, *Sugar* tracks a journey into the vertiginous realms of the mind. Dissolving the parameters between reality and psychosis, dream and delusion, *Sugar* descends into a labyrinth created through the arresting performance of Samara Golden. (Jolley 2011)

In fact, Jolley's film acts almost as a visual accompaniment to Freud's essay on the Uncanny with its many tropes of invisible illness, the doppelgänger, the corpse, the conflation of animate with inanimate objects and the inevitable return of the repressed. Golden's character who moves into a bedsit is haunted by its former occupant. As in Barry's *Possession*, objects are animated without human agency, seemingly powered and stimulated by the mental agitation of the protagonist; kettles burst into flame, light-bulbs blaze and crockery crashes to the floor (Figs. 134-135).
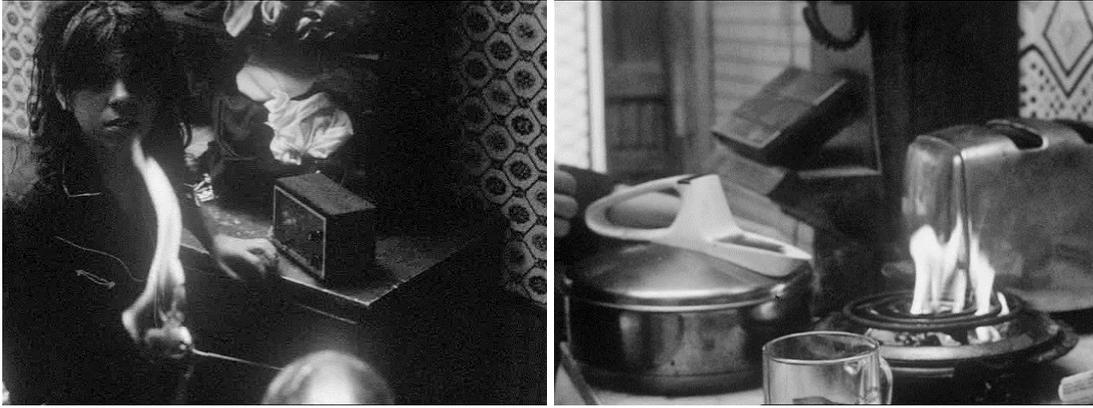
Figs. 134-135: **Patrick Jolley (From left to right):** *Sugar* **(2005). Film stills.**

The protagonist's invisible illnesses become manifest as the film continues; her spatial phobias and hallucinations conspire to terrify her into seeking refuge in a purification ceremony, taking a bath (Fig. 136). However, as in Barry's work, cleansing brings no relief, rather, as she washes, she begins to bleed heavily from her mouth. This abrupt appearance of blood as an abject substance seems to foreshadow her slippage towards annihilation, as Kristeva seems to suggest in 'Approaching Abjection':

> …what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses…A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. (Kristeva 1982: 2)

Figs. 136-137: **Patrick Jolley (From left to right):** *Sugar* **(2005). Film stills.**

Ideas of the abject haunt this film. We are confronted by the ultimate abject object, the corpse, and indeed, the ultimate uncanny object, the doppelgänger corpse. Kristeva terms the corpse as 'the most sickening of human wastes …the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life' (Kristeva 1982: 3-4). This fear of the corpse is also one that Kristeva identifies with the writing of Artaud. It is interesting that Jolley's sole documentary film, *The Door Ajar* (2011) is based on Artaud's visit to Ireland. Kristeva says of the abject nature of the corpse in Artaud's writing:

> An 'I' overcome by the corpse—such is often the abject in Artaud's text. For it is death that most violently represents the strange state in which a non-subject, a stray, having lost its non-objects, imagines nothingness through the ordeal of abjection. The death that 'I' am provokes horror, there is a choking sensation that does not separate inside from outside but draws them the one into the other, indefinitely (Kristeva 1982: 25).

This marvellous line '[A]n "I" overcome by the corpse' describes the dilemma of Jolley's progatonist perfectly. She washes the corpse of her double in a ritual that is itself an uncanny replication of her earlier bath; the same sponge washes the same body (Fig. 137). In an attempt to separate herself from her doppelgänger, she shuts it in the fridge (Fig. 138). This act of containment only provokes further agitation in the room itself; it rattles, shrieks and vibrates. Objects fall and crash around her feet. Wallpaper peels off in great, damp strips, revealing a fleshy, bleeding substance beneath. The protagonist pulls it off compulsively, a cinematic homage to the penultimate scene in Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Fig. 139).

Figs. 138-140:   Patrick Jolley (From left to right): *Sugar* (2005). Film stills.

This poltergeist activity only ceases when Golden's character packs her doppelgänger corpse into a suitcase (Fig. 140) and leaves the apartment. There is a constant ambiguity about the actions enacted; is the protagonist experiencing these situations in reality, or during a prolonged hallucination? The piece is rife with intense spatial anxieties; a literal illustration of Sencindiver's (2010) roll-call of female Gothic phobias including lygophobia, claustrophobia, monophobia, agoraphobia, stasophobia, cenophobia and domophobia. Of all these it is *domophobia* or *oikophobia*, the fear of home, that centralises these terrors into a concrete whole. In Jolley's *Sugar*, there is no happy ending to this tale of domestic horror. As the coda of the film plays out and the titles start to roll, the protagonist walks into the ocean with her dead *doppelgänger* in a suitcase. There is no possible ending other than oblivion. The link between living and dead has been repeatedly transgressed, to absolute breaking point, by a series of surreal events, and, even more terrifyingly, by the appearance of the doubled self, and most terrifying of all, by the abject and uncanny sight of the doubled self as a corpse.

Conclusions: A Home Possessed

With Jolley's *Sugar,* we return to the first concern of this chapter, to the domestic horror of confinement and the ruinous effect of this imprisonment on the female protagonists within. The sheer volume of Irish contemporary work centred on representations of the home as a distressed and gendered space has necessitated an examination of it in relation to the cultural history of distress and fears engendered by Irish female disempowerment. Through the polemic performances of Coogan, the surreal, distorted objects of Cross, Duffy and Barry, the abject liquids of Brennan and the frightened, confined spaces of Barry and Jolley, this art

consistently represents home as a place of potential and metaphorical imprisonment, of permeability and of violence. This Irish Gothic art maps the disintegration of what we consider as 'home' in Irish culture, the divorce of domesticity from its comfortable, utopian connotations. It represents home as a dangerous space of destruction, instability, hysteria and terror, wherein female protagonists suffer and are psychologically and even physically destroyed. In particular, the work of both Jolley and Barry evokes deep anxiety on the part of the viewer, as they expose their helpless and threatened female protagonists to a sequence of terrors while marooned within these uncanny houses.

Through its images, form and content, these pieces make a robust contribution to the Irish female Gothic tradition defined by Kilfeather; creative work that expresses the anxiety endured by female characters in terms of confinement and danger. The concerns that appear in the work are reminiscent of both the powerlessness experienced by female protagonists in Irish Gothic novels of the eighteenth-century and the nineteenth-century concern with confinement expressed by international Gothic writers. This makes a solid case for this contemporary artwork to be viewed as a kind of resurrection of latent female Gothic anxieties in the present; it is quite literally the return of the repressed. In fact, a psychoanalytic reading of Irish contemporary art reveals its recurring concern with both the abject and the uncanny within the domestic sphere; and especially with common tropes such as illness, both visible and invisible, and the confusion of animate and inanimate objects. Imprisoned women, weaponised household objects, cyborgs, sexualised furniture, the double and the ultimate fear, the corpse of the dead doppelgänger, all represent the uncanny return of terrible secrets in these works. The homes that appear in this art are therefore inherently Gothic in their characterisation of domestic space as a dangerous space. The work of artists Barry, Jolley and Brennan subverts all notions of comfort and safety by insistently focusing on fragmented and atomised versions of the Irish home. In going beyond the global concerns of the Gothic and

focusing on the home as a specific locus of anxiety, these Irish artists have produced a memorable and diverse body of work that actively contributes to the genre of Gothic art, as well as providing a commentary on female confinement, abjection and the uncanny and nervous disorders exacerbated by domestic roles. However, this chapter argues that the Gothic anxiety that infuses these works stems not only from the past, from the shadows of superstition (as in *Chapter One*) or the echoes of colonialism (as in *Chapter Two*), but from the urgent and overwhelming fears of the present. More than just another revival of the Gothic, this art offers a re-energised insight into domestic space, and into how it is explored within the Gothic. In this work, the past certainly informs the present, but equally, this work uses the forms of the past to voice resolutely contemporary fears. This aura of contemporary anxiety is one that also informs the art of the ghost estates explored in the next chapter.

Fig. 141   **Aideen Barry (2011) *Possession*. Film still.**

In the spirit of uncanny return, let us return to the starting point of our chapter, to Barry's *Possession*, in order to illustrate this bringing together of female Gothic concerns from the eighteenth-century to the present day. *Possession* (Fig. 141) offers a vivid illustration of the nightmare homes of Irish contemporary art; underscored with a deep-rooted anxiety that bursts forth to express itself in a series of surreal and contorted forms. In *Possession* and the other works discussed, Surrealism is used as a code for these female

spatial anxieties; it translates the unspeakable fears and frustrations of contemporary Irish women into a rich lexicon of distorted images. In this coded visual language, cleaning materials and distorted household objects symbolise both OCD and a neurotic fear of the abject, the rite of tea-drinking becomes a mask for violence, and nervous repetition leads to hysteria, harm and even death. Surrealism therefore becomes the only way to communicate these unspoken fears. It is remarkable that all video and performance pieces featured are non-verbal, with the sole exception of the recorded messages played in *Sugar* (which only feature a male voice). This silence illustrates a central idea of trauma theory. As Bloom explains: 'When we are overwhelmed with fear, we lose the capacity for speech; we lose the capacity to put words to our experience. Without words, the mind shifts to a mode of thinking that is characterised by visual, auditory, olfactory and kinaesthetic images, physical sensations and strong feelings' (Bloom 1999: 5). This explains not only the lack of speech in these works, but also helps explain the violence of action, the surrealism of forms, and above all, the identification with trauma, particularly by female artists like Coogan and Barry who use their own bodies as a site of performance. The muteness of these pieces can be construed as representing the voicelessness of Irish women (Kilfeather 1994), an allusion to their constitutional invisibility and corporeal disenfranchisement in contemporary culture. Once the subsequent colonisation of the female body (Freud's definition of the first home) by Church and State is understood, the anger and defiance of art that represents home as a place of female trauma becomes comprehensible. When bodies become controlled vessels and the home becomes a sphere ordained by the national constitution, the entities that are meant to constitute most comfort – a sense of personal freedom and autonomy, a comforting home – become uneasy and unsafe. There is a sense that the women in these works are no longer in possession of themselves. *Possession* is informed by tense narratives of consumption where the woman in the frame is consumed by her nervous cleansing rituals, her agitated and

excessive production of food, and ultimately by her own domestic setting (Fig. 151). The home becomes the site for the consumption of food, energy, and even of the protagonist herself.

The multiple meanings of the word 'possession' explored in Barry's work are not just a Lacanian or Kristevan play on words. They reflect on a series of precarious situations in contemporary Ireland. When female bodies are controlled by the State and the modern, mundane home represents a domestic prison, when body and home are possessed, it is impossible to remain possessed, to remain calm and demure, and to appear in control of either body or home. Not only do these homes present as perilous prisons, but also as *Chapter Four* will explore, they are also treacherous possessions. In the current climate of financial difficulty, and with the rise of ghost estates of unoccupied houses, the contemporary Irish home also becomes a millstone, an equity disaster, an expensive and precarious possession whose actual ownership hovers uncertainly between that of buyer, owner, bank and State. It is fitting therefore that it is a final examination of *Possession* that closes this chapter. Barry's work not only unites together concerns of past and present, nineteenth-century claustrophobia with twenty-first century domophobia, or illustrates how timeless female concerns can recur in a dystopian setting, but it is set on a ghost estate, which, with its compelling narratives of consumption, circularity and crisis, forms the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: [Re]Animating the Ghost Estates

 [T]here is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as re-apparition of the departed (Derrida 1994: 5).

Fig. 142-144:　　**Elaine Reynolds (2010)** *On/Off States*. **Film stills.**

It is October 2010. In the gathering twilight of a country evening in Leitrim, in the north-east of Ireland, a lone house is suddenly illuminated, blazing light from every window. The light disappears into darkness, and then flares on again. This is *On/Off States* (Fig. 142-144), a video piece by Irish artist Elaine Reynolds. In this work, she subverts the normative relationship between light and safety. The comforting signifier of lit windows is negated as the viewer becomes aware that, on closer inspection, the house is missing its windows and doors. Worse still, as the lights flash on, then off again, a familiar pattern emerges - three long flashes, three short, three long - the classic distress signal. Reynolds writes of the programming of this piece: 'It was significant that action was automated rather than a manual intervention, therefore the S.O.S can be perceived as coming from the house itself' (Reynolds 2010: 1). The flares of light are less alarming than the void which the darkness between the flashes reveals. For the duration of that long October night in 2010, the abandoned house,

without human agency, frantically and repeatedly telegraphs its distress call to the world. It signals a crisis that runs to the heart of what home means in contemporary Ireland.

Here is a superb example of what Eyal Weizman's research group at Goldsmiths term 'forensic architecture'; architecture that assumes anthropomorphic agency to bear witness to the trauma it has seen. Animated by its own distress, this house semaphores the contemporary crisis of Irish Gothic suburbia to the world. For this is not an isolated house. It is part of a *ghost estate*; a term coined by Irish economist and broadcaster David McWilliams in his prescient blog entry: 'A warning from deserted ghost estates' (McWilliams 2006). Reynolds chose this small ghost estate in a Leitrim village quite deliberately as the site for her project. Architect and writer Frank McDonald has identified Leitrim as having one of the primary concentrations of these ghost estates: '[T]hese [ghost estates] were disproportionately concentrated in counties Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon and Sligo - all of which were included in an indiscriminate tax incentive program aimed at encouraging "rural renewal" in the Upper Shannon region' (McDonald 2013: 67). This site is one of twenty-one such estates in the county of Leitrim, its houses deemed not viable to completion and scheduled for eventual demolition by the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA), an agency established by government in 2009 to handle the housing crisis. It is therefore a doomed estate, built as part of the unregulated free-falling development in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger economic boom (2000 to 2008), but now populated only by the forlorn ghosts of a future that will never take place.

According to the National Institute for Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) report of 2010, the definition of 'ghost estate' has been refined as the technical term used to describe an estate in which over fifty per cent of the properties lie unfinished or uninhabited (Kitchin et al 2010). In Ireland, there are over six hundred and fifty ghost estates that fit this NIRSA definition across Ireland (O'Callaghan 2011). These bleak suburban vistas of empty homes call to mind

Poe's famous description of the House of Usher: 'I looked at the scene before me - upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain - upon the bleak walls - upon the vacant eye-like windows…with an utter depression of the soul…' (Poe 1986: 157). This melancholy description is in perfect synchronicity with the rarefied atmosphere evoked by Valerie Anex in *Ghost Estates* (Figs. 145-146), her photographic collection based around housing estates in Leitrim. Anex's still, eerie photographs capture the timeless aura of houses trapped in a state of suspended reality. Her flat, straightforward style of documentation offers no overt authorial comment on the situation; it merely presents the sheer numbers of these estates in their spectral, uninhabited state. Like their finished suburban counterparts, these new ghost estates are uncanny. They are *Unheimlich*, in the truest, most direct sense of the word; they are unhomely homes. These ghost estate houses represent non-homes, and, in some cases, never-homes. These empty houses are doppelgängers of their inhabited counterparts, familiar yet unfamiliar. The ghost estate is a profoundly Gothic entity, uncanny, haunted and *in-between* in every sense of the phrase: in between country and city, built and finished, empty and occupied.

Classifying these ghost estates as Gothic is a very deliberate act; the Gothic almost always arises from gaps, dislocations and liminal spaces. The spectre of the Celtic Tiger haunts these unfinished houses: eloquent monuments to a lost prosperity, sites where nightmares replaced dreams of an affluent future. The ghost estates are defined by alterity, by what they are not: 'normal' estates. The houses are non-houses; in ontological terms, their very existence is problematised. They are the supreme example of not only the ruined home, but also the failed home; and not only the failed home, but also the failed home *en masse*. The relentless documentation of these estates, the lens-based recording of row after row of empty houses by Anex, Reynolds and other visual artists drives home the scale of this crisis, this national escalation of excess, ruin, fear and despair.

Figs. 145-146:   **Valerie Anex (2011)** *Ghost Estates*. **Photographic collection.**

This chapter sets out to examine in more detail the resurrection of the Gothic home within Irish contemporary culture. In so doing, it links with the idea of the divided and ruined home as central to the Irish landscape: an idea first explored in *Chapter Two*. The chapter explores these estates as revenant spaces, as a recurrence of the Irish Gothic home in contemporary culture. It studies the sociological and psychological impact of this current crisis of home in Irish life, and the fine art response that this situation has both evoked and provoked. It is useful here to remember the function of Gothic as a dissident mode. Earlier chapters have explored this air of protest that clings to images of Irish domesticity; the embedded counter-narratives of folklore explored in *Chapter One* and *Chapter Five*; the protest art considered in *Chapter Two*; and the work animated by feminist outrage examined in *Chapter Three*. Ledoux, in her *Social Reform in Gothic Writing: Fantastic Forms of Change, 1764-1834* summarises the idea of Gothic writing questioning perceived norms and perceived reality, citing Todorov's parallel explanation of the questioning role of the fantastic: 'By the hesitation it engenders, the fantastic questions precisely the existence of an irreducible opposition between real and unreal' (Todorov 1975: 168). In this chapter, we examine how contemporary Gothic art acts as a powerful dissident form: as an art of protest, that illuminates the notion of the Gothic home in contemporary Ireland as part of a call for accountability, and for justice. As such, it can be viewed as part of the national atmosphere of

citizen protest that culminated in 2014 and 2015 with the mass Water Tax marches. This is particularly true of the work of Elaine Reynolds, Eamon Crudden and Kim Haughton, artists who showed in protest art exhibition of 2010, NAMARAMA, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The Gothic as a dissident mode affects and even infects economic discourse with Gothic terms; zombies, vampires and the undead are used to evoke tales of ruin and disaster. This use of a deliberately Gothic terminology can also be considered as an attempt by the media to construct this crisis as a grand Gothic narrative. These unfinished estates are observed as a paradigm of neoliberal economic strategy and national policy, and as a Gothic manifestation of the contemporary home as ruin, simulacrum and unhomely home. This chapter analyses the creation of these suburban ghost estates, the economic, political and planning decisions that led to their creation, and the reactions and interpretations of fine artists to these strange sites. It examines how this crisis of home exacerbates existing postcolonial anxieties around housing and security in Ireland to create these haunted estates. The ghost estates are also considered as contemporary Gothic sites of anxiety in relation to older Irish cultural memories of dispossession and ruin. This chapter therefore ties in with *Chapter Two*, which examines the architectural and colonial discourse of the ruin. However, it takes this discussion and builds on it to focus on ideas of the *new* ruin, the *premature* ruin, and the *future* ruin. This chapter therefore focuses on Derrida's notion of circular time, the idea that time in these ghost estates appears, in the words of Hamlet, to be 'out of joint'. This idea of stilled or stagnant time, time that stands still, explains the structure of this chapter, which examines how these estates are equally haunted by the past, the present and even by the future.

As with preceding chapters, this chapter examines how contemporary Irish fine art practice has interpreted the Gothic home as a recurrent feature of contemporary art practice. This chapter views the development of the ghost estates as representing a seismic change in

national perceptions of the contemporary Irish home. It examines how the social, cultural and economic uncertainty that produced the ghost estates now frames an uneasy view of home. It looks at how fine art has reacted to this anxiety, and attempts to assess critically the value of this interaction. It addresses how these ghost estates have been re-animated and re-imagined by Irish artists and film-makers. In charting this response from the visual arts, this chapter focuses on specific artists: Elaine Reynolds, Valerie Anex, Dominic Thorpe, Aideen Barry, Anthony Haughey, Vera Klute, Eamon Crudden and Paddy Baxter. As discussed in the *Introduction*, this work features a very significant focus on the use of lens-based media (photography, film, stop-motion animation). Some artists examined in this chapter use these media in an almost documentary way, like Valerie Anex or Kim Haughton, in order to capture the uncanny nature of the ghost estates. Other artists such as Eamon Crudden or Paddy Baxter deliberately use film to evoke notions of the horror film in their discussion of the contemporary ghost estate. This use of lens-based media captures a kind of temporality, illustrating Derrida's notion of circular time, where the present appears super-imposed on the past. Through the forms of the present, the older concerns of the Gothic return to haunt the idea of home. This examination considers how this engagement with the notion of domestic dystopia reflects issues of place, history and possession, but also highlights the economic and social anxieties that led to this re-emergence of the Gothic home in the form of contemporary suburban ghost estates. This chapter seeks to examine how these artists represent and interrogate domestic changes wrought by the consequences of neoliberal economic policy and corrupt planning practices, and to analyse what this tells us about value, anxiety and the domestic in both economic and artistic terms. It looks at how this art has called attention to the housing catastrophe, but also how it documents it, how it resists it and how it calls for a new, responsible, culturally appropriate solution to the crisis of home in contemporary Ireland.

This chapter considers how the housing crisis itself has been constructed through media narratives as a Gothic event, as a disturbing catastrophe of epic dimensions that has resulted in a new generation of haunted houses and traumatised inhabitants. It contemplates these new, failed homes of the ghost estates as commodities with a disappearing value that leads to loss of function. In Ireland, this housing crisis is a contemporary drama of grand proportions. The sad tale of these ghost estates is construed as a real-life Gothic saga of greed and folly, punished by a terrible loss of wealth and stability, and leading inevitably to ruin and desolation. The art that evolves from this situation is can be read as Gothic. Thematically the art of the ghost estates is concerned with the Gothic tropes of the uncanny and the marginal, while its discourse borrows from a fusion of Gothic and economic idioms. This art invokes references to the uncanny but also to the chronological disruption that these strange estates present in terms of their simultaneous links to past, present and future. To quote O'Toole: 'When the past is "now", the artistic genre that cannot be escaped is the gothic. It is the form of ghosts, revenants, the undead – embodiments of the past that will not stay where they should be but insist on invading the "now"' (O'Toole 2012).

'The time is out of joint'

O'Toole's comment leads inevitably to a consideration of haunting and the spectral. This chapter offers a reading of these estates in terms of Derrida's famous essay of 1993, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International* (translated 1994). It considers the ghost estates and their constituent houses in terms of buildings that have lost their value as commodities, as places filled with lost possibilities. It examines them as spaces adrift in time, caught in the circular but overlapping movement of time between past, present and future. It may seem a little surprising to use the lens of Neo-Marxism to

analyse this embodiment of the contemporary Gothic home, but there are two valid reasons for using *Specters of Marx* as a lens though which to view the ghost estates. One is Derrida's idea that time does not exist in a simple chronological fashion. Looking at images of the ghost estates, one is reminded of Derrida's idea of the 'spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time' (Derrida 1992: xix). In a hauntological sense, these ghost estates are adrift in a temporal rift (we are reminded also of Derrida's famous citation from *Hamlet*, 'The time is out of joint.') The houses of these estates stand simultaneously both 'in' time and 'outside' time. Within their interior space, time stands still, many of the houses half-finished, frozen in this suspension of form. Outside these houses, time has carried on. Some of these estates have been developed, many more have remained half-developed, and some, the most liminal of all spaces, have never been realised at all and exist solely in half-dug foundations and optimistic signs. This relates powerfully to Derrida's urgent evocations of time as disjointed, strange and even threatening: '"The time is out of joint": time is disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down…deranged, both out of order and mad' (Derrida 1994: 20).

The other reason for referring to Derrida's essay is the idea of ghost estate as a commodity that has lost its value. Ghost estates are essentially spectral forms of fluctuating economic and cultural value. Their very being is problematised by their concurrent existence in several planes (what they might-have-been and what-they-are). They suffer from being both the thing-in-itself and its own simulacrum, one superimposed in front of the other. Valerie Anex's 2011 photographic project *Ghost Estates* helps to illustrate this point. In Figs. 147-148 Anex presents the viewer with a flat, documentary portrayal of the estates as commodity, as dream property marketed by a sign (Fig. 147), and by the optimistic canvas in which shows an idyllic suburban landscape with expensive cars and well-dressed neighbours standing in the driveways (Fig. 148). However, in one image the canvas poster is draped over

a half-finished house, while in the other the 'Houses for Sale' referred to in the advertisement lie soulless and empty behind it. The text is haunted by the dreadful reality of the images. The fracture of this vision is captured in the tension between sign and signifier, between the developers' dream and the homeowners' nightmare.

Figs. 147-148   Valerie Anex (2011) *Ghost Estates*. Photographic collection

Conor O'Clery puts it even more bluntly in his *Irish Times* article 'Ireland's Bust Leaves Ghost Houses and Zombie Hotels':

> From afar, many of these ghost estates look as if they are finished, but up close you find no cars in the driveways, no curtains in the windows and no sound but the wind stirring the weeds in the yards. In the cities the wind fairly howls through the open floors of unfinished apartment blocks, such as the skeleton of a 14-story building put up in Sandyford Dublin …. Incidentally, there is a fine-looking 10-story apartment block right beside the 14-story shell that seems like a nice place to live, with residents sunning themselves on the balconies. But on closer inspection you will find it is an illusion, a giant illustrated canvas draped over another empty concrete block like a shroud. (O'Clery 2010: 1)

In these estates, the hopes of the past, the crushing reality of the present and the uncertainty of the future all fill these empty houses. Their value has been lost, economically, physically and emotionally. Žižek in *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* addresses this idea of advertising as 'fantasmatic space':

> As we know already from Marx, the commodity is a mysterious entity full of theological caprices, a particular object satisfying a particular need, but it is at the same time also the promise of "something more," of an unfathomable enjoyment whose true location is fantasy…The function of this "more" is to fill in the lack of a 'less', to compensate for the

fact that, by definition, a merchandise never delivers on its (fantasmatic) promise. (Žižek 2003:146)

Suburbia, always a Gothic landscape in the truest sense, a liminal space literally *in-between* city and country, has become darker, more problematic, a haunted landscape of ghost estates. In order to understand the context from which these ghost estates emerge, it is necessary to examine not only the material culture of the current global economic crisis, but also the Irish context of history and colonialism that sees the spectres of past ruins in these contemporary ghost estates. The ghost estates symbolise the architectural uncanny, with their disjoint between form and function. The ruined architecture of these contemporary estates carries within it the spectral return of past ruins from Irish culture. The ghost estates therefore serve as a *revenant space*, a space of eternal return that acts as a distorted image of all the other troubled ruins in Ireland's history. The present is a space for the past to recur, but also presents a space within which the future can be anticipated (where the future can recur). It is therefore important not only to assess the contribution of these estates to Irish culture today, or to examine how they resonate with historical and cultural traditions, but also to consider their future and their probable legacy in Ireland. Borrowing from Derrida's notion of the circularity of time, this idea therefore informs the structure to this chapter, which looks at the idea of the ghost estates as profoundly haunted: simultaneously haunted by the past, the present and the future. In order to facilitate a rounded discussion of the ghost estate it is necessary to read it as an echo of the past, as site of contemporary crisis and as symbol of anxiety about the future. This chapter deals with these readings, but not necessarily in chronological order. As befits the use of Derrida's spectral vision of time itself, this chapter evokes a series of moments and images from contemporary culture that are pregnant with meaning and that in themselves evoke memories of the past and visions of the future. The most logical point at which to enter this discussion of the ghost estates is in the recent past;

the Celtic Tiger era of 2000-2008 which caused the stillbirth of contemporary suburbia and the production of the ghost estate phenomenon in Ireland.

Haunted by the (Recent) Past: Before the Fall

In 2007, a year before the suburban Irish dream imploded, Irish artist Aideen Barry curated a series of shows by seven international artists collectively titled *Subversion and the Domestic* as part of a larger national project, *House Projects* (2007). The venue was an unusual one, her own home, No. 22 Riveroaks housing estate in Claregalway, County Galway. One of the invited artists, Dominic Thorpe, chose to spell out the uncanny nature of the house - It's Not My Place - in large plastic letters across the façade. This work betrays disquiet with the traditional concept of home as site of family, domesticity, warmth and light. *It's Not My Place* (2007) (Fig. 149) is a play on words, literally meaning both 'this is not my home' and 'I don't have a right to engage with this', but also expressing the trope of contemporary home as a site of anxiety. The image of the semi-detached house adds to this feeling of disorientation by presenting the viewer with both a 'normal' house and its uncanny doppelgänger side by side, a visual trick also used by artist Valerie Anex in her *Ghost Estates* series. The location of the project within the confines of suburban Galway was a deliberate curatorial choice by Barry. Much of her own work is concerned with the uncanny suburban home. More than any other Irish artist, her work is concerned with domestic Gothic, with ideas of the unhomely home.

Fig. 149: **Dominic Thorpe (2007)** *It's Not My Place*. **Part of** *Subversion and the Domestic* **shows in House Projects. Installation.**

Critic Cliodhna Schaffrey, in her essay 'Unhomely Homes', written as part of the *House Projects*, termed Thorpe's work as 'a subversive piece of contemporary art that throws up issues around ownership and belonging. It becomes,' she writes, 'a critical entry point in which to discuss our relationship to the places and homes in which we live today' (Schaffrey 2007: 10).

Irish Suburban Dystopias

This entry point provided by Thorpe and Schaffrey gives us a useful aperture through which to examine recent developments in contemporary Irish suburbia. Thorpe's work illustrates a deep unease with the contemporary Irish home that has grown parallel to the rapid expansion of suburbia since 2000. The location of the project on the outskirts of suburban Galway was a deliberate curatorial choice by Barry. Much of her own work is concerned with the uncanny suburban home. Her work is concerned with domestic Gothic, and with the historical, cultural

and social sense of alterity that characterises Irish domestic space. Barry's works already explored such as *Levitating* (2007) (Fig. 105), *Minefield* (2008) (Fig. 128), *Spray Grenades* (2009) (Fig. 127) and *Possession* (2011) (Fig. 141) all exhibit a vivid awareness of the surreal space that constitutes home in contemporary Ireland. She has described her personal experience of living in the heart of Celtic Tiger suburgatory, identifying it as a Gothic site of general and personal anxiety:

> It's a very un-Irish landscape—and unlike in the past when you knew your neighbours and cared for each other—suddenly you didn't know who your neighbour was. The domesticity that I'm interested in came out of this space. I was living in one of these houses and all of the people in the estate were all obsessed with materiality and being perfect and clean. And this is where my anxiety manifested itself… (Gilsdorf, 2011)

Schaffrey also points out this recurrent equation of contemporary housing with a lack of community. 'River Oaks', she writes 'is a sort of non-place, a non-place of rented homes where residents are transient, passing through, but not necessarily with the means to ever leave'. Surburbia, in Barry's curated work and in her own work, recurs constantly as a kind of domestic limbo, a strange and uncanny landscape within which inhabitants and objects drift, transform and fuse.

During the Celtic Tiger period, there was an abrupt upturn in the numbers of suburban homes built to facilitate the demand for housing among the native and immigrant Irish population drawn to the cities by the upsurge in economy and industry. By 2008, this growth had reached its apex. The headline of an article in *The Irish Examiner* in 2012 revealed the staggering growth of urbanised Ireland: 'Urban congestion: 66% of us live in cities and suburbs' (O'Faharta 2012). This rapidity of growth led to a number of important social changes. Since 2000 the commuter belt around the cities, especially Dublin, kept widening, replacing tracts of rural land with identikit housing estates, many of which would be destined to end up as 'ghost estates'. The resulting effect on the population was seismic as people transitioned from living in the countryside or satellite towns to inhabiting a faceless suburban

sprawl. The National Institute of Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) in Maynooth has investigated the

consequence of this shift in living:

> In Ireland, the period of economic boom known as the 'Celtic Tiger' that began in the mid-1990s, was accompanied by rapid and extensive suburban development. 'Sprawl' has since become the focus of publicly articulated anxieties about changing family and community life. These anxieties have centred on the growing numbers of mothers in the labour force, and on the perception that dual-income families in the commuter belt are socially isolated – that they have reduced interaction with extended kin, and that they are less likely to be active participants in their local communities. (Gray *et al* 2009: 2)

Contemporary Irish suburbia therefore functions as a liminal space, a place literally and

metaphorically in-between two states. This fractured state of being leads to a fundamental

reshaping of suburbia as a Gothic space. As Murphy remarks:

> Given that the Gothic so often arises from gaps between what something is and what it is not, it is perhaps hardly surprising that from the beginnings of mass suburbanization, the milieu has proven a more fitting venue for horror and gothic fictions exploring the malevolent and frequently subversive flipside to the pro-suburban rhetoric espoused by the government, big business, land developers and the advertising industry. (Murphy 2009:4)

Murphy investigates a parallel period of suburban expansion in post-war America and the

subsequent appearance of the suburban home as site of family psychodramas (*Desperate

Housewives*), unexplained hauntings (*The Amityville Horror*), exaggerated hypochondria

(*Safe*), and even alien invasions (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). A contemporary update of

these would no doubt cite recent TV additions to the canon such as *American Horror Story*

(2010-2014), *Orphan Black* (2013-), *Sleeper Cell* (2005-2006) and *The Americans* (2013-)

as noteworthy additions to the canon, with their anxieties surrounding cloning, terrorism,

financial entrapment and fear of suburban infiltration by those who appear normal, but who

are concealing dark and deadly secrets. In Ireland, we find similar concerns running through

contemporary literature, including Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007) and Tana French's

The Secret Place (2014). The anxieties expressed by these authors revolve around fiscal

strain, failure to conform to the hegemony of suburbia and the crises of identity caused by

living in identical housing units. The same concerns also run through Irish fine art practice.

Although the suburbs with their neat rows present the appearance of stability on the outside, on the inside they often contain sites of anxiety. This Gothic state of unease is expressed by artists like Barry, Cross and Duffy in terms of their surreal art that conjures up this mismatch of inside and outside, this discrepancy of external conformity with internal anxiety.

The roots of this anxiety lie in the lineage of liminality associated with the suburbs in Ireland, created initially as a refuge, as a place towards which to escape. Although the Celtic Tiger period of the twenty-first century (2000-2008) saw the unprecedented and dizzying growth of suburbia, the Irish suburbs themselves are not a contemporary invention; in common with other European cities, Dublin's suburbs started developing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to the Industrial Revolution and its consequent effect on urban growth. Initially this move was a middle-class surge away from the dreaded tenement sites of the inner city (where thirty-three per cent of the population lived) towards outlying villages such as Kingstown, Donnybrook, Chapelizod and Malahide, but also to smaller outlying parts of the city. The 1911 census revealed a steep growth in the rise of populations of suburban spaces such as Ranelagh, Rathmines and Pembroke (Archives 1911). Indeed, Rathmines alone was home to 38,000 people in 1911 (NLI, EAS 1934). These suburban spaces became places of prestige, especially those outlying villages on the south side of the city, such as Kingstown, which were informed by theories of the Garden City emanating from England, with their large houses, ample gardens and plentiful amenities. Jackson (1987) contends that this kind of affluent, exclusive suburbia is more than just a physical place, it is represents a rarefied state of mind:

> Suburbia symbolizes the fullest, most unadulterated embodiment of contemporary culture; it is a manifestation of such fundamental characteristics as conspicuous consumption, a reliance upon the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family into nuclear units, the widening decision between work and leisure, and a tendency toward racial and economic exclusiveness. (Jackson, 1987: 4)

Other Dublin suburbs such as Ballybrack, Irishtown and Ringsend, which had a significant proportion of working-class inhabitants, suffered in comparison. Even from their inception, the suburbs had a complicated role in relation to the city (non-city, removed from city, yet part of the city) and to each other: a strained relationship between sites of privilege and sites of social deprivation. From the 1960s onward, with the destruction of many of the old tenement buildings in the inner city Dublin, a new version of the Irish suburbs emerged, a site of forced transplantation. In *Chapter Two* we explored the notion of dispossession in Irish postcolonial history, and its recurring effect on contemporary culture. Today the seismic social effects of moving large populations of indigenous inner-city people to geographically distant sites like Tallaght or modernist tower-blocks in Ballymun still linger. This forced move of social housing resulted in feelings of displacement, alienation and loss of community, which in turn led to dissatisfaction, anger and social problems deriving from this displacement. *Superbia* (2002), briefly discussed in the *Introduction*, was a project as part of the *Breaking Ground* Ballymun Regeneration Percent For Art Scheme that reflects the uncanny nature of the suburb. Like Thorpe's revisioning of Barry's home in *It's Not My Place*, artists Stephen Brandes and Bridgid Harte's collaboration offered a reconsideration of terraced house as art gallery and as home. The exterior was draped in a large vinyl banner proclaiming 'Superbia' (Fig. 150), while inside, artworks such as Samuel Rousseau's kitchen sink intervention (Fig. 151) were integrated subversively into the fabric of the home. The invitation (designed to look like an estate agent's leaflet) read:

> You are cordially invited to view the above property, which is superbly situated in the heart of the north of the Dublin suburb of Ballymun. Within its walls a number of individuals have dealt with this family home as a living organism, have explored its mythical associations and have altered the way we see this familiar domestic environment. Welcome to Superbia. (2003).

Fig. 150-151   (From left to right): Stephen Brandes and Bridgid Harte (2002) *Superbia*. **Samuel Rousseau (2002)** *Superbia*. **Installation.**

The 'new' town of Tallaght is also documented by Paul Seawright in his *The Map* series of photographs that document the unique position of this suburb on the very border of city and country.[6]

> This is a hybrid environment, neither country nor city, a place where nature and culture collide. These works map that axis, mining the complex psychology of social space. They move between urban and rural, inhabited and uninhabited landscapes, between day and night. Looking out from the streets and the fields that frame them, the terrain shifts and changes. (Seawright 2001)

The suburbs in Seawright's work are therefore revealed as a liminal space, a kind of no-man's-land, their meaning colonised equally by both their rural and urban context. This exploration of such spaces of transplantation in Ballymun also characterises the work of Patrick Jolley in light of his identification of the cramped spaces of the socially-disadvantaged suburbs as a site of danger. The contemporary Irish suburbs can therefore be construed as a Gothic space, not only a liminal space in-between city and country, where perimeters and borders are constantly shifting, but an anxious, isolated space, which adversely affects its inhabitants (Grey et al 2009).

This consideration of Irish suburbia as a Gothic space becomes even more pertinent during the Celtic Tiger period and after. During the boom days of the Celtic Tiger, the size of

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[6] Project viewable at http://www.paulseawright.com/themap/

Irish suburbia changed dramatically; it expanded, developed and extended far from its original boundaries. The definition of the Dublin commuting belt widened to include journeys of two, three, even four hours. Developers were eager to fulfil the growing hunger for housing by building estate after estate, and banks were equally eager to fund both these developments and the mortgages to buy within them. This startling rate of development was facilitated by a faulty planning process. In their NIRSA Working Paper of 2010, Kitchin *et al* analyse the effect of poor planning policy in Ireland and identify it as one of the main causes for the escalation of the 2008 crisis. In doing so they specifically cite both Derrida and Marx: 'A new spectre is haunting Ireland – the spectre of development run amok' (Kitchin *et al* 2010: 5).

This rapid growth of building development led to the emergence of an affluent suburbia, which, as Barry points out, then became uncanny places of perfection and expensive lifestyles (Gilsdorf 2011). *Home Is Where The Heart Is*, Vera Klute's perceptive animated piece of 2009 (Figs. 152-154) illustrates the mechanical and almost monstrous process of expansion during this period. Klute creates a mysterious subterranean location that rapidly begins to carve out a space for itself in the inhospitable earth, first by digging holes, then by creating roadways, and finally, by seeding a veritable suburbia that keeps expanding. Klute's work was developed in response to the wider *Unit* curatorial project in County Laois, in the midlands, inspired by the uncanny rate of growth taking place in the housing developments there. Several elements of this work resonate with Gothic overtones. The subterranean nature of this space reminds us of the Gothic's preoccupation with what lies underneath: dungeons, caves, the dark recesses of the mind. Even more disturbing is the giant mechanism that develops rapidly in the left-hand corner, a kind of artificial lung that regulates the speed of the development. As Schaffrey puts it:

> Omnipresent is the constant breathing of a lung machine, its heavy inhalations and
> exhalations controlling energies like the surveillant eyes of a watchman, breathing his

mechanical pumping breath, on whose every beat cars move round and round. Stark and definite. (Schaffrey 2009: 1)

This monstrous mechanism can be read as a metaphor for global and national forces of neoliberal economic policy and planning decisions that drove the development of housing at this time. The fact that the animation ends with the 'new' subterranean suburb being plunged into darkness is perhaps one of the most telling features of the piece.
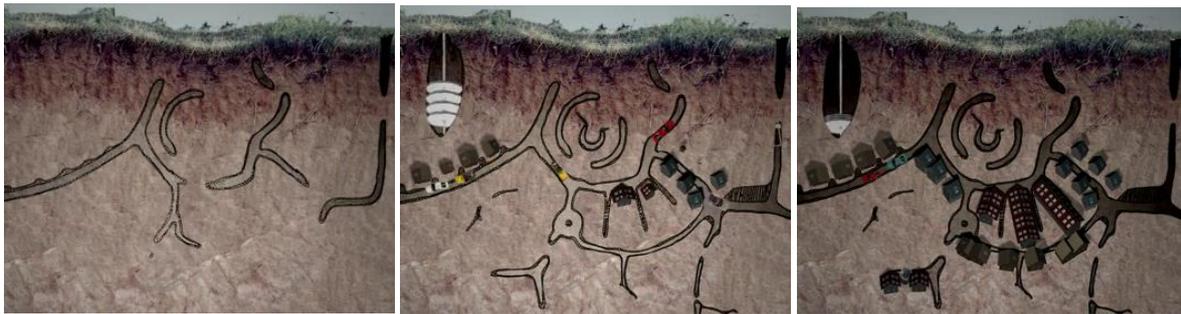
Figs. 152-154:   **Vera Klute (2009)** *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. **Chronological series of stills from animation**

In this dark drama of capitalism, corruption and crisis, the death throes of the Tiger birthed the uncanny ghost estates. It is to this era that this chapter returns repeatedly, in order to analyse this boom for the seeds of the incipient bust. The economic policies underlying this crisis of 2008 originate during a period of direct international investment in the early 2000s, and then develop during a period of property investment and development that lasted until 2008. During the second of these phases, Ireland celebrated its newfound wealth with a mania for property, with rising house prices leading to anxiety buying, while lax planning laws and carelessly large mortgages encouraged wide-scale speculation. This was facilitated both by economic forces outside Ireland, and by planning and banking laws in Ireland. While the global forces of neoliberal market economics led to massive property speculation, it was the unstable Irish planning processes and the large loans from the banking sector that facilitated

it. Coen and Maguire summarise the morass of ill-planned planning and development policies

succinctly:

> [W]hilst the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is responsible for planning legislation, much remains in the hands of 88 local planning authorities, 29 county councils, 5 county borough corporations, 5 borough corporations and 49 town councils. The system remains weak, ad hoc and often devoid of actual planning (Coen and Maguire, 2012: 11).

The forces of neoliberal economic policy and corrupt planning practices created a

very Gothic narrative of excess, reckless lending and heedless consumption, resulting in over

300,000 houses lying idle across the country. The government agency NAMA was appointed

in 2009 to take charge of these properties. In 2015, this agency is faced with several

possibilities for these estates: to finish and sell, to demolish, or to repurpose as social

housing. No consensus has currently been reached and it looks likely that the majority of

these estates will remain in this liminal state for the immediate future. In their essay 'Death of

a Tiger: The collapse of Irish property dreams', Coen and Maguire explicitly reference

Derrida (and Marx) in their reading of the Celtic Tiger as central to the realization of these

estates: 'The spectre of Ireland's Celtic Tiger stalks the landscape, and the social costs of the

spectacular financial and property-market collapse continue to mount' (Coen and Maguire

2012: 5). However, the Irish home, as we have seen in *Chapters One, Two* and *Three* is also

haunted by much older spectres; the traces of postcolonial angst, the fear of dispossession and

the notion of the home as dangerous space.

Haunted by the (less recent) Past

It would seem that the cracks in the foundation of contemporary Irish suburbia run deep. The

haunting of these ghost estates is by spectres both old and new. Derrida would seem to agree:

'and this being-with-specters would also be, not only but also, a politics of memory, or

inheritance, and of generations' (Derrida 1994: xviii). In one sense, these ghost estates are simply another manifestation of the long tradition of ghost towns, left as a legacy of ruins from gold rushes in America and Australia. Their other, darker, meaning will be discussed later in the chapter. With ruins, there is generally a passage of time that occurs between the creation of the whole and the disintegration of that whole into ruin. This allows for stories, legends and memories to accumulate, so that the ruin evolves an identity that is both aligned with, but different from, the original, whole building. These ancient or mock-ancient ruins are one of the most Gothic visual tropes of all. They are celebrated in classic Gothic texts, faked by architects such as Wyatt and animated by artists like Salvator Rosa. Indeed Rose Macaulay in *Pleasure of Ruins* (1953) claims: 'ruin pleasure must be, at one remove, softened by art' (Macaulay 1953: 454).

In his October 2011 show, *Settlement* (Figs. 155-156), Anthony Haughey engages frankly with this notion of the aesthetic ruin and its place within the historical canon of visual art practice. His photographic landscapes of ghost estates use the idiom of classical painting to evoke a sense of timelessness; the buildings assume the gravitas of a Poussin temple. His analogue photographs are irradiated with the serene, purifying light of a Claude Lorraine. This light also represents a Gothic, liminal space, the threshold time between dusk and dawn when Haughey worked to create these powerful images. Haughey describes the thinking behind his process in a 2010 interview: 'By photographing between dawn and dusk in the penumbra or half-light, the combination of darkness, long exposures and artificial light draws attention to the destruction of the natural environment' (Allen 2010). He has robustly defended charges of attempting to aestheticise a social crisis: 'Art can provoke, raise questions and generate a critical conversation around key societal issues whilst maintaining a tension between aesthetics and politics' (Allen, 2010). Although the unnervingly beautiful images and serene quality of light capture the attention, the images are also haunted by what

is absent: the inhabitants of these settlements. As Cian O'Callaghan writes in the introductory essay to *Settlement*: 'The absence (or oblique traces) of human life in the photographs highlights the uncanny decoupling of these houses from their function as places of dwelling' (O'Callaghan 2011: 33). The houses presented here have transcended their failed role to become something else. Haughey has described this 'something else' in a recent conference paper as 'a counter monument' to a lost prosperity, haunted by the spectre of the Celtic Tiger (Haughey 2014).

Fig. 155-156: **Anthony Haughey (2011)** *Settlement*. **Analogue photographic images.**

Haughey's work combats the idea that an art of protest and criticism cannot be aesthetic. It is not only the visual history of the ruin that is important here. Haughey's underlying vision also refutes this idea of the Irish ghost estates being a 'natural ruin'. In the tradition of the ghost town, like other ghost towns left by the gold rushes in America and Australia, these towns signify sites where natural resources have been consumed past a sustainable point. The Irish ghost estates, on the other hand, sit helplessly amid the landscape that has been torn up to accommodate them, many of them never used for their intended purpose. Of primary interest, here is not only the present form of the ruins, but the interrelationship between past and present that co-exists in the living metaphor of the ghost

estate. In the case of these Irish ghost towns, the echoes of the past resonate in the present. The empty houses of the estates are a physical reminder of the return of the repressed in Irish history. They have the ability to transport us back to the legacy of the haunted and abandoned home in Ireland.

The Irish countryside is littered with historical ruins of homes that carry with them the shadow of invasions and colonial anxieties: the ruins of Great Houses burned down, of Famine villages abandoned. This spectacle and its meanings have been discussed in *Chapter Two*. It is worth noting the explicit links that economist McWilliams has drawn between the ghost estates and their earlier precursors, the Famine villages: 'In the years ahead, these ghost estates, like our famine villages, may stand testament to a great tragedy which, although predicted by concerned observers, as never fully appreciated until the morning the crops failed' (McWilliams 2009). The visual links between Famine villages and ghost estates are striking. However, the trigger for the overbuilding and overconsumption of housing from 2000-2008 can also be linked to the legacy of dispossession that lingered in the wake of the Famine. The Great Famine discussed in *Chapter Two*, was caused mainly by British economic policy and the colonial system of land ownership which led to over-reliance on a single crop. The crisis of home was linked with the forces of colonial power, which caused a repercussive effect of dispossession, eviction and the abandonment of homes all over Ireland. In the latter half of the nineteenth-century this contested drama of home centred on the subsequent agrarian battles of the Land Wars, which are discussed in more detail in *Chapter Five*. After Ireland gained independence in the early twentieth century, there was a strong postcolonial desire to reverse these centuries of controlled ownership. In the early years of the twenty-first century, this sense of land hard-won and the unregulated excesses of the private rental market (particularly in the capital city of Dublin) created a sense of mingled anxiety and desire in relation to home ownership, that triggered the latent 'land hunger'

already discussed in *Chapter Two*, a hunger that could only be satisfied through the excesses of the Celtic Tiger build. The build was unsustainable, sustained only by neoliberal economic policies of lending, which meant that, yet again, Ireland found itself littered with abandoned homes. The ghost estates illustrate a horrid and inevitable return to this past, and the awful circularity of Irish history.

Haunted by the Present

The death of the Celtic Tiger is commemorated in one of the strangest monuments existing in Ireland today, Joe McNamara's *Achill-henge* (2011) (Fig. 157). This is a present-day recreation of Stonehenge constructed on Achill Island, one of the most westerly points in the country, on the edge of the Atlantic. This work was not was constructed not by an artist, but by a property developer, one of a series of visual protests he has launched since falling €3.5m in debt to Anglo Irish Bank. McNamara, who was subsequently jailed for three days for unauthorised building, has since revealed the structure to be a 'tomb for the Celtic Tiger'. There are connections between this monument to the Celtic Tiger development boom and the legacy of the landscape surrounding it in Achill. Just a few fields away from the monument lies a deserted Famine village; like Slievemore Famine village discussed in *Chapter Two*, it is another speaking memorial to the failed Irish home. Visually, *Achill-henge* is also connected with the Neolithic stone circles of Ireland, and of course, as the name suggests, with the world-famous structure of Stonehenge. As such, it presents a direct link with the writings of Cambrensis, who in *Topographia Hibernia* (1185) describes how Stonehenge was built in Ireland and then flown to Salisbury Plain by druids. The forms of *Achill-henge* may be ancient, but the construction techniques are contemporary. The poured concrete used is ugly and brutalist in its raw state, the resulting monument offering an easy parallel between it and the poorly constructed, partially-finished ghost estates, the legacy of the Celtic Tiger. In this

work, many of the current issues of the ghost estates come together; the debts, the developers,

the banks and the art of protest. Since the collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy in 2008, there

is a strong driving force in Irish art: the idea of resistance. This spirit of resistance was

inspired in part by global riots and protests about neoliberal economic policy around Europe,

especially in Iceland and Greece (Fig. 158). It is also infused by a native Irish spirit of

rebellion stemming from centuries of occupation and control under the British Empire.

Fig. 157-158:   (From left to right): Joe McNamara (2011) *Achill-henge***. Sculpture; Occupy Dame Street (2011). Photograph.**

In January and February of 2011, a series of artist-led events were held in Dublin

under the umbrella title of NAMARAMA. The object of these film-showings, walks and

activities were to draw attention to the crisis of living in the shadow of the Celtic Tiger.

Unsurprisingly, the ghost estates recurred as a motif throughout. In fact, the advertised line-

up for the opening night reads like a Who's Who of the visual culture of the ghost estates:

> [The] Opening night will reveal a host of video work from film-maker Eamonn Crudden with his work, Wallets of Blood featuring zombie bankers who stalk the dead republic, plus visual artist Elaine Reynolds with her illuminating work On/Off States that shows her unique resourcefulness of properties deemed 'not viable for completion' under NAMA categorisations. Other work includes photo stills from award-winning photojournalist Kim Haughton with her haunting betrayal of the barren landscape of Ireland's Midlands entitled, 'Shadowlands' and work from artist Chris Timms who pays satirical tribute to 90s sci-fi icons investigating Ireland's deserted landscape. (Market Studios 2011).

NAMARAMA is worth considering as emblematic of a new spirit of protest sweeping

through Irish art from 2010 -2015, reaching its zenith with the Occupy protests of late 2011.

This culture of resistance was embraced by artists who played a significant part in the illustration of the crisis of home in contemporary Ireland. NAMARAMA is indicative of a wave of socially-engaged art that called for public participation and which used techniques of assembling audience, encouraging debate, screening films and above all, of stimulating audience participation and involvement. NAMARAMA not only included passive acts for the spectator, like the viewing of film pieces, but also participative acts, such as a quiz with no winners hosted by artists and a guided tour of Dublin's docklands which identified buildings that had been enveloped by NAMA. The NAMAland walk developed by artist Conor McGarrigle was significantly augmented by the addition of a free-to-download mobile phone app that allowed visitors to take their own tour of the scene of the birth and death of the Celtic Tiger economy.[7] This event also needs to be read as part of the wider cultural response to the problem of the ghost estates. The ghost estates and the conditions of their creation have provoked strong reactions from Irish writers and commentators; from economist David McWilliams; geographers Rob Kitchin, Cian O'Callaghan, Justin Gleeson and Karen Keaveney; sociologists Kieran Keohane, Catriona Coen and Mark Maguire; journalists Fintan O'Toole and Conor Pope; and writers Donal Ryan, Tana French and William Wall. All have worked to identify and protest the factors that led to the crisis of home in Ireland, the alarmingly few prosecutions that have resulted for those who caused this national decline and the lack of governmental or national vision as to how this situation will be resolved. They challenge the conditions that created these uncanny spaces through political writing, geographical and spatial analysis and creative writing. It is no wonder, therefore, that a similar wave of outrage and acts of demonstration have also been characteristic of contemporary art that reflects on the predicament of the home in Ireland.

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[7] App available at http://www.walkspace.org/namaland/news.html

Much current Irish writing on economic analysis or cultural and human geography reads like a Gothic romance. The victims of the piece are presented as the homeowners of the ghost estates, duped into buying by promises of wise investment. The villains of the piece are identified as the sinister figures of bankers, politicians, solicitors, bondholders and planners complicit in the mechanism of the boom and bust economy. This is true of most accounts, with the exception of the neoliberal discourse of right-wing media where newspaper articles and media programmes are quick to blame homeowners for their complicity in the death of the Celtic Tiger. Despite the pressures created by an unregulated rental market and the seductive offer of 110% mortgages from banks, the homebuyers of this period are referred to in a pejorative fashion. Adjectives like 'greedy', 'crazy', 'materialistic', 'insatiable' indicate a level of blame heaped on homebuyers of the noughties. The language used by commentators in speaking of this crisis of home is significantly Gothic in its terminology. This termimology would point to a media consensus to read this crisis as a grand Gothic narrative. McWilliams likens this predicament to a disease: 'Like every infectious virus, the housing boom got into our pores. You could feel it' (Henley, 2010). Even the official discourse around these estates is infected with this lanaguage; the dry, legal, economic and political parlance of the Irish housing crisis takes on a Gothic inflection. This appropriation of traditional Gothic terminology by the language of economics is illustrated in one simple image, of a protest walk on October 30th 2010 that visited the homes of Dublin's richest citizens (the top one per cent) who had accumulated their wealth through association with Celtic Tiger enterprises, or through tax evasion (Figs. 159-160). The idea for holding this event on the feast of *Samhain*, a time when the dead walk with the living, was a clever conceit. Designed as a Hallowe'en treasure hunt, the call for participants on the Workers Solidarity Movement website urged those taking part to make explicit in their costumes the link between neoliberal economic policy and the Gothic: 'Participants are encouraged to wear

fancy dress along the theme of Zombie developers, Vampire bankers, Ghost estates and

Ravenous black holes'(Workers Solidarity Movement website).[8]

Fig. 159-160: **Workers' Solidarity Movement (2010)** *The 1% Halloween Treasure Hunt*. **Photographs.**

In their 2000 article, 'Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming',

Jean and John Comaroff (cited in Coen and Maguire, 2011: 16) conduct a linguistic analysis

of these Gothic terms as they occur in economic parlance:

> A striking corollary of the dawning Age of Millennial Capitalism has been the global proliferation of 'occult economies'. These economies have two dimensions: a material aspect founded on the effort to conjure wealth – or to account for its accumulation – by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason; and an ethical aspect grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the (real or imagined) production of value through such 'magical' means. (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 305–10)

Other commentators refer to ghost estates, the dead boom, dead houses, zombie bankers, and

even borrow the American legal term 'zombie houses' to describe houses where the title

deeds are left incomplete. This idea of the estates as zombie entities is explored by filmmaker

Eamon Crudden. In his short film *Houses on the Moon* (2009), the first of his trilogy of

cinematic commentaries on Ireland's boom and bust, *Wallets Full of Blood,* he neatly couples

the setting of a ghost estate with a metanarrative of zombies and consumerism (Figs. 161-

162). Crudden samples Dennis Hopper's voice from the audio track of Romero's *Land of the*

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[8] Website viewable at http://eirigi.org/

Dead (2005) to use him as a central figure of corrupt and psychotic authority as he tries to maintain his ghost town against an invasion of zombie bankers, run amok and maddened by consumerist excess. The zombie analogy is particularly interesting; the flesh-tearing monsters spliced into the footage seem clichéd and cartoonish; the real undead menace emanates from the rows of zombie houses, animated by Crudden's lens, his technique of capturing reflections in the rainy windows creating an eerie effect of a simulated half-life taking place within.

Fig. 161-162: **Eamon Crudden (2009)** *Houses On The Moon.* **Film stills.**

In Paddy Baxter's short film piece *Vacancy* (2012) we see a similar use of the aesthetic of the horror film (Figs. 163-164). *Vacancy* is one of several video works that together make up *Ghosts and the Machine: A Wander through the New Wastelands of Ireland*; what Baxter terms 'a series of essay and audio visual journeys through the changing landscapes of Ireland' (Baxter 2012). *Vacancy* is set in Carrig Glas Manor in Longford, one of the Big House estates whose colonial symbolism are discussed in *Chapter Two*. The construction of this estate was part of the Rural Renewal scheme that gave rise to the estates also documented by Anex and Reynolds. Thomas Lefroy, an Irish aristocrat alleged to be the inspiration for the character of Darcy in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, built Carrig Glas manor house in 1830 in the Victorian Gothic style. Baxter was interested in the feeling of

otherness that he associated with this manor house: '[I]t retained for me that distant air of a vague colonial past of which I barely understood but yet it had a presence that one intrinsically grasped as "Other"' (Baxter 2012). *Vacancy* chronicles what happens when old houses are demolished to make way for the heady dreams of consumerism and developer greed. The film itself offers two modes of image-making, one a series of flat stills of the leprous exterior of the estate, the other a tense, filmed journey through the interior of a half-finished house. Baxter uses the shaky hand-held aesthetic of found footage films like *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), while the ominous film score by Belied Gunciko builds up continually to a series of climaxes.

Figs. 163-164:   Paddy Baxter (2012) *Vacancy*. Film stills.

Baxter describes the sensation of filming on site in language haunted by the Gothic terminology of the horror film:

> All around lay heaps of rubble and top soil, huge craters of nothingness, a strange and disconcerting silence pervades, plastic insulation coverings of uncompleted houses flap menacingly on a near wind-free evening. Walled as you are, you feel quite exposed, at the mercy of whatever malign creatures your imagination might speculate resides there. It is less like the set of some high-end Jane Austen adaptation, more like the stage for a zombie-holocaust trash epic (Baxter, 2012).

The real horror, Baxter seems to say, is not contained within the visual or audio style of the horror film. The real horror, the real monster in *Vacancy*, is the ghost estate itself.

Ghosts of the Estates

So far, this discussion has revolved around the ghost estates and the art that charts and explores the economic and planning circumstances that led to their creation. As discussed, media narratives have viewed this housing crisis as a grand disaster caused by the forces of neoliberal economics. However, it is also important to focus on the people within these estates, the real-life horror stories of debt, negative equity and loss of community that they face. It is interesting to examine what contemporary art does to give voice to the counter-narratives these inhabitants offer to dominant discourses of politics and economics. When we examine how neoliberal economic policy construes home as commodity, it follows that when this commodity loses value, normative notions of comfort and security in relation to domesticity are consequently subverted. The ghost estates appear as scars on the landscape, symbolising the trauma and the unhealable wounds of the people trapped within. In Coen and Maguire's excellent 2011 sociological study of a suburban area in Dublin (under the fictive name of Olcote Village) they offer a description of how the inhabitants are haunted by the failure of the Celtic Tiger: '[T]heir dream-homes represent, to borrow from James Joyce, nightmares from which they cannot awaken' (Coen and Maguire 2011: 7).

O'Callaghan's current research project 'Memories of the everyday present: Haunting, absence, and the spectral performance of everyday life in the Irish Ghost Estate' aims to carry out an analysis of both the media commentary surrounding the ghost estates and of the people who live on them. O'Callaghan writes:

> This project deploys a research methodology based on discourse analysis of media and political debates to explore how ghost estates have been mobilised as a vehicle to represent the Celtic Tiger crash, and 'oral history' interviews with residents living on ghost estates to explore how they reconcile past and present realities... Together with facing stark fiscal and social realities, people must now reconcile how their own personal biographies intersect with this collective catastrophe. (O'Callaghan, 2013)

In reading these ghost estates as Gothic entities, it is important to recognise the role occupied by the homeowner (or the failed homeowner) in this saga. Within these ghost estates, the people trapped within them are like living ghosts. They inhabit these revenant spaces, caught in a time-slip, longing to return to the past, to escape the present and to change the future. Traumatised, abandoned, worried, trapped, debt-ridden, they exist, imprisoned without hope of escape. Inside the estates, they move like tiny marionettes on a deserted stage, driving home past darkened houses, opening the curtains on a vista of sightless windows. They are forever trapped in the spectral moment, like flies in amber, in the never-time of the ghost estates. Aideen Barry's *Tower of Folly* (2011) illustrates this terrifying existence. The nine-foot structure (Fig.165) is a twisting, tumbling vortex of over four hundred tiny houses. On closer inspection, these houses have hidden flaws. Inside them are miniature projectors, which show minute Gothic dramas unfolding that further disrupt this surreal landscape; one of the houses is on fire, another has sprouted a tree, another is fatally cracked. Other miniature scenes focus on the notion of female entrapment; one woman is about to fall out a window, while another (Fig. 176) appears to be drowning in a devastated landscape. *Tower of Folly* was shown as part of Barry's solo show *On Tenterhooks* (2011). The very title refers to a situation of unease or anxiety. The statement for the show illustrates Barry's authorial intentions and her fascination with ghost estates as Gothic homes:

> These manifestations of what the artist calls 'Visual Fictions' play on what we perceive to be real, the humdrum banal domesticity, with the unreal…some of the drawing and sculptural objects play on architectural folly, something that becomes a recurring theme in Barry's recent work. Shooting film and performances in abandoned contemporary housing estates both North and South of the border, the artist plays with the notion of the contemporary 'Houses of Usher', the most haunted of houses, of landscapes and of space of the 'in-between'. This exhibition is based on the notion of a landscape created by man-made forces

but possessed by grief, loss and failing. The haunted landscapes in our contemporary environment are the unfinished and repossessed housing estates, the redundant shopping centres and the desolate, unused car parks. Since the bursting of the year-long property bubble haunted houses are often perceived as being inhabited by disembodied spirits of the deceased who may have been former residents or were familiar with the property. (Barry, 2011)

Figs. 165-166: **Aideen Barry (2011)** *Tower of Folly*. **Sculptural installation.**

We can again borrow from Derrida to declare that in these ghost estates the time is indeed out of joint: 'time is disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down…deranged, both out of order and mad' (Derrida 1994: 20). Within these estates, the occupants themselves become ghosts:

> This is especially true of man, of the most '*Unheimlich*' of all ghosts, a word Stirner uses that the French translations overlook most often and that interests us to the highest degree. It is the word of irreducible haunting or obsession. The most familiar becomes the most disquieting. The economic or egological home of the *oikos*, the nearby, the familiar, the domestic, or even the national (*Heimlich*) frightens itself. It feels itself occupied, in the proper secret (*Geheimnis*) of its inside, by what is most strange, distant, threatening. We will come back to this in conclusion. If Christ, that absolute specter, causes fear and pain, the man that this *Gottmensch* becomes (and man only arrives at himself, here, in this becoming) causes even more fear as he comes closer to us. He is even more spectral than the spectral. (Derrida 1994: 144-145)

A comparative examination of recent Irish writing finds the same articulation of a fundamental anxiety that haunts suburban Ireland. Writers like Tana French and Donal Ryan use evocative language to describe the Gothic scenes of decay, and the palpable aura of a

suspended half-life that emanates from these suburban estates. Crime writer Tana French's novel *Broken Harbour* (2013) is preoccupied with the cracked and broken relationship between a deserted suburban estate and its few inhabitants. As Jenny Spain, the sole survivor of her family's murder says bitterly of her ghost estate home: 'The holes just happened, you know? Those houses…there's something wrong with the foundations. Holes, just, like, *appear*' (French 2013:370-371). The holes that Jenny alludes to are the result of shoddy workmanship on the half-finished site, but they also act as a powerful metaphor for the abyss of unemployment, hallucination and derangement that opens up underneath her family following their move to the desolate Broken Harbour ghost estate. Similarly, Donal Ryan makes the rundown and problematic ghost estate both a pivot for the narrative and a catalyst for disaster in *The Spinning Heart* (2012). William Wall's third poetry collection *Ghost Estate* (2011) offers an initial view of the ghost estate as mirror of Ireland's economic crisis, but then expands on this to offer a more global view of mankind and their response to this situation. His poem 'We Imagine the Police' offers a darkly humorous look at the resilience of people in impossible situations, but also their attachment to consumerism. It concludes with the lines '& a fold up tent/ for when we fold our tent/& a wallet full of promises/ that there will still be shopping/no matter how dark the times' (Wall 2011: 14).

The shifting relationship between house as commodity and occupier as consumer is explored by artist Aideen Barry in her stop-motion animation film of 2011, *Possession* (Figs. 167-168). Set on a ghost estate in Galway, *Possession* centres on strong themes of desire, consumption, excess and confinement. In *Chapter Three* we analysed the multiple meanings of *Possession* in relation to female confinement, hysteria, slippage and ultimately madness. However, is can also be seen in another sense, as the ultimate horror story of the ghost estate, where the inhabitants become haunted, or even possessed by its *Unheimlich* nature. The traumatised protagonist of *Possession* strives to be the perfect housewife and consumer, but

for all her efforts, she is ultimately subsumed by the house, devoured whole by her own regurgitated baking (Fig. 168). In the story of the ghost estates, the consumer becomes the consumed, and the future of human habitation within the ghost estate seems like an impossibility.

Fig. 167-168:   **Aideen Barry (2011)** *Possession*. **Film stills.**

Haunted by the Future –Responsibility, Possibility

As the end of Barry's *Possession* implied, the impact of the ghost estates in Ireland cannot be considered without reference to their likely or imagined future. These estates represent revenant spaces; they are contemporary failed homes that evoke spectral memories of past failed homes that have appeared throughout Irish history. However, what of their future? There is no degree of certainty in any answer. In 2015, NAMA are still in the process of documenting all of the ghost estates and separating them into categories: capable of full development, capable of usage for social housing, or not viable for completion. In the next cycle, therefore, the current landscape of dead houses may look very different. What can be definitively discussed are the different ways in which this uncertain future is mediated and predicted by fine art. Since the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, artists have responded to and reanimated these ghost estates with art that has sought to interpret, to document and to protest. This art has been concerned with the physical objects of the estates and with their

symbolism. It has also engaged socially with those affected by the creation of these artefacts of unlimited free marketeering, and it considers the yet un-reckoned emotional human toll of life on the estates. Bearing the spectral essence of the ghost estates in mind, artists have also conjured up images of a possible future, of infilling the voids left in the landscape and in the national psyche alike. They have engaged with the notion of responsible design and opened up discussions around the challenges and possibilities that these ghost estates present.

Kim Haughton's award-winning photo-essay *Shadowlands* of 2011 (Figs. 169-170) carries within it a vision of a paradoxically pastoral post-apocalyptic future. Several of her most memorable images contain ideas of reconciliation between the houses of the ghost estates and the ruined landscapes that they inhabit. Her reading of these estates is resolutely unhomely. The prospective human occupants of these ghost estates have never transpired. In their place are animals: horses and cows, who offer a vision of a landscape subsumed back to its natural purpose.

Figs. 169-170:   Kim Haughton (2011) *Shadowlands*. Photo-essay.

Another interesting project on home futures was *The Rambling House* (2012) (Figs. 171-172) a multimedia performance in Galway organised by choreographer Cindy Cummings and dancer Rionach O'Neill. It aimed to revive the notion of the 'céilí house' or 'rambling house'; a neighbourhood house which commonly hosted social events, seasonal rituals, and performances of song, music, dance and storytelling. For this project, for one night only, two

houses on a ghost estate outside Galway city were inhabited by a strange collection of dancers, sean-nós singers, céilí musicians and dancers garbed as 'straw boys'; traditional wedding-guests garbed in straw and odd garments who danced with the bride and brought luck to the wedding. This performance was one of the pivotal happenings from the visual art and geography conference, *Mapping Spectral Traces V*, whose mission was to explore and experiment with 'the connections between how everyday spaces are inhabited, and how they are influenced by traces of the past' (Siggins 2012). This evocation of the past function of the home in Irish culture, as a shared resource and as a place of connection, and the celebration of this aspect through performance, conversation, and social interaction remains one of the most positive uses for the houses of the ghost estate. This kind of 'cultural occupation' of the spaces of the ghost estate by artists is part of an unexpected fall-out of the current crisis. The culture of resistance and the positioning of art as advocacy within this culture have led to an increasing visibility of art in urban centres. Movements like the *Vacant Space Initiative* in Dublin, the *Creative Limerick* project in Limerick, or *Creative Cork* in Cork city all work to build relationships between local authorities and the creative community to infill these vacant domestic and commercial spaces. Much of the art emanating from the best of these artist-led spaces, such as *Block T* in Smithfield, Dublin, or *Ormston House* in Limerick, is resolutely anti-commercial in focus, something which artist Anthony Haughey had hoped for: 'I hope that the availability of free and affordable spaces will encourage new artist collectives, less concerned with commercial interests and more concerned with challenging orthodoxies and rampant consumerism' (Allen 2012).

Figs. 171-172: **Rionach O'Neill, Cindy Cummings (2012)** *The Rambling House*. **Photographs of participative sessions.**

With occupancy comes responsibility. An artist who has engaged fully in the consideration of the artist's role in terms of the ghost estates is Anthony Haughey. His 2011 show *Settlement*, already discussed in terms of its unusual harnessing of ruin aesthetics, bears further analysis in light of its vision of responsible design. Significantly, the central photographic pieces of Haughey's show (Fig. 173-174) were complemented by displays by young architects who offered plans, drawings and elevations of a proposed repurposing of large, empty public spaces in Dublin. Haughey was interested in the exhibition extending widely to facilitate inclusion in the discussion of a national question: what do we do with these abandoned properties, these commercial buildings, these ghost estates? He had already made contact with architectural firms who were reconsidering the possible futures of these NAMA buildings. As he says of the process:

> I invited contributions from UCD Architecture students and DIT's NAMAlab project to create an installation consisting of thirty-two A1 architectural drawings. Each drawing was printed as multiple copies, more than one thousand prints arranged on the floor of the gallery. This A1 paper stack was arranged to visually reference the concrete foundation of a building. Visitors to the gallery were invited to take a drawing from the top of the stack, revealing further proposals underneath. By taking a drawing home, the intention was to encourage a deeper reflection of what was being proposed, an opportunity to consider a more equitable and sustainable future. The exhibition was designed to engage visitors on many different levels including an interactive website and several public discussions. (Allen, 2010)

There is the sense here that in erecting this artistic monument to Irish greed and folly, Haughey is delving beyond the tragic reality, attempting to discuss possibilities and to offer several potential solutions. This collaborative process between artist and designers, concerned with the re-use of commercial and domestic spaces, focuses on architecture in its social sense, as both aesthetic form and functional user-centred design. It espouses both the values of emotional design, where design is based on the needs and desire of the user, and relational aesthetics where the process is as important as the result.

Figs. 173-174:   Anthony Haughey (2011) *Settlement*. **Analogue photographic images.**

Conclusions: Circular Narratives of Home

These unloved homes of the ghost estates have forced a re-examination of Irish domestic space and the relationship to it, both in lived practice and in contemporary culture. When the hyper-inflated property bubble of the Celtic Tiger burst, it spilled out a landscape haunted by ghost estates, failed promises and unpaid mortgages. The consequent ghost estates that result from this present the viewer with a vision of the Gothic home in contemporary culture that is aligned firmly to political, economic, geographical and social change in modern Ireland. These estates are at once an echo of the past, a mirror of the present and a warning for the future. Uncanny, revenant, traumatised, these spaces present and re-present themselves in Irish contemporary fine art practice as sites, protagonists and metaphors. Fine art plays a

significant role in terms of signalling these roles, imaginatively responding to these sites in terms of history, recasting them as places of horror and sensation, articulating the fears of the people who live in them and even offering solutions for their future beyond simple demolishment or estate development. Artists continue to telegraph this crisis of home, to signal these voids and to re-imagine these ghost estates as symbolic spaces and revenant places, and to reconfigure them as sites of possibility.

Derrida's idea of the spectral moment is dependent on a definition of time that holds within it the essence of time past and time in the future. This vision of the ghost estates as adrift in time reaches its apogee in the story of a single ghost estate, which has encompassed a singularly unusual set of identities since its inception. This is *Ard na Deirge* estate in County Clare. When building commenced in 2006 on a hill overlooking the historic beauty spot of Killaloe, the development was marketed as a 'dream' estate, a process already discussed in analysing Valerie Anex's *Ghost Estates* photographic collection. The average property on this estate was sold for €350,000 at this time. However, disaster soon struck. The building firm ran out of money to complete the work, so only the first phase of the build was fully completed. The estate then defaulted back into the possession of Allied Irish Bank who appointed KPMG as receivers. This led to a bizarre situation where the rightful owners of the finished houses were locked out of their homes for almost eight years. Those home-owners continued to pay their mortgages but remained in a wretched, liminal state, unable to legally enter or live in their houses, which lay overgrown and abandoned, no services, no life, no hope, as *Ard na Deirge* slowly metamorphosed into a ghost estate.

In 2013 when this process of transformation was complete, as part of this research I carried out a photographic documentation of *Ard na Deirge* (Figs. 175-176). The contrast between the overgrown estate and the sublime area of natural beauty it occupies was poignant. In the images (Fig. 175-176) the houses are presented as existing within a hostile

environment. They are surrounded by barbed wire, pitted with redundant signs (Fig. 175), and filled with craters to signify where the second phase of housing would have been (Fig. 176). Like the subjects of Anex's photographs, these houses appear deeply uncanny, doppelgängers of their imagined selves.

Figs. 175-176: **Tracy Fahey (2013)** *Ard na Deirge estate, Killaloe***. Photographic images.**

By 2013 the locked-out homeowners of *Ard na Deirge* had staged several protests (Fig 177) which were documented in the local newspapers and in the national media. At the same time as I was carrying out this documentation, the story of *Ard na Deirge* was taking another surprising turn. Local homeowner John Ryan broke into the home he was prevented from entering as a protest against both the bank and the receiver involved: 'I own the property. I have clean title to it. I'm here for the consequences and if AIB and KPMG want to contest my right to remain there, they can take me to court' (Ward 2013) (Fig. 178).

Figs. 177-178: **Protesters outside Ard Na Deirge; John Ryan outside his ghost estate home. Photographs.** *Limerick Leader* **2013.**

Nevertheless, the strangest part of the story was yet to unfold. In 2014 the properties on this disputed estate were released, the unsold homes offered for sale, rebranded as 'the relaunch of an exciting development' on the MyHome website.[9] The images presented on the website (Fig. 179) offer a manicured vision of suburban bliss, the interior of the show-home designed carefully in a palette of neutral colours. The only evidence of its former history is the view from the windows, which still shows the rough hoardings that surrounded the houses during its recent existence as a ghost estate (Fig. 180). This disruption of the image, the regained prosperity of the present haunted by the shadow of the recent past perfectly illustrates the uncertain and changing nature of these estates. As Murphy has contended, the suburbs have always been a Gothic place since their development; these ghost estates take the innately Gothic nature of the suburb and move it into increasingly uncertain territory.

Figs. 179-180:   *Ard na Deirge* **(2014). Images from the www.myhome.ie website**

The strangely circular fate of the *Ard na Deirge* ghost estate reveals a new way of perceiving home in contemporary Ireland. The function and context of a single home can fluctuate and change, often within short spaces of time. Its ownership can change just as rapidly, subject as it is to rival claims of banks, receivers and homeowners. The identity of

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[9] Advert viewable at http://www.myhome.ie/residential/brochure/arda-na-deirge-killaloe-clare/2781912

home is no longer fixed; the home can exist concurrently in several planes of existence: as home, as advertised utopia, as consumerist dream, as failed development, as part of a ghost estate, as a bank commodity, as object for receivership, as a site of protest. This incarnation of home in the form of the ghost estates is a Gothic one; a complex and often contradictory icon created by economic disaster, popularised by media narratives and illuminated by the counternarratives of personal accounts of protest by homeowners like John Ryan . It takes up the trope of the divided and haunted ruin as explored in *Chapter Two* and updates it to explore the motif of the contemporary ruin. The ghost estates exemplify the liminal and classically in-between existence of the home in contemporary Ireland. The bizarre tale of Ard na Deirge is a fitting end to this chapter. Its circular existence confirms the appropriateness of the framework of the spectre and the spectral moment through which to view the ghost estate. It also asks an important question for the future of home in Ireland: what happens if we fail to learn from the crisis of home in contemporary culture? In September 2014, the *Irish Independent* ran an article: 'House hunters queuing for five days before new homes go on sale' (Fegan and O'Regan 2014). The article contains a quote from Ronan O'Driscoll, director of Sherry FitzGerald, who declared:

> There are about four parties there at the moment, but we'd expect it to grow over the next few days. They'll probably use tents. I've been involved in this business for 25 years, and I haven't seen anything like this since 2006. Even at the height of the boom, I never remember people queuing on a Tuesday, for a show house opening on a Saturday. That's unprecedented in my view. (Fegan and O'Regan, 2014).

This occurrence, this frantic queuing to buy, has been hailed as evidence of economic recovery for Ireland. The more sobering revelation is that as a nation, there has been little learning from the painful lessons of the ghost estates. 'Progress' as Santayana commented 'far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness… when experience is not retained… infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat

it'(Santayana 1905: 45). It seems that although the ghost estates echoed the history of the failed home, they may also point with some prescience towards the future. The circularity of the narrative of the ruin in contemporary Ireland reveals the frightening possibility that these ghost estates may not be the last in a long line of failed homes in Irish culture. This circularity adds weight to the claim of this thesis, that the contemporary Gothic home is a resurrection of a much older forms, desire and anxieties, and that such revenant spaces are by their nature destined to recur. The next chapter again stresses this linkage of past and present in exploring the Gothic home of Wildgoose Lodge, its literary interpretations, its traumatic legacy and its silenced narratives in the frame of a contemporary fine art project that seeks to recapture and revoice secret counter-narratives of home.

Chapter 5: Homework – Remembering Wildgoose Lodge

> This chapter has been a kind of 'homework' for me, simultaneously Out There in the field of cultural historical research and In Here in the storehouse of memory, association and experience (Smyth 2001: 128).

Fig. 181:　　　**Tracy Fahey (2015)** *The contested site of Wildgoose Lodge*. **Photograph.**

Introduction: Contextualising the Project

In a field in Reaghstown, County Louth, a lone ash-tree stands against the skyline, its base marked by some rubble that interpenetrates the hedge behind it (Fig. 181). At first glance the tree resembles a single hawthorn, the kind traditionally associated with the fairies (as discussed in *Chapter 1: The Home of Folklore*) that are tacitly left to bloom in fields, not to be interfered with on pain of drawing down fairy wrath. The site itself is difficult to access; it

lies off a small bog-road, down a private farm lane, through a gate and then up to the summit

of a grassy hill. At the top of this field, the area around the tree appears marked out as

forbidden, with an old gate, fencing posts and rusted wire all combining to cordon off the

area around its base. These clumsy barriers protect mossy remnants of stone that the tree-

roots twine around: the contested site of the last physical fragments of the home of

Wildgoose Lodge. In *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge: Agrarian Crime and Punishment in

pre-Famine Ireland*, Dooley (2007) is struck by the uncanny quality of this hilltop site:

> …on top of the hill, now only a few hundred yards from the main Dublin–Derry road (N2),
> the outline of the site of Wildgoose Lodge is still hauntingly visible. Decaying trees and
> twisted branches cover what is left of the few stones that have survived but like the site of
> many ancient forts in Ireland, superstitiously guarded by the local communities, it has been
> nature rather than human intervention that has taken its toll. (Dooley 2007: 18-19)

In 1972, in one of a series of articles on Wildgoose Lodge published by the *Irish Times*

'Return to Wildgoose Lodge – 2: Leapfrog and a magic Ash tree', Benedict Kiely also

construes this site as a strange place:

> On the hilltop there's more left than you'd expect; remnants of strong walls…The magic ash
> is alive above us…We have always left undisturbed the hilltop mounds where the earliest
> people lived. But there is something on this hilltop that's a lot more sombre than any harmless
> belief in the Good People. (Kiely *The Irish Times* July 1972)

Wildgoose Lodge is the scene of one of the most famous agrarian atrocities of nineteenth-

century Ireland. It remains both a story and a palpable presence in the neighbourhood today.

Both Dooley and Kiely reference an aura of recurrent trauma that lingers at the site; it is an

aura readily comprehensible to those familiar with the atrocity tale that emanates from it. The

story of Wildgoose Lodge is a strange and complex one. On one level, it is a well-known

story of agrarian conflict, the 1816 burning of Wildgoose Lodge in Reaghstown, County

Louth in the north-east of Ireland. William Carleton (1794-1869) retells this event and some

of its subsequent repercussions in his short story of 1830, 'Confessions of a Reformed

Ribbonman', more famous for its 1933 reissue in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* under the title 'Wildgoose Lodge'. These horrifying events, which included the burning alive of the Lynch family within the Lodge as an act of revenge by local Ribbonmen, and the capture, trial and execution of eighteen men in 1817-1818, have furnished the material for many accounts of these atrocities. These accounts include not just Carleton's short story, but also fairly contemporaneous accounts by Anton (1841), journal articles by Paterson (1950), Casey (1974, 1975), a series of seven newspaper features by Kiely (1972) and historical monographs on the subject by Murray (2005) and Dooley (2007). McCormack (1998: 304) also cites this story as a key literary landmark in his overview of the evolution of Irish Gothic.

This chapter presents yet another investigation constituted around this incident, specifically a socially-engaged memory project, *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*, initiated by my fine art collective Gothicise. The intention behind this project was simple: to engage with the community who live on the homeland of this famous story and to locate and record a small sample of the voices missing from this well-known narrative. In doing so, the idea was to engage in a Gothic project that offered counter-narratives to dominant hegemonic discourses of history and fiction. These dissident stories represent the *Unheimlich* return of the past in the present. The Gothic itself is recognised as a study of in-betweenness, of 'otherness': the liminal, the interstitial, the marginal and the dispossessed. In *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* we deal with the reimagined, the revisited and the retold by socially engaging with a community of interest around sites and stories central to the original story. Since the 1960s the art world has recognised increasingly extended and delimited notions of art, artist, subject and audience. It has accepted ideas of social practice, social engagement and artist-ethnography as core to contemporary art practice (as discussed earlier in both the *Introduction* and *Chapter One*). Based on the idea of participation and of constructed

experiences, Gothicise projects use Debord's idea of the spectacle as a means of engaging an audience:

> The spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people mediated by images. The spectacle cannot be understood as the abuse of a world of vision, as the product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is, rather, a *Weltanschauung* which has become actual, materially translated. It is a vision of the world which has become objectified. (Debord: 6)

The *Weltanschauung* of Gothicise is built around the idea of *relational aesthetics*, the notion that '[C]ontemporary art resembles a period of time that has to be experienced, or the opening of a dialogue that never ends' (Bourriaud 1998: 160). *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* has at its heart a dialogue between collaborators, fieldworker and interviewees, but also a series of complex dialogues between history and fiction, metanarrative and counter-narratives, and memory and forgetting.

This chapter documents the initial stages of the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project, which has involved working to date over a two and a half year period with the older community of Reaghstown and the surrounding area, in order to collect accounts of the tragedy still held in family memory. This chapter also offers ancillary information: a timeline for the project (*Appendix B*), the information, consent forms and questionnaire disseminated to the stakeholders (*Appendices C-E*), the collated questionnaires of participants (*Appendix F*) and transcripts of recordings of variant stories (*Appendix G*). The original recordings of the interviews are also available online by visiting the private website for the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project[10]. Research for this project has revealed a body of previously unrecorded folktales and variants still told today in the locality of the original incident. This chapter also offers a comparative analysis of these collected tales against the dominant narratives provided by both historical sources and by Carleton's fictional account.

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[10] This site is viewable at http://designingtracy.wix.com/rememberingwgl

Chapter Five: Homework: Remembering Wildgoose Lodge aims to act as a capstone project for this thesis; that is, an interdisciplinary, multi-faceted project that draws together various strands of discussion throughout the thesis in relation to the Gothic home. This project offers irrefutable proof of the persistence of historical Gothic homes in the present through the analysis of original counter-narratives of Wildgoose Lodge collected during this project, variants that have evolved over the last two hundred years, and that are still told in homes in the locality today. *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* collects and examines variants of these stories of Wildgoose Lodge to construe what they tell us about the historical Gothic home and of its survival in contemporary culture. It brings together interconnected themes of memory, loss, anxiety, remembrance, forgetting, folklore and ruins. It deals with the longevity of trauma, the resonance of history and the shadows of colonialism. The project has run since late 2012, and will continue until 2016. For this chapter, I have taken only part of this project to analyse, the collection and interpretation of these previously untold variants of the atrocity story of Wildgoose Lodge counter-narratives. By examining these dissident versions of the story, the chapter focuses on the idea of Gothic as counter-narrative, a theme that runs throughout this thesis.

After this prolonged investigation of various manifestations of the Gothic home in Irish contemporary art practice, it is appropriate that the final chapter allows a behind-the-scenes look at the creation and curation of an art project that is Gothic in both subject matter and in methodology, and that is concerned with ideas of homeland and family, community and regional identity. In critically documenting the origins and fieldwork behind an original, contemporary socially-engaged art project around a famous Gothic home, this chapter also offers an alternative, hidden, history of folklore concerned with a Gothic home. This type of project, which is concerned chiefly with memory, traces and divergent stories whose origins are lost in time, is described by Foster (2004) as *anarchival*:

> …archival art is as much preproduction as it is postproduction: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces (perhaps 'anarchival impulse' is the appropriate term), these artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects – in art and in history alike – that might offer points of departure again. (Foster, 2004: 5)

This chapter returns to the discussion of ethnography and art first sketched out in *Chapter One: The Home of Folklore*. It continues to position ethnographic art as an important element in the Gothic, especially with regard to its ability to revoice silenced narratives through collaborative practice. The disputed site of Wildgoose Lodge (explored in more detail in a later section of this chapter, *Stories from the Hearth: The Contested Site*) and the stories that emanate from it also offer a real-life example of the idea of 'local Gothic' and 'vernacular Gothic' first explored in *Chapter One.* This kind of local or vernacular Gothic is firmly linked with the notion of genius loci, the spirit of place that gathers around it a very specific sense of memory, community meaning and a kind of otherness that derives from dark passages in folklore, traditional or local history. The official and multiple unofficial narratives of Wildgoose Lodge are understood by locals, but appear much more impenetrable to those who live outside the area. In fact, the execution of this project was only possible through my own family links to the area, through my family variant of the story, which led to my privileged position as embedded ethnographer in this community of interest. This position dictated the methodology of the project explored later in the chapter in *Approaching Autoethnography: The Methodology of Homework*. Autoethnography is a methodology that uses personal experience and narratives (usually moments of personal revelation) to aid an understanding of broader cultural events, which are then contrasted with other accounts and testimonies to reveal hidden truths. This chapter examines the existing context of the project in both historical and fictional narratives, by focusing on both Carleton's 1830 short story 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman', and his later version of the tale, 'Wildgoose Lodge' published in 1833. It also examines the idea of history, especially colonial history, as

having a profound and lasting effect on communities, especially rural communities (as explored in *Chapter Two*). It takes the idea of silence and trauma discussed in *Chapter Two: North and South: [Post] Colonial Notions of Home* and applies them to the fragmented and diverse versions of the Wildgoose Lodge story that still exist today.

The chapter also explores how these family narratives of the story of the Lodge and its aftermath acted locally as cautionary tales (as discussed earlier when examining the function of legends in *Chapter One)*. It looks at how the telling and transmission of these tales under conditions of secrecy illustrates profound fears in relation to secret societies, corrupt justice systems, colonial force and the dangers of informing. It also analyses these tales for the value they add to the existing master-narratives of history and fiction, and in terms of the evidence they provide of the persistence of the Gothic home in folk memory. Through a process of postcolonial *re-voicing*, this project seeks to offer authentic and other accounts of the atrocity. It also considers the historical nineteenth-century context in terms of the idea of 'land hunger', a concept discussed in both *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Four: [Re] Animating the Ghost Estates,* that still informs and haunts Irish ideas about housing in contemporary society. The *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project also serves as a case study for the survival of old terrors and anxieties in contemporary culture as illustrated in *Chapter 3: 'Women who just can't seem to get out of the house'; Domesticity, Abjection and the Uncanny*. It considers trauma theory and the survival of historical trauma as a set of uncanny returns, a series of repetitions of buried anxieties that recur in the retelling of tales.

This chapter will therefore explore the story of Wildgoose Lodge and the official sources of the story (*Wildgoose Lodge: Where Fact Meets Fiction*), and then contextualise the ensuing fieldwork by introducing the idea of autoethnography (*Autoethnography: The Methodology of Homework*) in order to explain the approach taken to this project. The chapter will also discuss the recurrent silence and trauma that this story evokes in the locality.

It outlines the progress of fieldwork (*The Process of the Project: The Fieldwork*), the challenges posed by this methodology and the collection of narratives that emanated from this process (*Stories from the Hearth*). The chapter will then focus on a detailed analysis of these narratives, and outline the 'new' knowledge generated by this project in terms of the curses, cautionary tales, contested geographies and ghost stories that emanate from these variants. Finally, it will offer reflections on this project as germane to the thesis at large and on the value of this practice-led research in relation to the return of the Gothic home in contemporary Irish art practice.

Wildgoose Lodge: Where Fact meets Fiction

The factual accounts of the atrocity of Wildgoose Lodge, Carleton's story, the critical responses to it and the native folktales found in the locality all offer a series of divergent and complicated narratives that represent different perspectives on the story. It is perhaps easiest to start with a blunt summation of the historical facts of the case. On October 29th 1816, a procession of a local agrarian secret society of Ribbonmen led by local schoolmaster Pat Devan threaded their way across the countryside from the neighbouring Stonetown parish to set fire to Cartill House (colloquially called Wildgoose Lodge), a building owned by Townley Patten Filgate, on land owned by his brother, the landlord William Filgate and leased by the Lynch family, a prosperous Catholic, farming family. This murderous act was motivated by revenge on the Lynch family for reporting a break-in and the destruction of their domestic property by armed men on 10th April 1816. This crime was reported and illustrated in the 1841 edition of *The Newgate Calendar* (or to give it its full title, *The chronicles of crime, or, The new Newgate calendar: being a series of memoirs and anecdotes of notorious characters who have outraged the laws of Great Britain from the earliest period to the present time ...*

including a number of curious cases never before published). In this edition, 'Patrick Devann' [sic] merited a whole entry under the ominously titled section: 'Men (and Women) of Blood' (Pelham and Browne 1841: 14-17). The accompanying illustration (Fig. 182) exaggerates the villainy of the Ribbonmen; the ringleader is masked and the features of the other attackers are distorted and oafish, in stark contrast to the resigned and beatific countenance of Edward Lynch who lies sprawled and helpless in his nightshirt, and whose wife despairingly clutches his arm in an act of supplication. The homely details of the gun mounted over the door and the fire in the hearth also offer a sinister foreshadowing of the dreadful deeds that were to follow this incident. According to the *Belfast Newsletter* (1816) three men were subsequently tried and executed for this attack in August 1816. As a grim consequence of this, just two months later in October 1816, the Lodge was set alight, and eight people were burned alive in the subsequent conflagration (Edward Lynch himself, his daughter Bridget, her husband Thomas Rooney, their five-month old son Peter and three young servants, Biddy Richards, James Rispin and Ann Cassidy). Subsequently rewards were offered for information and several informers gave evidence under conditions of secrecy, some of whom (according to both historical and folkloric stories) were allegedly murdered because of this act. After the subsequent prosecutions of 1817 and 1818, eighteen men were executed, and twelve of these men were gibbeted from trees in the locality in Reaghstown, Mills of Louth and Corcreaghy. Pat Devan himself was hanged in 1817 from a gallows erected on the site of the burned Lodge itself and his body gibbeted outside the family home in Corcreaghy.

It is at this point that the writer William Carleton entered the story of Wildgoose Lodge. In 1817, at Corcreaghy crossroads, Carleton first encountered the horrific aftermath of the events at Wildgoose Lodge. In that year, he came to Kilanny to visit his friend, the priest Edward McArdle, who lived 'three miles from the town of Carrickmacross and two or one

and a half from the celebrated Wildgoose Lodge, the scene of the dreadful tragedy which had occurred the preceding year' (Carleton 1896: 129). On a walk around the neighbourhood he saw a strange sight at Corcreaghy crossroads, a group of soldiers standing guard over a strange bundle suspended from a tree:

> I looked on before me when I had reached this queer little place, and perceived something like a tar sack dangling from a high beam of wood…There was a slight but agreeable breeze, the sack kept gently swinging backwards and forward in obedience to the wind, and I could perceive long ropes of slime shining in the light, and dangling from the bottom. (Carleton 1896: 130)

To his horror Carleton realised that these 'long ropes of slime' were the last mortal remnants of Ribbonman ringleader Pat Devan, decayed to the point of liquidity and seeping from a gibbet. The sight galvanised Carleton's interest and his *Autobiography* (1896) recalls his fascinated questioning of the soldiers, his interrogation of his friend Edward McArdle and his subsequent research of this tale of crime and punishment in the public papers available. From this information, Carleton assembled the bones of the story of Wildgoose Lodge, which were to serve as the basic building blocks for his later short stories, 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman' and 'Wildgoose Lodge'. In both of these narratives the anonymous, first-person narrator is a Ribbonman, implicit in the ghastly burning of the Lodge. The story offers an account of a single hellish night, the 29th of October 1816. In this tale, the action moves from Stonetown Church, where ringleader Pat Devan (referred to throughout as 'The Captain') forces the assembled band of dissident agrarian rebels to swear revenge on the Lynch family from the altar, then through the dark, swampy countryside to the ill-fated Lodge, which is deliberately set ablaze.

From this horrific episode of the burning of the Lodge comes one of the most memorable of all Irish Gothic scenes, where a woman (possibly Lynch's daughter Bridget or

the servant Biddy Richards) attempts to thrust a child from the window to save him from a

fiery death:

> Just then, from a window opposite him, proceeded the shrieks of a woman, who appeared at it
> with the infant, in her arms. She herself was almost scorched to death; but, with the presence
> of mind and humanity of her sex, she was about to put the little babe out of the window. The
> Captain noticed this, and, with characteristic atrocity, thrust, with a sharp bayonet, the little
> innocent, along with the person who endeavoured to rescue it, into the red flames, where they
> both perished. This was the work of an instant. Again he approached the man: "Your child is
> a coal now," said he, with deliberate mockery. (Carleton 1855: 259)

Carleton's vivid evocation of the horrors of Wildgoose Lodge presents as the ultimate Gothic

story of home. This short story features many of the characteristics of the classic Gothic

novel: the scenes of ghastly horror, the merciless cruelty towards vulnerable women and

children and the inhuman Catholic villains who are almost supernatural in appearance. The

depraved nature of these Ribbonmen is amply illustrated in the depiction of the church-sworn

oath in the 1833 *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (Fig. 183). Here, the Catholic

trappings of the scene contrast with the demonic aspect of Devan, who holds aloft the Bible

to the cheering mob while uttering the words: 'By this sacred an' holy book of God, I will

perform the action which we have met this night to accomplish, be that what it may; an' this I

swear upon God's book, and God's althar!' (Carleton 1955: 246).

Figs. 182-183: **(From left to right):** *The Attack on the Lynch Family* **(1841). Illustration from** *The Newgate Calendar*, *Part III (1800-1842)*; *The Oath on the Altar* **(1933) Illustration from** *Wildgoose Lodge.*

Sloan (1986) cites this account of the meeting in the church as 'a detail that belongs merely to the genre of Gothic horror tales' (Sloan 1986: 166), while Casey (1973) rhapsodies at length about the Gothic nature of this scene:

> In Carleton's 'Wildgoose Lodge', there are all the elements of Gothicisism – save perhaps the derelict castle, the tempest rages, lightening slices the heavens, and floods inundate the landscape. The chapel is transformed into a shadowy den of iniquity as 'the Captain', the clerk of the chapel, reigns over the midnight ceremony (Casey 1973: 220-221).

Another Gothic characteristic of this story is the presentation of the tale as sworn testimony, an impression intensified both by the narrator's repeated assurances that the story he tells is the truth and by the prosaic and factual nature of the conclusion of the story:

> This tale of terror is, unfortunately, too true. The scene of hellish murder detailed in it lies at Wildgoose Lodge, in the county of Louth, within about four miles of Carrickmacross, and nine of Dundalk...The language of the story is partly fictitious; but the facts are pretty closely such as were developed during the trial of the murderers. (Carleton 1855: 262)

In his *Autobiography* Carleton also defends the authenticity of his account of Wildgoose Lodge. He writes: 'While I resided in the county of Louth, so near the scene of the outrage, I

had an opportunity of learning, as every man had, that the incidents connected with it were as well known to the public as if that public had been present at them' (Carleton 1896: 133). This crucial statement forms the cornerstone for the testimony implicit in the narrative. In spite of this assertion, there are numerous discrepancies in Carleton's account: his claim that other convicted men were gibbeted in 1817 (when only Pat Devan was executed in that year), his description of Pat Devan's mother as living and not deceased; and, most crucially, the imagined sequence of atrocities at the Lodge fire. I direct the interested reader to Dooley's incisive historical text, which focuses on a factual analysis of these gaps found in Carleton's story (Dooley 2007: 31-39).

However, for the purpose of this thesis, our concern lies less with these gaps and more in considering what these lacunae reveal. Carleton's first account of Wildgoose Lodge ('Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman'), written thirteen years after his first horrifying encounter with Devan's gibbeted body at Corcreaghy crossroads, displays evidence of several types of gap in his recollections of the tale. These lacunae are the result of involuntary slippage, where Carleton's memory has incorrectly recalled details; of poetic licence, where his descriptions of character, setting and dialogue have been exaggerated for dramatic effect (such as his choice to write in the first person singular); but also of deliberate distortion where he framed the story of Wildgoose Lodge to fit his own political agenda. Carleton was born a Catholic in Tyrone, but as an ambitious young man, took the route that many shrewd Catholics of the era did, and converted to Anglicanism in his thirties (Dooley 2007: 29). Such conversions were often a practical response to the limitations imposed on *soi-disant* 'papists' under the Penal Laws. After his conversion, Carleton was keen to publicly embrace strong Protestant principles in his published writing. 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman', the original version of the Wildgoose Lodge story, published in the *Dublin Literary Gazette* in 1830, should therefore be seen as a strategic exercise in anti-Catholic rhetoric, designed, as

many concurrent Gothic Revival tales were, to reflect a knowing collusion of anti-Catholic

bigotry between author and reader. Indeed, in order to position this story as an anti-Catholic

tale, this 1830 version wrongly dubs the murdered Lynch family as Protestant, an attribution

Carleton later changed in the 1833 version after the *Newry Telegraph* published an irate letter

from a local man, Fr. Loughran:

> Should he [Carleton] take the trouble examining [the account of Wildgoose Lodge published
> in the *Telegraph*], he will learn from it that Lynch, whom he pompously designates with the
> epithet, *Mr.* was a *Roman Catholic* in a very humble sphere of life. (*Newry Telegraph*, 13th
> February 1830).

The title of the original story reflects a further oddity; Carleton, for all his public and

literary demonizing of Ribbonmen, had himself been sworn into the secret society of

Ribbonmen earlier in 1813, in his native Tyrone (Kiberd 2000: 265). Carleton's motives in

writing this story are therefore complex; in his hands, the narrative functions both as a Gothic

tale and as a passport into the sympathies of Anglican readers. This conflict of interest posed

by his changing sympathies is highlighted by his use of the Ribbonman as a first person

narrator. Interestingly, Carleton uses this technique again in another story of Ribbonmen

conflict, 'The Party Fight and Funeral', also published in *Traits and Stories of the Irish*

Peasantry (1833).

The different versions of the story of Wildgoose Lodge also reflect the intricate and

often contradictory relationship between Carleton and his ideas of home, nation, religion and

politics. These narratives of 1830 and 1833, while purporting to be truthful testimonies, in

fact reveal Carleton as a fundamentally unreliable narrator. This use of manufactured

narratives or 'found' narratives that are purportedly true is a characteristic not just of original

Gothic novels, but also of contemporary Gothic novels like Mark Danielewski's *House of*

Leaves (2000) or Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park* (2005). As Spooner puts it in her discussion

of 'Mock Gothic': '[T]he construction of fake histories is integral to Gothic texts' (Spooner

2006: 38). However, these stories of Wildgoose Lodge constitute an anomaly; they present a strange blend of fact and fiction where truth becomes blurred and complicated. What is undeniable is that Carleton's 1833 story became nationally known due to its inclusion in the popular *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1833). Due to the titillating nature of the tale, and the ghastly and Gothic descriptions of the terrible crime at its heart, this story began to function as the official narrative of the actual historical events. This foregrounding of Carleton's story is also due to the fear that pervaded the locality in the wake of the murders and executions, which silenced the local accounts of these traumatic events; this is an area explored further in the later section, *Stories from the Hearth*. These ambiguities, contradictions and divergences at the heart of Carleton's narratives become even more pronounced when we examine the counter-narratives they generate, specifically the local lore and the variants of the tales of Wildgoose Lodge that have remained quietly in local knowledge, transmitted secretly and remembered privately through four or five generations of the same families. These cautionary tales of Wildgoose Lodge engendered by the atrocities served as real-life reminders of both the potential *Unheimlich* nature of friends and family and of the *Heimlich* nature of the story, the need to keep it concealed.

For a researcher in the Gothic, the constitution and dissemination of these divergent stories reveal valuable information about how traumatic incidents recur in local and family narratives. It is particularly useful to analyse them in comparison to official historical accounts and authoritative fictional narratives. As this chapter will demonstrate, these accounts offer a set of narratives that run counter to the accepted metanarratives of Wildgoose Lodge. The 'little-narratives' (Lyotard 1984: 60) of these folktales discussed in *Chapter One* reflect the evolution of folk variants in the silent aftermath of trauma, the concerns of the tale-tellers who transmit them and the Gothic notions of home that still exist within this community. In discussing *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge,* the memory project

that took place to collect and identity these variants, it is necessary to outline the approaches

and the methodologies used. The fact that one of these variants stems from my own family

story of Wildgoose Lodge requires an explanation of the autoethnographic approach taken in

conducting the fieldwork for this chapter.

Autoethnography: The Methodology of Homework

This Wildgoose Lodge project starts *at home*. As such, it marks the final steps in the journey

of this dissertation, which sets out to analyse the recurrence of the Gothic home in

contemporary art and culture via memory, counter-narratives, traumatic stories, colonial

history and national anxieties. The folk-narratives of Wildgoose Lodge are germane to areas

around Reaghtown, including Corcreaghy, Philipstown, Stonetown and Mills of Louth, where

my grandparents lived. I first heard the haunting story of Wildgoose Lodge as a highly

unsuitable bedtime story from my grandmother Alice Moore. Like many storytellers

indigenous to the area, her tales offered variants of native folktales, coloured by her personal

beliefs and additions. Her tales of fairy forts, magic bushes, jumping churches, May Dolls

and graves cracked open by a hungry Devil were an intrinsic part of my childhood growing

up in rural Ireland, where mundane locations were infused with the ritual and wonder of these

supernatural narratives. This idea of 'local Gothic' has already been discussed in *Chapter*

One in terms of folk legends and superstitions, and their survival into contemporary culture

through the work of artists Rita Duffy, Alice Maher and especially Michael Fortune and

Aileen Lambert. These folk stories survive from generation to generation, especially in the

rural countryside, and inevitably become mixed with historical detail, and embellished by the

teller's memories. The teller is almost as important as the tale transmitted, as the versions invariably reflect their identity and values. The details transmitted through these tales also indicate how these stories function and how they informed and continue to inform local ideas about home, danger and secrecy.

This investigation into the local lore surrounding the story of Wildgoose Lodge therefore stems from authethnographical experience. Autoethnography, discussed in the analysis of Michael Fortune's work in *Chapter One* fuses autobiography with ethnography in a reflective manner:

> Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis et al 2011)

In the subsequent discussion of the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project I have used personal moments of autobiography to explain both the initial inspiration and the subsequent directions of the project. I have illustrated these moments with quotes from my short story 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' published in 2013 in the *Impossible Spaces* anthology (Hic Dragones: Manchester) and reproduced here in *Appendix A*. This short story was inspired by a visit to the alleged site of Wildgoose Lodge and the subsequent reflection it induced on the enduring resonance of both the story and its teller (Figs. 185-186).
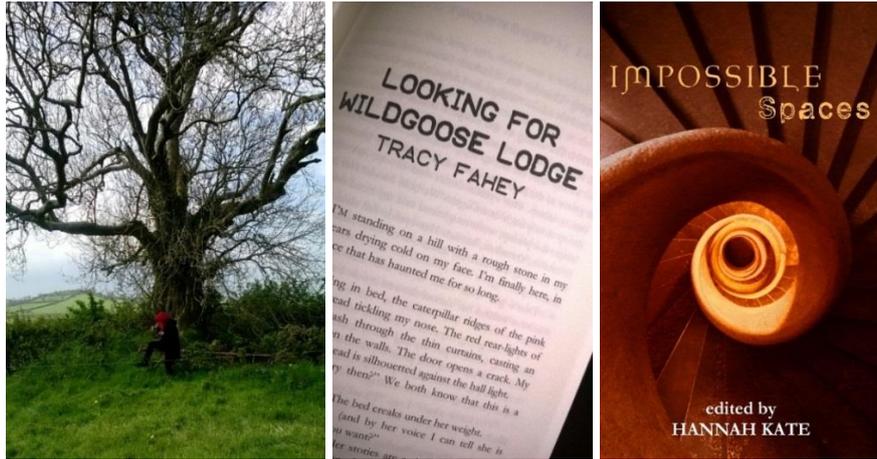
Figs. 184-186: **(From left to right): Tracy Fahey (2014)** *Site photography***; Images from** *Impossible Spaces* **anthology (2013).**

Autoethnography, as a mode of research, is used mainly in the contexts of social science and creative practice, and it occupies a liminal position between art and science research methodologies. It is seen as a post-modern antidote to the idea of the overarching meta-narrative. Autoethnography as a methodology is suited to this project as it clarifies and utilises my own dual position within the community of practice, both as an engaged member within the community and as a reflective practitioner outside the community. In *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*, my concern was to be truthful about the various roles carried out in the project, to preserve the critical nature of the reflections on the project, while acknowledging the embedded nature of my own position as ethnographer within the locality. This a delicate balancing act. Foster (1995) is sensitive to the dangers of artists using autoethnography as a kind of showy 'self-othering'. He warns of situations where the artist simulates a deeper engagement with the community of practice then actually exists:

> Consider this scenario, a caricature, I admit. An artist is contacted by a curator about a site-specific work. He or she is flown into town in order to engage the community targeted for collaboration by the institution. However, there is little time or money for much interaction with the community (which tends to be constructed as readymade for representation). Nevertheless, a project is designed, and an installation in the museum and/or a work in the community follows. Few of the principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued. And despite the best intentions of the artist, only limited engagement of the sited other is effected. Almost naturally the focus wanders from

> collaborative investigation to 'ethnographic self-fashioning', in which the artist is not decentered so much as the other is fashioned in artistic guise. (Foster 1995: 306)

This project, however, has involved embedded fieldwork over the last two and a half years. Using this autoethnographic approach has allowed me to offer truthful insights into the origins of the project, to outline clearly my position as embedded researcher relative to the community of interest around this story and to contribute a personal counter-narrative of a Gothic home, told originally in my own home. There are three autobiographical moments that have inspired and propelled this project, that I will outline and connect with the ensuing insights received and subsequent directions taken. These moments stem from my original reception of the story, the experience of the initial exploratory site-work and the realisation of the existence of other counter-narratives.

Autobiographical Moment 1: The Moment of Reception

> 'People started gathering, the way people do when there's a fire, but no one did anything.' Her voice rose sharply, as it always did at this point. 'Inside the family were burning and screaming, but no one helped them. The wife tried to save her youngest child, a baby. She broke a window and held the baby out, but a soldier raised his bayonet, stuck it through the baby, and threw it back into the fire saying, 'Nits make lice'. (Fahey 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge', *Appendix A*. 2012: 347).

When I first heard the story of Wildgoose Lodge from my grandmother, Alice Moore, in the late 1970s, this bloody and brutal narrative vividly illustrated the proximity of violence and the reality of historical atrocity. As a cautionary tale, it functioned with contemporary resonance for me as a child living ten miles from the Irish Border in the late 1970s. The notion of a hidden and guerrilla enemy resonated in those dangerous days of the Troubles. My mother would constantly reiterate the fact that active paramilitary members of the Irish

Republican Army might be embedded in my local community. We were cautioned not to speak of politics in the schoolyard 'just in case'. The story of Wildgoose Lodge therefore still functioned in the 1970s as a contemporary cautionary tale of appearance versus reality. It illustrated the idea of preserving a *Heimlich* sense of secrecy while offering an *Unheimlich* sense of the treachery and duplicity that could exist in a small, rural neighbourhood. The idea that neighbours might conceal membership of underground political societies is something to which Kiely also explicitly refers in his equation of Wildgoose Lodge with contemporary Irish politics of the 1970s. In his 1972 article in the *Irish Times*: 'Return to Wildgoose Lodge -7: The View from Leicester Prison', he reflects on 'Reprisal', a play about Wildgoose Lodge written by Republican Eamonn Smullen who was then serving time in Leicester prison on charge of attempting to buy weapons for the IRA (Kiely 1972). Smullen sent Kiely what he describes as 'a most interesting letter that he was attracted for a theme to the story of Wildgoose Lodge because he thought he could use it as "some societies use the body of the unknown soldier"'. This idea of the Wildgoose Lodge as a broader metaphor for agrarian injustice is one that may partly explain the continuing resonance of the story. In a subsequent section, *Stories from the Hearth*, I will also analyse other reasons for the survival of this Gothic home in contemporary society.

Autobiographical Moment 2: The Space of Encounter

> Then I notice that, behind the wire, overgrown with leaves, are crumbling stone walls. I bend down and touch the stones. My heart thumps hard in my throat with sudden agitation. I run my fingers over the wall, the rough stone grazing my fingertips. In the distance the farm dog begins to bark, then stops abruptly. I'm silent, so silent I can hear my own breathing. For a moment, nothing exists except the texture of stone, this physical reality of a story. *My poor Lynches*, I think, *poor, doomed little baby*. I pick up a stray stone and slowly straighten up. My eyes trace the pitiful ruin of the walls, hidden by bushes, overshadowed by the spreading branches of the tree. I can't believe the dimensions of this tiny lodge, the Lodge that has always stood so tall in my memories. (Fahey 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge', *Appendix A.* 2013: 350-51).

The direct inspiration for my short story, 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' (2013) took place in December 2012, when, as a family project, I decided to start to create a photographic map of the locales of some of my grandmother's stories. Walking the sites with my mother, Gretta Fahey (née Moore), we discussed our recollections of these tales, and I started to make some rough phototexts that captured both the prosaic nature of the locations and the strange stories they conjured up. All quotes used in the phototexts were based on contemporaneous notes taken from my mother's often-fragmented recollections of these narratives. The stories, though divergent, had one thing in common; they were tales mapped to specific local places, creating a dissonance between the mundane site and the fantastic story. Omnipresent in these strange landscapes were fragments of the most disturbing story of all my grandmother's oral narratives, the story of Wildgoose Lodge. The eventual discovery of the site was a complex operation, involving directions, wrong turns, backtracking and the final revelation of the supposed site at the top of the field (Fig. 187). At the bottom of the tree, wreathed in roots and leaves, was a heap of stones (Fig. 188), the alleged site of the Lodge. This site has an uncanny quality, discussed by Dooley and Kiely in their description; they see it as a sinister, Gothic place, a liminal site between the world of historical ghosts and folkloric legends. The site becomes even more liminal when indigenous tales of Wildgoose Lodge are considered later in the chapter, as many of these variants both dispute and offer alternatives sites for this story.

Figs. 187-188:   **Tracy Fahey (From left to right):** *Wildgoose Lodge: The Tree* **(2012). Phototext;** *Wildgoose Lodge: The Stones.* **Photograph.**

In 2012 when mapping other places situated within my grandmother's stories, it became obvious that story had leaked from the specificity of that Reaghtown field (Figs. 181, 187, 188), and that fragments of the story were now encoded in other sites and even in the very roads and crossroads that interconnected them (Figs. 199-200). This haunting presence of the story in the local countryside acts as a metaphor for how the narrative has lingered in the neighbourhood since the events of 1816.

Figs. 189-190:   **Tracy Fahey (From left to right):** *Along the Road* **(2012);** *Parknamurder Cross* **(2012).** *Phototext* **series.**

Autobiographical Moment 3: The Existence of Variants

'No good came to any of them after,' she says quietly. 'The ringleader Devan was caught and hanged, and so was half the neighbourhood, guilty and innocent alike.' My grandmother's stories are laced with death. Few characters survive. She takes another breath. 'Even the great homes connected with it died out, the four families who names began with F, they all fell victim to the curse of the Four F's.' (Fahey 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge', *Appendix A.* 2013: 347)

My grandmother had often related the story of Wildgoose Lodge with a post-script; the mini-narrative of 'The Curse of the Four F's' (Figs. 191-192). This was a story linked to the fate of four local Big Houses in the neighbourhood of the Lodge. While mapping and documenting these sites, I tried to find parallel accounts that would support this assertion. Although I could remember three of the four names - Filgate, Foster, Fortescue - I struggled to find the fourth name associated with the story. 'The Curse of the Four F's' proved elusive. In spite of researching historical documents, the Wildgoose Lodge archives in Dundalk library and conducting conversations with other members of the community, I failed to find another person who had heard this story. I then realised that my grandmother's version of the story was unique within existing historical and fictional narratives. This curse is further discussed and analysed in *Stories from the Hearth: The Curses*. In 2013, the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project began in earnest, as I started to investigate whether other dissident versions of this story existed. Initial research conducted through discussions with locals revealed that other accounts of the story also had unique mini-narratives tacked on to the story of Wildgoose Lodge (McArt 2013). This project therefore arose from the simple desire to trace the origins of a family story. There is a certain satisfaction in the symmetry of this project. This is a thesis, after all, about *home* and about how home is represented in contemporary Irish art as a Gothic concept, state, space and place. The socially-engaged art project that this chapter analyses, *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*, therefore comes from home, from a personal and autoethnographic space, a *Heimlich* place haunted by an *Unheimlich* story.
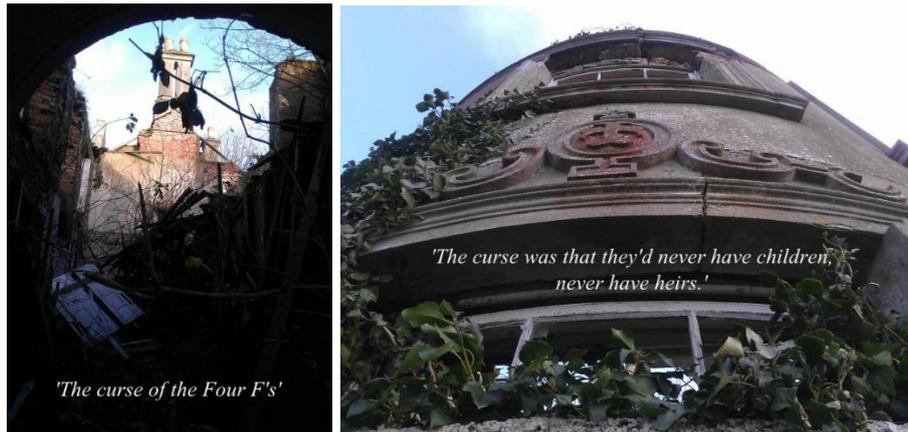
Figs. 191-192:   Tracy Fahey (From left to right) *The Curse of the Four F's* **(2012);** *Glyde Court* **(2012). :** *Phototext* **series .**

Using this autoethnographic approach also necessitated a precise type of fieldwork. This method is best described as 'homework', a concept first introduced by Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg in their *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* (1996) as fieldwork in a community, which is conducted by a member of that community:

> [Many] essays blur the boundaries that are expected to distinguish authors from their subjects of research, turning authors into subjects or semi-subjects of study. Such insertions of the author as subject are not just pretexts to occupy centre stage in narcissistic self-displays or as omniscient self-controllers…In many instances, the interjection of the autobiographical is also concerned with the author's own engagement, and/or belonging or partial belonging to the community under study, which produces a kind of lovingness towards the embattled groups. (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 22)

Smyth, in his *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (2001) elaborates on this idea of fieldwork that '…refuses the methodological boundaries…between "home" and "away", between the place of "legitimate" study – Out There – and the privileged locations – In Here – wherein "legitimate" study may be undertaken' (Smyth 2001: 128). He examines the classification of fieldwork as 'cognitive fieldwork' (or as he terms it, 'going native'), and asks 'what happens when the fieldworker *is* a native, and when the subject/object dyad that structures disciplinary knowledge is blurred?' (Smyth 2001: 127). Smyth reads this blurring of boundaries as vital in order to create a successful cross-fertilisation of different research

methods drawn from autobiography, fiction, historical sources and fieldwork, and cites the work of historian Simon Schama as an indicative product of this blended methodology. He likens this idea to a contemporary tendency in Irish fiction (citing Roddy Doyle, Paula Meehan and Dermot Bolger as examples which offer multiple viewpoints on familiar locales in order to transform them): 'A kind of fiction emerged, for example, which engaged quite deliberately with discourses of genealogy, local history and local geography' (Smyth 2001: 94).

This self-consciousness, this sense of wonderment derived from a specific site and its stories can also be seen in the work of several contemporary Irish artists including Sean Lynch, Tim Robinson and Yvonne Cullivan. Lynch, in works such as *Hy Brazil* (2008) (Figs. 9-10) discussed in the *Introduction* and *Latoon* (2007) (Figs. 16-17) analysed in *Chapter One* focuses on areas of particular concern and then ties together images and discourse of history, geography, folklore and heritage to illuminate his subject. Similarly, cartographer Tim Robinson, in his exquisitely detailed maps of the West of Ireland, overlays familiar geographies of topographical sites with the sites of cures, curses and community narratives. Cullivan, whose *Meanwhile* (2011) is analysed in the *Introduction* to this thesis (Figs. 11-12), uses a socially-engaged approach to gather stories, memories, histories, images, interviews and happenings to create a dense and multi-layered presentation of a community space. *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* fits into this context. Like the work of Lynch, Robinson and Cullivan, this project is positioned somewhere between art, memory, folklore, fieldwork, history and fiction. Most importantly, it is a socially-engaged project about homes and about the narratives we tell of home within them. Smyth's third chapter in *Space and the Cultural Imagination* ('The Location of Criticism') features studies of a number of locales in which he has lived, which he claims give him a dual perspective on his subject. His autoethnographic investigations are made poignant by his reflections on the nostalgic value of these sites to

him. He says of this work: '[I]t also represents a search for home conducted in the knowledge that home was always slipping away and is now permanently lost' (Smyth 2001: 99). This mingled sense of loss, nostalgia and the interplay of past and present is key to understanding the way that artists construct the notion of the resurrected Gothic home throughout this thesis, and is particularly relevant in understanding and analysing this project: *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*.

Remembering Wildgoose Lodge: A Gothicise Project

Remembering Wildgoose Lodge explores the kind of 'local Gothic' discussed in *Chapter One*: a mode of Gothic counter-narrative based on a set of histories and legends that are communally maintained and locally understood. The project considers how the echoes of historical events become embodied in the oral folklore of a specific community. This chapter of the thesis also illustrates and analyses the dissident narratives that occur when a traumatic event causes local stories of a site to become forbidden, secret and suppressed. It also examines these stifled narratives as emblematic of 'postcolonial Gothic' where the focus is on the return of repressed histories. The idea of social practice is praised by Foster (1995) as an appropriate mode of engagement with communities in sensitive projects that involve recovery of memories: 'Some artists have used these opportunities to collaborate with communities innovatively: for instance, to recover suppressed histories that are sited in particular ways, that are accessed by some more effectively than others' (Foster 1995: 306). For *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* the collaborators included local community members with myself as principal fieldworker. With this project, Gothicise sought to break the local silence that still lingers around the story of Wildgoose Lodge, to collect and analyse the secret, family stories that had evolved through several generations, to reflect on the value of

these narratives and to consider communally the difficult idea of commemorating this historical trauma in the locality of its origin. It is important to note here that the parameters of the project stretch beyond the boundaries of this thesis, especially with regard to the outcomes of the project and the ideas of commemoration they embody. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus narrowly on the fieldwork for this project, the collection of narratives of Wildgoose Lodge. My analysis of these stories reflects on what these tales tell us about the Gothic home of Wildgoose Lodge, how these Gothic narratives are disseminated and how these cautionary tales continue to function in their community of origin.

The Process of the Project: The Fieldwork

The story of Wildgoose Lodge is a strange commingling of *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*. On the one hand, it has certain *Heimlich* characteristics; it is a secret story about home, a story that has grown in an atmosphere of silence and concealment. On the other hand, it is also deeply *Unheimlich*, despite the familiarity of the story through various publications, native versions of the story are treated as a dark secret in their locality of origin. Here they function as repressed memories that keep recurring through their secret transmission from generation to generation. The shocking nature of the real events of 1816-1818 resonated powerfully in nineteenth-century Reaghstown. Due to the bloody and dangerous nature of the story, it went underground and remained privately communicated. It also meant that due to this public silence, particular variants of the story survived in different families and have done up to the present day. In Dooley's *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, he notes the reluctance of local people to talk about the incident, until well into the 1950s:

> As T.G.F. Paterson pointed out, the atrocity at Wildgoose Lodge was still spoken of 'with horror' in the neighbourhood at Reaghstown in the 1950s. Decades later it was still difficult to find anyone who would talk openly of the incident…There were too many raw nerve ends. (Dooley 2013: 57)

The poet, Patrick Kavanagh, a local man, wrote of the secrecy that surrounded Wildgoose Lodge in the introduction to Carleton's *Autobiography*:

> The name of Wildgoose Lodge was whispered in my native parish of Inniskeen right up to my own time…I remember one October evening, when I was gathering potatoes as a boy for a neighbour, asking him to tell me something about the business. He told me to ask my father. (Kavanagh 1968: 10)

Kavanagh's final sentence 'He told me to ask my father' is telling. The story of Wildgoose Lodge was not a tale for public discussion or consumption. It was a story told within a family, around the hearth, under conditions of secrecy. It makes sense that this story of the Lodge would be concealed. For these older interviewees, their great-grandparents, and even in some cases their grandparents, would have been alive at the time of the burning of the Lodge. We are reminded again of Cronin's (2012) investigation of Famine stories cited in *Chapter Two* and what she terms the 'porosity of memory… due as much to people's unwillingness to remember as to their inability' (Cronin 2012: 4). This silence was also due to the horror that still lingers in the locality at the savagery of the burnings, and at the brutal punishment meted out to the alleged perpetrators, especially the display of the rotting bodies of friends and neighbours in gibbets along local roads as a terrible *memento mori*. Finally, the secrecy with which this story was communicated, in the privacy of home, upheld the function of this story as a cautionary tale that warned of the hidden dangers of treacherous neighbours. This notion of secrecy, silence and trauma surrounding this story is upheld by the analysis of the stories collected through this project.

The starting point for this project was simply a desire to collect these unwritten stories. I was interested in how these stories also reflected the constitution of identity through memory, how these collective or social memories inform how we constitute community and how we share experiences through stories. This project is profoundly connected with

memory: individual, familial, community and national memory. This project is, after all, a memory project, and it uses a mix of ethnographic methodologies espoused in the work of Michael Fortune and Aileen Lambert described in *Chapter One* and methods of socially-engaged art practice espoused in the work of Sean Lynch and described in the *Introduction*. *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* examines how notions of home, especially ideas of the traumatic home, are constituted in memory. It adopts Fentress and Wickham's anthropological stance in relation to social memory. Pertinent to this project is Fentress' idea of all memory as inherently social and how it is never devoid of its immediate, local and collective context:

> …even individual memory is not simply personal: the memories which constitute our identity and provide the context for every thought and action are not only our own, but are learned, borrowed and inherited – in part, and part of, a common stock, constructed, sustained, and transmitted by the families, communities, and cultures to whom we belong. (Fentress 1992: pviii)

In *Stories from the Hearth,* these stories are analysed in terms of how they were transmitted privately as traumatic stories that formed part of local identity. Stories of this Gothic home therefore offered the members of this community cautionary tales that were communally understood. This atmosphere of secrecy surrounding the story is still prevalent today; there remains a reluctance to discuss it openly or outside the home. It is significant that the initial meetings of this project, the completion of questionnaires, the interviews and the recording of stories all took place in the participants' homes.

Given the atmosphere of secrecy that cloaked the story variants, approaching this project within the locality initially seemed like a difficult task. However, three serendipitous circumstances facilitated this fieldwork. The first was my position as embedded ethnographer, especially in terms of my access to the community of storytellers afforded by my family version of the story (already outlined in *Autoethnography: The Methodology of*

Homework). The second, and very practical reason, was the willingness of my family to broker engagement with key members of the community. The third was the license granted to speak publicly about Wildgoose Lodge due to a local film that was shooting in the area from 2013 to 2015. This film is an adaptation of a play, 'Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge', written and directed by Paul McArdle and produced by Willie Martin, currently in post-production and expected to premiere in 2016.

Initial engagement with the community was facilitated through the good offices of relatives, and the first recruit to this project, Jim McArt, came to it through the involvement of my aunt, Jean McGeough, with the Aclint Art Group. The chair of this group is local history enthusiast, self-taught artist and journalist McArt, who lives beside the Lodge and who encouraged and supported others to become involved in the project. In a meeting of 2013, McArt confirmed my impression of the story of Wildgoose Lodge being a secret one, an issue that is further discussed in *Stories from the Hearth: Secrecy and Silence*. The gravity of this story meant that the progress of the project had to be slow; the participants had to trust me with their carefully guarded versions of the tale. McArt introduced me to another interested local, Pat Drumgoole, a singer and poet who lived on the same road, the picturesquely titled 'Hell Street'. I gave McArt and Drumgoole the project information (see *Appendices C, D* and *E*), and worked with them, recording their answers to the questionnaires, which is where the first real evidence of the variants emerged. McArt's version contested the site of the Lodge and offered new information on curses associated with the Lodge including 'The Curse of the 3 R's' (McArt 2013, *Appendix F: Collated questionnaires of participants*). Despite living a few hundred yards away from McArt, Drumgoole's account abounded with different stories: tales of ghosts, a runaway Ribbonman and the christening of the Boy Evelyn (Drumgoole 2013, *Appendix F: Collated*

questionnaires of participants), some of which his friend and neighbour, McArt had never heard.

The shooting of 'Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge' also opened up avenues of communication about the story. This film became an open but encoded way to discuss the story itself in the community, especially as many local people volunteered to participate as extras on the set. Through McArt's connection with film producer Martin, we were invited to take part as extras in the filming of 'Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge' in May and June 2014: McArt as a disguised Ribbonman and myself as a village woman (Figs. 193-198). This film is currently in post-production but we will appear in several scenes filmed in Castletown and Drumcondrath that focus on the aftermath of the burning of Wildgoose Lodge. Not only was participating in this project enormous fun, allowing us to view the story of the Lodge imagined through Martin and McArdle's eyes, but it also gave McArt and myself the opportunity to discuss this project with others from the locality who were interested enough to volunteer as extras in the film.

Figs. 193-198: **Tracy Fahey (2014)** *The Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge*. **Location photography.**

After these discussions on the film set, we announced a public meeting to disseminate information on the project in Aclint Community Centre in June 2014 (Figs. 199-200). McArt advertised the meeting in the parish newsletter and through it, we recruited two more collaborators for the project, another interested amateur historian, retired teacher Enda Matthews and my mother, Gretta Fahey, who until then had not agreed to take part.

Figs. 119-200: **John Fahey (2014)** *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* **public meeting, Aclint Community Centre. Photographs.**

Others who attended the public meeting professed interest in the project but undervalued their own potential contribution to it, citing the inferiority of their versions to stories told by others in the locality. After this meeting, McArt also suggested another recruit, Ambrose Finn, who lived on the site of Pat Devan's former home in Corcreaghy. In the strange and interconnected way of rural projects, it turned out that my father had previously employed wrought-iron worker Finn to design gates for his laneway, so he brokered the introduction, and Finn agreed to take part in the project in the autumn of 2014. Finally, with five subjects identified, I was ready to start the process of final questionnaires, interviews, recording and transcription (*Appendices E* and *F*). This laborious process of trust-building exercises with collaborators involved tea-drinking and casual conversation, mediated meetings using members of my family to help contextualise the project, individual conversations with collaborators, initially without note-taking and, finally, with note-taking.

The project itself has taken over two and a half years to date, and two of those years involved building up to the point of being able to record the project variants. The timeline of this project is fully outlined in *Appendix B: Timeline of Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*. All of the questionnaires are collated in *Appendix F*, and the transcripts of the interviews and recordings are preserved in *Appendix G*. The original recordings of the interviews are also available online.[11] Time passes differently in rural communities, especially among older people. Here, old suspicions and old stories flower as fresh as when they first bloomed. The past is always present; it is a permanent backdrop to a fast-paced, ever-changing and often unintelligible present. Engaging in memory projects like this involves a change of pace on the part of the fieldworker, a need to attune to and appreciate the gentle, unhurried conversations that carry within them echoes of other generations of stories, discussions and memories. However, this slow, at times painfully slow, process yielded fruitful results in the interviews that ensued; and the recordings that capture some of the colourful and divergent stories of Wildgoose Lodge, which are analysed in the following sections of *Stories from the Hearth*.

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[11] http://designingtracy.wix.com/rememberingwgl

Stories from the Hearth

> Almost two centuries of inter-penetration between the written word and oral traditions have undoubtedly shaped and reshaped each other. The facts have become distorted and this is particularly true of the oral history of the incident, there have been and continue to be so many versions of the Wildgoose Lodge story in circulation in the oral tradition it is impossible to relate them all. (Dooley 2007: 58)

The first point to note about the variants of the Wildgoose Lodge story is the sheer amount of these narratives that have existed and that still exist in their community of origin. In *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* Gothicise has only worked with a small cross-section of collaborators, and an analysis of these narratives in *Stories from the Hearth* reveals the richness and diversity of these tales. Stories of Wildgoose Lodge are stories of a Gothic home, told in secret within homes, around the pivotal story-telling area of the hearth. In *Chapter One* we examined the function of the hearth as a focal point of the home and as a traditional centre for storytelling. Through the importance of the hearth as the font of heat, cooking and light, it began to acquire a mythic status, and became a locus for protective charms, superstitions and even animal sacrifices. The physical structure of Wildgoose Lodge remains contested (as explored in *Stories from the Hearth: The Contested Site*), but one part of the house survived the burning: the hearth. The kitchen grate of Wildgoose Lodge of this house was removed in January 1819 by Townley Patten Filgate, the owner of Wildgoose Lodge, three years after the burning, and two years after the home had been used as a gallows (Dooley 2007: 252). Filgate placed this grate in his home of Lowther Lodge near Balbriggan in County Dublin. This removal of this hearth from the Lodge seems strange; surely, such a dreadful domestic history would not bring luck to a new location. However, this removal may signify the importance of the hearth in Irish culture: it considered such a vital hub of the home that a fragment of an old hearth was often incorporated into the building of a new one (Lyons 2013). Perhaps this activity may also form part of the symbolic dismantling of the

home in the wake of its final use as a site of execution. However, as this section of the chapter explores, although the physical remains of the Lodge may have largely dissipated, the stories endure. It is these stories we will now analyse in terms of what they tell us about the Lodge, the storytellers and the significance of the events in the locality up to the present day. This section examines the secrecy surrounding these tales and their mode of transmission, the enduring legacy of Carleton and his textual colonisation of oral tales, the lore surrounding the contested site of the Lodge, and the five curses and two ghost stories that are included in the variants analysed.

Stories from the Hearth: Silence and Secrecy

These *Unheimlich* stories of Wildgoose Lodge were family narratives. 'My generation heard it in homes. Stories were told within people's own families – handed down, not written down, so there are variations from story to story' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire). These stories of Wildgoose Lodge were retold quietly, in homes, around the hearth. Public transmission of the story was discouraged and it was discussed either privately, or not at all: 'It was whispered about the area' (Finn 2015. Questionnaire). These family stories were accompanied by cautions not to repeat the story publicly, something to which almost all of those interviewed testify. Even within families, there was a sense that not all the information was being transmitted: 'And because of a fear of people to talk about it, his became fact. Because in the area we lived, I remember me father telling me stories, I mean, there's things I know he didn't tell me' (McArt 2014. Questionnaire). Matthews (2015) also recalls his father's discretion in relation to the story:

> My father never talked about it. He said it was divisive. They were sensitive about it. There was people hanged because they told stories. Wasn't discussed in the local community because you were aware that people were under suspicion. But it certainly caused divisions in the area. (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

McArt (2013) outlines the reason for this silence. In his view, the story contained information about the informers in the story that might prove damaging to their ancestors. This idea of 'associative stigmatisation' (Dooley 2007: 57) within the community is relevant here:

> Informers weren't meant to be spoken of to outsiders. Informers names were not recorded (some were, by the British, but not the right names). They run counter to British information – there is meticulous documentation but local lore has it the names were wrong. My father wanted the names to be kept secret to avoid it being cast up to people. (McArt 2013. Questionnare)

Drumgoole is blunter in his summation of the public silence that this story demanded:

> …up till I was a kid, there was people wouldn't talk about it, like, because there was a lot of informing, like and there was a lot of that, and it'd be, it'd be hurtful, you see. You wouldn't know where you were talking, that's the truth. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

This idea of damaging knowledge held secretly in the community is further explained by Drumgoole (2014), who describes this 'hush-hush' story as being talked about 'in the house'. He also cites the nineteenth-century fear of being hanged for retelling the story:

> The whole thing was so hush-hush because it was local. The real truth was only known in the local area, because they'd hang you for nothing… At the present time people are more open about it. But it'd still be only in a circle that knew about it. It'd be talked about in the house; it wouldn't be a broadcast job (Drumgoole 2014. Questionnaire).

Matthews even suggests that some embroidered accounts may have been told deliberately in order to cast suspicion on certain families:

> And thinking back on it now, the people that did talk, they would have their own version, they would have it slanted in a certain way. Now they would be implicating a family, maybe that they didn't like, you know. I think that did carry on for a long time in the area and the result is that no one spoke very much about…my father would have said something – a bit about it. (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

Likewise, Fahey (2015) recalls hearing this story at home, from her mother. Her mother came from Haggardstown, miles away from the site of the story, and was therefore untainted by the

local fears that stemmed from speaking of the story: 'Yes, I remember hearing it at home from my mother who wasn't a native of the area, my father, who was, never spoke of it' (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview). Fahey (2015) also reveals being told about it by another non-native, the local schoolteacher: 'Even when the teacher spoke about it, we didn't discuss it among ourselves in the yard. The teacher wasn't from around. Some of the children in the yard were related to either informers or Ribbonmen' (Fahey 2015. Questionnaire). Neither Fahey's mother, nor her teacher felt the full weight of local secrecy associated with the telling of the tale. The taboo on talking about the story was a very strong one because of these family connections with the story: 'It was a bit frightening and we were told not to talk about it to anybody because their relations lived nearby, relations of the people in the story like the Kearneys, Murrays, O'Callaghans and, I think, Philipses' (Fahey 2015. Questionnaire). Indeed, Finn (2015) maintains that this avoidance of the subject still lingers in the area today:

> And even today, there's still, like, a taboo about talking about it, you know. Because the Lynches there, actually a couple of them died not so long ago in Reaghstown, I'm sure they were related to the Lynches that was there. (Finn 2015. Recorded interview)

Fahey (2015) describes the traumatic effect of this story on her as a child and the unusual degree of silence that the local children preserved about it:

> My mother used to tell us lots of stories and this story again shocked us and as children when we'd go out to the playground after hearing it, we would not discuss it. We'd never bring it up in any of our games or mention it again. Even as very young children we were very, very discreet about this. (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview)

Her reason for this is revealed in her description of the night terrors she and her sister experienced as a consequence of the story: 'As a child we thought some of the people were still alive and we'd go to bed at night and any noise we'd hear, we'd think it was them back to burn our house' (Fahey 2015. Questionnaire). This repeated distress caused by imagined home invasions by long-dead Ribbonmen is the stuff of nightmares, the essence of trauma,

whose very haunting quality lies in involuntary repetition. Not only did Fahey imagine these vindictive acts, but also the repeated admonitions to keep silent about the story confused her sense of the chronology of the story itself:

> These people were still *alive* [my italics]. In our minds the actual people who did it were still out there, just because they were related to these people that we played with, we thought they were still alive, and they could do it, they could burn our house too (Fahey 2015. Recorded Interview)

This vivid illustration of the power of the story to remain alive in the present is a testimony to the storytelling of the narrator. It also echoes my own experience of encountering the story through the same primary source - my grandmother, which is recorded in 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' (Appendix A):

> I check the date of the story. 1833. For years I'd contemplated that dark circle of surrounding faces, unmoved and unmoving, lit by the red flames of the Lodge. The date finally answers the dreadful question I had never dared to ask my grandmother – "Were you there?" (Fahey 2013: 348-349)

For Fahey (2015), the unwanted immediacy of this story had the effect of silencing any discussion of the story; this repression makes sense as a response to a traumatic experience: 'I didn't tell it to my own children. I didn't like the story. I wanted to get it out of my house' (Fahey 2015. Questionnaire). As Bradley *et al* (2001) claim: 'In psychoanalytic terms, trauma resides in repetition and its manifestation in language. A trauma is something the subject keeps trying not to go back to' (Bradley *et al* 2001: 6). However, if the *Unheimlich* nature of the story silenced some from repeating it, for others, the *Heimlich* nature of the tale meant that it was preserved in their family as secret knowledge, to be kept close and remembered: 'that was the secret of it that kept it alive, more or less' (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview). Drumgoole links this secrecy with the need to keep the tale safe within the family:

> But then there was everyone like nearly down the lane there, there was a man there was taken out and hanged. It was still…it was in the area, you know? It was such a local thing, it never

died but it was very…people was afraid to open their mouth. That's the truth. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

The immediacy of these stories of Wildgoose Lodge cannot be overstated. These were tales that were (and to an extent, still are) transmitted in the home, by family members to family members. The home was the site of the re-enactment of the tale. Many of the crucial events of the story took place in homes; in the Lodge itself, and outside the homes of the executed men, which also functioned as grim sites of gibbets. One of these sites was located behind Ambrose Finn's home. As Finn puts it: 'I lived on the site of Pat Devan's house' (Finn 2015. Questionnaire). Devan's house had stood where Finn's workshop does today, behind his own home, and some of the original stones were reused in the building of the workshop (Figs 201, 202). Finn (2015) asserts that this site proved a magnet for those who wanted to experience the vicarious thrills of witnessing a *bona fide* site of the story:

> AF: Coming from Corcreaghy…well, years ago there used to come loads of people who wanted to see where the Wildgoose Lodge, the fella that burned it was, lived, you know. And there used to come, actually, bus-loads of people, that time.
>
> TF: Really?
>
> AF: Yeah. I can still remember and that's an awful long time ago, and all you'd do is show them the place, and they'd give you a shilling, maybe, or something, you know? At the time, sure, you'd be over the moon. [both laugh]. But, eh, he lived up there, just where our workshop is. They say that Pat Devan was hung outside the house for eighteen months. He was hanged actually in Reaghstown but they left him hanging there for eighteen months. And the other lads was hung along with him, they were only there for six months, but they left him there as a reminder to keep [pause] to keep them quiet I suppose. (Finn 2015. Recorded interview)

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Figs. 201-202:   **Tracy Fahey (2015) (left to right):** *Ambrose Finn outside his workshop*; *The remains of Pat Devan's house behind the workshop*. **Photographs.**

Finn's home, in his youth, was the site of ghoulish Gothic tourism but his home offered a very different variety to the simulated experiences offered by Doagh Famine Village, Loftus Hall and the Titanic Experience, discussed in *Chapter Two*. In considering the folk stories of Wildgoose Lodge as Gothic tales, it is crucial to note how these narratives not only signalled home as a site of danger, but through their telling the local homes they were told in were also transformed into places where this story was re-enacted in the imaginations of children (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview). Some homes themselves even became Gothic sites of tourism visited by travellers to experience the second-hand *frisson* of the story (Finn 2015. Recorded interview).

Finn's home may have been the site of one of the gibbetings, but other interviewees also claimed a direct link with Wildgoose Lodge through family members who were directly involved in the original historical events of 1816. Martin McArt, McArt's great-grandfather was one of the locals asked by the landlord William Filgate to help guard the Lynch property:

> Also, my great-grandfather, Martin McArt, would be one of the tenants who kept a watch on the Wild Goose Lodge, after the initial attack on the lodge, which, you see, people were hanged for, and because they suspected something might happen. (McArt 2014. Recorded interview)

This story is also supported by Drumgoole in his interview:

> …old Jemmy McArt, Jim McArt's father, like, his grandfather now, Jim's great grandfather – everyone had to take their turn, there was a tenant in the area for security after the three men was hung there was security put on Lynch, y'know what I mean? – to protect him. And they had soldiers but the tenants had to protect them as well. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

Matthews (2015) also had an ancestor who played a role in the story. Like Devan, he was a hedge-school teacher, who may have been implicated by a spiteful neighbour, who, according to Matthews, told William Filgate that he was involved with the Ribbonmen:

…there was some of my ancestors were teaching – up around the church there was a hedge school. It's recorded in the Archaeological Journal, a hedge school in 1813 or 1814. And Michael Matthews taught there in a hedge school. And some people came to me and told me that – whether it was him or his brother – some of my ancestors were rumoured to be involved in the activities that led up to the Wildgoose burning. And the story is that the local landlord visited …

TF: [interrupting] That would have been William Filgate?

EM: Yes, that would have been the story, on horseback, and knocked at the door, and my ancestor must have came out and he just said 'Are you at home? Have you been at home?' 'Yeah' he says. 'That so-and-so' he says, mentioning a name, 'is telling me lies again'. Or something like that. So obviously someone was trying to implicate him. (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

However, these stories are interesting, not in terms of the truths they tell, but in terms of the Gothic counter-narratives that they offer to the dominant discourses of history and fiction. The urgency and immediacy of these narratives is arresting; these local people talk of their great-grandfathers as if they were a recent memory. Episodes from Drumgoole's story are described with breathless horror, as if they were witnessed directly by the contemporary narrator:

They were from all over. I heard my father say he knew a man called Fagan- his own age – his grandfather told the story – he met a man running near Kingscourt, his face was all black and he said 'There was dreadful things done at Wildgoose Lodge tonight'. (Drumgoole 2013. Questionnaire)

These counter-narratives illustrate how gaps in historical narrative are infilled by communities, and how these stories become populated by their own family ancestors, their own familiar places. As Lippard comments:

When history fails a community, memory takes up the task. If history comes from above and outside, from teachers and governments, and document cultures prove inadequate, grandmothers become the authorities. And the landscape triggers their memories, becomes symbolic, conveys different messages in different cultural languages. (Lippard 1995: 155)

Stories from the Hearth: Carleton's Influence

What is of interest, however, is how Carleton's story infects these local narratives: 'The first bit of information was Carleton's book' (Matthews 2015. Interview). Both McArt and Matthews assert the dominance of Carleton's story and the role of his publications in keeping the story alive:

> Yeah, but it wouldn't have been kept so much in the public eye unless your man wrote about it, Carleton. Carleton was the guy first saw the body and wrote it down. I'd say it might have been more or less forgotten if Carleton hadn't written his book because it kept it alive and then other people went in to research it – Father Murray, and Dooley did the final one. They were the books that did keep it…But probably Carleton's account - it wasn't entirely accurate, I think – would have kept it in people's minds. (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

> William Carleton, who came to house down in Killanny…he went on to Dublin, laid down the year after Wildgoose Lodge, where there were still bodies hidden around the area. And when he went on to Dublin, he wrote a book, 'Traits and Customs', I think it was, and included in that, he included the story of Wildgoose Lodge, where it's now regarded as a gothic tale, he told, not necessarily the truth, he added his own bits to it. So it's only really in recent years, people have researched, and gotten back to what it was. (McArt 2014. Recorded interview)

Finn also unconsciously repeats an image from Carleton's story in his recorded interview: 'It was in Stonetown Chapel that the oath was made, and they always said that a dove flew down and put out the candle twice, that they were going with candles' (Finn 2015. Recorded interview). This is a direct translation of Carleton's imagined scene, where a pigeon flies down and puts out the candle in the church, to dramatic effect: 'At this moment, the candle that had burned before him went suddenly out, and the chapel was wrapped in pitchy blackness; and the sound as if of rushing wings fell upon our ears' (Carleton 1855: 246). It is not only Carleton's story of Wildgoose Lodge which is cited by those interviewed. McArt describes the gruesome, lingering effect caused by the decaying bodies hanging in the area in

1818: 'Gibbeted bodies caused fear. No-one who had fruit in the area could sell it - because of the flies that clustered around the bodies' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire). He repeats this information in the recorded interview of 2014:

> We said that fruit from county Louth, or that area of county Louth, you couldn't sell it at market because the bodies were rotten down in it, and the flavour had it in, which is understandable that it wouldn't be touched. Whatever farms it was from, they could just forget about it. (McArt 2014. Recorded interview)

This evocative image, however, is an unconscious echo of Carleton's description of the area in his *Autobiography*:

> During that autumn, fruit in the county of Louth was avoided, as something which could not be eaten. This I knew to be a fact, because I was an eye-witness of it. There were in all twenty-four dead bodies swinging from gibbets in different directions throughout the county of Louth... Every sack was literally covered with flies, which having enjoyed their feast, passed away in millions upon millions throughout the country. (Carleton 1896: 134)

Carleton's texts still colonise these folk stories, a reflection of the public dominance of this story in national as well as regional discourse. This reflects the function of Carleton's story since the 1830s as a cypher, a coded but legitimate way to discuss that which was too terrible to speak about through the medium of fictionalised narrative. This is also borne out by my fieldwork. As McArt put it succinctly: 'People were afraid to talk about the story, so Carleton's story became the story' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire).

In 2013, a new cypher for the story emerged in the locality, the shooting of the film, 'The Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge'. Some of those interviewed saw this as a positive thing, a chance to reclaim the story: 'Maybe when this film is out it will open things up a bit' (Matthews 2015. Questionnaire). 'In the last ten years there has been more talk. With the film now being made it has become topical' (Finn 2015. Questionnaire). However, local opinions were divided on the veracity of this film:

> If a film is made [a film shoot is ongoing in 2013] that will revive it but it will produce fiction. I'm afraid too much fiction going into it. I'm glad the bones will be remembered by a film. However the books are well researched, this is the best way to remember it. (McArt 2013. Questionnaire)

> Well there's a film coming out. There was a play about it too, and the film is based loosely on the play. I was at the play. It mightn't be all that accurate. (Matthews 2015. Questionnaire)

However, the imminence of the release of this film has quite possibly encouraged these project participants to set their family stories down in interviews as a counterpoint to yet another fictionalised narrative of Wildgoose Lodge.

Stories from the Hearth: The Curses

Another interesting point to note is that this film has also revived rumours of a local curse. Matthews' interview records his half-joking, half-serious contention that those involved in the film may experience ill-luck:

> I'd say people round here would have probably liked to have forgotten about it. They mightn't have – even still – like in the film – an odd person will be saying 'What do you want to bring that up for?' D'you know? And people saying - 'You'll have no luck, no luck with that…The curse is over. The curse – no. The curse - when the film started, Willie [Martin, the producer] was in hospital, three or four people were in hospital. That was the curse. But I think it's been – [laughter] – the film's finished. (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

According to McArt, this curse is rumoured to have followed the productions of stories of Wildgoose Lodge into the twenty-first century (Mc Art 2013. Recorded interview). The staging of the play 'Occurrence at Wildgoose Lodge' in the Táin Theatre, Dundalk in 2011 (originally performed in 1996) was beset by real-life drama. As the *Argus*, the local newspaper reported: 'By a weird twist of fate, the set for the play, which had been stored in old warehouses on the Long Walk, was damaged by fire the night before the production was due to open in the Town Hall' (Roddy, the *Argus,* 12/01/2011). However, McArt also has a more serious perspective on the issue born from his own original reception of the tale: 'There

was a curse - if we touched anything to do with it, we would be cursed - cursed if we got involved in a film or any other project. Wildgoose Lodge was a cursed story' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire). During the course of this fieldwork, five different curses associated with Wildgoose Lodge have been uncovered: the 'Curse of the Four F's', the 'Curse of the 3 R's', the curse of the site, the curse of the gibbets and the curse that McArt cites - a general curse on anything that revived the story of the Lodge.

The 'Curse of the Four F's' was one of the starting points of this project, which originated with the variant told by Alice Moore within my own family. In the version my mother and I had heard, this story was tacked on as an aftermath of the story of the Lodge; the claim that four local families, including the Fosters, the Fortescues and the Filgates were cursed to die out:

> The curse of the 4 F's was that they'd never had children, never have heirs. They had female children the line was to die out. The Filgates are still around, but that's because a man with the surname Henry married the Filgates' daughter – he changed his name. The others were the Fosters, the Fortescues and I don't know the last one, maybe Foulkes or Fitzgerald (Fahey 2012. Comments recorded for family mapping project. 2012).

McArt confirms this artificial continuation of the Filgate name: 'He was Henry, but then he had to change it to have the land so, but they retained the name, but he was actually Henry. So he was named Filgate, but he was really Henry' (McArt 2014. Recorded interview). After sustained research looking for links between the Fosters, the Fortescues, the Filgates, in 2015, when reading about the 1818 trials popularly believed to have resulted in the execution of innocent men (Wildgoose Lodge Archives, Dundalk), I realised that members of these three families had been jury members at these trials. Another 'F' is recorded as sitting on the jury, a member of another local wealthy family, the Fitzgeralds. This remains my most likely hypothesis for this missing fourth cursed family; the cursing of the jury members of four

prominent colonial families who had sentenced seventeen local men to death would have seemed like an instinctive community response.

Possibly the most significant curse uncovered in this research is the 'Curse of the 3 R's', described by McArt, Drumgoole and Matthews. This curse was first revealed in an initial interview with McArt in 2013. In completing this questionnaire McArt mentioned, with slight reluctance, the 'Curse of the 3 R's' that his father had told him which was concerned with the identity and punishment of informers. 'The parish priest (Rev. Marron) wrote a letter to Mrs. O'Reilly of Knockabbey [local Big House] about the incident and he cursed the names of the informers from the altar – the three R's' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire). His later recorded interview of 2014 reiterates this story:

> The story of the three R's was that they were local informers [names omitted here on request of interviewee] and that they gave information that got people hanged. Their names have never come out when William Pendleton investigated the whole thing, his report, their names have never come out, it's always other informers. But that was said locally… (McArt 2014. Recorded interview)

The names of the three 'R's' are popularly supposed to be the names of the original local informers, names that were not meant to be disseminated to the authorities. McArt is visibly uncomfortable with the story. His father obviously told it to him with strict instructions not to repeat it. In terms of the recording, we agreed on omitting the actual names beginning with 'R' spoken on tape from the transcript. However, McArt was happy to explain that one of these 'R's' was a local miller, who operated Reaghstown Mill. Annie Lynch's oral account of Wildgoose Lodge (1964-65) cited in Casey (1975) and Dooley (2007) confirms the existence of this character in local lore: 'One man was the name of the Miller Reenan, he lived at the chapel…he stagged [informed] too' (Casey 1975: 216). Lynch's account also details gory accounts of another informer (Kavanagh) being shot and left to lie in the road and another unnamed man who was lashed to a horse's tail 'and galloped round till there wasn't a piece of

him left together'(Casey 1975: 216). McArt also talks of the terrible punishment of informers

in the area, and of the fate of this miller turned informant:

> But they went home for something and when they came back the miller was dead, someone
> had put in his head, his skull, with a stone. There was someone crossing over, and it's
> believed the miller fell asleep, and he saw that which shouldn't leave you. And said 'Oh you
> devil. (McArt 2014. Recorded interview)

Matthews corroborates this story, albeit in a more fragmented manner. He affirms that he

heard the story from the same (unnamed) source from whom McArt heard it. However,

Matthews's account returns to his repeated assertion that Wildgoose Lodge is a dangerous

story, a story people tell to implicate others. Like McArt, Matthews will not mention the

actual names:

> One of the stories was mentioned was three surnames beginning with 'R' – won't mention
> them. And the story was that, em, on the scaffold a priest must have been giving last rites or
> last whatever he gave to the people being hanged and the story was that he took off their
> shoes – don't know if they took off their shoes before they were hanged? – I don't know – but
> when he was taking off their shoes he said to the guy 'These three' – he named the three 'R's
> – 'they will die out. They won't last in this parish.' Now the guy that said that to me would be
> the guy that Jim McArt would've probably got the story from, but I imagine that guy would
> have had a slant on his story that he was anxious to …he would have been anxious certainly
> that one of the R's, maybe two of the 'R's would be implicated in that way. That he wouldn't
> be a fan of them, d'you know? (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview)

It is interesting to note that both McArt and Matthews' accounts are typical of Catholic folk

tales; in both versions, the priest performs an exorcism-like function of banishing evil from

the area, as discussed in the analysis of *The Cardplayers and the Devil* in *Chapter Two*.

Other curses are simple and based, like the fairy legends discussed in *Chapter One*, on

the idea of occupying sites of atrocity and trauma. These include the trees used as gibbets for

the executed men. Matthews recalls with some enjoyment his repudiation of such a legend to

his own neighbours:

> I also remember when I built my house I cut a tree, and some of the old folks going past said
> to me – 'You'll never have luck, that tree is where people were hanged from the Wildgoose

Lodge'. So of course I stopped that by saying I counted the rings on the tree, the tree didn't go back that far, so that stopped that. That was the tree straight out there, that gap there was where the tree was. It was an ash tree. But I don't think there was any hangings there, you couldn't have seen the Wildgoose Lodge from there (Matthews 2015. Recorded interview).

Some of these curses were site-specific. These curses also, of course, include the site of the Lodge itself. 'It was meant to be cursed of course, the person who owned the land would have bad luck' (Matthews 2015. Questionnaire). However, this curse becomes more diffused as the site of the Lodge itself is called into question by different accounts of the story that still survive in the locality, in this case the variants recorded by McArt (2014), Matthews (2015) and Drumgoole (2015).

Stories from the Hearth: The Contested Site

In these local variants, the accepted knowledge of the site of the Lodge is contested by the tacit information held in these family tales. Three versions of this story captured through interviews contest the agreed site of the Lodge, as discussed in the *Introduction* to this chapter. Dooley (2007) tells us that on this site at the top of the Reaghstown field stood a stone, thatched shooting lodge built for the Filgate family of nearby Lisrenny House. The Filgates settled in Ireland during the Cromwellian plantations of the seventeenth century, and in 1816, the Lodge was owned by Townley Patten Filgate, brother to William Filgate, the owner of Lisrenny House. Filgate refers to it in a letter of 1867 as Carthill House. The house was built on a flood plain and attracted wild geese, hence the name. However, the main clue as to the topography of the site is a drawing in the Wildgoose Lodge archives in Dundalk Library (Fig. 203). This is a drawing by one of Townley Filgate's nieces for William Filgate, which depicts the Lodge at the top of the field. This child's drawing, however naïve, appears to uphold the testament of the ruined stone walls that stand beneath the ash-tree today. Of

these ruins, Dooley states unequivocally: 'The site was never rebuilt upon. In fact, it is unlikely to have been touched by those who have farmed the surrounding fields since 1816. It has remained taboo, a place not to be meddled with because tradition has associated the site with great tragedy' (Dooley 2007: 19).

However, local lore claims otherwise. A painting by McArt (2014) of Wildgoose Lodge (Fig. 204) which hangs in Aclint Community Centre, site of the public project meeting, offers a quiet but defiant reclamation of the site of the story - half-way down the hill on the right hand side.

Figs. 203-204: **(Left to right): The only known contemporary drawing of Wildgoose Lodge by Townley Filgate's niece. Exact date unknown. From the Wildgoose Lodge Archive, Dundalk County Library; Jim McArt (2013)** *The Burning of Wildgoose Lodge***. Painting.**

McArt (whose father Jemmy McArt is cited by McArt, Drumgoole and Matthews in their stories as a local 'expert' on Lodge lore) contests the site of the Lodge, claiming that the building popularly supposed to be the Lodge was in fact a later cowshed built from the old stones. Matthews and Drumgoole also agree with this:

> Well…the Wildgoose Lodge is on the right-hand side, me father ploughed it. And he worked in them places…he came from Coolderry... But he ploughed, it, I think, in 1926. And he says you could just mark out the whole square, of the whole haggard, it was real black, with the ashes. It was all flat, you see. The shed's there on its own. There's no doubt, no doubt at all, no doubt where it was, but to save a lot of talk, Mick [Drunmgoole's brother] always said that they took up the stones from the old building and made a cattle shed or something on top of the hill, but there was sure one thing, they never put thatched houses on the top of the hill, Johnny, that's why they built in the hollow. Down on the right, if you go up that ditch there, I

can show you there from the window. In the ploughed field, just out from the right, that's where it is. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

On a site visit in April 2015, McArt accompanied me to the field to point out this alternative site (Fig. 205). According to him, Matthews and Drumgoole it lies half way down the hill of the adjoining ploughed field (Fig. 206).

Figs. 205-206:   **Tracy Fahey (2015) (left to right);** *McArt indicates the alternative site of Wildgoose Lodge*; *The field containing the alternative site of the Lodge*. **Photographs.**

There are no existing historical accounts to back up this assertion apart from a curious statement by Carleton in his *Autobiography* (1896) when he recalled visiting the site:

> I was so completely absorbed by the interest it [Wildgoose Lodge] excited, that I went to the *very low elevation* [my italics] on which the house stood and observed the scenery about it. The house had been rebuilt and was inhabited by a decent and very civil family, named Cassidy, if my memory does not fail me. (Carleton 1896: 131)

The 'very low elevation' Carleton describes seems to have more in common with the land labelled in local accounts and indicated by McArt. Whatever the truths concealed in the site itself, the very ambiguity about this place constitutes a defiant counter-narrative to those who are locally considered the 'authorities' on the story, Carleton, Murray and Dooley. The alternative site posited by the locals is a rebellious affirmation of the 'secret' knowledge that the community claim to possess. Fentress and Wickham (1992: 113) discuss what they term 'peasant memory', a term I apply here in the context of these folk memories of Wildgoose

Lodge. Fentress and Wickham describe these memories as featuring local geography, narratives of resistance, opposition to the outside world:

> One certainty is the constantly recurring importance of local geography as a structure for remembrance: hills, caves, farmhouses, and fields, all carry their memories for peasants to talk about…the geographical space of the community is by this means itself socialised, its past associations giving it a meaning that makes sense for its inhabitants. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 133)

This idea of the predominance of local geography in rural social memory illuminates the many and various references to local geography in the variants of Wildgoose Lodge story. In the interviews there are multiple references to crucial events taking place 'down the road' or 'across the field' which stress the immediacy of the story (McArt 2013, 2014, Drumgoole 204. 2015, Matthews 2015, Finn 2015) and which also lay claim to these sites as containing local narratives of personal and family value.

Stories from the Hearth: Cautionary Tales

The story of Wildgoose Lodge functions locally as a dark folk-tale, as an Irish Gothic story that vividly illustrates the consequences of transgression. The Gothic has long been served, as Spooner puts it 'as a language and lexicon through which anxieties both personal and collective can be narrativized' (Spooner 2006: 9). Over last four or five generations these stories of Wildgoose Lodge have been transmitted from parent to child accompanied by admonitions of secrecy. These admonitions were accompanied by vivid images of the transgression of this secrecy: hangings, gibbetings and murders. It is helpful to view these variants as cautionary tales in terms of both content and mode of transmission. This idea is supported by Dooley who says: 'The further one moves chronologically from the event, the less historically accurate it becomes and versions begin to take on the characteristics of folk tales in which the forces of good and evil are ranged against each other' (Dooley 2007: 63-

64). These cautionary tales of good and evil had several functions: to keep children safe, to warn of the dangers of secret societies, to function as an oblique reminder of the treacherous nature of neighbours. The original tales were shrouded in secrecy to avoid incriminating members of the community, and are still rarely spoken of to avoid causing shame to the ancestors of the original Ribbonmen and informers. These tales warned of the permeability of the home to acts of violence committed by neighbours; a cautionary tale that functioned at different moments in time periods concurrent with episodes of national unrest, rebellion, or guerrilla warfare, as discussed in the earlier section *Autobiographical Moment 2: The Moment of Reception* and as illustrated also in Drumgoole's account:

> Not but there could have been two hundred at the burning of Wildgoose Lodge, from all over the country. Oh they were from all over. They were from nearly as far as Shercock. I think Scanlan was from Meath Hill direction, or County Cavan or over that part of the country, and they were from right round everywhere. It was like, nearly like the IRA, you know? That was, that was like the same thing. Well, it was round the revolution, fighting the British. That was simple as it. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

Carleton himself wrote the original story, at least in part, as a cautionary tale about Catholic rebellion and the wickedness of the Ribbonmen, as part of his own complicated relationship with religion and politics. In fact, as discussed earlier on the chapter, in the second version of the story in his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* he replaces the original title of 'Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman' with the simpler 'Wildgoose Lodge', as if to deny the possibility of repentance on the part of the Ribbonmen in question (Dooley 2007: 33). The story of Wildgoose Lodge also acted as a grim reminder of the fates awaiting those seduced by mob violence. Finn (2015) sees the function of the story to act as an object lesson in the danger of mob rule: 'People need to be reminded what can happen when a mob of people get out of control. All reason goes' (Finn 2015). The story also illustrates a real fear of secret societies and of the dangers they posed not only to others, but to their own members.

For McArt, the tale he heard from his family was flavoured by the fear of the Ribbonmen that was transmitted by his father. His father, Jemmy McArt, was born in 1886, a scant seventy years after the burning of the Lodge, and was cautioned repeatedly by his own mother against joining any secret society: 'His mother [Jemmy's mother] when she lay dying made her sons promise not to join any oathbound society' (McArt 2013). This fear of the lawless force of secret societies is echoed in Drumgoole's story:

> They [the local people who had joined the Ribbonmen] couldn't get out. The old folk would say a lot of them wouldn't go and were killed and buried in the bog. It was no messing, it was one or the other…You couldn't get out, they wouldn't let you out. (Drumgoole 2013. Questionnaire)

The terrible consequences of rebellious actions would have been originally reinforced by the grim presence of gibbeted men in the district from 1817 to 1819. This act of gibbeting is recalled as an integral part of the story by McArt (2014), Drumgoole (2015), Matthews (2015) and Finn (2015). Even in Fahey's account (2015) where she disassociates herself from the story, she recalls a vague sense of this episode:

> And then there was something about hanging people with ropes and they were taken out of the ropes and piled up in a crossroads just outside Louth village and it was called Parknamurder Cross, and it's still got that name. And that's what we heard. That's the way my mother told that story. (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview)

The effect of this narrative on children is described in Fahey's account (2015) 'I was the youngest in the family. I was frightened by it' (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview). When she heard the story in the late 1950s, it was still a story that terrified. It still performed its function as a cautionary tale: 'We'd [the local children in the 1950s] never bring it up in any of our games or mention it again. Even as very young children we were very, very discreet about this' (Fahey 2015. Recorded interview). Matthews describes the unexpected effects of this story on a recent party of visiting Scouts: 'We had Scouts camping out in the football

field for a jamboree. Jim [McArt] and myself gave them a little walk up to Wildgoose Lodge and told them the story, and of course, when they came back we couldn't get them to sleep' (Matthews 2015. Questionnaire). These testimonies show that the narratives of Wildgoose Lodge still function as cautionary tales: the threat of Ribbonmen and gibbeting may have receded, but the stories still provide a gory warning from history against transgression and act as a caution against breaking local silences.

Wildgoose Lodge offers a set of complicated narratives. Even the central figures in the story occupy liminal positions; no one is entirely innocent or villainous. As Finn puts it in his account: 'There was traitorish behaviour on all sides in this story of brutality, it was evident in the mob that attacked Wildgoose Lodge, also the police who responded to it' (Finn 2015. Questionnaire). Some accounts also posit a counter-narrative of resistance: an insistence that the 'real' villains were not the Ribbonmen but those who created an unequal system that prompted these acts of violence. Pat Drumgoole's account points the finger squarely at the property owners: 'The enemy was Filgate the landlord' (Drumgoole 2014. Questionnaire), although, as discussed, McArt (2013) and Matthews (2015) both recall the Filgates asking local men to stand guard over Wildgoose Lodge in order to protect the Lynches. Even more confusingly, the Lynches are not viewed uniformly as innocent victims. Ambrose Finn's account (2015) openly states that the Lynches were foolish to report the initial crime. This was also seen as tantamount to informing. Pat Drumgoole's account perhaps best reflects the complicated relationship that the Lynch family occupies in this narrative:

> Charlestown was the place, was the sort of, we'll say the head office of Filgates that time, and Lynch – that's the road, there was no road over there, out here, the lane, that was the way that time. So he went up to report the thing and he was told on the way to go back, he'd cause an awful lot of problems. He was on his way back and he met – now according to this, now this is, I would only know, the old folk'd tell you, met a woman who said 'Go on, report that crime, because we can't live in the country with the raiding and the robbing, and all this. So

he went up and he told the story. There was three men then informed on and they were hanged and that's what caused the whole thing. (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

In fact, of all the accounts recorded, it is Drumgoole's which is seeded with the most stories. Of the five subjects interviewed, only he recalls hearing versions of the story outside the home, from several local, elderly people: 'Well the story I was told, a long, long time ago by the old people' (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview). These multiple sources of reception may be the reason why Drumgoole's version of the story is so full of colourful micro-stories:

> You'd hear it with the old boys above in the ceidlidh houses. There was no radio, nothing, just memory, locked in. It was carried in the mind, all the time. You'd hear it from the Hell Street locals, when people came in from cutting turf in the bog, to where there was a drinking place for horses. They'd gather together with the Bumper Sharkey. There's where the truth of it was told. (Drumgoole 2014. Questionnaire)

In fact, Drumgoole's account tells a story not recorded in any written or oral source, of the christening of the Boy Evelyn, an account of a meeting between Devan and a child on its way to a christening:

> When they were taking Pat Devane to be executed, on the 24th of July 1817, they came down Hell Street. There was at least two thousand gathered. On the way they met a baby being taken to be christened – the Boy Evelyn - the child's name was Johnny McDonald, his mother was Evelyn' (Pat Drumgoole 2013. Questionnaire).

This is an odd story and may serve as a moral tale where evil and innocence are contrasted, where the babe on its way to the christening meets the man on his way to be hanged. Given the moral ambiguities of the story of Wildgoose Lodge, this symbol of innocence represented by the child Johnny may also have functioned to cast a question on Devan's guilt. These micro-narratives of curses and incidental, tacked-on stories are fascinating in that they reflect the individual preoccupations, prejudices, or concerns of the tellers. Of all of these, perhaps the most interesting micro-stories concern ghosts.

Stories from the Hearth: Haunting Stories

On initially researching local stories of Wildgoose Lodge, I was struck by the absence of ghost stories. Given the proximity of the story to Samhain, the Irish feast of the dead, and the terrible nature of the deeds committed, this was puzzling. My first interviewee, McArt had never heard any ghost stories associated with the site or the characters of this story: 'There are no ghost stories about Wildgoose Lodge, even though it is such a horrific story. Maybe the story is so horrific that it represses ghost stories' (McArt 2013. Questionnaire). This was an interesting and perceptive comment on the effect of trauma on silencing narratives of haunting, but was refuted the following year by McArt's friend and neighbour, Drumgoole, who recounted the story of the ghost of the Lodge servant girl, Biddy Richards. It is worth noting that although McArt and Drumgoole are friends of long standing who live a few hundred yards from each other, McArt had never heard this story, a speaking tribute to the secrecy of these family variants. Drumgoole repeats this story of Biddy Richards in the recorded interview of 2015:

> Biddy Richard came from Mountrush, Stormanstown. But there's a mass pass from that time … everyone had to walk. There was a mass pass from her place, by her door, it came out at Reaghstown Chapel, still there, the wicker gate's there, still at the back there was a mass pass, eye, people used to go, like when I was serving mass, people'd cross the fields, d'you know, short cut. And an old woman called Mrs. Quinn was in hospital, she was ninety years of age if she was an hour [laughs] and me mother could come out to see her, and I'd take out me mother and I'd sit down and I'd ask her. I was interested and she lived beside Richards or her people. And she says 'I'll tell you a story, the night of the Wildgoose Lodge', that her father handed on down, or that came down through the family. 'He was coming walking down the mass pass and he met his daughter going home, and he said to her 'Biddy, where are you going?' She never spoke. She never spoke. It was her ghost! She was burned that night.' (Drumgoole 2015. Recorded interview)

Drumgoole's expert use of stories within stories is a motif often found in folklore and copied in classic Gothic texts such as Maturin's *Melmoth* (1820) which features a labyrinthine

selection of these micro-stories. This Gothic ghost story of the Lodge, of the *fetch*, or double

of Biddy Richards, may be linked to the fact that it burned down almost on the eve of

Samhain, a time when ghosts were popularly supposed to walk. This was the only ghost story

that Drumgoole was aware of about the Lodge, although he remarks of it: 'It was a breeding

ground for them [ghosts], if ever there was one'. However, Finn's interview (2015) revealed

another possible ghostly legacy of the Lodge, the spectre of Pat Devan, popularly supposed to

haunt the site of his former home and the site of his gibbeting. Devan's old home stood at the

end of the hall garden, where Finn's workshop stands today:

> AF: Well actually that time we would have been – there was ghosts everywhere – there used to be a hall garden down there and everyone seen ghosts in it. But sure it was all – when electricity came in it did away with them all [laughs]. They couldn't appear then at all.
>
> TF: Did anyone tell you they'd seen this ghost?
>
> AF: Ah, our Oliver [Finn's brother], beyond in England, he'd swear he was coming from a dance one night and he seen a lad down there. Sure it was probably somebody out behind the ditch, maybe. He's supposed to have run home. (Finn 2015. Recorded interview)

In a beautiful act of symmetry, the haunting story gives rise to stories of haunting.

Conclusions: The Persistence of Memory

It is at this intriguing point that we close off the discussion of the process of the project. As

outlined in the introduction to this chapter, *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* continues beyond

the parameters of this thesis, and will continue until 2016. In this next phase, I am working

with the collaborators and other artists to discuss ideas of creative commemoration. These

will involve local folk responses to the story of Wildgoose Lodge that will be publicly

displayed and performed in the locality, some of these produced by the active collaborators

such as McArt's paintings (Fig. 204) and Drumgoole's *Ballad of Wildgoose Lodge* (Figs.

207-208), as well as local man Jemmy Daley's epic poem on the Lodge (Fig. 209), a copy of which was given to me by Drumgoole in 2014.
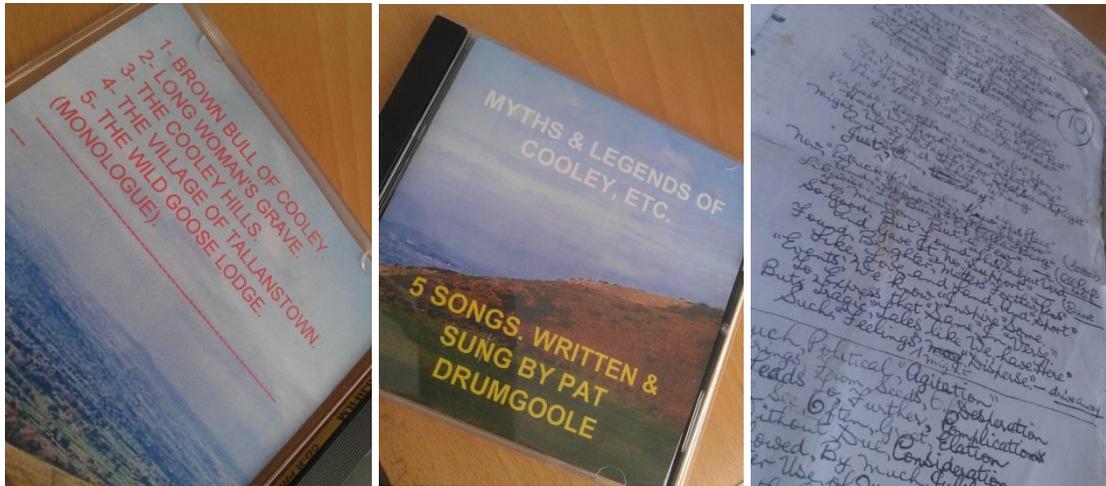
Figs. 207-209:   **(From left to right): Pat Drumgoole (2012)** *Myths and Legends of Cooley, etc***. featuring 'The Wild Goose Lodge' (Monologue); Jemmy Daley (1984)** *Epic poem***.**

This local dissemination will also consolidated by other sub-projects. The collective, working with the County Library, will examine the feasibility of creating a local archive. There is also a planned collaboration with artist Martina Cleary, whose current art practice (discussed in *Chapter Two*) specialises in the photography of traumatic sites. Cleary will work collaboratively with the locals producing images that capture the spirit of the story and its variants. The final project output in 2016 will be the creation of a short book or catalogue of these variant stories together with the project photography by Cleary. This book will offer their stories, and validate and reify these narratives as interesting, complex and creative responses to this story of atrocity and trauma. In doing so, it is hoped to position these oral narratives as a recognised contribution towards the lore of Wildgoose Lodge through an act of postcolonial *revoicing*.

This project is important because memory projects are important; they preserve, record and celebrate memory as a collective and living entity. Stevens argues for the importance of these studies in capturing the haunting quality of historical traces:

> Unlike history, as the story goes, memory exists continually, inscribed in the ongoing production of a narrativized self or community of practice or affiliation. The muscle remembers, the space is haunted, the landscape is scarred, always, with memory, a trace remains. A trace remains, defiantly, sometimes hinting, sometimes pressing, sometimes roaring, but always insisting in its ubiquitous return. (Stevens 2009: 3)

Social memory or folk memory reflects what is valued by the community. What survives is important; what survives tells us about the community and its values. *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* plays an important part in the documenting of the sad history of the Gothic home of the Lodge; an 'other' version preserved through oral folklore. It also explores the idea of colonial history as having a profound and lasting effect on rural communities. Many of these pivotal happenings, like the Great Famine and the agrarian wars, are still surrounded by silence, resulting in the fragmented and diverse versions of the Wildgoose Lodge story that still exist today. This project seeks to offer authentic and othered accounts of the atrocity. It attempts to allay the fears of open discussion that surrounds these stories. In this project, Gothicise hopes to act as a catalyst in facilitating the communication of these stories, the coming together of the community to discuss these and remember them, and ultimately to preserve these unique stories that are bound up in personal, local, regional and national identity. This process of revoicing and of commemoration would offer the community a validation of their memories and stories that they consider important. As Lippard (1995) puts it: 'The reconstructive potential of an art practice that restores or reveals the meaning of a place to those who live within it cannot be overestimated' (Lippard 1995: 155)

However, is to these Gothic counter-narratives that we return to in order to consider fully the implications of the story of Wildgoose Lodge within the context of the Irish Gothic home. *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* acts as a case study that shows how notions of home and safety continue to be subverted through the contemporary transmission of tales based on a single historical incident. This is a Gothic art project that focuses on the survival of the

Gothic home in contemporary culture. Carleton's story with its exaggerations, drama, villains and unreliable narrator has been termed 'Gothic' by McCormack (1998: 304), Sloan (1986: 165-166) and Casey (1973: 220-221). This project demonstrates that the local variants of the story of Wildgoose Lodge analysed here are also perfect Gothic stories. They feature many of the characteristics we associate with Gothic stories: strange gaps and silences, deliberate omissions, unreliable narrators, contested sites, ghost stories and areas of ambiguity. Kiely, in an article of 1972 states: 'The Gothic, or even the Grand Guignol, still follow the folklore of Wildgoose Lodge' (Kiely, the *Irish Times*, 21ˢᵗ September 1972). The counter-narratives collected and analysed here offer solid evidence of both the lingering of the Gothic home through this case study of a single haunting tale, and of how this story has been continually resurrected, retold and reinterpreted from generation to generation. This act of storytelling transforms these same homes into Gothic sites of transmission of these counter-narratives.

These stories are, in a sense, timeless; at their heart, they function as cautionary tales that warn of the *Unheimlich* dangers posed by neighbours, of the vulnerability of home and the need for secrecy around stories. These tales undermine home as a site of safety and induce a sense of trauma in the listener. The reservoirs of memory conjured up in these variant tales typify the Irish Gothic ideas of home discussed in earlier chapters; home appears here as a place of danger and anxiety, shadowed by colonial oppression. In a country haunted by similar historical atrocities (rebellion, wars, executions, evictions, The Great Famine) home is presented consistently as a threatened and permeable space. More than any other study contained in this thesis, the stories of Wildgoose Lodge illustrate how past visions, memories and stories of the home continue to penetrate, infiltrate and complicate ideas of home in contemporary art practice. Wildgoose Lodge, which burned down almost two hundred years ago, obstinately refuses to disappear. Its spectre lies dormant in the houses around Reaghstown, Corcreaghy and Mills of Louth, where it is still resurrected as a tale to

frighten children and warn of domestic danger. The fiery afterglow of the Lodge still continues to illuminate national, regional and local stories of home that haunt contemporary Irish culture.

Some Conclusions

> Irish culture is sedimentary. By this I mean that things don't get obliterated, they get buried. They are covered with a new layer of history but they are still down there, like bodies preserved in bogs. They surface in new forms, like holy wells and holy mountains as places of Christian pilgrimage. Or they emerge into wholly new contexts, like Fionn Mac Cumhaill waking from his slumbers to find himself in two avant-garde 20th-century novels, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*. What Sigmund Freud called 'the return of the repressed' is the very stuff of Irish art. It is haunted by ghosts and revenants. Nothing is ever really dead. (O'Toole, 2011)

This thesis has explored the resurrection of the Gothic home in Irish contemporary art practice from 1990 to 2015, and examined the reasons underlying this uncanny recurrence. These dark homes of contemporary art are *revenant spaces*; they recur repeatedly in Irish culture. However, the twenty-five years from 1990 and 2015 gave rise to a strong wave of domestic Gothic art by artists including Alice Maher, Rita Duffy, Michael Fortune, Connolly Cleary, Martina Cleary, Michele Horrigan, David Creedon, Yvonne Cullivan, Willie Doherty, John Kindness, Patric Coogan, Philip Napier, Aideen Barry, Dorothy Cross, Amanda Coogan, Cicely Brennan, Patrick Jolley, Anthony Haughey, Elaine Reynolds, Paddy Baxter, Kim Haughton, Valerie Anex, Sean Lynch, Daphne Wright, Michelle Horrigan, Marianne Keating and Seamus Farrell. The thesis examines this art for its continued and multifarious representations of the Gothic home in contemporary culture. This work is firmly identified as Gothic in both subject matter and form.

This thesis views the Irish home as a profoundly Gothic space, as a font of narratives and images that reflect themes of suppression, marginalisation, repression and trauma. More than just another revival of the Gothic, this contemporary art offers a fresh, flexible and

invigorating view of the topic of domestic space, and of how this space is explored within the context of Gothic as a genre. Furthermore, it exhibits a national concern for home and identity, and how this is constituted through memory and tradition. In this art, home is a place of potential and metaphorical imprisonment: of permeability and of violence. The contemporary anxieties latent in Irish society are echoed by artworks that reflect the status of home as contemporary ruin and as a dangerous space of destruction, instability, hysteria and terror. Lynch and Cullivan explore the disappearance of the traditional culture of home, Creedon and Haughey look at how the physical form of home becomes fragmented, and Barry and Jolley question the mental and normative constructs of home.

Aesthetically, the art examined here conforms to the definition of Gothic art offered in the *Introduction*: it is 'concerned with ideas of representation and narrative, with surreal juxtaposition, uncanny recurrence and ambiguous space' (Fahey 2015: 37). This art also uses Surrealist modes of representation, and photography, film, and animation as favoured media. Surrealist juxtapositions in the work of Maher, Cross and Barry both illustrate the interwoven nature of past and present homes, and explore the surreal state of existence posed by constricted gender roles in contemporary society. The use of lens-based media fulfils a documentary role in ethnographic art projects, but also captures the flickering instability of home in the recording and reanimation of contemporary ruins. These contemporary artists use the Irish home as a symbol of domesticity in all its manifestations, from local to national, but also use it as a symbol of wider concerns that incorporate ideas of control, transgression and identity.

This contemporary recurrence of the Gothic home is rooted in the Irish past: in history, memory and folklore, ideas of dark domesticity run deep. However, the artistic responses to the home as Gothic space from 1990 to 2015 are also catalysed by key events

during this time-period. The dawn of the new millennium in 2000 marked the beginning of the Celtic Tiger economic boom. This was planned as a new beginning that would mark the end of the past: a new wave of home-building signalling the end of precarious tenancy and a healing of colonial scars. However, in the fifteen years that followed, Ireland's economy went into spectacular slow-motion collapse, ownership of homes reverted to government agencies and banks and estates lay abandoned all over Ireland in a dreadful echo of Famine villages of the 1840s. This economic collapse created a real-life Gothic drama for those labouring under heavy mortgages, racked by austerity taxes and trapped on ghost estates. As the timeline (p. ix-x) of this thesis shows, during these fifteen years from 2000-2015, the past has been repeatedly resurrected through a series of commissions and reports that have uncovered evidence of Church scandals: clerical child abuse and the appalling conditions prevalent in Magdalen Laundries. This has forced Ireland to continually confront its own buried horrors: the dreadful *Unheimlich*, or uncanny, secrets of institutional homes. The work of Coogan, Barry and Maher reflects on this shameful, dark history. From 2000 to 2015, dark secrets have also been excavated through the dreadful recovery of bodies of the Irish 'Disappeared', victims of paramilitary violence, from unmarked graves in Ireland. This period has also been marked by the painful path towards an eventual ceasefire in Northern Ireland, a political situation which has triggered responses from artists such as Doherty, Duffy and Kindness, who contemplate the nature of divided and dangerous homes constructed on contested territories.

In focusing on home as an *Unheimlich* locus of anxiety, the Irish artists investigated in this thesis have produced a remarkable body of work that actively contributes to the genre of Irish Gothic art. This art enlarges the idea of Irish Gothic itself by providing a commentary on colonial memory, postcolonial disquiet, capitalist culture, neoliberal economics, cultural history and anxiety disorders. This thesis has also explored how this practice-led research

conducted by these artists leads us to a new understanding of Irish Gothic as it emerges from both national and contemporary contexts. The integration of the study of Irish fine art practice with the study of Irish literature and culture should also lead to potential new and useful interdisciplinary directions in Irish Gothic scholarship, and open up transdisciplinary possibilities to a new generation of scholars of the Gothic. There is a need to bring this fresh approach to reinvigorate ideas of Irish Gothic, which have lain too long in the shadow of Anglo-Irish Gothic novels. There is also a need to engage with the vivid, dramatic and compelling canon of Irish contemporary Gothic art. The analysis of fine art practice in this thesis has proven fruitful in defining the nature of contemporary Irish Gothic in an interdisciplinary sense, and artists and writers, through a series of exhibitions, talks and publications, could usefully identify and elaborate further domestic Gothic themes in contemporary creative practice.

This thesis recognises the wider possibilities of contemporary Irish Gothic. There are several planned outputs from the thesis that hope to stimulate further dissemination of the idea of the Irish Gothic home in contemporary culture. These include the continuation of the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project, the publication of a book of short fiction (*The Unheimlich Manoeuvre*), the delivery of a conference paper ('This tale of terror is, unfortunately, too true': Contested Stories, Sites and Memories of Wildgoose Lodge) in November 2015, and the preparation of a public 'In Conversation' with Aideen Barry to be held in the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2016. This 'In Conversation' will mark the culmination of Barry's residency living in the gallery and will interrogate her ideas of the *Unheimlich* home before an audience. These interdisciplinary outputs reflect both the nature of the thesis, but also the nature of contemporary Gothic itself, which embraces multiple modes of expression. This thesis therefore considers how artists contribute to the idea of Irish Gothic; but also looks at the function of the Gothic as a dissident mode, offering a counter-

narrative that runs parallel to hegemonic discourses of home, culture, history and politics. The Gothic art of the home is aligned with the art of counter-narratives and protest: from Maher's response to the 'little-narratives' (Lyotard 1984: 60) of folklore, to Doherty's exposure of hidden histories in Northern Ireland, to the polemic performances of Amanda Coogan, to the political protest art of *NAMARAMA*, and the fieldwork collection of counter-narratives by Gothicise during the *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* project. All of these works contest dominant narratives of home and actively subvert normative notions of domesticity as 'felicitous space' (Bachelard 1954: xxxv). This illustrates Botting's view of the Gothic as a counterpoint to prevailing narratives (1996: 1-2). This point is also supported by Schultz (2010) who sees Irish Gothic as a tradition that runs counter to the mainstream, and one which usefully illuminates the splits and divisions in contemporary Irish identity.

The triggering of past Irish traumas by contemporary events is discussed and demonstrated throughout this thesis. *Chapter One* explores the persistence of the Gothic home in contemporary culture, in terms of the survival and reimagining of domestic legends and superstitions that relate to ideas of danger and protection. *Chapter Two* examines the persistence of history and colonialism in ideas of home in both the North and South of Ireland. *Chapter Three* deals with the issue of home as a charged zone of gendered anxiety, and as a past and present site of female oppression. *Chapter Four* looks at the economic crisis of 2008, and the resultant ghost estates produced, as physical evidence of the haunting recurrence of the Irish Gothic home as a revenant space. *Chapter Five* continues the idea of circular time outlined in *Chapter Four* by revealing the existence of hidden counter-narratives of the famous Gothic home of Wildgoose Lodge that still survive into contemporary culture. This constant aligning of past and present recurs throughout the thesis; artists look continually at creative continuities within the genre of Gothic domesticity. Fortune and Lambert act to preserve and to document cautionary tales of the home in

ethnographic collections of contemporary folklore, Duffy looks at the difficult task of reclaiming home from the dark memory of colonialism, while Haughey links the ghost estates with the aesthetic and political histories of the ruin. Through the practice of these artists and others examined in *Chapters One* to *Four*, and, especially, through the practice-led research conducted in *Chapter Five*, this thesis also offers strong evidence of the resounding echoes of folklore, history and memory in contemporary representations of home.

Fig. 210   **Seamus Farrell (2008)** *Neo Ruin/Irish Folly*. **Temporary sculptural installation.**

This interpenetration of past and present homes in Irish art is perhaps best exemplified by a final example drawn from contemporary fine art. In 2008, a strange building project began within the walls of the medieval King John's Castle in Limerick city. In the courtyard, a frail structure slowly emerged: a ruined, dislocated, and chaotic version of a contemporary Irish home. Not only was the structure completely permeable to the elements, but the exterior walls were studded with domestic objects, thereby creating a boundary confusion between interior and exterior. This piece was *Neo Ruin/Irish Folly*, created by artist Seamus Farrell for *Eva International*, the Irish biennial of fine art in 2008 (Fig. 210). Sited within the walls of the medieval King John's Castle, it contrasted the monolithic bulk of the castle with the frail remains of excessive, extravagant modern building. A sympathetic piece, *Neo Ruin/Irish*

Folly refers to the history of the castle, to the twentieth-century housing estate that once existed within its walls and to the Gothic legacy of the mock-ruin. One of the chief tropes used in the discourse of failed home is that of the ruin, with all its allied historical and cultural meanings as explored in *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Four*. The term 'folly' used here can signify both the tradition of building ornamental Gothic Revival works, and the mania inherent in the hysterical over-building in the early twenty-first century. Farrell's piece is a reminder of the fragmented and political resonance of the ruin, and the idea of the ruin as both a metaphor and a trigger for memories.

The most Gothic of all ruins, of all homes, is of course, the castle. In this piece, both homes, castle and folly, represent Gothic spaces of colonialism, ruin and destruction. As McGrath comments: '[T]he Gothic revels in ruin, whether it be architectural, moral, biological, ontological or psychic, and every manifestation is emblematic of death' (McGrath, Grunenberg 1997). This piece signals ruin in both ancient and contemporary contexts. In 2008, the same year as Seamus Farrell exhibited *Neo Ruin/Irish Folly*, the Irish housing market collapsed in a spectacular fashion. This financial disaster resulted in a grim legacy explored in *Chapter Four*: a legacy of evictions, defaulted mortgages, abandoned building sites and acres of bleak ghost estates that infested the country with the mass spectacle of dead homes. Farrell's work appears here as a kind of cultural premonition, a forerunner of the blank expanses of future-ruins that were to manifest in Ireland from 2008 onwards. *Neo Ruin/Irish Folly* presents the viewer with a physical resurrection of the Gothic home in Irish contemporary art: a modern resurrection that reawakens older, darker ideas of dispossession, colonialism and agrarian warfare. Farrell's piece also acts as a summative image of the strange journey of the Irish home from early history to contemporary culture: the home resurrected in the form of dark legends, cautionary tales, colonial hauntings, gendered anxieties, postcolonial reconfigurations, economic instability and inevitable returns. When

placed side by side, the medieval castle and the contemporary ruined home signify the link between past and present: between old homes and new, and between older and more contemporary ideas of Gothic.

This thesis has interrogated and analysed contemporary manifestations of the Gothic home in Irish fine art practice and valorised these representations as a resurrection of the Gothic in Irish culture. It sees these Gothic homes imagined in fine art as shadowy echoes of a dark past, as profoundly revenant spaces that haunt Irish culture. The works discussed here are rooted in both contemporary anxieties and a traumatised past; contemporary art acts as a *trigger* that unleashes buried traumas of home within the Irish psyche; danger, warfare, colonialism and eviction. This art of the Gothic home is also profoundly concerned with ideas of trauma and loss: with loss of culture, loss of community, loss of integrity and loss of agency. This thesis maintains that although contemporary events such as the rise and fall of the Irish economy, the repression and control of Irish women by Church and State, and the political anxieties in Northern Ireland have all provoked Gothic responses in fine art practice, these responses are triggered by 'worrying old wounds' (Backus 1999: 243-44). These contemporary events resurrect old fears, old insecurities and old hurts in the national psyche. Historic and folkloric models of the Gothic home that exist in Irish society represent dormant anxieties that are activated and resurrected by contemporary art practitioners. The homes of contemporary Irish art are haunted by past homes: the ghosts of fairy forts, Famine Cottages, Big Houses, bombed houses, Magdalen Laundries, ghost estates and other *Unheimlich* predecessors of modern Irish domesticity. Implicit in the traces of these former homes is the physical and mental survival of these places as uncanny spaces; they return in the form of spectres of colonialism, atrocity and economic disaster. One thing is certain: in the persistent spirit of *Unheimlich* return, these Irish Gothic homes that haunt contemporary art will

continue to haunt its future; as revenant spaces that continually seek to resurface and reappear.

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Appendix A: 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' (Tracy Fahey)

Looking for Wildgoose Lodge

by Tracy Fahey

It's 2012. I'm standing on a hill with a rough stone in my hand and tears drying cold on my face. I'm finally here, in this strange space that has haunted me for so long.

It's 1979. I'm lying in bed, the caterpillar ridges of the pink candlewick bedspread tickling my nose. The red rear-lights of my parents' car wash through the thin curtains, casting an ominous red glow on the walls. The door opens a crack. My grandmother's curly head is silhouetted against the hall light.

"You'll want a story then?" We both know that this is a rhetorical question.

"Yes," I say happily. The bed creaks under her weight.

"Well now," she says (and by her voice I can tell she is smiling). "What story do you want?"

I ponder the choices. Her stories are a rich cornucopia of possibilities. There's the magical building of St Mochta's Cell, the Jumping Church, the Cracked Grave… I consider the options and choose – "Wildgoose Lodge, please Granny."

It's 1999. I'm sitting in the hospital beside my grandmother's bed. A busy nurse hurries by.

"Nearly time for her to rest," she says, but gently. Everyone is gentle in the intensive care ward. In fact, my grandmother is almost asleep. Her eyelids flutter and droop, jerk open, then droop slowly back down again. We hold hands. Her hand is no longer the plump, work-roughened one my hand remembers; it is smaller, shrunken, harder. Her eyelids fall shut. I gather up my handbag and ease my hand out of hers. Instantly her eyes flicker open.

"Don't go." Her voice is so low that the hum of the machines behind her almost drowns it out. I settle back in the chair.

"I'm not going anywhere," I say, in what I hope is my most reassuring voice. I put my bag firmly back down on the worn linoleum of the floor and place my hand back on hers.

There's a double-bleep from a nearby monitor. Another nurse pauses to check the readings.

"You know what?" I say. "I'll tell you a story. Any story you like."

It's 1979. My grandmother draws a dramatic breath and starts the story. "The Lynch family lived in a house called Wildgoose Lodge," she began. "Now this is a true story and it all happened just up the road. But, long ago, there was a wicked, evil bunch of men – who wanted to get rid of this family. So, they met in a church and, in front of the altar, they took a vow to kill them all. So off they went that night, in the dark, and they surrounded the Lodge. They lit it all on fire, and the flames danced around, lighting up the countryside all around. People started gathering, the way people do when there's a fire, but no one did anything." Her voice rose sharply, as it always did at this point. "Inside the family were burning and screaming, but no one helped them. The wife tried to save her youngest child, a baby. She broke a window and held the baby out, but a soldier raised his bayonet, stuck it through the baby, and threw it back into the fire saying, "Nits make lice.""

In the darkness, I feel the familiar, cold wriggle of horror in my stomach. It's a horrible story. I don't know why I ask for it. But I'm mesmerised by its awfulness. For a minute we are suspended in a bubble of silence and darkness, as we contemplate the fire and screams.

"No good came to any of them after" she says quietly. "The ringleader Devan was caught and hanged, and so was half the neighbourhood, guilty and innocent alike." My grandmother's stories are laced with death. Few characters survive. She takes another breath. "Even the great homes connected with it died out, the four families who names began with F, they all fell victim to the curse of the Four F's."

"And this really happened?" I ask, as I always do.

"It did, and just down the road, in Wildgoose Lodge."

This is the final line. She gets up and closes the door. I lie in the dark imagining the terrible heat of the Lodge, the faceless men, the spitted baby.

I don't think my parents really knew about the stories she told me.

It's 1988. I'm bored, and in the reference section of the local library. It is the Year of the Leaving Certificate – that dreaded entity of multiple school examinations. I'm meant to be revising for a chemistry exam, according to my revision planner, but my desk is recklessly piled with odd books, novels, poetry, stories. I suck my pen, rolling it about my mouth in an expert fashion, like a sailor with a hand-rolled cigarette, as I read. Idly, I flip through the pages of the Penguin Book of Irish Short Stories, and then stop. There it is. Wildgoose Lodge, by William Carleton. *Surely not*, I think, disturbed, *not Granny's Lodge*? Confused, I suck furiously as the pen, until I taste bitter ink on my tongue and spit it out. It is the same

Wildgoose Lodge. I'm enchanted. The ominous, multi-coloured revision planner lies beside me, utterly forgotten. The familiar script moves seamlessly through the old set-pieces – the trip through the dark fields, the old Lodge aflame. I read on, breathlessly, as the poor Lynches, trapped in their terrible narrative, once again re-enact their final moments. The desperate mother thrusts the child forward, the captain stabs his bayonet, the momentous words are uttered: "*Your child is a coal now," said he, with deliberate mockery.*" I feel a perfect shock, like ice-water down my back, despite the dusty warmth of the library.

I check the date of the story. 1833. For years I'd contemplated that dark circle of surrounding faces, unmoved and unmoving, lit by the red flames of the Lodge. The date finally answers the dreadful question I had never dared to ask my grandmother – "Were you there?"

It's 2012. I've spent over an hour trying to find the site of Wildgoose Lodge. I'm armed with a copy of the Carleton story and my grandmother's vague description – "just down the road." My aunt, when I call her, proves a more reliable source, directing me through a complex series of manoeuvres down roads and laneways, with a suggestion to ask for final directions at a nearby farmhouse. As I drive I realise that this place, this strange place, is only half a mile down the road from my grandmother's house. Her directions are more precise that I had imagined.

I get out of the car and rap on the farmhouse door. Silence. Then a dog barks, once, twice, and then there is a steady staccato burst of barking from the backyard. I'm rehearsing my lines, but when the door finally opens I just blurt out, "I'm looking for Wildgoose Lodge."

There's a pause as the stout woman in the doorway looks at me carefully.

"Aye?" She clearly needs more information.

"I'm Alice Moore's granddaughter," I explain. "She told me the story when I was very young. I've always wondered where it happened."

Her expression softens. "Alice Moore! She was a lovely woman. I thought for a minute you were one of those history people that come here wanting to rake it all up again. It was a bad business. Some things should be let lie."

"Sorry," I say instinctively.

"You're grand," she says dismissively. "You're local, that's different."

She stands beside me and points to her right.

"Just up that track and it's on top of the hill." She stops to consider something. "Sure I'll walk up a bit of the way with you. I have to go up to the cows anyway." Picking up a bucket from the doorway, she nods at me. We walk up the lane. I feel suddenly, absurdly nervous. She chats on – the weather, the growing shortness of the days, the rise in petrol prices. I don't listen, distracted by the welling bubble of anxiety in my stomach.

We turn the corner. She points again. "There it is." I look and see a huge tree, darkly silhouetted against the sky, an uneven scrub of grass and hedge surrounding it.

"It looks like a fairy fort," I say, marvelling.

"It's one of those places alright."

I look confused.

"One of those places, you know, ones that people don't go near."

"I know what you mean."

She sighs. "Maybe it was a fairy fort once. Places like that do get used again and again. Bad places." She hefts the bucket from one arm to the other. "I'll not go up there with you. Take care, Alice's granddaughter."

"Thanks," I say. I can't take my eyes off the towering tree.

But where is the Lodge? I walk towards the tree and clump of bushes. I can see fence posts surrounding the bushes, a slim strand of wire connecting them. I walk around, puzzled. Then I notice that, behind the wire, overgrown with leaves, are crumbling stone walls. I bend down and touch the stones. My heart thumps hard in my throat with sudden agitation. I run my fingers over the wall, the rough stone grazing my fingertips. In the distance the farm dog begins to bark, then stops abruptly. I'm silent, so silent I can hear my own breathing. For a moment, nothing exists except the texture of stone, this physical reality of a story. *My poor Lynches*, I think, *poor doomed little baby*. I pick up a stray stone and slowly straighten up. My eyes trace the pitiful ruin of the walls, hidden by bushes, overshadowed by the spreading branches of the tree. I can't believe the dimensions of this tiny lodge, the Lodge that has always stood so tall in my memories. I swallow hard.

It's 1992. I know what has happened. I know as soon as I step off the bus, my father's face tells me. When we open the car boot to stow our college rucksacks in the back, I see it, her little, battered, maroon suitcase that I once borrowed for a school trip to the Gaeltacht. It contains, my father confirms, her 'effects'. I look at it, my throat swelling with a football-sized ache. How can someone whose life was so large and unforgettable come to be

contained in something so little? Years later, that suitcase will be one of the saddest things I remember.

It's 2012. I'm standing on a hill, with a rough stone in my hand, and tears drying cold on my face. I think of my grandmother, of her suitcase, of the tiny lodge. I'm crying for my sweetsting memories, for time's terrible diminishment, for what remains behind when the story has ended.

Appendix B: Timeline of Remembering Wildgoose Lodge

Remembering Wildgoose Lodge
2012-2015 (Part I)

| Dec 2012-Jan 2013 | July 2013 | Aug 2013 | Sept2013 | Jan 2014 | Feb-March 2014 | April 2014 | May 2014 |

Site photography, family interviews, archival research in Dundalk commences

24 July Jim McArt meeting

Meeting with Jim and Pat Drumgoole

Meeting Jim McArt

Lecture 'Forgetting to Remember' March 31 (Lime Tree Lecture Series)

Contacted Willie Martin re: filming

Short story 'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge' accepted for publication

'Looking for Wildgoose Lodge published 15 July

Lecture 'Gothic Locations; [Re]imagining Sites and Stories' for MA Festive Arts September 23rd

Printmaking – screen printing images and text (Feb-March)

Site photography II

Wildgoose Lodge filming May 24

Remembering Wildgoose Lodge
2014-2015 (Part II)

Timeline dates: July 2014 | August 2014 | Dec 2014 | Feb 2015 | April 2015 | May 2015 | June 2015 | July 2015

Public meeting Aclint Hall June 27

Recorded interview Jim McArt

Pat Drumgoole questionnaire Dec 6

'The Locality of Loss'. Paper given at Literature of Loss conference MIC Feb 20

Remembering Wildgoose Lodge: Gothic Trauma Recalled and Retold' Paper given at Radboud University, April 1

Full write up of WGL project

Arts Council applications, Site photography with artist Martina Cleary

THESIS SUBMISSION DATE

Meetings with stakeholders on final outcomes

Project process continues beyond writeup

Filming Wildgoose Lodge June 28

Ambrose Finn questionnaire Dec 10

Enda Matthews questionnaire March 24

Record interviews with Pat Drumgoole, Enda Matthews, Ambrose Finn, Gretta Fahey

Appendix C: General Information Sheet for participating stakeholders in *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge*

General Information Sheet for participating stakeholders in Wildgoose Lodge project.

Dates:	2015
Project Title:	PhD study: "*Resurrection. The Return of the Gothic Home in Irish Contemporary Fine Art Practice*"
Principal Investigator:	Majella Tracy Fahey, PhD student at Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick).
Contact details:	tracy.fahey@lit.ie

Invitation

I am a PhD student at Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick). I am currently researching the nature of the Gothic home in contemporary Irish art practice. Irish Gothic, as a study of otherness, marginality and liminality, has been well documented in literature and to a lesser extent, in film, but little work has been done on the significance of the Gothic in terms of fine art practice. This research aims to explore the connections that currently exist between contemporary Irish art and the Irish Gothic tradition from legends to contemporary culture. My current working title is: "*Resurrection. The Return of the Gothic Home in Irish Contemporary Fine Art Practice.*"

As part of this research I am conducting a research project into Wildgoose Lodge as a famous example of a real-life Gothic house, which has been documented through literature, history and social history. As part of this research, I want to conduct a local investigation into the history of Wildgoose Lodge in the immediate community of Co. Louth, in terms of the legends, stories and family memories that surround it. As one of my selected stakeholders, I would like to invite you to participate in this research. There is some additional information below, but please contact me directly for any further information needed before participating at tracy.fahey@lit.ie.

What's Involved

As a participant, you will be asked to either complete the **Questionnaire** (enclosed), to consent to be interviewed or to participate in both forms of information collection.

Confidentiality

The information in the questionnaires or interviews is for my own research; it will not be disclosed to any other person.

Any personal information which has been gathered either in written questionnaires or audio interviews will not be disclosed to any other individual. The purpose of this research is to provide information towards my PhD research. All participants will be thanked in the resulting PhD thesis.

Publication of Results

Results of this research may be published in my PhD thesis, in a book, in articles in professional and scholarly journals, chapters in edited collections, in conference presentations. Images of you will not be published without your permission.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator (myself, Majella Tracy Fahey) at tracy.fahey@lit.ie or by calling 086 0422623.

Appendix D: Consent form for participating stakeholders in
**   *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge***

Consent Form for participating stakeholders in Wildgoose Lodge project

Dates: 2015
Project Title: PhD study: "*Resurrection. The Return of the Gothic Home in Irish Contemporary Fine Art Practice*"
Principal Investigator: Majella Tracy Fahey, PhD student at Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick).
Contact details: tracy.fahey@lit.ie

As a stakeholder I agree to participate in this study described in the **General Information Sheet**. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the **General Information Sheet**. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

I agree to participate in questionnaires which may assist with this research:

Yes ☐   No ☐

I agree to participate in an interview:

Yes ☐   No ☐

Appendix E: **Questionnaire for** *Remembering Wildgoose Lodge* **Project**

Questionnaire

1. How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?

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2. Can you retell this story?

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3. What do you remember most vividly about it?

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4. Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?

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   _____

5. Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?

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6. Is this story still told in your local community?

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7. Should the story still be told?

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8. Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?

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9. Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?

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10. Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?

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11. If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?

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12. Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.

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13. Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating.

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Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

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Appendix F: Collated questionnaires of participants

Jim McArt

August 21st 2013

Answers to Questionnaire

14. How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?
I heard it from my father who was born in 1886, 70 years after Wildgoose Lodge. My generation heard it in homes.
His mother when she lay dying made her sons promise not to join any oathbound society.

15. Can you retell this story?
Yes, I will do for the recording.

16. What do you remember most vividly about it?
Informers weren't meant to be spoken of to outsiders. Informers' names were not recorded (some were, by the British, but not the right names). They run counter to British information – there is meticulous documentation but local lore has it the names were wrong. My father wanted the names to be kept secret to avoid it being cast up to people.
The parish priest (Rev. Marron) wrote a letter to Mrs. O'Reilly of Knockabbey [local Big House] about the incident and he cursed the names of the informers from the altar – the three R's.
Of all those who were executed, only McCullough was a local man, the others were from outside the area. Local lore would have it that someone had to be punished – not necessarily the right people – but someone had to be made an example of.

17. Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?
Yes. I've told it to people who were newcomers to the area.

18. Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?
People were afraid to talk about the story, so Carleton's story became the story. William Carlton came to Killanny as a tutor, the bodies were still gibbeted there at the time. Stories were told within people's own families – handed down, not written down, so there are variations from story to story. There was a curse –if we touched anything to do with it, we would be cursed – cursed if we got involved in a film or any other project. Wildgoose Lodge was a cursed story.

19. Is this story still told in your local community?
Yes. Once the books came out (Murray and Dooley), the books revived the story. Dooley's in particular is very well researched.
There are no ghost stories about Wildgoose Lodge, even though it is such a horrific story. Maybe the story is so horrific that it represses ghost stories. The site is horrible in every sense of the word, firstly with the murder, then with the hangings. For the hangings, some took place in Wildgoose Lodge, others took place within sight of it. It was very important that the scaffolds were within sight of Wildgoose Lodge.

20. Should the story still be told?

It should be told.

21. Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?
Yes.

22. Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?
Yes.

23. Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?
Yes. It's part of us. It's what happened.

24. If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?
If a film is made [a film shoot is ongoing in 2013] that will revive it but it will produce fiction. I'm afraid too much fiction going into it. I'm glad the bones will be remembered by a film. However the books are well researched, this is the best way to remember it.

25. Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.
Would like to see it remembered locally. It would be good to have signposts for people to go to it, though it is probably not a site that would attract attention.

26. Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating .
Yes.

Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

Gibbeted bodies caused fear. No-one who has fruit in the area could sell it – because of the flies that clustered around the bodies.

Pat Drumgoole

August 10th 2013

Answers to Questionnaire

1. **How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?**
    Through my mother and Jim's (Jim McArt's) father and through a granduncle who was 90 when he died in 1950, his memory was very sharp. Didn't put much past on it when I was a gosson, but it's the kind of story you grow with.

2. **What do you remember most vividly about it?**
    The burning of the family even yet, I think it was horrific. That'd be the part would stick out in my mind…the innocents. I think it was savage. It was unbelievable. I thought it was a cowardly outfit that wouldn't attack the enemy. The enemy was Filgate the landlord.
    They [the local people who had joined the Ribbonmen] couldn't get out. The old folk would say a lot of them wouldn't go and were killed and buried in the bog. It was no messing, it was one or the other…You couldn't get out, they wouldn't let you out.

3. **Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?**
    Yes. I told the children in conversation when they were big enough. Sure they're fed up of me writing verses and making CDs about it!

4. **Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?**
    Up to twenty years ago, no. The whole thing was so hush-hush because it was local. The real truth was only known in the local area, because they'd hang you for nothing. It'd be under the shadow all the time because, you see, you'd be talking about your neighbour…You didn't know what they knew. You could be touching a nerve.
    It was told at the table, on and off.
    You'd hear it with the old boys above in the ceidlidh houses. There was no radio, nothing, just memory, locked in. It was carried in the mind, all the time. You'd hear it from the Hell Street locals, when people came in from cutting turf in the bog, to where there was a drinking place for horses. They'd gather together with the Bumper Sharkey. There's where the truth of it was told.

5. **Is this story still told in your local community?**
    At the present time people are more open about it. But it'd still be only in a circle that knew about it. It'd be talked about in the house; it wouldn't be a broadcast job.

6. **Should the story still be told?**
7. Yes. It is important that people should know the result of hate and intimidation. Sometimes I do say yes, but it was so horrific. It annoys me sometimes when I think of the children that were burned.

8. **Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?**
    Yes

9. **Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?**
    Yes.

10. **Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    Yes.

11. **If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    The written word would be good enough for me. The film – I don't know

12. **Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.**
    Yes, there should be some form of memorial erected at the site to commemorate those who died in the fire and also those who were innocent and hanged.

13. **Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating .**
    n/a

Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

Pat also added the following
Pat O'Neill from Knockbridge would be a good contact. Also Tom Larney, lives in a big house on the Carrick Road.
Kevin Lynch, who died aged 100 was a friend of Jim's and Pat's – also a local historian, the three of them often discussed the story of Wildgoose Lodge together.
Paul McArdle wrote the play about Wildgoose Lodge 'Occurrence of Wild Goose Lodge' – he is also involved in the filming.

Pat Devan
Pat Devan's last words were 'Drive on the cart' – later turned into a poem.

Protecting the Lynches
Jim's great-grandfather Martin McArt took his turn (as did all the neighbours) at protecting the Lynches, after they got the first lot of threats. William Filgate arranged it.

Informers
One of the informers was known locally – Reenan, a miller. He worked in the Mill on the hill. He told one of the WGL crew to hide in the mill (Matthews) and then told the pursuers where he was. The Miller Reenan came to a bad end. He was scaring crows out of the corn, when someone came behind him with a big stone and split his head open.

The site of the Lodge
Kevin Lynch told Jim and Pat that there was the stump of a tree along the right hand hedge of the field.
Pat thinks the people (Wildmans) took the stones and built a cattle shed on the hill – that is what leads people to think that the Lodge was there.
Pat tells of how his father ploughed the field about 1926 and he saw the ashes and the dark outline of the lodge in the field on the right hand side.

The route from Stonetown to WGL
The bog road was flooded. They came across the Mill, down by PJ Sweeneys. They came out on the road by Mary McDonnell's
Local men involved– Pat Craven, McCullough

Other Stories about Wildgoose Lodge

The Boy Evelyn
'When they were taking Pat Devane to be executed, on the 24th of July 1817, they came down Hell Street. There was at least 2000 gathered. On the way they met a baby being taken to be christened – the Boy Evelyn (the child's name was Johnny McDonald, his mother was Evelyn)'

The Runaway Ribbonman
'They were from all over. I heard my father say he knew a man called Fagan- his own age – his grandfather told the story – he met a man running near Kingscourt, his face

was all black and he said 'There was dreadful things done at Wildgoose Lodge tonight'

<u>The Ghost of Biddy Richards</u>
The Lodge was burned down on the 30th October, the night before Hallowe'en. There is one ghost story connected with the Lodge. It was told to Pat by an old lady, a Mrs. Quinn (a woman of 90 that his mother used to bring him to visit when he was a boy). 'Biddy Richards was a girl who worked in the Lodge. One evening her father met her as he was walking the mass pass. He said to her 'What's taking you home?' She never spoke, only walked by. She was burned to death later that night. It was a breeding ground for them[ghosts], if ever there was one.'

Variations
'Sometimes Devane was a woman. Some people say it was money they were looking for, some people say it was guns they were looking for. Lynch's daughter was going with Devane, then married a man called Rooney. It was revenge I think. Me old grandfather always said 'There was a woman involved'.

Enda Matthews

March 24th 2014

Answers to Questionnaire

1. **How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   It was generally in the area. The first bit of information was Carleton's book and after that there was a lecturer from America interviewed two people, one from Louth, one from down here.

2. **Can you retell this story?**
   I will do for the recording.

3. **What do you remember most vividly about it?**
   The house burning and all the hangings afterwards.

4. **Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?**
   They [Enda's children] never asked but the book was in the house, and the Archaeological Journal.
   We had Scouts camping out in the football field for a jamboree. Jim and myself gave them a little walk up to Wildgoose Lodge and told them the story, and of course, when they came back we couldn't get them to sleep.

5. **Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?**
   My father never talked about it. He said it was divisive. They were sensitive about it. There was people hanged because they told stories.Wasn't discussed in the local community because you were aware that people were under suspicion. But it certainly caused divisions in the area.

6. **Is this story still told in your local community?**
   Yes. There's local dispute about where the house was.

7. **Should the story still be told?**
   It's part of history, it should be told. It's important. I think it's been long enough now past.

8. **Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?**
   Yes. I read Monseigneur Murray's book, and Dooley's too.

9. **Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   Yes. There's another dispute as to where the site is, actually.

10. **Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    Yes. In my little bit I didn't put any names down.

11. **If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    Yes.

12. Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.

You see the site is privately owned. It was meant to be cursed of course, the person who owned the land would have bad luck. But it's a mucky lane up to it, and you can go through the next field. Some people would certainly be in favour of it, other people would object, they wouldn't be too pleased. I'd say most people would agree. Maybe when this film is out it will open things up a bit.

Something along the road?

13. Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating.

Well there's a film coming out. There was a play about it too, and the film is based loosely on the play. I was at the play. It mightn't be all that accurate.

Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

Ambrose Finn

December 10th 2014

Answers to Questionnaire

1. **How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   It was whispered about the area and as I lived on the site of Pat Devan's house we had plenty of callers when I was young.

2. **Can you retell this story?**
   Pat Devane lived almost where we are sitting today, he had considerable influence in the area, being a teacher and sacristan of the local church (Stonetown). This is how he had access to the church for the meeting of the Ribbonmen of whom he appeared to be the local leader. The Ribbonmen went to Lynches house looking for guns, when he reported them he brought the trouble on himself and his household. The Ribbonmen under Pat Devane went in a mob to burn his house but as it got out of control nobody was allowed to leave. The Ribbonmen then scattered but were informed on and found. Up to 30 men were hanged some of whom were not even there. Pat Devane was captured in Dublin as he was trying to escape to America. There was traitorish behaviour on all sides in this story of brutality was evident in the mob that attacked Wildgoose Lodge, also the police who responded to it.

3. **What do you remember most vividly about it?**
   The thought of the fire and people being forced to stay inside to die, also the body of Pat Devane hung in a cage outside his mother's door for approximately two years.

4. **Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?**
   Mostly just to people who asked.

5. **Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?**
   No. In the last ten years there has been more talk. With the film now being made it has become topical.

6. **Is this story still told in your local community?**
   To a certain extent, yes.

7. **Should the story still be told?**
   Yes, it is important that people should remember what happened and could happen.

8. **Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?**
   Yes. It is believed that he wrote the story in a house near here with a window overlooking Wildgoose Lodge.

9. **Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   Yes

10. **Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    Yes

11. If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?
It is a place where injustice was committed on both sides also by the justice system.

12. Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.
Yes there should be a memorial there, maybe a plaque or something commemorating all who died there and were hanged later for the crime.

13. Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating.
Yes, people need to be reminded what can happen when a mob of people get out of control. All reason goes.

Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

<u>Gretta Fahey</u>

<u>April 25th 2015</u>

<u>Answers to Questionnaire</u>

1. **How did you first hear the story of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   At home from my mother. She wasn't local but she was always interested in folklore.

2. **Can you retell this story?**
   Not really. I wasn't interested in it when I was younger. It was a bit frightening and we were told not to talk about it to anybody because their relations lived nearby, relations of the people in the story like the Kearneys, Murrays, O'Callaghans, and, I think, Philips'. The family was burned alive in their house and someone threw the child out the window, and the baby was pitchforked and flung back in, and the men who did it said 'Let the nits go with the fleas'. As a child we thought some of the people were still alive and we'd go to bed at night and any noise we'd hear, we'd think it was them back to burn our house. As the headmaster in the school told the story, he had the same caution about him. When he confirmed the same story we'd heard at home, it wasn't just fiction, it was a true story.

3. **What do you remember most vividly about it?**
   We were told the people who were hung were piled up at Parknamurder Cross.

4. **Have you ever re-told this story, and if so, to whom?**
   No, I was the youngest. I didn't tell it to my own children. I didn't like the story. I wanted to get it out of my house.

5. **Was the story openly discussed in your family and among the local community?**
   No. Even when the teacher spoke about it, we didn't discuss it among ourselves in the yard. The teacher wasn't from around. Some of the children in the yard were related to either informers or Ribbonmen.

6. **Is this story still told in your local community?**
   I've moved away so I don't know.

7. **Should the story still be told?**
   I don't know. I was so young and frightened. I still don't like it.

8. **Have you ever read the William Carleton short story "Wildgoose Lodge"?**
   No.

9. **Have you ever been to the site of Wildgoose Lodge?**
   Yes

10. **Do you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**
    I don't want to remember it.

11. **If so, how you think the story of Wildgoose Lodge should be remembered?**

n/a

12. Do you think there should be a memorial at the site? Please give reasons for or against this idea.
It's history now, yes.

13. Do you think there should be some kind of event to commemorate the story? Please give reasons for commemorating or not commemorating.
There will be the film but I'm still not interested.

Additional information about Wildgoose Lodge may be provided here

Appendix G: Transcript of recordings of variant stories for
Remembering Wildgoose Lodge project

Transcript I   Recording of story by Jim McArt

Transcript II   Recording of story by Pat Drumgoole

Transcript III   Recording of story by Ambrose Finn

Transcript IV   Recording of story by Enda Matthews (Parts I and II)

Transcript V   Recording of story by Gretta Fahey

Transcript I   Recording of story by Jim McArt

Recording of story

Jim McArt (JMA) by Tracy Fahey (TF)

10th August 2014

TF: I think that...

JMA: …I'd say ten years, if we've not, old George Martin, telling Mike Lynch and various other people, who are, better off, you know, going nearer to the time of the Wild Goose Lodge story, but we've probably gathered a lot of them.

TF: No, no, because yourself and Pat, in particular, would have gleaned a lot of information about Wild Goose Lodge from older people.

JMA: Yes, oh yeah. Well I heard from my father, and in fact I probably from me father too, and from his own father and people like that. Because my father was born in 1886, seventy years after that. Yeah, well, what happened was he would have heard from his father, but when his mother was, our dad's dad, he never joined with organisations, because of the fear there was, with what happened when the Ribbonmen were an organisation. And George Martin told me the same answer, so it must have been a thing that happened, because that was there. You know, to keep away from anything like that, because of the word, you're gone. Also, my great-grandfather, Martin McArt, would be one of the tenants who kept a watch on the Wild Goose Lodge, after the initial attack on the lodge, which, you see, people were hanged for, and because they suspect something might happen. And presumably there was some military in the area, and then there was a kind of a thought that it would be safe, but it wasn't safe, the Ribbonmen had their vengeance.

TF: What version of the Wildgoose Lodge story comes from Martin McArt, to your grandmother, to your father, to yourself?

JMA: It would have, yeah, down the line, yes, it would have.

TF: So would you like to just tell me, in your own words, the story, the way you would have heard it?

JMA: Well, strangely enough, I heard very little of the initial thing until before April 1816, because Wildgoose Lodge was a hunting lodge, for Filgates, for the landlords. It was expected to be armed, and three Ribbonmen, or really more raiders, Stanley, Tiernan and the third name-and they abused the people in this, and they're supposed to have

knocked over crops and stuff like that. Destroyed looms, because at that time there was an industry there in the house [coughs] I apologise... And they were arrested and tried in Dundalk, and they were hanged for that. Of course you have to remember 1816 was only 18 years after the '98 rebellion, so folks were still feared of anything with the aristocracy, they called them that. There and that was it. Er… then there's how the Ribbonmen swore revenge, the one I told you there about the watch being kept on it. Yeah, yeah it would be. And…er…Paddy Devan was the parish cleric, and the school teacher in Stonetown and he was the leader of the Ribbonmen, and the attack, and they burned down the…I know you hear about the time they were thrown out and thrown back in and they said 'Let the nits fall where they lie'. Especially that, because we were there to tell you a story, I don't think there's too many involved in what went on. William Carleton, who came to house down in Killanny, has two...two of them there, family of.. er, he went on to Dublin, laid down the year after Wildgoose Lodge, where there were still bodies hidden around the area. And when he went on to Dublin, he wrote a book, 'Traits and Customs', I think it was, and included in that, he included the story of Wildgoose Lodge, where it's now regarded as a gothic tale, he told, not necessarily the truth, he added his own bits to it. So it's only really in recent years, people have researched, and gotten back to what it was. And because of a fear of people to talk about it, his became fact. Because in the area we lived, I remember me father telling me stories, I mean, there's things I know he didn't tell me.

TF: **Well what I'll do is give you this transcript and you can just omit things you want omitted.**

JMA: Yeah I don't mind saying it but it'd be best not to maybe appear. Now the names I mentioned as informers, in Trim gaol there was a fella waiting to be executed, and he said he'd been at the Wildgoose Lodge, but he probably wasn't, but he knew it'd save his life, and he gave names and that's why it's believed there were many people, and the authorities weren't too worried but they got him for it. The story of the three R's was that they were local informers [names omitted here on request of interviewee] and that they gave information that got people hanged. Their names have never come out when William Pendleton investigated the whole thing, his report, their names have never come out, it's always other informers. But that was said locally, and that's why the parish priest at the time, er, Father Marron cut them from there, down to the three Rs.... the families would die out, they have died out, but it took a long time, and other families died out too so, that happens normally.

TF: **Now because the whole 'ripple effect' of Wildgoose Lodge there seems to be less people concerned with the family that were burnt alive, but with all the injustices that were piled on...**

JMA: Yes, that's right. Now only recently, I think we talked before about where were the Lynches were buried, well, Patrick'll tell you this when you meet him, he suggested it's in the church in Clonkeen. He's probably right, there'd be no graves in Reaghstown so it most likely would be Clonkeen, Phillipstown, or the old cemetery

which was used by a lot of the people from Reaghstown at that time. A lot to be found in the old cemetery. Something you've heard lately, nothing really to do with that.

TF: **That's grand sure, we can edit it later.**

JMA: Well what it is, [name omitted here at request of interviewee] told me, only lately, his ma, his father's [name omitted here at request of interviewee]

TF: **His mother was [name omitted here at request of interviewee]?**

JMA: His mother was [name omitted here at request of interviewee], but he told me, his grandmother would be Martin, not the George Martin.

TF: **Oh yes?**

JMA: He was asked, when she was dying, she asked him to go out to the Martin graves in old Tallanstown cemetery, which he does. And he wouldn't be the only one, member of the Martin family, and they all went there.

TF: **The same Martin as Willy Martin?**

JMA: Yeah, it would be the same Martin's yeah. But every year when they'd be at the rest of the graves, there was one grave there, think it's Martins who they didn't know who he was, but there's a woman always came and put flowers on that grave. There's a sister Moira Martin, who's a sister of that George Martin I mentioned, and she's a missionary nun, and she started her research on the Martin family lately, and he was telling me she had gone into all of this, and there's something strange about all of this, I think it's Martin. Peter began, I think that woman must have died, and Peter began looking into it to see who was this Martin. Another branch of the Martin family, Paddy Martin, who I know well, was approached and he said 'What the hell you want to know about that fella for?' and he left it at that. And then the Martins from the area are also related, told me to keep away from the story, had Peter and I more nosey than ever to see exactly. But what he told me also was, the nun we're talking about, it seemed she stopped…she must have found something new out [laughs] all research in that area has stopped for fear that the theories of what might have been...was he gay, was he...?

TF: **Aha. Okay.**

JMA: But there was something....

TF: **Dubious...?**

JMA: Yeah. So he told me that he's mad to know why these people don't want him to...

TF: **Do you think it could be connected to Wildgoose Lodge?**

JMA: No, no sorry…It's just

TF: No no no. That's a very interesting one though, isn't it?

JMA: Yeah. Peter Rowntree of course

TF: I think we discussed it. One of the things about Wildgoose Lodge, we were saying before, is that there's no graves connected to it.

JMA: No. The only thing is that persons were buried in some other family's grave, which did happen I know alright, in some cases.

TF: But also Pat Devan and the other prisoners who were executed, are there any graves?

JMA: Well no. The last execution the bodies were taken away for dissection so... The other ones, their bodies were hanged, so therefore, goodness they're probably just a bundle of bones by the time, you know, they were taken down and so there'd be a good chance they'd be buried in the prison in Dundalk, because they're criminals.

TF: You mentioned before as well, I think our first conversation you mentioned the gibbetting?

JMA: Yeah. We said that fruit from county Louth, or that area of county Louth, you couldn't sell it at market because the bodies were rotten down in it, and the flavour had it in, which is understandable that it wouldn't be touched. Whatever farms it was from, they could just forget about it. Now, locally there was no gibbets. Stonetown probably was the closest. Because it was considered the river men came from there, I think from a larger area, some from Meath and...

TF: I suppose it's not too far from Wildgoose Lodge as well. Stonetown would be there.

JMA: Oh yeah. Don't want to intrude on someone else's story, Enda'll probably tell you, you can remind him then of his Walter Matthews who wouldn't be a direct ancestor, he'd probably be a great-great grand-uncle of his, who was also a head school teacher, who taught in the site where Reaghstown Church is, the church wouldn't have been there at that time. Because Devan was a hedge school teacher, also they were kind of leaders of the people, because they were more educated, and they were teaching. And behind where he lived there was the mill, the Reaghstown mill, the windmill. This is one of the things that comes in to this about-

TF: Yeah, yeah I remember.

JMA: Do I need to...?

TF: Please, please tell me.

JMA: The story is that he was in his house, Michael Matthews, and that the miller [name omitted at request of interviewee] came and said to him 'Are you in there, Matthews?

You'd better hide in the mill', and Matthews knew that if he hid in there, in the mill they'd come in the mill. So why would he be hiding? He stayed where he was and when they came, the soldiers, he was there, he didn't hide. That's why there's so much...

TF: **Suspicion about the....**

JMA: Yeah. Another story about that, that I only heard from Kevin Lynch, who just died last year, at 100 years of age, and he told me that over here towards Aclint the [name omitted here at request of interviewee] own land there, and the miller [name omitted here at request of interviewee], a few years after, was over there, could be [name omitted here at request of interviewee] could be I don't know what, could be the son. But they went home for something and when they came back the miller was dead, someone had put it in his head, his skull with a stone. There was someone crossing over, and it's believed the miller fell asleep, and he saw that which shouldn't leave you. And said 'Oh you devil'.

TF: **Somebody, somebody no doubt from one of the families of the men...**

JMA: Could be, could be yeah. Course there'd be revenge on a lot of people's families, mind, as well because they hated those that had done it. So that's why this thing is quite in tune.

TF: **And, and if they- I mean your father would have been the man who told you most of these stories...**

JMA: Not that now.

TF: **Not that?**

JMA: He was very careful about naming local names like [names omitted here at request of interviewee] and that boy, and indeed there was…shouldn't have been, they were involved in another dispute.

TF: **But your father would have been very careful?**

JMA: (Being spoken over)...was very annoyed about that, that that should have happened. Course he would have told me, but not to say too much about it. When Professor Casey done his thing for that Archaeological Society, he interviewed an old woman down in Stonetown, and she actually gave the name [name omitted here at request of interviewee]), which actually shocked a lot of people (indistinct) a lot of locals would have been staggered, sort of allowing them...

TF: **That's right! That's right. I think Dooley quotes that.**

JMA: I'd say he does, yeah, I'd say he does. That's what she said [coughs] about the miller, [name omitted here at request of interviewee].

TF: **Yeah, because I think he said those records were kept in the folklore department in UCD, but that he hadn't been able to access them in a couple of [indistinct] contact them.**

JMA: Oh good!

TF: **See if I can get anything. But, but I suppose, Jim, just to kind of finish up on your father, because he's very important, he's the tale-teller, he's the one who kind of communicated it to you. What parts of the story would he have emphasised to you, wanted to-not wanted you to pass on the names? He was always very careful**

JMA: Well it was always the names of the people locally that may have been informers. He didn't want anything to be told of people. As I said, the initial attack on the Wildgoose Lodge, never did. Now the funny thing about that, someone said to me, only recently, if you go over the road from the Wildgoose Lodge, towards Knockabbey on the right in the field, there's an old- I remember I viewed it as a child, and that's where this happened, this [indistinct] miller attacked and everything. But now when I look on it, I think it was [name omitted here at request of interviewee] who said 'Do I remember it?' and I-he reminded me, I do-I did remember, that that supposedly this attack happened. But maybe not. Rooney lived there, Rooney was married to Lynch, maybe that's it, and in the recent history, that hadn't come out.

TF: **That's very interesting though, because it seemed to be a mistake of mistaken identity, of the wrong place at the wrong time so.. So it might be that this Lodge was wrongly targeted then, in the second wave.**

JMA: Yeah, well you see there may have been a connection, maybe Rooney did it, maybe the Rooney family did it, I don't know. They weren't normally targeting this place, sorry, I should have told you that Lynch and Rooney were the people.

TF: **That the first attack happened in the Rooney house, perhaps, rather than the Lynches'?**

JMA: Maybe. Maybe there's some connection. And I don't even know if that house was Rooney's, I'm only thinking of why was it mentioned? And I'd forgotten about that until, I think it was Patrick who said to me 'Do you remember that?' and I said, 'Yeah, you're right.' But there's definitely a Lynch, and people were giving evidence, and people were hanged, and [indistinct] that's a [name omitted here at request of interviewee], they gave the evidence, and the people were hanged. So they were attacked, one way or another, in the first instance. All the people, the victims and the perpetrators, they were all Catholic.

TF: **I know, very, very unusual.**

JMA: That was the thing. The people then they were, the lords were all Protestants, well except the Rileys, they were...

TF: Not the Rs.

JMA: Ah but you see, that's a very good point too, and you'd be right there. Can you remember again who is [spoken over]

TF: Fosters, and I can't remember the other, my mother suggested it might be the Folks, because the last lady in the Fosters, Phillipa, the one who assumed the name John, and she was buried under it, she'd have lived with Miss Foulkes, over near Readypenny.

JMA: That's right, they're buried in the same grave.

TF: So I suppose, unfortunately when I was a kid I never wrote this down, and my mother wouldn't have been as interested, now, as me, at all like.

JMA: No, I know, yeah.

TF: But she was the one who suggested the Foulkes

JMA: Was there another name?

TF: But on that warrant there's a couple of Fosters who signed it, then there's the Fortescues and the Filgates.

JMA: Oh yes. There was another, encountering...

TF: Might be that there was a Fox as well, but I'm not, but not sure…

JMA: In Tallanstown cemetery, there's a road, it's called Corbus road, and the family they'd be, eh...

TF: But I suppose as I've been talking to people, like, Pat's version of the story would cast the landlords as the baddies, very much so, and the poem he gave me a copy of, that was written by Jemmy Daley's father, that's all about the wicked British, and their colonial law.

JMA: That's right, of course.

TF: And that version survived on as well like, and that would be appropriate then to have the Fs. Because my grandmother's version of it was that they would all die out and she said 'and they all did', except for the Filgates. One of the Filgates married- a man married into the Filgates, and he changed his name to Filgatet, and then the family artificially kept on.

JMA: Henry. I remember that was in the last cen-in the 1900s.

TF: Yep.

JMA: He was Henry, but then he had to change it to have the land so, but they retained the name, but he was actually Henry. So he was named Filgate, but he was really Henry.

TF: So she contended that the families had died out, and the curse had all worked, but..

JMA: Certainly the [indistinct]... I think the Foulkes.

[Recording ends]

Transcript II   Recording of story by Pat Drumgoole

Recording of story

Pat Drumgoole (PD) by Tracy Fahey (TF)

25th April 2015

PD: Well the story I was told, a long, long time ago by the old people. The land was all owned by Mr. Filgate the landlord, completely. All the land was rented. Nobody owned anything. And the small tenant farmer was Edward Lynch, that had… there's about 27 acres in the Wildgoose Lodge, no more. That's all that's in it. And he rented it and he used to grow flax, he was a flax grower. And there was different things; that he had a daughter…and Devan he came down from Knockbridge, or down Corcreaghy. He was a schoolteacher, he'd something to do with the church and that, an educated boy enough. Some claims he was going with Lynch's daughter and so they fell out and then she married a man called Rooney. Thomas Rooney. And some claim it was then…well, the Ribbonmen, the Ribbonmen was the revolutionary fighting agin [against] the landlord not to pay the rent. This was part of it. And they claimed that Lynch used to hold – the Ribbonmen they called them – and then it got too overpowering and he wouldn't let them have any more meetings. This was one version of it. And the other was that Devan had a spleen in because he didn't get the daughter, you know, he didn't marry the daughter, Rooney married the daughter. But it finished up – well according to the book I had, it finished up – in March the first raid came, the Ribbonmen, and they forced the door in and they cut the looms. That's why, he was a weaver, that's why, a flax weaver. And they…they wrecked up the joint on him anyway. Charlestown was the place, was the sort of, we'll say the head office of Filgates that time, and Lynch – that's the road, there was no road over there, out here, the lane, that was the way that time. So he went up to report the thing and he was told on the way to go back, he'd cause an awful lot of problems. He was on his way back and he met – now according to this, now this is, I would only know, the old folk'd tell you, met a woman who said 'Go on, report that crime, because we can't live in the country with the raiding and the robbing, and all this. So he went up and he told the story. There was three men then informed on and they were hanged and that's what caused the whole thing.

TF: **Yes.**

PD: Scanlan…there was…I knew their names one time but I forget the three of them now. And they were hung, in Dundalk. And then Devan had the meeting in Stonetown, the old church. Devan gathered all the Ribbonmen together and organised it. It was very dark cause they done it on the altar swore on the mass book, you couldn't …and the

old folks did always say, the ould lads at the bog, they knew most…a dove blew out the candle in the church. But if there was a dove in the church he'd fly for the candle anyway, but this is the claim, that a dove blew out the light. There was a light…they all swore, but they were mad on poteen at the same time. And only five or six knew what was happening. Not but there could have been 200 at the burning of Wildgoose Lodge, from all over the country. Oh they were from all over. They were from nearly as far as Shercock. I think Scanlan was from Meath hill direction, or County Cavan or over that part of the country, and they were from right round everywhere. It was like, nearly like the IRA, you know? That was, that was like the same thing. Well, it was round the revolution, fighting the British. That was simple as it. And then it turned into a fiasco then when they, they, they came out and burned it then, the last, the 30th of October. And down that road they went there. And up that lane. On horses and every other way. And they claim, you see, it was such a desperate thing, they were afraid to talk about it, y'know, you'd be hung for nothing! That was the truth, you'd be hung, it was only an excuse to hang you. And that's why they'd claim at lot of them was kilt [killed] and buried in the bog, they wouldn't…that was flooded completely that time. That whole thing was a sea of water. And it had the bridge of bodies just at the gate to get across, for the people to cross over. A gang of them went over and surrounded them. The rest of them was surrounding, out on the surveillance maybe. But from, from the time the three boys was hung, that was in, I think, they'd be hung, I'd say maybe mid-summer, that year, I'm not sure but I think …I know Devan, when Devan was hung, he was hung in July 1817. He went out down that road with 2000 people behind the hangman's cart from Dundalk. I know that because the old men told me. And they met a woman going up to christen the child in the church, on the side of the hill when they met him coming on the cart, and the crowds of people of people coming and there was shocking poverty, desperate poverty. There were…old Jemmy McArt, Jim McArt's father, like, his grandfather now, Jim's great grandfather – everyone had to take their turn, there was a tenant in the area for security after the three men was hung there was security put on Lynch, y'know what I mean? – to protect him. And they had soldiers but the tenants had to protect them as well. And he was ready to move when he took out the praties, but he never got them out.

TF: **You mentioned Pat Devan in the cart, meeting the child being taken to be christened…**

PD: That's right

TF: **That's an interesting story**

PD: The name of the child was Evelyn, and she was something, she could be something to JimMcArt, away back, because I think Evelyn McArt was her name. I think that's the name of the child anyway. And they met on the side of the hill. There was a, they used to call it a…there was a crab-apple tree on the side of the hill and they used to meet – nothing to do with the Wildgoose Lodge – on May morning and they would

dance at it. Me granny told Mick [Pat's brother] and them that. And they'd be playing music. Mayday was a big festival that time…and when they were going up the hill to christen the child, which the church in Reaghstown, Johnny, that time was down behind the Danny boy, there's where it is t'ould ruins of it.

TF; **Ah!**

PD: There's a little lane, if you If you go up, go up down Arthurstown road, you just see it at the end of the shed. You go down, that road comes out below on the bottom of the hill, at Kirby's maybe, you'd be the right maybe, you might know. I seen houses on it.

TF: **Are there any ruins still left there?**

PD: Not of the chapel. There could be down…there was a few houses, Tom Marron and them…there was a few tenant houses, little houses down there. Oh I remember people living down there, but they did, they knocked them all. Once the bulldozer came in that was it. But they were there for a long time. But I think there's…there's a couple of trees, laurel trees and evergreens where that church was. Th'old church. Before…I don't know when they built the new church, y'know, the one that's there now. But that was the one that was there that time anyway.

TF: **But you've a couple of stories about the Lodge. You had the one about the Boy Evelyn, the child being taken to be christened, but you had another story about the servant girl Biddy Richards from the Lodge.**

PD: That's right. Well…But this is true…Biddy Richard came from Mountrush, Stormanstown. But there's a mass pass from that time, you see, everyone had to walk. There was a mass pass from her place, by her door, it came out at Reaghstown Chapel, still there, the wicker gate's there, still at the back there was a mass pass, eye, people used to go, like when I was serving mass, people'd cross the fields, d'you know, short cut. And an old woman called Mrs. Quinn was in hospital, she was ninety years of age if she was an hour [laughs] and me mother could come out to see her, and I'd take out me mother and I'd sit down and I'd ask her. I was interested and she lived beside Richards or her people. And she says 'I'll tell you a story, the night of the Wildgoose Lodge', that her father handed on down, or that came down through the family. He was coming walking down the mass pass and he met his daughter going home, and he said to her 'Biddy, where are you going?' She never spoke. She never spoke. It was her ghost! She was burned that night.

TF: **So she would have been burned later that night?**

PD: They had a premonition before, that's right. That's been known for, it'd be known, I don't know, it'd be…

TF: **There's an old Irish legend called the fetch, which is meant to be the double of the person who comes to bring them away…**

PD: That's right. Is it?

TF: Yes. I've heard it a couple of times.

PD: You're into this …historian, and you'd be away on a different train than us.

TF: No, No, it's just a very interesting story. It's only one of two ghost stories I've heard attached to the Lodge

PD: Yes

TF: Ambrose Finn claims that there were stories about the ghost of Pat Devan haunting Corcreaghy..

PD: Same yard, y'see. And that's where Stonetown Church must be, just, you go round, you turn left, round the wee road there. I think, there's where the church was, t'old ruins. I asked and someone said 'No, that's where the church was, at Tommy Byrne's. There's where the old church was, because I did ask 'Where was this church? It's not like, Stonetown church is down there, and I'd say, sure that never was there that time, that's where the ruins was

TF: So it's right beside Corcreaghy crossroads?

PD: That's right. That's right.

TF: I'm starting to know my way around a bit

PD: You know it well [both laugh]

TF: But then, Pat, thank you that was a great kind of rendition of the story. I'd just like to ask you, kind of a question or two about how the story survived and why it survived?

PD: Well now, it was horrific. Like, there was thirty people, like dead, you know. There was twenty-two hanged and it was horrific. The whole, and d'you see, like up till I was a kid, there was people wouldn't talk about it, like, because there was a lot of informing, like and there was a lot of that, and it'd be, it'd be hurtful, you see. You wouldn't know where you were talking, that's the truth, Johnny, like, this was the problem and that was the secret of it that kept it alive, more or less. But then there was everyone like nearly down the lane there, there was a man there was taken out and hanged. It was still…it was in the area, you know? It was such a local thing, it never died but it was very…people was afraid to open their mouth. That's the truth. You'd be hung for little or nothing. Like, that woman also told me, that old woman..

TF: Mrs. Quinn?

PD: And its above, you see, again if you go to Reaghstown, it's only now, it was planted two years ago, just as you wheel down, just as you go to the chapel, you wheel down the Danny Boy, you pass, you know where, the car park, on your left as you go down

the Danny Boy, and where you're dipping the hollow you'll see a bit of a ditch, about the width of that [opens arms], little wider, replanted. Well there's where she says they dug out a man called Flood to hang him, an innocent man. He was in England when it happened. And he was hung. And it never grew, so the Fás scheme built it up, and that was the gap, they took it out. And when they were hanging him on the high hill he told them – I have it in that – that's the first time he ever saw the Wildgoose Lodge, when they were putting him on the gallows to hang him. A man called Flood. Dundalk. That's right. It's in the book.

TF: **Yes, yes.**

PD: And like it was there, they never planted anything in it, only this last couple of years, d'you know. But before that, that gap was in the hedge. There, just as you go down, the new hedge, bit of a wall, they put flowers on it or something. That was the gateway looking out on the hill.

TF: **Pat can I ask you just about the site of Wildgoose Lodge? 'Cause there's been, there's been different opinions about it.**

PD: Yeah.

TF: **Where would you pick out the site of Wildgoose Lodge as being?**

PD: Well..the Wildgoose Lodge is on the right-hand side, me father ploughed it. And he worked in them places…he came from Coolderry. Me father, he worked with Prowles, they were an estate agents, er landlords, the best there ever were in Ireland. They're still operating in Strangford, some of them in government, you know? And he came over and so he worked in Wildman's, and that's where he met my mother. She was, you see, how that came about. But he ploughed, it, I think, in 1926. And he says you could just mark out the whole square, of the whole haggard, it was real black, with the ashes. It was all flat, you see. The shed's there on its own. There's no doubt, no doubt at all, no doubt where it was, but to save a lot of talk, Mick always said that they took up the stones from the old building and made a cattle shed or somethingon top of the hill, but there was sure one thing, they never put thatch houses on the top of the hill, Johnny, that's why they built in the hollow. Down on the right, if you go up that ditch there, I can show you there from the window. In the ploughed field, just out from the right, that's where it is

TF: **I have some photos of it here.**

PD: You see the road takes the tree, because it suits better. You know what I mean? Didn't Didn't I give you the record? Did I give you a record? The monologue of the story? [Pat is alluding here to a CD of his song of Wildgoose Lodge]

TF: **Yes, Pat, I have it safe, and I'll give it back to you.**

PD: No, no, no, as long as I gave it to you, I was going to say I'll get you one and I'll give it to you.

TF: I've everything kept safe in a big box.

PD: No no no [laughs] I won't be wanting it where I'm going! [Laughs]

TF: Now, Pat, I went to the field, and I'm going to be going there later with Jim now. I'm going to call to Mr McArt after this, and we're going to go up the field, and he said that he'll point out the place to me. But is it-you know there's, there's the 'Wildgoose Lodge field', we'll call it, and then there's the ploughed field?

PD: The ploughed field.

TF: And is it where the gate is in the ploughed..?

PD: Yes, yes.

TF: Because there's stones there, you can see them around the wall.

PD: The gate, that-there was just a gate going out the end of the lane. That was that-they had the bridge, they had to go into it-to let people walk across, the people that was burning it -it was flooded with them, and the horses stood on the lane, maybe surveillance round the country. They likely knew, the landlord and them likely knew there was going to be something, when they put protection on 'em, d'you know what I mean, people to protect 'em, you know? But it's in that field, just over there, just out the gate, over there. It's over a bit from the ditch, over near the drop. And I'm nearly sure there was a well over there. I think there was a well over there, they'd always need to have water, you know? Somewhere now, you'd hear there was a well – you'd pass no remarks – you see it was always running drains, over, way over in the drain, that runs right round, and on for the river, you know?

TF: Pat, that's really super, thank you so much.

PD: No, no. there's other, not about the other things I told you that, they got the turf burner there [points out window]. Y'see where that tree is standing? Well, you see by that tree there's a gateway? Going in to that man's...

TF: You mind if I take a photo out of your window?

PD: Well if you're going down that way, just at that-there was a wee house. A fella called Pat Halpenny lived it in, and that's where they got the turf, the peat, and put it in a pot, and they carried it down to burn it, they threw it on the roof. That's where they got it.

[Recording ends]

Transcript III   Recording of story by Ambrose Finn

Recording of story

Ambrose Finn (AF) by Tracy Fahey (TF)

25ᵗʰ April 2015

TF: **It's just, if you can remember the way the story would be told to you and if you could tell me a bit about your interest in the story, I suppose, coming from Corcreaghy.**

AF: Coming from Corcreaghy…well, years ago there used to come loads of people who wanted to see where the Wildgoose Lodge, the fella that burned it was, lived, you know. And there used to come, actually, bus-loads of people, that time.

TF: **Really?**

AF: Yeah. I can still remember and that's an awful long time ago, you know, and all you'd do is show them the place, and they'd give you a shilling, maybe, or something, you know? At the time, sure, you'd be over the moon. [Both laugh]. But, eh, he lived up there, just where our workshop is. And…they say that Pat Devan was hung outside the house for eighteen months. He was hung in actually in Reaghstown but they left him hanging there for eighteen months. And the other lads was hung along with him, they were only there for six months, but they left him there as a reminder to keep the [pause] to keep them quiet I suppose.

TF: **Do you feel it worked?**

AF: it worked for a while, but I don't think it worked in the end, you know?

TF: **Why do you think people felt like coming back to look at it?**

AF: Eh, people just really were interested to see where it was. You know, when you think of it too, it was neighbours against neighbours that time. I know a lot of outsiders came in all right, but there was certainly two of them lads that – actually one of them lived over the road, he was a fellow called Stanley, he lived over there in Clark's house and there was another fellow called Keegan, away down there the road, they were all men from Corcreaghy as well, you know. They were tried but they got off, even though they say that they were in it, you know, they were there that night, but it seems they had nothing to do with the burning, you know.

TF: **And would you have heard this story in your own family?**

AF: Ah yeah, yeah. They actually say, next door, that there were stones of Pat Devan's house. You can imagine when the Finn's were there, ould Pat Finn, it would have been fairly fresh in their minds, at the time, you know, because we wouldn't pass any remarks of it. It was supposed to be haunted, but sure – [laughs] – we never seen him.

[Information about Patrick Kavanagh here not relevant to story, 2.46- 4.47]

TF: Can I ask you one last question Ambrose? I was wondering if you could tell me the story of Wildgoose Lodge, the way you would have heard it.

AF: Well nearly the way you would have heard it, it nearly the way it's actually written, you know. There have been a lot of pieces added to it but there wouldn't be much difference. They say there was roughly thirty-two executed that time, you know, for that deed and they say it was all done on the whims of a woman in Dundalk, you know, that heard people talking, and that's all she heard, you know, and they were convicted on that. When you think about it, Filgates and all these, they were the law at the time, whatever they said was law.

TF: And the burning of the Lodge itself, how would that have been told to you?

AF: Roughly the way they were talking it was in Stonetown Chapel that the oath was made, and they always said that a dove flew down and put out the candle twice, that they were going with candles and course, pigeons'd be in any high building that time, they still are actually [laughs]. It's nearly all they'll have soon. And that's where the oath was made and they headed off, and there was a big crowd of them in it. So there was a lot of lads from around the locality. And even today, there's still, like, a taboo about talking about it, you know, because the Lynches there, actually a couple of them died not so long ago in Reaghstown, I'm sure they were related to the Lynches that was there…

TF: Kevin Lynch, was it?

AF: Yeah. Lynches. Not sure whether they were or not, though they were the only Lynches that were round there. So, that was basically it. You know, nearly what you read in the thing, was what happened.

TF: I've noticed in a lot of accounts like you own there's a big concern for the men who were executed because it seems very locally accepted that a lot of these men would have been innocent.

AF: Ah, yeah. They say that up to fifteen of those men were innocent. They probably where there and they probably had nothing to do, and like that Keegan's down there, they lived down the road there, and Stanley's they lived over on the Stonetown road, and they wouldn't have been any more than a hundred yards – two hundred yards - from Pat Devan, living. So they had to be involved in it.

TF: Would you yourself have felt curious about Pat Devan, just living here?

AF: Yeah. Well actually that time we would have been – there was ghosts everywhere – there used to be a hall garden down there and everyone seen ghosts in it. But sure it was all – when electricity came in it did away with them all [laughs]. They couldn't appear then at all.

TF: Did anyone tell you they'd seen this ghost?

AF: Ah, our Oliver, beyond in England, he'd swear he was coming from a dance one night and he seen a lad down there. Sure it was probably somebody out behind the ditch, maybe. He's supposed to have run home.

TF: Fantastic. You know Ambrose, I couldn't have asked for any more. Thank you so much for that.

AF: Ah no, it's not a lot.

TF: You gave a great local flavour. Now we have Corcreaghy in the story as well.

AF: Corcreagh in the story, yeah.

[Recording ends]

Transcript IV   Recording of story by Enda Matthews (Parts I and II)

Recording of story

Enda Matthews (Part I)

25th April 2015

TF.   **I guess in your own time if you could outline the story of Wildgoose Lodge for me.**

EM: Yes. Tape running? –oh! [laughs] Well the story of Wildgoose Lodge would be I suppose going back to the actual burning. I remember stories about it being burned, and of course the big story was the child being thrown out and thrown back into the flames., with some phrase – 'Nits being burned along with' - I forget what it was. And then was the hangings. Some of the hangings took place around Reaghstown. The story was they took place around the church. Some guy's supposed to have said that he never saw the Wildgoose Lodge till he stood on the scaffold at the church, that was the first time he saw the Wildgoose Lodge. I also remember when I built my house I cut a tree, and some of the old folks going past said to me – 'You'll never have luck, that tree is where people were hanged from the Wildgoose Lodge'. So of course I stopped that by saying I counted the rings on the tree, the tree didn't go back that far, so that stopped that. That was the tree straight out there, that gap there was where the tree was. It was an ash tree. But I don't think there was any hangings there, you couldn't have seen the Wildgoose Lodge from there. The other story was of course, there was some of my ancestors were teaching – up around the church there was a hedge school. It's recorded in the Archaeological Journal, a hedge school in 1813 or 1814. And Michael Matthews taught there in a hedge school. And some people came to me and told me that – whether it was him or his brother – some of my ancestors were rumoured to be involved in the activities that led up to the Wildgoose burning. And the story is that the local landlord visited …

TF: **[interrupting] That would have been William Filgate?**

EM: Yes, that would have been the story, on horseback, and knocked at the door, and my ancestor must have came out and he just said 'Are you at home? Have you been at home?' 'Yeah' he says. 'That so-and-so' he says, mentioning a name, 'is telling me lies again'. Or something like that. So obviously someone was trying to implicate him. I suppose, yes, when I was young, some people did say something, but most people clammed up, most people didn't say anything about the Wildgoose Lodge.

And thinking back on it now, the people that did talk, they would have their own version, they would have it slanted in a certain way. Now they would be implicating a family, maybe that they didn't like, you know. I think that did carry on for a long time in the area and the result is that no one spoke very much about…my father would have said something – a bit about it.

TF: **So you would have spoken about it privately, within…**

EM: He would have spoken privately about it, yeah. But he wouldn't have – he was a teacher in the local school – he wouldn't have said anything in the school but he would have spoken to me about it, you know, the outline that I've given you about the Widlgoose Lodge. But not going in to any details. Also some of the old people, like Kevin Lynch, he died, I'd say, last year, well into his 90s – he would have had an interest in it, and he had some story about how it finished, that it finished with the local landed people round there that were fairly big famers up where Robert Kieran's living and up in Arthurstown, they were fairly wealthy Catholic farmers. They said 'Lookit, this has gone on long enough'. They stopped it. I think they were involved in the court, but whatever they were, they were on the jury, whatever they were, they were connected, they did put a stop to it. And Kevin Lynch did say that your man, Devan, was betrayed by someone from over Meath-side. I don't know the exact details there was some story about that. And that's how they found him in Dublin. Somebody gave him away.

TF: **There seem to be almost as many stories about the informers and the executions than there are about the burning of the Lodge itself.**

EM: Well the burning of the Lodge in itself I suppose was bad, but the actual fact that there were how many men – fifteen? Sixteen men? Something like that – executed. And the local priest wrote to O'Reilly's and when O'Reilly's was sold in actual fact…

TF: **Would that have been the Reverend Marron?**

EM: Yeah. Yeah. He did say that more than half of them were actually innocent. He was a man was there for 40 years, a long time in this parish.

TF: **It's a devastating story, isn't it when you think of it?**

EM: Yeah, but it wouldn't have been kept so much in the public eye unless your man wrote about it, Carleton. Carleton was the guy first saw the body and wrote it down. I'd say it might have been more or less forgotten if Carleton hadn't written his book because it kept it alive and then other people went in to research it – Father Murray, and Dooley did the final one. They were the books that did keep it…But probably Carleton's account - it wasn't entirely accurate, I think – would have kept it in people's minds. I'd say people round here would have probably liked to have forgotten about it. They mightn't have – even still – like in the film – an odd person will be saying 'What do you want to bring that up for?' D'you know? And people saying 'You'll have no luck, no luck with that'

TF: **Every bit of recording I've done has gone awry with this project so far. I hope I haven't fallen victim to the curse.**

EM: The curse is over. The curse – no. The curse - when the film started, Willie [Martin, the producer] was in hospital, three or four people were in hospital. That was the curse. But I think it's been – [laughter] – the film's finished.

[Recording ends]

Recording of story

Enda Matthews (Part II)

25th April 2015

EM: One of the stories was mentioned was three surnames beginning with 'R' – won't mention them. And the story was that, em, on the scaffold a priest must have been giving last rites or last whatever he gave to the people being hanged and the story was that he took off their shoes – don't know if they took off their shoes before they were hanged? – I don't know – but when he was taking off their shoes he said to the guy 'These three' – he named the three 'R's – 'they will die out. They won't last in this parish.' Now the guy that said that to me would be the guy that Jim McArt would've probably got the story from, but I imagine that guy would have had a slant on his story that he was anxious to …he would have been anxious certainly that one of the R's, maybe two of the 'R's would be implicated in that way. That he wouldn't be a fan of them, d'you know?

TF: **Would you have encountered any other stories that kind of emanated from Wildgoose Lodge, or one of the informers or the families?**

EM: I wouldn't have, no. There wouldn't be round here, not very much, very little. There'd be very little spoke about it. That guy that gave me the three 'R's, that mentioned the three 'R's would be a guy that would have spoken about it. Because he was old at the time, and we went over and we were only children, and we went in and he spoke and talked about different things. But one of the things that would have come up were the three 'R's, we'll call them [laughs]

TF: **That's brilliant Enda, thank you very much.**

[Recording ends]

Transcript V   Recording of story by Gretta Fahey

Recording of story

Gretta Fahey

25th April 2015

TF: **So can you tell me what you remember about hearing the story of Wildgoose Lodge**

GF: Yes, I remember hearing it at home from my mother who wasn't a native of the area, my father, who was, never spoke of it. I was the youngest in the family. I was frightened by it. I would go to bed at night, my eldest sister who would be more imaginative than me would hear noises outside of people climbing up on the roof and it was very scary.

TF: **Because you'd imagine that story?**

GF: Yes, these people were still alive and they were going out to get us because we heard the story. And we were also told not to speak about it outside to anybody because our neighbours who we played with were related to these people who did all these bad works and we were very frightened.

TF: **What do you remember about the story itself – the bare bones of it?**

GF: The house on fire, and somebody throwing out a baby, and some man outside stuck a fork through the baby and flung it back in and said 'Let the nits go with the fleas'. And then there was something about hanging people with ropes and they were taken out of the ropes and piled up in a crossroads just outside Louth village and it was called Parknamurder Cross, and it's still got that name. And that's what we heard. That's the way my mother told that story.

TF: **Did you hear it in school?**

GF: We heard it from the headmaster in the school and when he was telling us, it was the same as my mother's, and then we thought 'This is really… it happened, it wasn't just a story from what my mother used to tell us. My mother used to tell us lots of stories and this story again shocked us and as children when we'd go out to the playground after hearing it, we would not discuss it. We'd never bring it up in any of our games or mention it again. Even as very young children we were very, very discreet about this.

TF: **What was it that frightened you so specifically about the story?**

GF: These people were still alive. In our minds the actual people who did it were still out there, just because they were related to these people that we played with, we thought they were still alive, and they could do it, they could burn our house too.

TF: Thank you very much for that.

[Recording ends]