

Turbulent Times: Bloody Sunday and the Civil Rights Movement

John Lynch

On 30 January 1972 in Derry Northern Ireland 13 men were shot dead by British soldiers. Bloody Sunday has come to be seen to be one of the key events in the recent history of the conflict in Northern Ireland. This article is an analysis of that event and its context through a range of theoretical ideas that seek to address the processes at work through the notion of movement or flow. Mobilizing a range of concepts from theorists such as Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, Delanda, Serres and Virilio, the period is understood as one characterised by disruptive turbulence in the social field. As part of this reading use is made of a number of formulations from Complexity theory to address the open and dynamic nature of the forces involved. By considering the civil rights movement and the emergence of Free Derry as moments in an ongoing attempt to de-code and de-territorialize the founding terms of the Unionist statelet, the article argues that the potential for radical social change was drastically halted by Bloody Sunday.

There was a great air of excitement that day as I joined an immense throng of neighbors, friends, and fellow nationalists in asserting our right to civil disobedience. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon. I vividly recall the blue sky, the cool fresh crispness in the Derry air, and the friendly banter that turned the gathering into a near carnival.

Don Mullan. (Ziff 1998, p. 35)

The mob fluctuates and the institution is made of stone. (Serres 1995, p. 106)

On the afternoon of the 30 January 1972 British troops opened fire on a demonstration in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland. Thirteen people were killed and another later died from his injuries. What became known as Bloody Sunday was a defining moment in the Northern Ireland conflict. As an intervention into a moment of profound social turmoil, the Army's actions came to be seen as a turning point away from the possibility of peaceful political reform of the Northern Ireland statelet and towards the normalising of an emerging guerrilla/terrorist war. What is offered here is an attempt to understand that event, as well as the processes at work within the social and political terrain of Northern Ireland of that time, through concepts deriving from a number of thinkers including Deleuze and Guattari, Paul Virilio, Manuel Delanda and Michel Serres. It is my

argument that these thinkers offer the potential for a quite radical way of thinking about social movements that can usefully facilitate a productive engagement with the actual forces at work within them. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to open up the event and its context to a counter-cartographic practise that goes beyond the kind of analysis which privileges structure over movement but which, instead, seeks to work with the unstable and non-linear nature of the relationship between social activism and State repression. The intention is to engage with the *dynamic* nature of the struggle between the forces of dissent and the forces of the State.

After 30-odd years of a monologic history of Bloody Sunday, as defined by the Widgery Report of April 1972, the process of another history emerging from the Saville Inquiry is imminent. But I want to question the status of this official history and to attempt to think differently the terms and paradigmatic concepts that generally define Bloody Sunday as a key event in Northern Irish history. The first section of the paper addresses questions of movement and civil rights; the second section deals with bounded space and the formation of Free Derry; in the third section I want to consider Bloody Sunday itself in terms of movement in and across bounded space i.e. as flow. This paper is framed by the contested nature of the relationship between these categories as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari:

... the State needs to subordinate hydraulic force to conduits, pipes, embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constrain movement to go from one point to another, and space itself to be striated and measured, which makes the fluid depend on the solid, and flows proceed by parallel, laminar layers. The hydraulic model of nomad science and the war machine, on the other hand, consists in being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space, in producing a movement that holds space and simultaneously affects all of its points, instead of being held by space in a local movement from one specified point to another. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 363)

In a broader sense what connects the period leading up to Bloody Sunday with contemporary social movements is the complex nature of the forces at work in seeking social transformation. This resonance is identified by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt as they theorise their notion of the 'multitude'. In a section of the book *Multitude* Hardt and Negri make use of Mikhail Bakhtin's literary trope of the carnival and 'carnevalesque vision of the world' to explore this. The strength of the concept for them is that, firstly, it is an inherently open and dialogical form opposed to the closed form of the monologic, and, secondly, that it points to the potential of new worlds. As they write:

The carnevalesque is the prose that opposes the monologue and thus refuses to claim an already completed truth, producing instead contrast and conflict in the form of narrative movement itself. The carnevalesque thus sets in motion an enormous capacity for innovation - innovation that can transform reality itself. The carnevalesque, dialogue, and polyphonic narration, of course, can easily take the form of a crude naturalism that merely mirrors daily life, but it can also

become a form of experimentation that links the imagination to desire and utopia. (Hardt & Negri 2004, p. 210)

Carnavalesque narration, therefore, offers a strategy for both describing and constructing reality. Within this formation meaning is generated by the continuous and ongoing exchange between actors, or singularities as Hardt and Negri define it in less humanistic terms, rather than any central organising figure so that the common is constituted in an open and polyphonic dialogue. This becomes useful for Hardt and Negri in understanding the emergent anti-capitalist movement, both in relation to its sentiments and its organization.

I want to extend this strategy to open up a point of connection between past and present that rejects the demand for a singular narrative but instead offers a reading that gives a sense of the range of potentials out of which other possibilities could have emerged from that time. In relation to Northern Ireland the possibility of articulating accounts that do not rely on absolute terms is perhaps beginning to emerge once more. For Hardt and Negri the carnivalesque impulse, as evident in previous instances of political and social resistance, offers a way of developing an effective engagement across movements and time:

The multitude in movement is a kind of narration that produces new subjectivities and new languages. Certainly other political movements, those of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, succeeded in constructing such a polyphonic narration, but it often seems that all that is left of them today is the monologic history of them told by the ruling powers, the police, and the judges. (Hardt & Negri 2004, p. 211)

Like Hardt and Negri I find the Bakhtinian registers of the carnivalesque and the dialogic a useful framework to critically engage with the processes of social formation and creative dissent. As the opening words to this article from Don Mullan illustrate, the march of 30 January 1972 was simultaneously both *angry* and *joyful* in its carnival-like atmosphere and the source for an understanding of the open nature of the protest. What Bakhtin offers in his concept of the dialogic is an articulation of the binary always at work within language and, by extension, the social realm in its political and cultural forms. The tendency of any form to harden and elevate norms and identity, privileges a single-voiced reading which can be located within a structure defined by relations of force characterised by an 'official' language (exemplified by the Widgery Report into Bloody Sunday). But such an assemblage is never static and is challenged by the multiple and heteroglossic momentum of the utterance. Appropriately, Bakhtin draws upon the language of physics to characterise this tension and struggle over meaning as that between centrifugal and centripetal forces:

And this stratification and heteroglossia, once realized, is not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics: stratification and

heteroglossia widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing. Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward. (Bakhtin 1981, p. 272)

What follows, then, is an attempt to shift the terms of thinking about Bloody Sunday away from any monologic account to that of a dialogic process of the multiple-voiced. This could be described as a 'stratometric analysis', after Manuel DeLanda. The mapping project at work here is informed by his notion of a 'geological ethics' where such an intervention is guided by the desire to track flows of matter and energy to enable a destratification of hardened institutions and social practices. By conceptualising social movements as operating with a dynamic viscosity we can perceive the potential for '...humanity to self-organize without the need for coercion and war' (DeLanda 1992, p. 155).

Civil Rights Movement

Firstly, I want to consider what is referred to as the civil rights movement as a collection of affiliated campaigns and individuals, the key aspect of which was precisely that it was engaged in a strategy of 'movement' rather than the formal notion of an organisation. Emerging from a number of diverse campaigns launched throughout the 1960s such as the Campaign for Social Justice, and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, through to locally based housing campaigns, the movement sought, essentially, to force reform from the Unionist state which had ruled for 50 years on the basis of systematic discrimination and political manipulation. As a broad based movement it contained any number of disparate political ideologies, from reformism informed by Catholicism through to the revolutionary claims of Maoism, and in this sense its polyvocality articulated the Bakhtinian sense of optimism and becoming. But it was organised around a number of very obvious and material concerns such as discrimination in employment and living conditions, primarily housing, as well as the issue of policing, repressive security laws and the justice system.

As would be expected non-violent-direct-action was its key strategy with which to confront the state. But its defining strength at this juncture lay in its demand for legal and constitutional rights *within* the state in the first instance. Traditionally, resistance to the Northern Irish state had resided in Republicanism, which denied the legitimacy of the Statelet itself, counter-posing, rather, a 'United Ireland' as the singular aspiration. But whilst there is no doubt that within the civil rights movement such an aspiration was present it was not an organising principle as such.

Most importantly the civil rights movement aspired to work beyond the defining category of the state itself, which was that of religion. The binary coding of sectarian dualism between Protestant and Catholic described the social and political machinery of Northern Ireland. Not surprisingly those who supported the

State vehemently challenged the movement as nothing other than a front for violent Republicanism. As a political strategy it had a profoundly destabilizing effect, in which the State was unable and unwilling to move beyond its organizing religious identities.

The civil rights campaign had disrupted the balance of power in Northern Ireland by the simple fact of mobilisation of the Catholic community. It was not so much that Northern Ireland could not be reformed. By the summer of 1969, it already had been reformed to some extent. It was that it could not incorporate its Catholic minority into the political process. It could not offer Catholics the prospect of political power. (Ó Dochartaigh 1997, p. 61)

This strategy of destratification (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) shook the State to its foundation, i.e. its founding political and conceptual principles. The civil rights movement was not seeking the dismantling of the Northern Irish state as such (even if elements within it would be happy to see this), rather, an immanent process of decoding and deterritorialization worked to operate upon the foundational terms of social and political organization to intensify the effect of *refusing* those terms at the same time as working *with* them. Bob Purdie writes:

The new strategy was inspired by the Black civil rights movement in the United States. The term 'civil rights' had not been used to define the aspirations of the minority community in Northern Ireland before the 1960s and it had never before adopted a strategy that was both militant and constitutional. (Purdie 1990, p. 2)

The intention, therefore, was not to produce chaos, in the sense of anarchic disruption, but to pose relations that could not be contained within the existing social and political organization of Northern Ireland. The conjunction of the demand for civil rights for the minority within a sectarian state produced a violent response driven by prejudice and incomprehension. Now, again, it would be wrong to characterise the civil rights movement at this time in singular terms, it was by definition a loose affiliation of disparate campaigns and politics which were generally deeply antagonistic of each other, but it drew a fairly consistent response from the state which was one of refusal or, at best, reluctant concession, coupled with large-scale repression. At this point the activities of the civil rights movement shift away from the notion of a licensed event, one of the limitations of Bakhtin's notion of the carnival, to one of becoming increasingly confrontational.

The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland drew inspiration from the US black civil rights movement and other areas of social collectivity that defined the optimistic and speculative nature of the period (Hardt & Negri 2000, p. 261). Of course there were many differences between them but the strategy of non-violent protest was central to both as was the aggressive and violent response of the local state and its police. A crucial element for both movements, therefore, was the generation of new circuits of resistance through the transmission of

television images of brutal suppression of peaceful marches (Ó Dochartaigh 1997, pp. 53-59). Gerry Murray, a resident of the Creggan estate in Derry, usefully encapsulates the relationships between the local and the global:

Before the year was over, Derry was destined to appear on television screens across the world. The first marches for civil rights were eagerly grasped by our parents, anxious to see a better future for us in terms of jobs, housing and the ability to control the destiny of our city. The famous words uttered five years earlier by Martin Luther King, 'I have a dream', had a powerful meaning for our parents and symbolised their determination to see wrongs put right. There was a great sense of unity of purpose and a lack of dissent. The politics of non-violence and the songs of the American Civil Rights movement were readily embraced in the spirit of hope and determination. (McGuinness & Downey 2000)

The image of the MP Gerry Fitt being viciously struck by a baton wielding RUC officer has become iconic of such moments. More importantly it served to mobilise Catholics and supporters of civil rights across the north and south of Ireland. The role of television images was not lost on campaigners from that point on. The response of the state, especially the police, forced an escalation of the protestors actions causing no small amount of anguish for the middle class and liberal inclined sections of the movement. As Purdie writes:

The launching of street marches by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1968 could be seen as a logical consequence of the closure of every other channel for bring about reform, but it divided the Liberals. (Purdie 1990, p. 78)

The problem for them, as was articulated at the time, was that it was going to be relatively easy to get people onto the streets but not so easy to get them off again. The shift in strategy to organised marches in protest was a significant one.

To march for civil rights was a point of connection with an international tradition of social protest but it also connected with a tradition rather more internal to Northern Ireland: sectarian parades. To walk, to march, to parade, involves many different aspects of cultural and symbolic power movement across territory is something vigorously policed by the modern state. Freedom of movement in such a context is essentially an illusion. One is not simply free to walk in the middle of the road, for instance, because the economic imperative of vehicular traffic takes precedent. The concept of private property asserts the right to exclude others from crossing across ones sovereign territory and indeed we walk upon the 'Queen's highway'. A complex system of legal and political prohibitions, therefore, works to closely supervise such practices (Goodrich 1990, p. 298). To march across or in a territory requires the charitable acquiescence of the police to such an event, and will be subject to close supervision and summary changes if it is deemed excessively disruptive to the functioning of daily life. However, the normative parameters of 'daily life' are not abstract relationships but depend entirely upon the political contours of the

local environment. Within Northern Ireland this could be seen (and it is an inherently visual display) in the tradition of Orange Order parades.

Neil Jarman writes of the way in which the strategy of marching for civil rights impacted upon the cultural environment of Northern Ireland where the 'right to march' had been central to the loyalist tradition of parades. As he says: 'While the use of protest marches was drawn from the example of the American civil rights movement, it confronted head-on the loyalist belief that parading was largely the prerogative of Unionists' (Jarman 1997, p. 76). The civil rights marches and parades *themselves*, therefore, were as contentious as any explicitly political demand. They posed in very visible terms the power lines of the under side of the sectarian state and the social order which it had been able to maintain as normative. As Jarman states:

For while the loyalists insisted on their inalienable right to parade wherever and whenever they wished, this right was not extended to Catholics. Civil rights parades did not fit into the traditional polarities; but by challenging the authority of the Protestant state and demanding equal rights for the minority they became immediately liable to be categorised as Catholic and nationalist. (Jarman 1997, p. 78)

Further, it can be argued that it was precisely the carnivalesque potential at work within civil rights marches that also distinguished them from Orange Order parades as they actively sought to *invert* dominant social relations. As Jack Santino points out the rigid and hierarchical nature of officially sanctioned parades act as a containment to the challenging potential of the carnival and articulates a reinforcing of social power: 'The Derry [Apprentice Boys] parades and Orange parades reinforce hierarchy while suspending some prohibitions. While they partake partially in the carnivalesque, their intention is to inscribe hegemony upon territory' (Santino 2001, p. 119). Jarman similarly distinguishes between the open and informal aspects of the Republican parades as opposed to the triumphal and militarised nature of the Loyalist tradition (Jarman 1997, p. 152).

To extend this analysis further, at this point I want to relate this aspect of the civil rights movement to some of the ideas articulated by Paul Virilio in his text *Speed and Politics*. For Virilio such marches have been perceived as an 'ambulatory manifestation' of the revolutionary potential of the masses (Virilio 1986, p. 19). He identifies the destabilizing aspect of this as one of an *acceleration*. This is a powerful concept with which to recognise the revolutionary potential of something like the civil rights *movement*. People in movement, ways of thinking in movement, a state forced into movement: all of these things are true but of course, *a la* Heraclitus, they are also always *already* in movement. It is not movement in the abstract but movement that seeks new ways of thinking, of acting, of imagining which is potentially revolutionary. It is the fact that what is being challenged is the ways in which the state seeks to control movement that is significant. As stated above, marching as such was actually a central element to the dominant identity of the Unionist State. But when the minor(ity) seeks to traverse the terrain of the major(ity) a very different potential comes into play. Parading

continues to be the primary means by which to express collective identities and claim dominance over territory (Jarman 1997, p. 79) and a central element of negotiating peace in the province has been an 'independent' commission to rule on contentious marches (www.paradescommission.org).

Containment had been a key aspect of the control of local and state power within Northern Ireland. Derry, most significantly, had remained a Unionist controlled city because of the strict maintenance of electoral ward boundaries and the curtailing of new house building in religiously mixed areas. A central demand of the civil rights movement had been for universal suffrage in local government elections (reluctantly conceded in 1969). Voting in Northern Ireland had been dependant upon one being a rate-payer and anomalies also meant that companies had multiple votes. It was possible, therefore, for a company owner to have a number of votes whilst a family that included several adults but living in rented accommodation to have only the one. Whilst clearly favouring one class over another (and so cutting across the binary of religious identity) it also points to the profoundly sedentary basis of the state which is to refuse to recognise a body as eligible for political power unless it begins to re-conceptualise the terms of its relationship to the land: to be an elector one must be a *landowner*. As we will see, the danger posed by the march of 30 January 1972 was a danger of turbulence within the field of social movement, of circulating outside the parameters of the very terms by which the Northern Irish statelet conceptualised itself: terms that were posited as rigid, eternal and identical. Deleuze and Guattari write of the dynamic nature of the nomadic potential which operates at the margins that is fundamentally metamorphic:

In short, we will say by convention that only nomads have absolute movement, in other words, speed: vortical or swirling movement is an essential feature of their war machine. (Deleuze & Guattari 1980/1988, p. 381)

I will consider this further on when looking at the march of the 30th January itself.

Free Derry

Free Derry encompassed the Bogside, the sprawling Creggan housing estate, the more compact Brandywell and a small middle-class area. The territory held by the rebels roughly corresponded to the South Ward, which had been set up by the Unionist administration to contain the Catholic population of the city. The newly liberated territory measured 888 acres and two roods, or roughly one and a half square miles. By gerrymandering the city for over half a century, the Unionists had inadvertently created an Achilles heel for themselves. Twenty-eight thousand despised people shoved together, piled on top of each other and discriminated against, had decided that enough was enough. They were now outside the law, and their position, energy, and numbers posed a threat to the very existence of the state. (Docherty 2001, p. 151)

Free Derry was 'thrown up' in 1969 in response to concerted attacks on the Bogside community by the police and their auxiliary reserve the infamous B specials, a force renowned for its brutality and mobilised as a reaction against the Catholic minority. As Paddy Docherty articulates above, a ghetto is an easy way to contain and manage a minority but it has a paradoxical relationship to state power in that it can switch to become a well-defined and defensible site of resistance. Drawing its nomenclature from Free Berkeley in the USA, Free Derry quickly established itself as a zone of autonomy where the police and loyalists were physically repelled and kept back behind hastily erected barricades which, over time, became more permanent. This phrase is, of course, suggestive of Hakim Bey's most famous work the *Temporary Autonomous Zone*. In this he argues that a potential exists at the boundaries of established order for new formations to emerge that elude formal control. Self-generated structures of communication and new networks of information can form temporary spaces outside the fixed hierarchies of the established order that is inherently creative. The concept usefully draws attention to the tendency of any system to develop structures of permanence that inevitably begin to contain the creative and radical energies that had created it (Bey 1985). For some, Bey's concept challenges aspects of Bakhtin's notion of the carnival because it refuses to engage with the state in any way and cannot, therefore, be appropriated (Nicholson 2006). However, it is important to recognise Free Derry as an act of self-defence, generated by the very real fears of brutality, arson and state-sanctioned murder. Like the monument to it, 'Free Derry' was *of* yet simultaneously *after* the act. As Deleuze and Guattari write: '...what History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing concept, escapes History' (Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994, p. 110). The initial assertion of the space was a creative response to the problems posed by the reaction of the forces of the state to the demands for civil rights.

The establishing of Free Derry gave physical manifestation to the already existing processes of minor-becoming at work within the Northern Irish statelet discussed above. But it was, of course, a process as opposed to a state of being where within it always already many different and contradictory forces were working. Eamonn McCann articulates most clearly the 'swirling' nature of the time where all ideas were open to debate and power was distributed throughout the mass of people all actively participating in the resistance, as he writes: 'The chaos we felt around us was for real, and rich in possibilities other than those which came to pass' (Kerr 1997, p. 4); and that at that time 'No political tendency had hegemony' (Kerr 1997, p. 5). The constitution of Free Derry was, therefore, one driven by the need to defend a space and yet to move beyond the physical boundaries that defined it and a range of spatial regimes were in play. Paul Patton writes of the quite different relationships to space posed by the contrasting conceptualisations of the understandings of territory: 'In contrast to the roads and highways that connect the regions of sedentary space, the paths of nomadic existence serve to distribute individuals and groups across an open and indeterminate space. Whereas sedentary space is striated by enclosures and paths between enclosures,

the territory of nomadic peoples is a pure surface for mobile existence, without enclosures or fixed patterns of distribution' (Patton 2000, p. 117).

The relevance of Free Derry in this context is that it was a social entity that was fundamentally exterior to the Northern Irish State: this was the danger it posed. Its exteriority coexisted with interiority in a competing terrain defined by what escapes the State. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, pp. 360-1) For the police and subsequently the army it was a 'no-go' zone where the concept of law was something other than that defined by State power. Yet at the same time it was a thoroughly permeable space to the people within it. It was not a utopian space in an ideal sense, as the reading of any account written by those who occupied it makes clear. What is evident is the constraining nature of existence for those in Free Derry. The notion of minor is intrinsically linked to the confronting of boundaries and limits to that which is in movement. Yet as Thoburn observes the 'impossibility' of action is mirrored by the impossibility of passivity '...if anything is to be *lived*' (Thoburn 2003, p. 19).

What Free Derry did was to manifest the *refusal* of the subjected minority to accept the legitimacy of both the violence of the State and its *right* to exercise violence through its agents. Such a space is intolerable to the State, which is driven by the compulsive need to colonise, capture and, centrally, regulate, the processes of lived experience. The externality of Free Derry posed a quite profoundly antipathetic mode of existence to the Northern Irish and, by extension, British state. The process of reaction generated by the State leading up to and beyond Bloody Sunday can, arguably, be seen as the concerted attempt to reduce the dynamic and multiple nature of this political and social formation to another kind of binary: that of a militarised conflict operating in a heavily striated space. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 386) This imperative manifests itself directly on the day of the march on 30 January 1972.

Bloody Sunday

A crowd, *turba*, whirls around me, *turbo*, and disturbs me. (Serres 1995)

As we will see, mathematical models of the outbreak of war have been created, and they suggest that the onset of armed conflict is related (remarkably) to the onset of turbulence in a flowing liquid. (Delanda 1991, p. 9)

As part of its strategy of repression and containment of the threat posed to it by the mythical and emergent reality of armed Republicanism the Unionist government had introduced Internment without trial in August 1971. The march of 30 January 1972 was against this injustice and in protest at the deaths of innocent civilians killed by the army. As the level of protest escalated so all marches had been banned. The march that day had therefore been designated as illegal and the route to the Guildhall Square in the centre of Derry was blocked at several points by army barriers. The organisers responded by reluctantly re-routing past the closed off streets and turning back into the heart of the Bogside to hold the final rally.

What becomes apparent from this point on, then, is a conflict of perception of what was in process. As Delanda observes, whether we view the demographic pressures which impact upon warfare as 'creative' or 'destructive' will depend on our point of view (Delanda 1991, p. 8) There is a strongly held view amongst many commentators on Northern Ireland that the primary effect of Bloody Sunday was to see the end of any conviction in the civil rights strategy of non-violent direct action and instead a more wide spread turn to the armed guerrilla war of the Provisional IRA. Bloody Sunday was one of a limited number of key events whose significance was that it served as a defining trauma in a collective community sense *and* as a moment of conversion on an individual basis for many of those involved. This connected and made concrete the micro and the macro levels of conflict where the defining parameters of normality were shattered by a violent act (Cunningham 2001, pp. 5-6). Given the recognition by many of this event as the one that signalled a fundamental shift in the relationship between Catholics and the State and was crucial in escalating the militarising of the conflict, it could be characterised as a 'threshold event'. More commonly, a threshold event refers to the impact of a factor that changes a body from one state to another, for instance a liquid changing to a solid. Such a formulation suggests that there is another way of thinking about Bloody Sunday and its context.

It should be clear that a conflict situation such as this was highly complex, contingently open-ended, and that a range of possible futures could have been generated. For these reasons the characterisation of the situation as complex is a reference to complexity theory, an example of what John Urry calls 'the complexity turn' (Urry 2005, p. 1). This range of disciplinary transformations are characterised by an awareness of the complex and open nature of systems that have a transformational potential. At any one time such systems are in balance between order and chaos and, counter to dominant thinking, don't necessarily tend towards equilibrium. As David Byrne states 'Complexity science is inherently dynamic' (Byrne 2005, p. 97). The advantage such thinking offers for conflict scenarios is worth considering further. Indeed, William Cunningham has written of the usefulness of this approach specifically to Northern Ireland:

The reason that we turn to chaos and complexity theories in conflict analysis and resolution is that it offers novel and interesting ways to analyze the behaviour of dynamic systems. In human social life there are few processes or systems that are as dynamic or complex as conflict systems. (Cunningham 2001, p. 11)

This approach allows us to at least attempt to appreciate the active relationship between agency and deterministic laws in these scenarios.

Accounts of the march on 30 January 1972 consistently paint a picture of a large crowd peacefully marching down into the Bogside. The flow of thousands of people was dammed by army barricades manned by soldiers at two key points into the city centre. The flat backed lorry carrying the organisers turned back into the Bogside to avoid the confrontation and stewards attempted to marshal people away from the points of contact with the army and police.

However, through a mixture of confusion and frustration (and it must be said out of a, by now, well established habit) a minor riot situation developed. This can be, therefore, characterised as a point of turbulence. The relatively stable flow of marchers became less so and from one point of view would have seemed chaotic. As the situation developed from latent to manifest conflict processes the perceptions of those involved begins to diverge at an exponential rate. McCann and others describe the ebb and flow of a familiar process of moving towards soldiers and police with a barrage of rocks and the standard response of CS gas, water cannon and rubber bullets in a form of elemental warfare. For the army commanders the rioting is perceived as organised and led by key individuals; for the rioters and observers there is no such distinction as marchers joined in then perhaps left the area of conflict. A sense of unity and community can be identified among the crowd, which consists not simply as an aggregate of individuals but an open and dynamic entity operating through a bodily register and located as outside the official discourse. Bakhtin writes of the crowd in this way:

The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. (Morris 1994, p. 225)

It is important, of course, not to essentialise carnival as inherently radical, as Stallybrass and White point out, but that what can be said is that '...given the presence of sharpened political antagonism, it may often act as *catalyst* and *site of actual and symbolic struggle*' (Stallybrass and White 1986, p. 14).

The key to understanding the next stage of the army action can be traced to a memo dictated by General Ford in which he articulates the need to identify and shoot leaders of the 'Derry young hooligans'. The young men of the area are to be the target of soldiers using low velocity bullets in specially adapted rifles. Such a strategy is predicated upon the notion that there is a small group, a few hundred strong at most, who organise themselves to engage in dedicated attacks upon the army and police. Accounts of the time indicate that for many young men a culture of confrontation and property destruction had established itself much to the annoyance of more conservative Catholics. (Ó Dochartaigh 1997, p. 245) Nevertheless, for the army there was no concept of a community, as such, mobilising itself in diverse and multiple ways to resist the constraining and offensive nature of military occupation. For the armed men working at the behest of the State, those to be targeted are defined by a specific identity such as 'hooligan' but who are, of course, intrinsically connected to the defining enemy the 'terrorists' for whom they are perceived to provide cover.

For the army commanders, at this point in the demonstration as much separation between the different layers of peaceful marchers and 'hooligans' has been achieved, what the army refer to as 'friction' (Delanda 1991, p. 60). This is the

moment when the order is given to allow the paratroopers in to engage in an arrest operation (where we can read this as a police action and as the halting of a flow). It is clear from all accounts that it is at this point that, what becomes Bloody Sunday is generated by the movement of the Paras into the Bogside. In the language of complexity theory this moment can be understood as a bifurcation: a change in the qualitative nature of the attractor, where the attractor can be defined as the state or point towards which a system tends (Masumi 1992, p. 60). From this point on the range of possible outcomes is greatly reduced. Changes in key variables generate social changes as a process of polarisation (Byrne 1998, p. 4) Such points allow for a pattern to be identified and a solution to be plotted: by initiating overwhelming aggressive military action the variables were inevitably condensed around violence. Cunningham articulates why such a concept can be useful in this analysis:

Bifurcations are important to understanding system behaviour at the edge of chaos - between order and disorder. Decisions that are made, for instance whether to call a cease-fire or continue a violent campaign, are highly important to determine the path of chaotic systems. This is one of the reasons that chaos theory is important to conflict resolution. (Cunningham 2001, p. 11)

Bifurcation events are the critical point at which there is a profound change in the attractor. In general, through a certain range of changes in values the attractors will change only subtly but at this critical point there is a transformation (Delanda 1992, p. 138).

It is precisely at such a moment that attractors offer different possibilities for the long-term behaviour of the system. One incident can potentially transform the long-term trajectory of the entire system. On the wider scale of conflict in Northern Ireland, Bloody Sunday was not necessarily the most significant event but, arguably, was one of a small number of points from which the subsequent system-wide pattern was generated. The relevance of complexity theory is precisely that although the input change may not seem relatively unusual, the outcome effect is enormous:

One state is replaced by another through a non-linear transformation which is nonetheless singular. There is only one new state possible. Chaotic transformations are not really about states or steady conditions. Rather they are about trajectories, about the dynamic development of systems. The connection is the idea of *bifurcation* which describes the development of very different system trajectories in the values of initial conditions. The usual form of chaotic attractor which is most described is the *Lorenz or butterfly attractor*. (Byrne 1998, p.170)

Certainly the trajectory of the movement to challenge the system subsequent to Bloody Sunday was very different from that before.

On the day itself the focus of the commanding officer on the ground is defined in terms of the task at hand, which is to isolate the incident from any wider system of analysis. This approach reflects the traditional approach within

science to artificially isolate systems to analyse them in the belief that they will achieve a steady-state equilibrium. What is ignored, therefore, is any notion that there is rather a much more dynamic process at work. Subsequently for General Ford the military intervention of 30 January 1972 had been deemed a success because, as he is reported to say that Sunday night, 'Londonderry' is quiet. This reference to the stilling of the 'noise' of the subject population is indicative of a perception of the threat posed by the crowd and by extension the troublesome community as one of disturbance/turbulence, what Michel Serres describes as 'An arborescent and turbulent rumor' (Serres 1995, p. 59).

Once the order was given to go into the Bogside, soldiers entered in armoured vehicles driven at high speed through the crowds. This highlights the central strategy of the armed policing of the different zones within Northern Ireland that was beginning to emerge at this point. Virilio usefully articulates the centrality of the ability to move quickly for the armies of the state:

Speed is the hope of the West; it is speed that supports the armies' morale. What 'makes war convenient' is transportation, and the armoured car, able to go over every kind of terrain, erases the obstacles. (Virilio 1986, p. 55)

For the paratroopers the ability to penetrate into the heart of the Bogside was dependant on the fast and protective shell of the Saracen armoured vehicles or 'pigs' as they are more euphemistically called. No longer within the domain of water or gas, instead hard metal is used as projectile against the soft tissue of bodies. The 'pigs' are projectiles fired into the body of the Bogside before individual soldiers spill out onto the ground, adopt firing position and fire bullets into the fleeing crowds.

It is useful to contrast the different vehicular strategies of the combatants within the conflict. The army had all-terrain high-speed armoured cars, a cross between a Landrover and a tank. The guerrilla forces of the IRA 'hijacked' cars and travelled with weapons stored in the boot. One of the key developments of the permanent surveillance state that Northern Ireland became over the next twenty years after Bloody Sunday was the use of number-plate recognition software to identify and track suspected IRA movements. If the revolution takes place on the street then the ability to move quickly becomes a key determinant of political power. Virilio's thesis is that the essence of revolution is speed, as he writes making specific reference to Northern Ireland:

After Belfast, Beirut showed us the old communal city crushed under the blows of the Palestinian migrants. What they lived through was not the old state of siege, but an aimless and permanent state of emergency. To survive in the city one had to stay informed daily, by radio, about the strategic situation of one's own neighborhood; everyone transformed his car into an assault vehicle, loaded with weapons in order to ensure freedom of movement. (Virilio 1977/1986, p. 120)

Six months after Bloody Sunday, in the aftermath of 'Bloody Friday' when the IRA blitzed the centre of Belfast causing widespread death and destruction, the code

word for the smashing of the barricades of Free Derry and the reclaiming for the state of the no-go zones was Operation Motorman, a term suggestive of a conflation between the human and technologies of speed mobilized by the State, to crush dissent.

What becomes apparent are the different tendencies of what is at work in the instigation of something like Bloody Sunday: the strategies of containment, control and fixed points of order employed by the army and State against ever-adapting processes of social transformation employed by those in and around the civil rights movement. This does not offer a simple binary between the two, I characterise them as tendencies. Within the civil rights movement there was an inherent conservatism (change but not too much too fast and epitomised by the influence of the Catholic church) and at the same time elements of the military machine aware of the need for the adoption of guerrilla tactics (mobile undercover assassination squads in unmarked cars). What is evident, however, is the non-linear nature of the event. For Cunningham the concept of the fractal is pertinent to the complexity of a conflict situation such as Northern Ireland. The irregular, geometrical shapes are infinitely self-generating and self-similar at all levels, he writes:

This self-similarity at all scales is important because it illustrates the presence of chaos theory and nonlinearity on all levels: the individual, group, societal, international, and global. Each fractal has the same shapes and qualities at all scales and levels. (Cunningham 2001, p. 14)

By considering such conflict scenarios through the application of complexity theory a different way of thinking beyond the binaries of conventional thought are suggested. The disruptive nature of working at the boundary between order and chaos cannot be simply restrained by the force of either military or State thinking.

Crystallization

In tracing the different moments of self-organising and strategies of becoming at work in the civil rights movement of Northern Ireland of the late 1960s and 70s it is possible to see how the conflict involved quite different conceptualisations of social order, dissent and transformation. To consider the event in this way is to reject the singularising tendency of something like the official inquiry of Lord Saville currently still engaged in formulating its final report. The very starting point of this article was a reference to the creative energy of anger coupled with a certain kind of joyfulness: a joyfulness generated by a community engaged in a self-conscious and dialogic strategy of resistance. Bloody Sunday replaced that with anger and an enduring bitterness. Such terms are, perhaps, not generally considered useful analytical concepts. Bakhtin's understanding of carnival is an effective way of connecting the different energies at work and where such

sentiments are crucial. The inter-subjective dialogue that characterises the concept distinguishes it as subversive and metamorphic. The play of difference at work within it generated the questioning of absolutes in a process of deconstruction and possible reconstruction in a rejection of the official order of reality. Carnival is not necessarily free from violence, of course, as the account of the day shows but it was not a violence motivated by a desire to silence an other's voice but rather for a voice to be recognized in the face of vicious repression. The chaos or flux of the civil rights movement was transformed into a more stable order that, ultimately, came to be managed by the State.

The civil rights movement had a resonance precisely because it did not seek to draw its authority from a series of mythical moments from the past but was driven by an energy and a refusal of established categories that was simultaneously utopian yet fundamentally pragmatic. As Hwa Yol Jung observes of this aspect of carnival:

Epistemological dogmatism and moral absolutism have no place in carnivalesque life because they contradict the essence of Bakhtin's dialogical principle that always recognizes the ever-present, porous moment and zone of ambiguity that resides and persists between complete doubt and absolute certainty. (Jung 1998, p. 107)

The thinking behind the army's intervention can be characterised as the repressive instincts of a colonial mindset where the desired effect is one of sustaining a system defined in mechanical terms: static, fixed and linear. In contrast the key aspect of the civil rights movement as it came into being was its orientation towards change, flux and speculative intervention. The dialogic impulse at work in the movement was forcibly halted in an act of calculated State violence on 30 January 1972.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination*, M. Holquist (ed.), University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bey, Hakim (1985) T. A. Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism Autonomedia Anti-copyright, http://www.hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.html.
- Byrne, D. (1998) *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences: An Introduction*, Routledge, London.
- Byrne, D. (2005) 'Complexity, Configurations and Cases', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 22, no. 5,, pp. 95-111.
- Cunningham, W. (2001) 'Violent Conflict in Northern Ireland: Complex Life at the Edge of Chaos', paper given on June 7-10, 2001 at George Mason University Fairfax, Virginia, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/conflict/index.html>.
- Delanda, M. (1991) *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, Zone Books, New York.
- Delanda, M. (1992) 'Nonorganic Life', *Zone 6*, New York.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus*, The Athlone Press, London.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1994) *What is Philosophy*, Verso, London.

- Docherty, P. (2001) *Paddy Bogside*, Mercier Press, Cork..
- Goodrich, P. (1990) *Languages of Law: From Logics of Memory to Nomadic Masks*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2000) *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Hardt, M & Negri, A. (2004) *Multitude*, Penguin Books, London.
- Jarman, N. (1997) *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland*, Berg, Oxford.
- Jung, H. W. (1998) 'Bakhtin's Dialogical Body Politics' in Bell, M. M. & Gardiner, M. (eds), *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*, Sage, London.
- Kerr, A. (ed.) (1997) *No Go. A Photographic Record of Free Derry*, Guildhall Press, Derry.
- Massumi, B. (1992) *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- McGuinness, M. & Downey, G. (2000) *Creggan: More Than a History*, Guildhall Press, 2000, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/places/creggan/mcguinness00.htm>..
- Morris, P. (1994) *The Bakhtin Reader*, Edward Arnold, London and New York.
- Nicholson, S. (2006) 'DIY Carnival: Reclaim the Streets Sydney Style', <http://reviews.media-culture.org.au//sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=211>.
- Ó Dochartaigh, N. (1997) *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles*, Cork University Press, Cork.
- Patton, P. (2000) *Deleuze and the Political*, Routledge, London.
- Purdie, B. (1990) *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland*, Blackstaff Press, Belfast.
- Santino, J. (2001) *Signs of War and Peace: Social Conflict and the Uses of Symbols in Public in Northern Ireland*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Serres, M. (1995) *Genesis*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Stallybrass, P. and White, A. (1986) *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.
- Thoburn, N. (2003) *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*, Routledge, London.
- Urry, J. (2003) *Global Complexity*, Polity, Cambridge.
- Urry, J. (2005) 'The Complexity Turn', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 1-14.
- Virilio, P. (1986) *Speed and Politics*, Semiotext(e), New York.
- Ziff, T. (1998) *Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972*, Smart Art Press, Santa Monica.