

L08-SG1 PAUL ORD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Paul Ord
Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interview summarisers: Dr Jack Crangle and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

L08-SG1 Paul Ord	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 02:13:22	Duration: 02:13:22	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Belfast in 1982 to parents who lived in Glengormley. His Catholic mother was a bank official and his Protestant father an engineer. Describes some of his mother's experiences of the Troubles and their lasting legacy: 'she's quite a nervous person, she'll jump at the slightest noise'. States that it took decades for him and his older brother to appreciate the chronic impact of such experiences on her. Explains that one of the main reasons his parents emigrated to England was because 'they were worried about what might happen to them as a so-called mixed couple' in NI.			
10:00–19:59	Explains that his parents were also keen to leave NI because they didn't want to be part of a society in which violent atrocities were becoming commonplace. Describes his father's stories about the vibrant countercultural music scene in 1960s Belfast, which dispel 'this idea of Belfast as being some kind of backwater'. Recalls his adolescent lack in interest in NI politics when living in England during the 1990s. He felt that 'as somebody from Northern Ireland I was entitled not to care about it' and 'knew more about what was happening in the Balkans than I did about the Northern Irish conflict'. Remembers his father's belief that 'something substantial had been achieved' in NI as a result of the peace process.			
20:00–29:59	He visited NI often during the 1990s and recalls a vivid childhood memory of being confronted by British soldiers with machine guns at a border crossing. Comments on the juxtaposition of this militarised environment with the cosiness of his grandparents' house. Recalls developing a vague sense of Irishness at this time, an identity that was tied to NI as a location and the imagery of Catholicism. Remembers driving past the site of the 1987 Remembrance Day bomb in Enniskillen and 'looking for a trace of this event'. States that he found NI to be a place of 'constant gravitating between the familiar and the unusual [...], and then another layer is the supernatural, which was talked about quite openly by my granny'. Remembers those childhood visits to NI as 'really magical'.			
30:00–39:59	Speaks of how ferry journeys from England to NI when young were both 'awe-inspiring' and 'alienating'. Explains that his parents first left Belfast in the late 1970s and moved to Welwyn Garden City, where they struggled financially. His brother was born there in 1980, after which the family moved back to NI, before moving again in 1984, this time to Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire, where his sister was born. They moved back to Welwyn Garden in 1988 when he was six, and he lived there until he left for university in 2003 aged twenty-one. Describes himself as a 'weird little boy', drawn to 'old churches and graveyards'.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls that his accent was more discernibly Northern Irish when he was a child, so much so that in primary school other children would 'correct' the way he spoke. The fact that there were more children from Irish backgrounds in Welwyn Garden made him aware of the 'gradations' of Irishness and Englishness. He found that 'Irishness was something you could tune up or tune down depending on what circumstances you were in', which led his brother to tease him about			

	being 'a social chameleon'. The Brexit referendum result prompted him to apply for his first Irish passport. Describes his own cultural identity as 'amorphous' and dualistic, and criticises the 'jingoism in British politics' as 'nonsensical'.
50:00–59:59	States that his parents were occasional mass-goers during his childhood and that he himself 'quite enjoyed the ritualistic aspects' of Catholicism, but ultimately took religion 'with a pinch of salt [...], a little bit like Irishness [...], something you could dip your toe in and dip in and out'. Comments on the similarities between the Catholicism of his Polish partner's family and that of his own. States that the secondary school he attended in the 1990s was a non-denominational school.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Recalls being bullied at secondary school, but does not attribute this to his Irishness. Feels his 'sheltered upbringing' left him ill-equipped to deal with the bullying. Enjoyed the academic side of school, particularly English and drama. Joined the drama club and took part in productions of several Shakespeare plays. Claims acting allowed him to escape his 'awkward' demeanour and cultivate an alternative identity: 'I loved trying to convey something to people, but I also really, really loved this weird sensation that you get when you're in front of people acting, which is of [...] assuming more than one identity at the same time'.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Recalls acting in a 'really terrible' school play called <i>No Wonderland</i> by a local playwright, which was an adaptation of <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> based on the NI peace process. Remembers his brother being 'angry about how it had treated the issues'. Explains that not only are his memories of IRA atrocities in England vague, but that his 'inner sense of the events that affected my parents is more vivid than the ones that took place during my own lifetime', and goes on to exemplify this by describing what his father told him about his experiences of the Bloody Friday bombings in Belfast in 1972.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Narrates his mother's memory of Bloody Friday, during which she saw body parts being put into bags. Comments that this occurred alongside more mundane concerns such as whether the buses were still running. Speculates that such events may have affected his parents in ways he does not fully understand. States that his parents regularly had frank conversations with him and his brother about the Troubles, despite him being a relatively incurious child. Explains that when he began his A-Levels he was unsure about his career path, but eventually settled on going to art college in Falmouth, hoping to become a painter.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Describes art college as a formative experience 'that really opened my eyes to different ways of seeing the world that I'd not appreciated before'. It enabled him to meet a greater range of people than he was accustomed to in suburban Hertfordshire, including openly gay and transgender people, which prompted him to re-evaluate his preconceptions about otherness and marginalisation: 'any claims for alterity you might have yourself are suddenly put into this very, very different scale of experience'. Recalls a long-term relationship with a previous girlfriend whom he met in Falmouth and with whom he visited NI.
01:40:00–01:49:59	States that he has never wished to be regarded as English and would 'bristle' if defined as such. It pleases him that his Polish partner embraces his Irishness and sees the Irish as preferable to the English. Comments on the cultural synergies between Poland and Ireland, including their shared history of having 'to tragically reassert' themselves against colonial powers. Also comments on the cultural commonalities between NI and the Basque country, noting that the film <i>The Wind that Shakes the Barley</i> was very popular there. Discusses his renewed interest in NI history after his parents' separation and his father's subsequent remarriage to an English woman. Describes his new in-laws as typically middle-class English people, which prompted him to rediscover his Irishness.

01:50:00–01:59:59	Believes that his father’s new family tend to ‘trivialise’ his father’s and his own Irishness. Discusses how his interest in Cold War and post-Soviet history led him to investigate ‘resurgent political and populist nationalism’, which led in turn to his revisiting NI history during an MA module at the University of Brighton. Expresses his enjoyment of <i>Derry Girls</i> for the way its teenage protagonists ‘brutally simplify things which adults have unnecessarily overcomplicated’. Discusses his motivations for getting an Irish passport in the wake of the Brexit referendum and speculates on whether this has changed his sense of identity.
02:00:00–02:09:59	States that his main reason for obtaining an Irish passport was to make it easier to travel in Europe with his Polish partner, adding: ‘I haven’t done it because of a kind of explosion of Irish patriotism or something’. Explains that his lack of close family ties to NI means that he has little reason to visit now, yet there remains a ‘kind of melancholy sense that that’s where everything is, [...] but it’s not known or understood or visited’. Thinking about his past prompts him to consider how memories are influenced by ‘cinematic narrative and cinematic forms’, as discussed in the work of Alison Landsberg and Alistair Thomson. In this context he mentions how watching the film <i>’71</i> triggered early memories of seeing armed soldiers during childhood visits to NI.
02:10:00–02:13:22	Discusses how the ‘very sympathetic representation of a young British soldier’ in Belfast in <i>’71</i> caused him to reappraise his perception of the role of soldiers in the NI conflict, viewing them more as young men who were ‘scared shitless or bored’ than as ‘faceless symbols of authority’.