

L03: ANNE POWER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Anne Power
Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interview summarisers: Dr Fearghus Roulston and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded across two audio files that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

L03: Anne Power	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:42:04	Duration: 01:42:04	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Explains her wish to be part of this oral history project because she wants the experiences of a ‘lost generation’ of NI people to be recorded. Born in Belfast in 1969 to working-class Catholic parents. Family moved to Walsall in 1973, returning in 1975 to Belfast, where she attended grammar school. Graduated from the University of Ulster in 1993 with a degree in human communication. Visited the US during a gap year and found the experience ‘pivotal’ in giving her a wider perspective on her NI childhood. Still regards New York as her ‘spiritual home’. Fondly recalls the vibrant multiculturalism of Walsall in the early 1970s.			
10:00–19:59	Explains that her family returned to NI in 1975 partly because of the suspicion and surveillance they attracted in the wake of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. Recalls returning with ‘a very strong Brummie accent’, which made her feel like ‘an English kid in a Catholic school’. Describes her parents as devout Catholics who ‘never related their religion with politics’, and nor did she. Speaks of how education was greatly valued by her family. Going to grammar school on the Falls Road was an ‘eye-opener’, in that she was mixing with pupils ‘from very different social backgrounds and political backgrounds’.			
20:00–29:59	Recalls the difficulties of travelling to school on buses that were often stoned in Protestant areas, and how her uniform was a marker of religious identity. Notes her changing relationship to the the Union flag, which ‘to us in England was everyone’s flag [...], and you go back to Northern Ireland and suddenly you can’t like that flag anymore’. Recalls constraints on movement and socialising, but also the existence of cross-religious friendships in her north Belfast locality. Provides more detail about her decision to go to USA for four months after her A-levels. Explains that she had an ancestor who settled in Brighton in the early 1900s.			
30:00–39:59	Describes how she worked and saved hard in advance of her trip to the US, after which she returned to begin her degree studies at UU’s Jordanstown campus. Recalls feeling very socially restricted in NI compared to the US and resentful at the denial of freedoms that ‘everyone else in the world takes for granted’. In the US she felt ‘you didn’t have to keep looking over your shoulder’ or worry that the sound of fireworks might be that of guns.			
40:00–50:12	After university she worked as a youth counsellor and in marketing in NI, before marrying her barrister boyfriend and moving to London for his work. Describes how her English friends’ perceptions of NI were shaped by media representations of the Troubles, and how this even affected her own sense of NI after she moved. Explains that she and her husband fully intended to return to NI, but ‘life takes over and then we had our family here’. Recalls being very conscious of anti-Irish feeling when IRA bombs exploded in the city, and describes an occasion when a work colleague blamed an atrocity, which turned out to have nothing to do with the Troubles, on ‘one of your lot’. The two interview audio files were spliced together here.			

50:13–01:00:12	Nostalgically recalls her yearning for certain NI foods in London, particularly bread. Describes the ‘awful feelings’ evoked by the July 2005 London bombings, by which time she and her family had moved to Brighton. Expresses her frustration at the pervasive ignorance of NI and the Troubles among many English people she met. Recalls the pleasure she derived from having a wide circle of friends in London, including many from diverse immigrant backgrounds.
01:00:13–01:10:12	Bemoans the oppressive airport security that travellers to NI had to endure during the 1990s. Recalls being ‘interrogated intensely’ at Heathrow Airport and seeing a police officer point a gun at her husband’s head. Opines that such ‘extreme’ measures were ‘garnered to make people feel very uncomfortable and second-class citizens’. Mentions a school trip to the Tower of London, during which a Beefeater made a disparaging remark on learning that she and her friends were from Belfast. Recalls her elation and relief when the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was signed, which coincided with the birth of her second child.
01:10:13–01:20:12	Speaks of her children’s strong attachment to NI, which they regarded as home in their early childhood. States that, despite her dismay at the church’s institutional shortcomings, she is still a practising Catholic and values the communality faith can engender. Reveals that she and her family had a property built in NI and spent the summer of 2000 there with a view to moving back permanently, but found life in ‘a little one-street town’ too quiet and relocated to Brighton instead that autumn.
01:20:13–01:30:12	Remembers feeling homesick for Belfast in the years after 1998 and marvelling at the changes that occurred in the city as part of the peace dividend, some of which she found disconcerting. Reveals that she avoided discussing the Troubles with her children, so as not to ‘to taint their lives’ with ‘her’ history, but sought instead to instil religious and cultural tolerance in them. States that NI will always be home for her, but suspects she has ‘been away too long now’ to move back permanently. Reflects on her mixed memories of growing up in Belfast, dwelling in particular on the ‘bullying’ and intimidatory tactics of the army and police.
01:30:13–01:40:12	Reflects further on the effects of the conflict and how they were normalised for her as a young person. Admits that her attitude towards English people’s ignorance about NI and Irish history more generally has softened during her time in England, shifting from frustration and defensiveness to a belief in the need for more school education. Discusses her husband’s involvement in an initiative to promote NI among its diaspora and recalls her own surprise encounter with UU alumni in Tokyo when visiting the city.