

A Shooting Script for Serial Time: Co-Ordinants of Continuity and Co-Incidence

Paul Tarpey

Introduction

This paper addresses how a positioning of revolutionary pathways, sourced from the period 1965 to 1973, can support activist-led historical mapping in Limerick City. For a contribution to a critical cartography of place, the intention is to speculate on how an activist mapping of the themes of resistance of the period can function in a transgenerational context when reactivated.

The directions taken explore how speculative elements align when investigating how memories come down and how an open source code of music-based Blackness instigated in sixties' America continues to resonate in a local context.

A sense of place can be recovered through the excavation of local knowledge that is physically embodied and 'written in the landscape' or place by the people who live or lived there.¹

At work here is a new tropism and a new sort of reflexivity, involving artists as well as theorists and activists in a passage beyond the limits traditionally assigned to their practice. The word tropism conveys the desire or need to turn towards something else, towards an exterior field or discipline; while the notion of reflexivity now indicates a critical return to the departure point, an attempt to transform the initial discipline, to end its isolation, to open up new possibilities of expression, analysis, cooperation and commitment. This back-and-forth movement, or rather, this transformative spiral, is the operative principle of what I will be calling extradisciplinary investigations.

(Holmes, 2007, para. 5)

¹ Lucy Lippard (1997) *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentred Society* (New York: The New Press).

It seems to me that I've been here before.
The sounds I heard and the sights I saw.
Was it real or in my dreams I need to know what it all means

(The Yardbirds, 1966 cited in Savage, 1997, p. 7)



Figure 1. Image by Stephen Shames, a White photographer who documented the Black Panthers, 1970.

‘The revolution has always been in the hands of the young. The young always inherit the revolution.’² In his 1973 autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*, one of the founders of the Black Panthers, Huey P. Newton (1942–1989), describes the formative experience of reading James Joyce alongside Aristotle, Hume, and Socrates. Newton references Joyce twice in his book in regards to a political awakening.

Of his coming of age in Los Angeles in the sixties, Newton (2009, p. 58) writes,

I identified very strongly with Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* because he went through a similar experience. He felt great guilt when he first questioned Catholicism believing he would be consumed by the fires of hell for his doubt... that is what happened to me.

² Huey P. Newton (n.d.) ‘Huey Newton Quotes’ *BrainyQuote.com*. [online] Available at: <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/hueynewton211795.html> [Accessed 24 October 2017].

In the book, Joyce has Stephen Dedalus identify himself by resisting both the Catholic Church and the imperialism of the British state. A realisation of how these overlapping boundaries have defined him as a servant leads Dedalus to declare ‘non serviam: I will not Serve’ (Joyce, 2000, p. 205). Joyce has his subject articulate how a pervasive sense of power is latent in the everyday. It must be recognised and confronted before being negotiated politically. Articulating this awareness means foregrounding the intention to resist as one’s vocabulary expands.

As the profile of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense grew in the late sixties, Newton and his fellow revolutionaries focused on the act of politicising language for the Black struggle. The movement for civil rights had introduced this agenda to the media, but the Panthers sought more. Their mission was to build on the radical elements now associated with Black identity in the wake of the movement generated by civil rights activists.³ The dynamic inherent in the vernacular was a primary task for this.

Newton and the Panthers were aware of how the media responded to how Martin Luther King delivered speeches on racial and economic injustice. As a preacher, King’s skilful delivery appeared at the time to merge with how television, in particular, had to address discontent now that evidence of injustice was being projected directly into the homes of White America and abroad.⁴ This shift was recognised by the Panthers who monitored the level and impact of media traffic towards shaping their media strategies. As the balance of power dynamics are maintained by language through cultural and communication systems, the Panthers accentuated the opportunity of the vernacular (in sound and image) for maximum effect. The eloquence of King, the preacher, represented one direction for the task in hand, but there was another example, the boxer, Muhammad Ali.

Ali attracted major news coverage when he refused to be drafted to fight in Vietnam in 1967. Using his media profile and fame as a boxer, he framed his protest in macro and micro terms drawing parallels between national and international strife. Ali demanded that the coverage of this event was to be received as a series of anti-war statements. As a Black conscientious objector, he underlined the fact that his oppressor was not Chinese or Vietcong, but America itself. ‘My conscience won’t let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor hungry people in the mud for big powerful America,’ he said (cited in Calamur, 2016, para. 4). The tone of these sound bites from a Black man had a significant impact worldwide.

³ The heading on *The Black Panther* newspaper heralded it as functioning as an intercommunal news service.

⁴ In 1967 television simulcasting was in place.

Vernacular language punctuated a global issue using traces of the local to align the experience of the Black community with similar struggles against injustice worldwide. As well as offering this perspective, such incidents can be seen as the genesis of positioning Black urban consciousness as a radical pan-racial resource for universal ends.

A key example of how Newton turned language to contest authority is in how the Panthers applied the vernacular to create the description ‘pig’ for the institutionalised police officer. As an effective sound bite, the term ‘pig’ came quickly to critique how the authorities in the everyday managed power. The Panthers saw the police as being a law unto themselves, and the figure of the policeman had come to represent how power was used to contain the Black community. Addressing this as a core issue in the earlier stage of his political writing, Newton ambitiously sought to encourage both the general White population and police officers to become aware of and change their behaviour. All were to unify and reject their compromised roles in the corrupt structures of power.⁵



Figure 2. Image of a pig illustrated by Emory Douglas for the end page of *The Black Panther* magazine 20 December 1967 at Huey Newton’s request. Offset lithograph on paper.

Source: Tate Modern (2017).⁶

Newton (2009, p. 175) wished for ‘a new consciousness to be inflicted on the ruling circle.’ For this to happen, Whites and police officers would have to break ranks and join the collective struggle. Power would then revert to the people providing autonomy for each community. The figure of the ‘pig’, a pejorative name for police, was designed to represent

⁵ ‘In 1969 William Burroughs referred to a structure of power called “The Police Machine”. Something that could be destroyed with the whole concept of a Nation.’ (Odier and Burroughs, 2008, p. 80).

⁶ Tate Modern (2017) *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*. Exhibition held at the Tate Modern London, 12 July to 22 October 2017 [Exhibition Catalogue] p. 62.

the ideal of the police officer who would ignore this call and continue to serve a corrupt agenda. In Joyce's time, the derogatory nationalist term for similar subservience was 'shoneen'. Akin to calling someone a traitor, shoneen described an Irishman who saw himself or herself as a 'little John Bull', someone content to defer to the authority of the British oppressor in local issues.

The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is referenced again as Newton processed the grotesque as an aid for political ends. He references Joyce's use of the image of the swine as a destructive, devouring image and drew parallels with this in how he saw power structured for Black communities. Ireland is 'an old sow that eats her farrow', (Newton, 2009, p. 176). In this section of his book, the reader is reminded that 'ethnic groups like the Irish and Italians established institutions and organisations within their own communities' (Newton, 2009, p. 176). Newton (2009, p. 176) points out that, 'When they achieved this political control, they had the power to deal with their problems.'



Figure 3. An image of the 'pig' being killed on the front page of The Black Panther newspaper in 1969.

Source: It's About Time (2004–2014).⁷

⁷ It's About Time (2004–2014) [online]. Available at: <http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/index.html> [Accessed 19 April 2019].

By 1970, the vicious use of the term ‘pig’ became shorthand in the counterculture. In this fashion, it allowed *The Black Panther* newspaper to directly address incidents involving police oppression in Black communities.⁸ Nothing like this type of visual dialogue was then being processed in any other publication then designed for a Black audience.⁹ The Panthers primarily spoke here for a community that Marx would have described as ‘the lumpen proletariat’. These were the leftover communities that were corralled in urban areas and policed as a societal threat in Los Angeles after the Watts riots of 1965. Conditions of enforced Black identity in this manner acted as a regulatory mechanism for authority. The image of the pig as a corrupt figure, illustrated by Emory Douglas for the newspaper, visualised the fact that this regulation also rendered the corralled communities as a recruitment resource for authorities to employ the more dubious elements within them.¹⁰ The term ‘pig’ transcended its precise Los Angeles origins and spread rapidly as an inter-racial term of resistance ubiquitous with how authority was contested. In the Kent State massacre of 1970, the National Guard was confronted by predominantly White students with the chant ‘One, Two, Three, Four, we don’t want your fucking war: Pigs off campus.’ It was then that the Guard released tear gas followed by live ammunition.

The immediacy offered by the vernacular allowed, for example, an article in *The Black Panther* newspaper, to be written in a way that it appeared to be reporting in real time. As a writing technique, this is known as coloured narrative. It was used by Joyce to convey the interior thoughts of Stephen Daedalus.¹¹

⁸ ‘At its peak in 1970, the paper reached hundreds of thousands of readers across the United States, including those who saw it as a menace. According to a 1976 congressional report, the FBI’s field offices hatched elaborate methods against the paper, including pressure on airlines shipping its issues, and calls for boycotts. Pitchaya Sudbanthad (2008) *Biography of Emory Douglas* [online] AIGA The Professional Association for Design, 1 September 2008. Available at: <http://www.aiga.org/design-journeys-emory-douglas> [Accessed 19 April 2019].

⁹ The prominent magazine for this audience, *Ebony* (established 1945) promoted the achievements of African Americans and encouraged racial pride in an uncontentious fashion in a publishing format similar to *Time* or *Newsweek*. In 1966, Debord, writing on the Watts riots stream referred to this stream as ‘a minority spectacle, a mere appendage of a general spectacle.’ A colony of a White spectacle. See Frances Stracy (2014) *Constructed Situations*, London, UK: Pluto Press, p. 68.

¹⁰ Douglas’s image has been referenced as having influenced Black and political art associated with the hip hop movement of the late eighties, particularly the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat (See the painting *Defacement (The Death of Michael Stewart)* 1983.

¹¹ In his memoir, (2016) *The Beautiful Struggle*, London, UK: Verso, the Black writer, Ta-Nehisi Coates, describes his father Paul’s initial engagement with the Black Panthers in Baltimore as one of a ‘Community Worker’. He would ‘Rise at 5 am, head over to the Martin De Porres centre, talk to the radical Catholics then head to the kitchen. The revolution was centred around pancakes, bacon and grits.’ (p. 87). This was in the late 1960s before, as Coates puts it, ‘the time before’ the revolution went bacchanal (p. 82). This of-age memoir explores how Coates’ conception of Blackness growing up evolved from the conditions experienced and

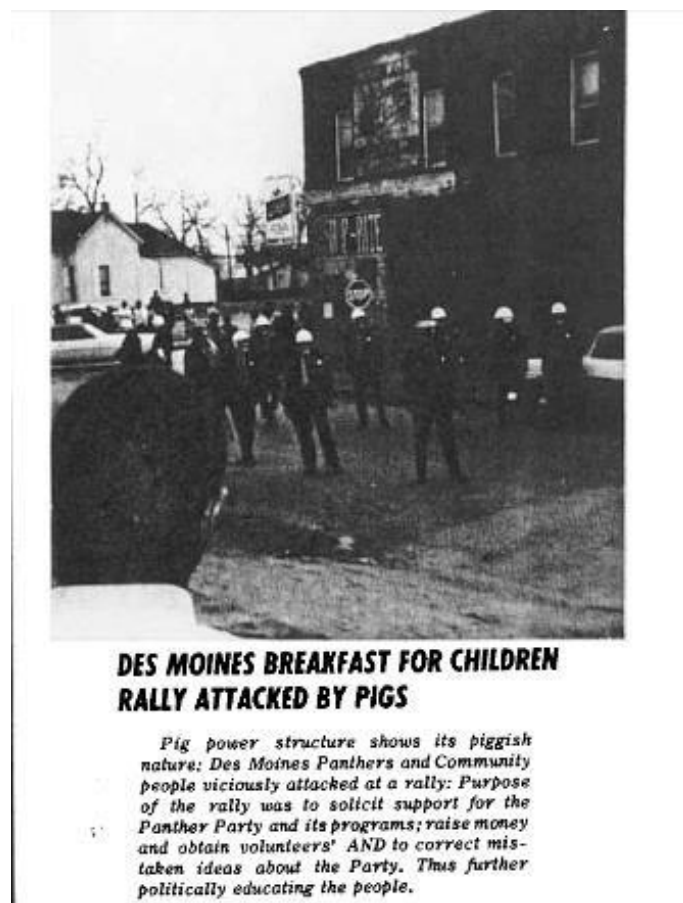


Figure 4. Image from The Black Panther magazine (1969) Vol. 3 No. 1.

Source: It's About Time (2004–2014).¹²

articulated by his father. A tag on the cover of the book calls the author 'the young James Joyce of the hip-hop generation.'

¹² It's About Time (2004–2014) [online]. Available at:

http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/BPP_Newspapers/pdf/Vol_III_No1_1969_1.pdf [Accessed 19 April 2019].

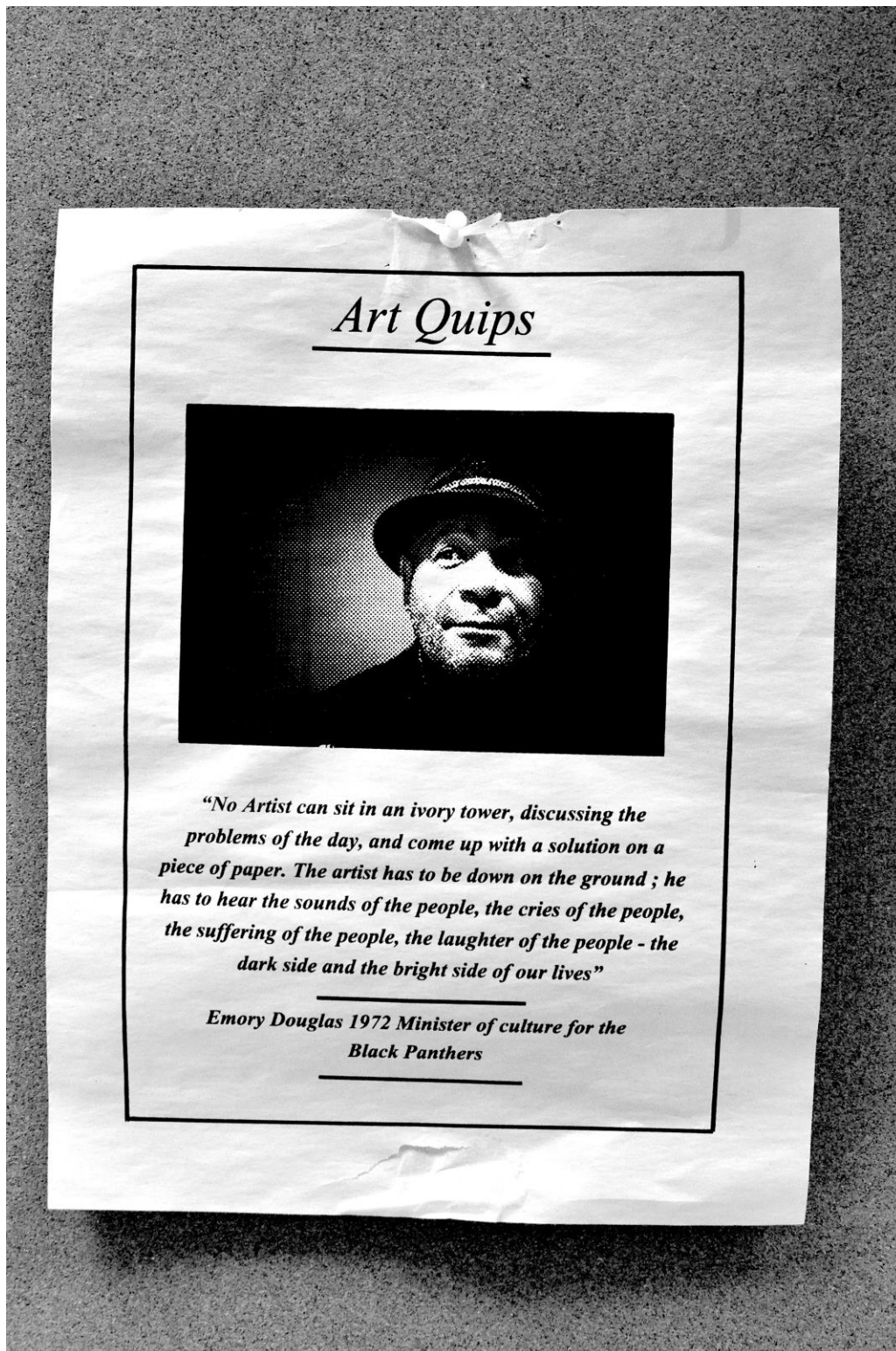


Figure 5. A4 poster (screen print) project for Limerick City by the artist Eoin Barry circa 2014.

The vernacular in text for chant, print, or placard has been a staple of Western protest in the 20th century. Foregrounding the use of the vernacular as an activist turn is usually the first step in grounding a local response to an international issue. To assist in an understanding of

contentious global issues and introduce activism, it is useful to frame it locally. One slightly relevant Irish example is the anti-imperialist activities in the period under discussion, a protest in Cork in 1967. A visit to Ireland by the US warship, the USS Courtney, was protested by a group of Irish Republicans, one of whom carried a placard reading ‘Yankee Black and Tans get out of Vietnam’. The Irish vernacular term ‘Black and Tan’ being forever associated with an occupying English presence.



Figure 6. Cork Vietnamese Freedom Association protesting the visit of the US warship USS Courtney in Cork July 12th, 1967. Photographer Dan Neville.

Source: Jim Lane Archive Cork.¹³

¹³ In a post on social media, 22nd July 2017, Jim Lane said, ‘the Cork Vietnamese Freedom Association placed a picket on the U.S.S. Courtney Warship, when on what was referred to as a “courtesy” visit. It was a 5-day visit starting on 12th July 1967. During that period, we had a rotating picket on the ship during all daytime hours. It was constantly watched by police and special branch. At no time was there any interference with the picket. The main photo attached shows our picket passing the ship, with what it appears, a section of the ship’s crew, giving the picket a salute. Would not have surprised us, as we found those among the crew who spoke to us, very disgruntled as to their future and the war.’

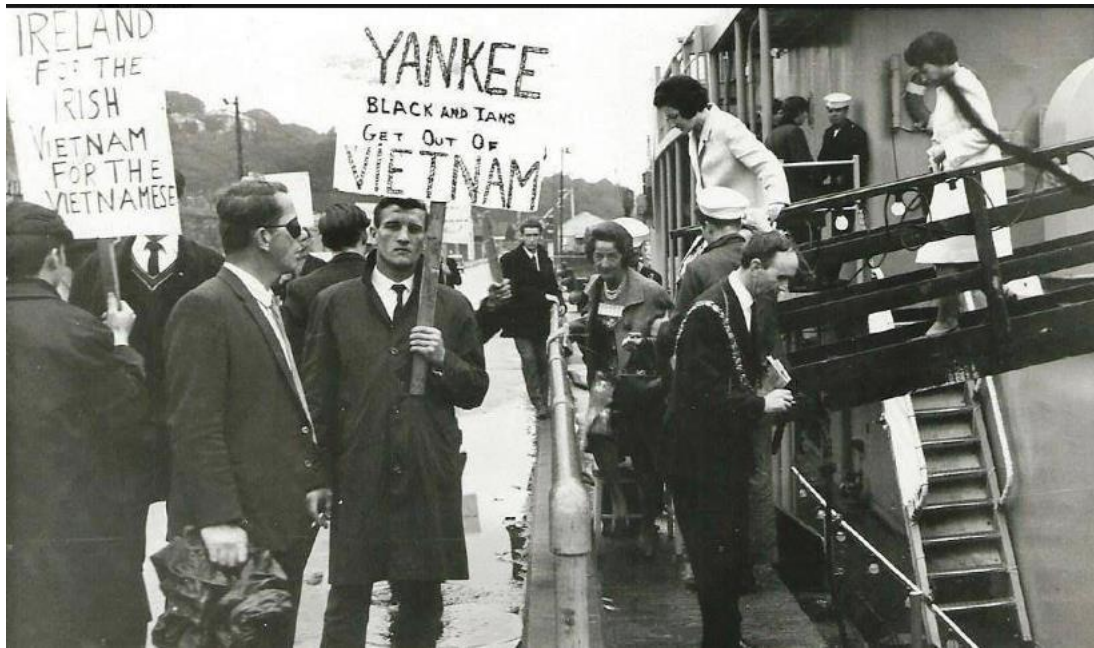


Figure 7. The Mayor of Cork leaves the US warship USS Courtney in Cork 12th July 1967. Photographer Dan Neville.

By 1972, mainly through the free press, the use of ‘pig’ as shorthand referring to authority as oppressor was established enough then to be used in an Irish context. In a comprehensive article in the *International Times* titled ‘Ireland for the Irish – England for the Pigs’, the writer and artist George Snow outlines the background of the war in the North of Ireland from a socialist perspective. A quote by Karl Marx introduces the piece, ‘The English people can never be free as long as Ireland is enslaved.’ English colonial expansion from 1840 is emphasised as the root of the conflict in the North.¹⁴ The history-based article is notable for its educational base as well as the artwork that formed part of it. Contesting the view that the war was a conflict on religious lines supported by the mainstream British media, a neo-psychedelic treatment framed an alternative discussion using a combination of journalism/history and polemic. This was facilitated using a treated photograph that was taken in the North by Snow after he embedded himself with protesting Catholic youths in Derry. Unintentionally, the clashing colour scheme of blue and green with the red in the foreground echoes Eugène Delacroix’s (1830) painting *Liberty Leading the People*. This was the painter’s commemoration of the 1830 Paris uprising showing street children and intellectuals fighting together on the barricades. An important aspect of the legacy of this modern revolution is based on how it legitimised popular revolt based on a sweeping away of

¹⁴ *International Times*, Jan–Feb 1972, Issue 122, pp. 12 – 13.

tradition.¹⁵ In the *International Times* spread, Snow inserted a clipping from a war comic showing a WWII Allied soldier unleashing ‘a spray of lead, silencing the last of the opposition.’ Linking of this war comic trope of the image of the plucky soldier facing down the evil axis with the image of youths facing down the British Army in Derry was intentional. It mocked the good versus evil paradigm that confirmed the Allied victory familiar in the war comics popular in the seventies and emphasised the complexity as the forces that achieved that victory were now being sent into battle against civilians. In the context of 1972, the subtext of this collage visualised the historical roots of the conflict as being intrinsically linked to a reactivation of a British imperialist agenda in the North.



Figure 8. *International Times*. Jan–Feb 1972, Issue 122, pp. 12–13.

A review of how the *International Times*, in particular, covered the war in the North, circa 1970–1972, finds a combination of factual, fictional (including New Age¹⁶) and speculative approaches as the editors sought to position revolutionary agendas in a wider context. Due to

¹⁵ The Irish painter Robert Ballagh’s version in a cartoon style of this painting (1968) substitutes the red flag of socialism for the French flag in the original. A composite of this version with a profile of the republican Padraig Pearse formed the design of a commemorative stamp for Pearse.

¹⁶ For example, issue 105 of the *International Times* contains an Irish related new age essay called ‘Atlantean Traditions in Ancient Ireland: Giants of The Earth’ p. 24.

censorship and coverage in the British tabloids of the war being a religious conflict, the countercultural press was an important source of information for a youth audience. This audience was cognisant of the language of the countercultural press and how they facilitated a particular perspective on the Irish situation.



Figure 9. International Times vol. 1, issue 105, p. 11. A parody of a 1950s fan club ad where 'heart throbs' are renamed mainly after countercultural figureheads.



Figure 10. Ad in New Spotlight magazine 1972.