Dealing with nationalism in view of a human need to belong: the feasibility of narrative transformation in Northern Ireland

Florian Englberger

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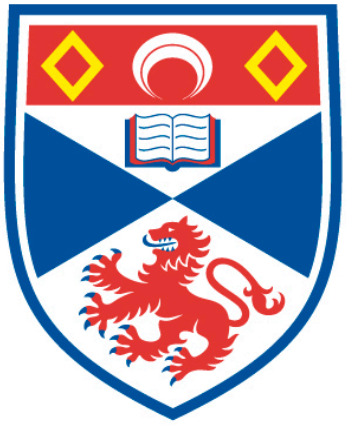

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to delineate what change in divided societies such as Northern Ireland is possible. Two steps are necessary to answer this question: first, to explain the potency of nationalism. I contend that taking the evolutionary history of humans and a human need to belong into account is essential for an understanding of A. D. Smith's ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism. We need to acknowledge that human beings emerged from small-scale settings and are therefore conservative beings who seek those patterns of familiarity that make up the ordinary 'everyday'. They are also prejudiced beings, as prejudice helps to break down a complex world into digestible pieces. The ethnic state excluding an ethnic 'other' is an answer to these calls for simplicity. By establishing an apparent *terra firma*, a *habitus*, symbols of an ethnic past and national present speak of nationalist narratives that provide a sense of ontological security. In (Northern) Ireland, ethno-national communities based on prejudiced understandings of history have long been established. In this second step I maintain that change that violates the core potent national narratives cannot be achieved. The Provisional IRA's change from insurrection to parliament became feasible because a radical break with republican dogmas was avoided. Sinn Féin, despite a rhetorical move towards 'reconciliation', still seek to outmanoeuvre the unionist 'other'. The history of Irish socialism, on the other hand, has been a failure, as it embodied a radical attempt to banish the 'other' from the national narrative. Regarding 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland, I argue for a peacebuilding approach that leaves the confinements of hostile identity politics, as these mass guarantors of ontological security possess only limited potential for relationship transformation. We need to appreciate those almost invisible acts of empathy and peace that could be found even in Northern Ireland's darkest hours.

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Introduction: Dealing with nationalism

Northern Ireland and the problem of social change

There is little doubt that Northern Ireland remains a "contested society" (Victims and Survivors Forum 2013, 5) where opposing, often strictly binary, ethno-nationalist narratives of the events that shaped the period between ca. 1968 and 1998 (the 'Troubles') remain widely disputed. Michael Ignatieff (1999, 165) quotes James Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake". Strong words indeed, but they stress the intractability that often plagues dealing with the past in post-conflict societies – and the importance the past plays in perceptions of nation and self. For a society to move forward, it must shift the past out of the present and try to lose the grip of "a grief or an anger whose power traps us in an unending yesterday" (ibid., 169). Where the past strikes to the core of the communal identity, abandoning it becomes highly problematic.

Subsequently, all attempts by Northern Ireland's politicians to solve this conundrum have failed; to this day, there is no agreed, overall mechanism to deal with the past. The 2009 Eames-Bradley report, produced by the Consultative Group on the Past, fell through, because of its controversial proposal to grant recognition to all those who were caught up in the violence of the 'Troubles'. Who exactly was a victim was purposely left undecided: the idea that relatives of members of the Provisional IRA who died during that period could also claim victim status predictably enraged those who saw the IRA's campaign as criminal terrorism (McEvoy 2013). The politics of victimhood reflect the dilemma of the past: victims cannot be perpetrators, perpetrators cannot be victims. Thus, a world divided into black and white prevails (McEvoy and McConnachie 2012). The draft Haass document, the outcome of the ill-fated 2013 multi-party talks on parades, flags, and the past stressed that "Many continue to await the end of sectarianism and the peace dividend that should be all citizens' due. The division of our society runs through our schools and our neighbourhoods" (Panel

of Parties in the NI Executive 2013, 2). And:

> the past continues to permeate our government, institutions, and people […]. It maintains the gulf between neighbours who pass each other in the street or in the shops. Without facing this issue, Northern Ireland and its people will find it challenging to achieve the future its people desire and deserve. (ibid., 19)

A new attempt to establish a coherent approach to the past as part of the Stormont House Agreement (British and Irish Governments 2014) and Fresh Start Agreement (DUP, Sinn Féin, and British and Irish Governments 2015) equally had to be abandoned.

As of early 2018, Northern Ireland is stumbling on, lingering somewhat in a state of low-scale crisis with governmental stability, if it exists at all, always at risk. This does not mean that its political and societal divisions are always divided into clean-cut 'orange' and 'green' proportions, or always all-important to all members of society. However, there is no denying that the issue of dealing with the violent past remains a deeply controversial topic. Rowan (2015) argues that

> there will always be arguments about who started, and what started, this conflict; different narratives and different beliefs, which are all parts of the same story on the same stage, seen through different eyes and experiences. Acknowledging the past fully is not about picking one of these experiences, and ignoring others. They all have their place in any complete retrospective of those decades of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The different narratives will never be reconciled, but must all be included in any review of the past. (113–14)

Therefore, a consensus across the political divide that allows for different perceptions of 'truth' appears to be a necessity – such a compromise of unity through difference has proven to be extremely difficult to arrive at, because mutually exclusive discourses still dominate the public discourse in Northern Ireland. Meaningful change altering this status quo appears to be beyond reach.

In this thesis, I will focus less on the specific topic of dealing with the past in Northern

Ireland, since the topic has been addressed many times elsewhere[1], but more on the main obstacle that stands in its way: the appeal of nationalism. I will follow loosely the research agenda on identity change outlined by Todd (2018, 90): on what issues have leaders and social entrepreneurs in divided societies successfully shaped the identities of those that take part in them? And: what are the constraints to identity change? When do people refuse to follow policy revivals and adjustments? Answering these questions, I will argue that the appeal of nationalism stems from a more universal need to belong which constitutes the main obstacle to sweeping change to national narratives and the national identities that are derived from them. Using the specific example of Irish nationalism and republicanism, I will show that the change that did transpire became possible only because it left the core of the national narrative intact.

By focusing on a universal need to belong I do not contend that nationalism is the only answer to this call, but that in divided societies such as Northern Ireland, shaped by a communal defence mechanism, nationalism has been a particularly obtuse obstacle to social change that does not exist in other societies which have not been shaped by a history of communal violence. As such, I take this history of violence and wider religious and political antagonism for granted, explaining why such a need to belong can be held responsible for its consistency and reoccurrence.

The thesis is divided into two parts that will seek to address therefore both the universal (the need to belong and how nationalism fulfils this need very convincingly, see Chapters 1 and 2) and how it can be applied to the specific (the ways in which Irish nationalism has or has not changed in the face of such a need, see Chapters 3 and 4). Combining the two strands of

[1] For an overview of the woes and wails of dealing with the past in Northern Ireland and subsequent questions of reconciliation and conflict transformation see, amongst many others, Lawther (2010; 2013; 2014), Rowan (2015), Little (2012), McDowell and Braniff (2014, 38–59), McCaughey (2001), McEvoy (2013), Gormally and McEvoy (2009), Hamber (2015; 2016), and Simpson (2009).

enquiry, the rest of the thesis will be structured as follows: the remainder of the introduction will be devoted to providing an overview of existing literature on the study of nationalism and its appeal and will then delineate the counter-proposal I suggest. In Chapter 1 and 2, I will argue that to understand the appeal of nationalism we need to investigate the evolutionary history of humankind. Most approaches to the study of nationalism take its emotional appeal for granted – looking into the processes that create human belonging will help to explain the endurance of nationalism in our world. These chapters build on sociobiological and social-psychological perspectives, elaborating on the idea that if we are to be critical of the current state of affairs, we need to know where to apply leverage. We need to have a sharply-focused idea of society, its actors and its forces. Only an accurate understanding of society will enable us to think about why certain methods of dealing with the past will be more promising than others. To accomplish this task of inquiry, we must dig deep into society and examine carefully those societal forces which play their part in shaping society into its current state. We have to open up the black box, "show the nuts and bolts, the cogs and wheels of the internal machinery" (Elster 1983, 24) and explain what is going on inside.

By opening up the 'black box', my argument revives the sociobiological path paved by Pierre van den Berghe (1978; 1979; 1980; 1995), although I will go down a different route. While van den Berghe based nationalism on ethnic nepotism, i.e. the idea that people are prepared to cooperate with those with whom they share genetic similarities, I will contend that human evolution in small-group environments has made us beings who are inclined towards order and stability: humans desire a sense of belonging and ontological security. Nationalism excels in providing ontological security because it incorporates three elements – prejudice, popular sovereignty, and banality – which all relate to how ontological security is created. Prejudice is the cognitive tool that creates belonging in the individual, democracy understood

as popular sovereignty orders the social world at large by wedding the state to one certain people. 'Banal nationalism' (Billig 2010) then turns belonging as nationalism into a daily experience. Taken together, these three elements make nationalism a powerful social force. Importantly, this also has consequences for how we talk about social change, in particular in divided societies where conflict narratives provide ontological belonging: it means that radical change to established social structures has little chance of success.

This we see confirmed in Northern Ireland, where the change that *did* happen did so because the core of the respective national narratives was kept intact. In the third and fourth chapter, a broader sociological perspective will again be employed to use the idea of the human need to belong, defined as the cornerstone of the appeal of nationalism, to analyse the course the narrative of Irish republicanism has taken. Chapter 3 will focus on the seemingly radical transformation within Irish republicanism: the transformation of the IRA into a constitutional party, brought about by the leadership around Gerry Adams. I will argue that this was only possible because the core of the national narrative, which provides belonging, was left untouched: this core is that Irish republicanism is still built around an anti-unionist agenda. It is the 'other' that needs to be outflanked by keeping the constitutional question – the question of who owns the state – open. Chapter 4 will contrast this development with the much more radical agenda of Irish socialism. Socialist rhetoric never left the republican movement and Sinn Féin pays, to this day, lip service to its internationalist reasoning. However, solidarism in Northern Ireland demanded a radical transformation of the republican narrative which would have ended its nationalistic core: solidarity within the working class 'other' outweighing the nationalist goal of Irish unity. Where socialism's internationalist maxim was taken seriously, its advocates had to pay the price of condemning themselves to obscurity, quickly outpaced by the nationalist-orthodox agenda.

In the conclusion I will discuss the repercussions for Northern Ireland, reintroducing wider concerns of dealing with the past that build upon my main argument that the appeal of nationalism can be traced back to a more general human need to belong. I will end with the finding that the identity politics that have shaped the politics of Northern Ireland cannot be transformative, as ethnic identities in divided societies like Northern Ireland *always* intend to preserve that very sense of belonging created through the exclusion of the national 'other'. Conflict resolution that reaches out to the 'other' must find alternative venues, for instance in the form of a storytelling approach to peacebuilding.

In this dissertation I will focus on Northern Ireland.[2] The 'Troubles' are increasingly portrayed as an ethno-national 'textbook conflict' that provides useful 'lessons learned' (Breen Smyth 2008; Powell 2012; Fitzduff 2016) in the fields of counter-terrorism and peacebuilding, especially since the conflict was seemingly brought to a surprising end by a peace process which culminated in a power-sharing agreement between the former warring parties. It is therefore not surprising that only a few undergraduate courses on nationalism and ethnic conflict would *not* delve into the politics of Northern Ireland. In a similar vein, I treat the conflict in Northern Ireland as an ethno-national conflict, shaped by conflicting national aspirations that either seek to tie the six counties of Northern Ireland to the rest of the island or advocate the political status quo that sees Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Nationalism is the driving force, because both Irish nationalism and unionism vie for the privilege of state ownership, effectively linking this political project to prevalent ideas of cultural identity. Hence, unionism in Northern Ireland is still a 'nationalist' project

[2] This necessary means excluding many other case studies where the interplay between the nation and social change – the making and unmaking of nationalisms – can be equally observed and studied. See for instance Zerubavel (2002, 2013) for the case of the Israeli nation, McCrone and Bechhofer (2015) for Scotland, and Drapac (2010) and Wachtel (1998) for Yugoslavia.

even if it does not constitute a nationalist vision in itself, but should rather be understood as an element of the wider British nation; this is despite the occasional and largely tactical flirtations of some unionists with the idea of an independent Ulster.[3]

While it is true that Northern Ireland's history has been extensively charted and some of its recent history might even suffer from academic saturation, the plethora of monographs on its history, recent and ancient, its people, and political actors provide for a detailed image of the role nationalism has played in its genesis and how societal change has affected its course. This puts Northern Ireland on the front line of the study of nationalism. Making use of the multitude of sources available allows for a detailed analysis of the change that has happened, while also giving an account of the change that did not occur.

Despite this wealth of literature, a theoretically grounded approach outlining the course of transition while focusing on nationalism is largely absent from literature on the peace process[4] or somewhat stinted[5]. Hence, while the peace process has been excessively studied, the reasons why this dramatic change of heart became a possibility have been neglected. The same pertains to other topical areas that feature prominently in the literature, especially the history of the republican movement and in particular the Provisional IRA[6] and (Provisional) Sinn Féin[7]. Nonetheless, and apart from various Marxist interpretations (see Whyte 1991, 175–93), some contributions are worth mentioning: English (2007) charts the history of Irish nationalism using the concepts of community, power, and struggle. Hutchinson (1987)

[3] I will elaborate on this thought and the ever-present link between ethnicity and popular sovereignty in Chapter 3.
[4] The literature on the peace process is indeed vast, see for instance Todd (2007), Mac Ginty and Darby (2000; 2002), Guelke (2012), Bourke (2012), Oberschall (2007), Powell (2008), Cochrane (2013), Elliott (2007), Power (2011), and Darby (2001).
[5] For example, Crawford's (2003) account of the conflict potential of ethnicity in Darby and Mac Ginty (2003) amounts to a mere nine pages.
[6] See McKearney (2011), B. O'Brien (1993), Patterson (1997), Coogan (2000), Moloney (2003), Dingley (2012), English (2012), Bean (1994, 2007), and Alonso (2003).
[7] For instance Ó Broin (2009), Rafter (2005), Tonge and Murray (2005), and Frampton (2009).

builds upon the work of A. D. Smith to analyse 19th century Irish nationalism from the perspective of cultural nationalism. Githens-Mazer (2006) provides an analysis of the Easter Rising using ethno-symbolism and social movement theory. Whyte (1991, 94–111) provides an overview of psychological explanations. These authors speak of societal change in the face of powerful social structures. In this thesis, I will aim at something similar regarding the study of nationalism.

Before elaborating on my own approach, I will therefore begin by reviewing the relevant literature in the field of nationalism studies and locate my own take on the subject matter within it. This will include a more extensive discussion of how in particular A. D. Smith's ethno-symbolist approach has dealt with the question of explaining the emotional appeal of nationalism. The crucial point is that much of nationalism's allure remains unaccounted for: those ethnic myths that underlie nationalist conflicts, such as in Northern Ireland, are depicted as powerful forces *because such is their nature*. This circular argument leaves the very core of the ethnic explanation of nationalism in darkness. I will end this introductory chapter with a discussion of how we can think about social change: even if we acknowledge the appeal that nationalism has, any theoretical deliberations must lead somewhere, i.e. to an improved understanding of to what extent belonging constitutes an obstacle on the way to social change in divided societies.

The study of nationalism and the appeal thereof: A theoretical overview

There exists a vast and extensive amount of literature on the topic of nationalism.[8] The study of nationalism has been dominated, Özkırımlı (2017, 228–29) observes, by the question of *when* nationalism entered the stage of world history. According to A. D. Smith (2010),

[8] For an introduction on various issues cogent to the study of nationalism, see for instance McCrone (1998), Grosby (2005), Lawrence (2005), Greenfeld (2016), and Coakley (2012). See O'Duffy (2009), Hutchinson and A. D. Smith (1994), A. D. Smith (1998, 2010), and Özkırımlı (2017) for an overview of the respective theoretical approaches, as well as Hutchinson and A. D. Smith's (2000) five-part edited volume.

explanations and definitions of nationalism broadly work within the scope of four paradigms: modernism, perennialism, primordialism, and ethno-symbolism. Modernism sees nationalism as a modern invention, as "a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century" (Kedourie 1985, 9), invoking socio-economic (Nairn 1975; Hechter 2000) and political (Breuilly 1985, 1993) roots, as well as industrialisation processes and mass-education (Gellner 1965, 1997, 2006), ideology (Kedourie 1985), and the socially constructed character of nationalism (Anderson 2006; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Primordialist scholars stress the 'participant primordialism' of nationalism – unlike 'real' nationalists who advocate this stance as a political or cultural programme, they stress that nations are often *perceived* as ancient and indeed natural entities coming down to us from 'times immemorial' (Geertz 1963; Connor 1994).

Ethno-symbolism (A. D. Smith 1981, 1986, 1991, 1999, 2004, 2009 2010; Hutchinson 1987; Armstrong 1982) focuses on ethnic elements which were adapted to modern usage and subsequently used to endow the modern nation with meaning. This approach often comes close to the perennial perception which questions the general modernity of the nation, arguing that some nations are of medieval (Greenfeld 1992; Hastings 1997) or even ancient origin, such as the Jewish nation (Roshwald 2006; Grosby 2000; Mendels 1997). Gat (2013) even goes a step further: nationalism is just the latest reincarnation of politicised ethnicity, which has been part of human affairs since pre-historical times.

Özkırımlı's objection that the 'when' question has seen too much attention shall be my starting point. The historiographical debate has indeed, to a certain extent, become a moot point, raising doubts about whether the problem of the historical origins of the nation really deserves the attention it has seen over the years. Özkırımlı's answer is no: the labels attached to primordialists, perennialists, and ethno-symbolists emphasise minor differences, masking

the fact that all theories of nationalism must be modernist as the original primordial position has been discredited long ago. What divides Gellner from Smith is the latter's refusal to sign up to the orthodox-modernist claim that "just as Pallas Athene sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus, without parents, so nations emerged fully fledged from the requirements of modernity" (A. D. Smith 2004, 66). Gellner stresses the transition from pre-industrial societies to the industrial era: only once that threshold was crossed could nationalism invent nations where they did not exist (Gellner 1965, 168). Smith, on the other hand, emphasises the continuity between past and present: the majority of modern nations did not simply appear "nihil ex nihilo" (A. D. Smith 2004, 78) but are well connected to their ethnic pasts.

For Smith, this alone accounts for the prevalence and endurance of nationalism – an observation that has been noted on numerous occasions. According to Kohn (1944), nationalism has moulded and dominated politics and society in a way not seen before: "In the face of the omnipotence of nationality, humanity seems a distant idea, a pale theory or a poetic dream, through which the red blood of life does not pulsate" (22). Nairn (1975, 26) calls nationalism a largely incurable "pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as 'neurosis' in the individual". For Breuilly (1985, 65), nationalism is "the most important political ideology of the modern era", a sentiment shared by Snyder (1972, 74): nationalism is a "powerful emotion that has dominated the political thought and actions of most peoples since the time of the French Revolution". Nationalism represents the "most important and powerful force in human history" (English 2007, 2–3). As such, it remains "an inescapably central feature of human life" (ibid., 3) with "world-wide appeal" (A. D. Smith 1999, 4), continuously outpacing other forms of collective allegiance such as gender, class, and religion. A. D. Smith (ibid.) asks the ultimate question: "why is it that so many people remain so deeply attached to their ethnic communities and nations"? He answers the question himself: it is the myths, memories, symbols, and values of the ethnic past, dragged

into modernity by nationalist entrepreneurs, which are responsible for nationalist fervour (A. D. Smith 1986). The living traditions of the ethnic past ensure a sense of collective cohesion especially in times of crisis and rapid change, forming what Smith describes as the 'ethnic core' of a nation. This myth-symbol complex gives answers to the following pressing questions: what is our collective denomination? Where do we and our ancestors stem from? Where is our homeland? To what extent do we share the same culture, especially religion and language? What is our history? (A. D. Smith 2004, 185). The answers to these questions will be distinctively subjective and would not impress the objectively-minded historian – they are, indeed, myths.

However, these myths and memories are the *sine qua non* of the nation. Myths are responsible for endowing a nation with a sense of cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis a national 'other', defining who belongs to the in-group and who does not. Because of their diacritical quality – i.e. because they produce in-group solidarity through the exclusion of those who are defined as members of an outgroup – they can foster social cohesion (A. D. Smith 1991, 23). National flags, rituals, anthems, the symbols of the nations, are amongst the most visible makers of the national group identity (A. D. Smith 2009, 25). Myths also point a way forward. Nationalism, by being "like the old Roman god, Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards" (Nairn 1975, 18), builds upon the "reassuring sight of the familiar" (Kohn 1944, 5) in order to project a path into the future. Nationalist entrepreneurs who claim that the national people is directly descended from the nation's golden age suggest that a national rejuvenation is both possible and commendable. All that has to be done is to be true to the heroes of old and revive the state of unblemished bliss that was undone by the ethnic 'other', or, even worse, the treacherous enemy within. Through its ethnic heroes and the golden age of yore the nation can "at last break free from the 'fetters' of a baleful fate and mould modernity in the image of an authentic and

autonomous community" (A. D. Smith 1986, 196), thus returning to its "pure form" (ibid.).

For Smith, political modernists like Gellner did not have much to say about popular motivations or about the particular character of a nation. They could, importantly, not explain their emotional grounding (an accusation which Gellner refuted). Smith argued that for a proper and thorough understanding of modern nations one had to inquire into the genealogies of nations and their pre-existing, pre-modern ethnic roots (A. D. Smith 2004, 69). In a similar vein, Connor complained that "many authors have scant respect for the psychological and emotional hold that ethnonational identity has upon the group" (Connor 1994, 73), stressing Chateaubriand's credo that "Men don't allow themselves to be killed for their interests; they allow themselves to be killed for their passions" (ibid., 206).

Whether Gellner was really unaware of the nationalists' passions is doubtful (Özkırımlı 2017, 140). Gellner himself attributed the ethno-symbolist critique to a misreading of his own theory. Gellner argues indeed that nations are not natural or a permanent feature of the human condition but explicitly came into being through the need for "context free communication" (Gellner 2006, xxiv) in the wake of industrialisation. He was nonetheless cognisant, as he writes on the first page of *Nations and Nationalism*, of nationalist sentiments. Given his own family background, born into a Jewish family in Prague who fled to England in 1939, it would be surprising if he had not been acutely aware of the destructive power of ethnic nationalism. The same counts for Eli Kedourie, who traced nationalism back to Kant and his disciple Fichte and who, for a lifetime, attacked the aimless and at times violent nationalisms of the new states in Africa and the Middle East (Mango 1998).

Gellner's reputation as someone who underestimated the spell of nationalism comes from the position that nationalism occupies in his theory: nationalism does not exist independently but almost as a side effect of industrialisation. However, this does not mean that nationalism

can easily be undone by "Student Exchange Schemes, the British Council, foreign holidays, re-written history textbooks and *au pair* girls" (Gellner 1965, 149) – on the contrary, it is a requirement of modernity and a requirement for all societies that cross the threshold to advanced industrialism. Gellner was conscious of ethnicity and, although he ultimately attributed the existence of nationalism to modern industrialist processes, of ethnic feelings coming to the fore "where cultural differentia become aligned with social or economic cleavages" (McCrone 1998, 79). Nationalism, he vehemently affirmed, "requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones" (Gellner 2006, 1) – or conflict would ensue.

The problem with Gellner is more that he had little to say about ethnic conflicts in the post-World War Two era, such as ethnic revivals or frozen standoffs like in Northern Ireland. He outlined a view of nationalism that once more foregrounded the question of *when* nationalism happened (Gellner 1996, 111–12). The last stage, following the excesses of Stalin and Hitler, would see a "High level of satiation of the nationalist requirement, plus generalised affluence, plus cultural convergence" (ibid., 112). Nationalism would thus be tamed "just as religion was tamed" (McCrone 1998, 79). This, clearly, did not happen, which begs the que stion of whether industrialisation was really the ultimate driving force behind nationalism.

But even for Gellner, whose focus on industrialisation processes puts him more obviously into the modernist camp, ethnicity and emotions continue to lurk in the background. Interestingly enough, although Gellner disavowed the natural character of nations and the existence of the "dark atavistic gods […] of ethnic or territorial loyalty" (Gellner 1965, 149), he conceded that the primordial position "includes some sensible premises – such as the importance of the human need to belong, to identify, and hence also to exclude" (ibid.). Gellner was aware that nationalism could be explained on a level that went beyond the

sociological position of industrialisation processes – but he decided to let the dark gods be dark gods.

The ethno-symbolist approach is therefore better suited to be a starting point for explaining the endurance and strength of nationalist emotions, as Smith's theoretical eschewal of a radical break at the dawn of modernity helps us to conceptualise the fact that nationalist antics are modern expressions of much older precursors. But similar to Gellner's, Smith's approach is not entirely convincing. Although myths and memories are *prima facie* in a better position to explain the appeal of nationalism, Smith's analysis falls short of giving proof. Ethno-symbolism relies on the assertion that myths are appealing because *this is the case*, but this analytical emphasis on the rediscovery of 'authentic' links that resonate with 'the people' does not explain *why* they resonate with the people in the first place (A. D. Smith 1998, 198). The spell of ethnic myths and memories thus remains an assumption. Smith, according to Gat (2013, 383), "is ultimately left with no better answer than modernists to the fundamental puzzle of the ethnic and national phenomenon", since there is "a lazy equation between an emotion being deep in the psyche with it being deep in time" (Breuilly, quoted in: Özkırımlı 2017, 233). Equally, Laitin (1999, 177) accuses Smith of being 'trapped in assumptions'. Smith would base his analysis on those cases that are most promising to his presumption that ethnic roots have their role to play in the formation of nations. The apparent emotional allure of nationalism thus rests on the circular argument that nationalism was simply that: emotionally appealing. Smith's conjectures would "allow his perspective to dominate over opposing frameworks", but "victory through assumption is hardly a compelling research strategy" (ibid.).

By taking nationalism's power to attract for granted, Smith finds himself in the tradition of Durkheim (1982b). Durkheim explained the trajectories of societies not through individuals

and their motivations, but by referring to ‘social facts’, those “ways of acting, thinking, and feeling which possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual” (ibid., 51). Social facts are neither “reducible to the facts of individual behaviour” (Mandelbaum 1959, 484) nor are they merely a sum of their respective parts (Durkheim 1982b, 56): they exhibit a “psychical individuality of a new kind” (ibid., 129). Social facts are a *sui generis* case and exist outside of the consciousness of the individuals (Dingley 2008, 83). According to Durkheim, explanations for social facts and their character have always to be sought in society alone, because social structures decisively put their mark upon individual consciences, moulding the individual in the process and repeating the condition of the group in the individuals (Baert 2005, 23).

However, the explanatory power of social facts stops there. Like A. D. Smith, Durkheim was aware that social phenomena ultimately arose from individual needs, but only “in embryo” (Durkheim 1982a, 252). Durkheim based his observation on the assumption that humans have lived in communities of some sort since times immemorial – hence, social facts have moulded human behaviour for an equally long time. This, according to him, was far more important than the psychological origins in a very distant past which had made life in society possible (Durkheim 1982b, 129–30). Psychological tendencies only make a social fact feasible, nothing more: they are “the indeterminate matter which the social factor fashions and transforms” (ibid., 131). Human predispositions are “something vague and schematic, infinitely removed from the facts which have to be explained” (ibid., 132). Individual being thus depends completely upon some pre-existing social entity that shapes and forms the individual into existence (Dingley 2008, 94). This finding is true in a way – see my next point in this introduction – but it also blurs the origins of social phenomena, as the link to the individuals who inhabit social facts is severed: social facts suffer from *genesis amnesia*. Thus, the origins of social phenomena like nationalism become obfuscated. We are simply

left with the observation that social facts, such as nationalism, are indispensable for a thorough explanation of human demeanour. The question of how we got there in the first place Durkheim writes off as unimportant.

Durkheim foreshadowed the 'death of the subject', an allegation that was later levelled against intellectual pioneers such as Althusser (2008) and Foucault (2002), for whom the individual is equally defined and shaped by the discursive practices. The social subject producing a particular statement is "not an entity which exists outside of and independently of discourse, […] but is on the contrary a function of the statement itself" (Fairclough 1992, 43). A prevalent discourse defines what the subject is because it has the power to do so. In every dominant discourse power is ubiquitous, but silent and impossible to locate as it cannot be traced. The discursive subject becomes an inmate of Bentham's panopticon, policing their own behaviour according to the rules the prevalent discursive formation dictates – but acting under the impression that to do so was their own choice. The governing discourse, characterised by its pervasive power, moulds and disciplines the individual "without the need for anyone to tell them to do so" (Joas and Knöbl 2009, 359). The subject is subsequently almost reduced to an effect of power, a result of power relations in a certain period of time. In this world, "the subject, in its atomistic sense, causes nothing" (E. Adler 1997, 333). Taken to an extreme, the subject-agent becomes completely shaped by discourse and ceases to be an independent initiator of dissent. It loses its ability to defy the prevalent opinion in society. Foucault's insistence on the social subject as a mere result of discourse has therefore a heavily "structuralist flavour" (ibid., 45), comparable to Durkheim's vision of society, and excludes meaningful agency.This "depressingly ineffectual version of the subject" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 31) cannot tell us much about where the origins of nationalism lie – it cannot go beyond the assumption that nationalists are 'believers' because nationalism interpellates their being. People simply accept and even internalise discourse in the form of

social relations and norms, overpowered by false consciousness (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 30; Sprinker 1995).

I will quickly clarify my point with an example: the Shankill Butchers were a notorious UVF gang in the mid-1970s led by the infamous Lenny Murphy and 'specialising' in kidnapping, torturing, and murdering people from Catholic areas of Belfast with butchers' knives. The image of the evil killer was challenged by Brendan Hughes, a leading Irish republican during the 1970s and 80s. In prison Hughes befriended 'Basher' Bates, one of the gang's members. He said about Bates: "hatred had been preached to him all his life. And it's an example to me of how you can turn a human being into a monster. Basher Bates turned into a monster because that was the environment he was brought up in" (Moloney 2011, 260). Another source agrees:

> I regarded them as a decent bunch of lads. Like everything else in life, there were maybe one or two out of that group that would have found their way into prison anyway. But I would say that 70 or 80 per cent of those charged with the 'Shankill Butchers' would probably have gone through life without ever being in prison themselves. (P. Taylor 2000, 155)

True enough, not all loyalists or for that matter republicans turned on their victims with butcher knives, but the gist of this example is the pervasive power of social identities imposing themselves upon the 'victim'. Or, to rephrase the conundrum: "How many British unionists are born on the Falls Road? How many Irish republicans are born on the Shankill?" (Hall 2013, 6). The answer must be: virtually none.

If ethnic nationalists are not lunatics, then nationalism must impose itself on the people who then become killers in the name of their nation, which seemingly manipulates and even subjugates those individuals who otherwise would have led innocent lives. This observation however does not tell us anything about why people became nationalists and why this form of social organisation had such an appeal to them. For both Smith and Durkheim, the answer

can only be: because nationalism *is* a powerful social fact. Smith sees ethnic myths as inherently appealing, but he does not elaborate on the reasons why humans should find themselves attracted by ethnic myths and symbols at all. Durkheim's social facts possess a coercive power that forces itself upon the individual; like Smith, he never asks "why individuals, interpreting their social order in religious or mythological terms, should have a need to do so: he just assumed that they do" (Lukes 1982, 17–18). Smith, in all fairness, does link the appeal of ethnic myths to the "kernel of factual truth" (A. D. Smith 1998, 149) that links the modern nation to ethnic predecessors. Most nations are not invented out of the blue – their ethnic core gives them a subjective appearance of authenticity. But Smith's self-declared historical-sociological perspective (ibid., 190) prevents him from unearthing the significance of that authenticity for the individual. Durkheim's explanation of nationalism remained a macro-theory without a foundation (Lukes 1982, 16) – and by extension, so does Smith's.

Özkırımlı (2017, 217–27) formulates a social constructionist response to this dilemma. He also sets out to solve the problem of people's attachment to their nations, albeit from the perspective of discourse. For him, the nationalist project is dominant if it successfully "consolidates its hegemony by reproducing and naturalizing itself"[9] (ibid., 222). Hegemony can only be achieved in the "volatile settings of everyday life" (ibid.) – only there can nationalist discourse reify its hegemonic status and turn itself into absolute values, the state of taken-for-granted reality. This is indeed a valid point. However, we can now level the same accusation Özkırımlı made against Smith. Where does this propensity for 'everyday life' come from? Essentially, why do discourses strive for hegemony? *Why* is there a need for a social discourse to be dominant? If Özkırımlı argues that nationalism takes it power from its reproduction and naturalisation in what is everyday life, we still need an explanation

[9] Emphasis removed.

of the mechanism standing behind this process. This answer, I argue, cannot be given if we remain on a sociological level of enquiry. The individual is needed as the ultimate level of explanation.

A counter-proposal: Explaining nationalism and change through individual belonging

As I just outlined, I will build my thesis upon the credo that the study of ethnicity and nationalism needs to take the "underlying processes and structures of knowledge" (D. Edwards 1991, 175) into consideration, what Brubaker (2009) has described as an emerging 'cognitive turn' in the study of ethnicity, race, and nationalism. This approach looks both at the individual and society and tries to understand how the two relate (ibid., 29). In Brubaker's words, we need to "go beyond the substantialist or groupist assumptions that continue to inform the study of ethnicity, race, and nation" (ibid., 28) and analyse nationalism and ethnicity without invoking "the language of bounded groups" (Brubaker 2006b, 357). This does not mean to exclude ethnicity and nations completely from our analysis, because doing so would border on ostrichism. Although the nation might be 'imagined' – see Anderson (2006) – it is everywhere lived as a sociological reality, in Ireland and elsewhere (McCrone and Bechhofer 2015, 16–17).

There is no obvious contradiction between invoking the nation as an acting agent in history – something this dissertation will do repeatedly – and someone like Barth (1998), who advocated an analytical shift away from the content of group identity to the "social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership" (ibid., 10). What Barth saw as most important were the boundaries that emerge between group identities and effectively guard and administer group membership. This is not to say that the content of the "cultural stuff" (ibid., 15) amounts to nothing more than "morphological characteristics" (ibid., 12), as Barth wanted it, but we

cannot access the sociological value of culture and history until we are aware of how they are processed by the individuals in question. To avoid 'groupist' assumptions therefore must mean to avoid taking ethnicity and nationalism for granted; to explain both, we need biological and psychological approaches, even if the nation-as-group remains as a historical force and actor. This will be one guiding thought in my enquiry, heeding the advice that

> principled antipathy to the biological is both intellectually narrow-minded and professionally self-defeating, threating to make sociology irrelevant in an intellectual social context in which the biological sciences are increasingly powerful. (Brubaker 2015, 3)

Brubaker goes down the 'cognitive route', providing "resources for avoiding analytical groupism while helping to explain the tenacious hold of groupist, even primordialist ways of thinking in everyday life" (Brubaker 2009, 34). This is commendable, but without an awareness of the evolutionary history of humankind we again face the dilemma of where the cognitive prejudices Brubaker invokes come from and how they impact the study of nationalism and its resilience.

Only through a thorough understanding of the sociological, social psychological, and evolutionary biological processes involved can we understand the full scope of factors involved in preventing or promoting certain changes in societies. This dissertation therefore intends to rejuvenate the idea that to know about social change and how it affects national narratives in particular we must dig *deeper*, illuminating the mechanism standing behind the obvious, taking into account the factors that shape human behaviour. Rorty (1982) criticised scientific efforts to explore humanity's 'true nature', something that, according to him, would give policy makers the opportunity to predict or even control human behaviour. The world out there can simply not be accurately represented, he said, and denied that 'deep down there' there might be something more than text, a foundational basis of what is to be human. For him, it was not science's task to deliver ultimate explanations. Science, thus,

becomes a means and not an objective truth (Williams 1990; Sorell 1990).

However, we need to search for ultimate causes if we want to track down the functional principles of societal change. Ultimately, this does not mean that we need to succeed in constructing a "theory of truth" (Baert 2005, 130) or "an absolute conception of reality" (Rorty 1982, 194) – given the overwhelming complexity of human nature and societies, there is a distinct possibility of ending up in a cul-de-sac or being outright wrong. However, for a meaningful contribution to the study of change in society an honest attempt is necessary – aiming as precisely as possible is no "pointless exercise" (Baert 2005, 130), but is fully compatible with the pragmatist credo that social inquiry has to ask questions that are worth asking and to debate theoretical approaches only insofar as they make a difference. Hobsbawm (1992a) asserted that nation-building needed the artificial intervention of the entrepreneur, in order to disguise the modern construct of the nation as something primordial and ancient. Similarly, social change – in the form of 'peacebuilding' or 'dealing with the past' – needs a deliberate intervention to change the status quo.

Methodologically speaking we must turn to Elster (1983), whose discussion on technical change seeks to find the micro-foundations of social life: the proper level of scientific explanation has to be "at a lower level than the explanandum" (ibid., 23). If we are to investigate into social phenomena, we therefore need to make sense of individual actions and motivations. Elster urges us to look to the individual members of society for explanations, for individual human action that is elementary and social praxis that comes about as the result of the interaction of individuals (Elster 1989, 13). Social institutions do not exist independently from the individuals who partake in them: "Only individuals", Elster notes, "can act and intend" (ibid., 154).

In the same vein, J. S. Mill (1974) postulated that all social sciences had to originate in the

individual, as social reality consisted of nothing but individual members (Anschutz 1953; Whitaker 1975; Ryan 1970). Being in society does not change the attributes of the individuals who constitute social phenomena: every phenomenon that society brings to the fore is governed by "nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state" (Mill 1974, VI, viii, 1). Mill strongly rejected the idea that our human individual fate is decided by forces beyond our own control and called such an attitude "a mere illusion" (ibid., VI, ii, 2). Therefore, social phenomena such as nationalism do not work despite the individual but *through* the individual human beings that constitute society. Institutions are not monolithic monstrosities, but collections of human beings. It follows that social action always has individual human action as its building block. Social phenomena can be explained by taking the motivations and beliefs of the individual into account – social phenomena are not individuals writ large, but constructions that depend on the acting conduct of those who bear them.

Thus, methodological individualism helps us to see ethnic nationalism – and in particular its violent convulsions – not as an anomaly but as a part of a wider identity phenomenon. Laitin (1999, 177) overlooks this fact. He complains about Smith's habit of invoking only those case studies that confirm his own theory *a priori*, glossing over the ones that do not fit the model. Thus, apparently, the Croats receive too much attention in Smith's *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999), but not Bavarians who do without a national state of their own. But is this really the contentious matter Laitin makes it? Bavarian identity is not a national identity, true, but it is a strong regional identity. Within the wider framework of a German national identity, it also fulfils the function of collective meaning-making in the everyday.

This can be taken a step further: cosmopolitanism – "a subjective orientation of conscious

openness to the world and towards other cultures" (Erkmen 2015, 28) – has been portrayed as an alternative to the national project and as a 'post-national ideal' (ibid., 35). Similar to nationalism, it is still a multi-dimensional identity concept which cannot exist without an idea of where 'home' is. For nationalism, 'home' is literally where the homeland is; Kohn (1944, 5) predestined humans to prefer "native customs and native food to alien ones, which appear to [them] unintelligible and indigestible". A native home brings comfort and joy: should Kohn's man travel, "he will return to his chair and his table with a feeling of relaxation and will be elated by the joy of finding himself again at home, away from the strain of a sojourn in foreign lands and contact with foreign peoples" (ibid.). In contrast, cosmopolitanism treats attachment to 'home' as portable (Erkmen 2015, 39) and anchored in a narrative of 'being global' (ibid., 50).

My point is that ethnic nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not binary antipodes but identity concepts which in different ways provide a notion of what and where 'home' is. Even if the excesses of ethnic nationalism are frequently severe – something that of course separates nationalism from expressions of regional identity or even cosmopolitanism – we must keep in mind that the emotional appeal of ethnic nationalism lies buried in the fact that, on a mere sociological level, supposedly weaker forms of collective identity, such as regionalism and cosmopolitanism, work according to the same principles ethnic nationalism does.

Cosmopolitanism does not mean 'not to belong' – it merely delivers a different answer to the very same question. Cosmopolitan identity, like national identity, is fixed on "sites of habitual activities, where individuals know what to expect and are able to assume that those expectations will be met" (ibid., 39). Like people rooting their self-understanding in national identity, cosmopolitans also "take precautions to ensure that they feel like they belong"

(ibid., 39) by treating belonging as something mobile and portable. Relationships to friends and colleagues become embedded in transnational networks. Similarly, working in globalised cities and surroundings makes it possible to recreate work environments and recreational habits elsewhere. Cosmopolitans are hence confident that changing residence will not lead to a feeling of isolation, but that that their immediate sites of habitual behaviour can be transported to a different location. Cosmopolitanism is therefore more than a simple life-style choice, but a social identity that, upon being denied, will also lead to frustration amongst its adherents. 'Nationalist appeal', i.e. the appeal that invokes a sense of belonging, can in a way be found even outside nationalism and is ubiquitous everywhere humans have collective identities that grant them that sense of security. Then, what is more important for a thorough explanation of the allure of nationalism is the fact that its *potential* lies everywhere where humans are social or, more precisely, take part in a collective identity.

Humans are indeed a social species. Famously, we find this acknowledged in Aristotle's (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics*: human being could only reach their *telos*, that is happiness, inside the *polis* since only there was virtuous life possible. Outside the *polis*, there is no place for human life as we understand it: "anyone who lacks the capacity to share in community, or has no need to because of his self-sufficiency is no part of the city and as a result either a beast or a god" (Aristotle 1997, 1253a18). And: "anyone who is cityless by nature and not by chance is either of a depraved sort or better than a human being" (ibid., 1253a1). The city takes precedence over the individual and the individual, alone and solitary, is a mere isolated part of the whole and cannot be self-sufficient. In the words of Thomas Carlyle (1984):

> It is in Society that man first feels what he is; first becomes what he can be. […]. Society is the genial element wherein his nature first lives and grows; the solitary man were but a small portion of himself, and must continue forever folded in, stunted and only half alive. (75)

It is impossible to imagine life outside human communities, because sociality fulfils a vital

need, the need for people to partake in communities.[10] This need we must, in Kantian fashion, locate in the individual. In return, such a need must have consequences for the explanation of nationalism. It means that human beings need to belong, one way or another, and that nationalism somehow fulfils this need in a very efficient manner. Theorising a need to belong will not settle the 'when' and 'where' question of the genesis of nationalism; but by analysing nationalism "from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" (Hobsbawm 1992b, 10), an answer to the question of why nationalism lingers on and often evokes strong emotions can be given. A need to belong is not inescapably national but always social and above all else *human* – this is what nationalism builds on.

When stripped of their slogans, nationalist movements "are seen to fulfil a want" (Kedourie 1985, 101), i.e. the need to belong to a coherent and stable community. Smith counters that a universal need to belong explains "too much" (A. D. Smith 1971, 35). He commits the fallacy of linking a need to belong to the question of 'when' is nationalism, assuming that belonging is inextricably linked to Kedourie's "secular pride" (ibid., 40). A need to belong thus only became relevant in the 17th century when the de-Christianisation of Europe was underway, leading to a breakdown of the traditional patterns of politics and religion. Spinoza and his kindred spirits worked to free the individual from the deceiving bondage which was church mysticism. Human freedom was the watchword. In his *Tractatus politicus*, Spinoza (2007) asserted:

> It may indeed be the highest secret of monarchical government and utterly essential to it, to keep men

[10] We see the status of *H. sapiens* as a social animal also confirmed from a biological perspective (Tattersall 2011). This is difficult to verify, as most societies ban 'forbidden experiments' that exclude infants from human contact and conversation (Swart 2014); we can draw on scientific experiments conducted with rhesus monkeys, with whom we share 93% of DNA material (Gibbs 2007, 222): infants were removed from their mothers to grow up in isolation. When they re-joined other monkeys at a later stage their behaviour proved to be psychotic (E. O. Wilson 1980b). The monkeys showed abnormal aggressive and autistic behaviour. Isolation for three months resulted in depression, isolation for six months caused durable damage, and isolation for a year gave rise to "virtually total impairment" (ibid., 84).

> deceived, and to disguise the fear that sways them with the specious name of religion, so that they will fight for their servitude as if they were fighting for their own deliverance, and will not think it humiliating but supremely glorious to spill their blood and sacrifice their lives for the glorification of a single man. (6)

The individual was urged to cast off the shackles of church domination by challenging the authority of those who saw themselves as administering God's will on earth. Thus, the once divinely-ordained order began to crumble as the "ancient myths and their interpretation on the continent no longer held water, the 'grace of god' and the 'good old order' were outworn concepts" (Schulze 1998, 150).

> In societies suddenly exposed to the new learning and the new philosophies of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism, orthodox settled ways began to seem ridiculous and useless. The attack was powerful and left the old generation bewildered and speechless. […]. The sons rejected the fathers and their ways; but the rejection extended also to the very practices, traditions, and beliefs which had over the centuries moulded and fashioned these societies which suddenly seemed to the young so confining, so graceless, so devoid of spiritual comfort and so unable to minister to the dignity and fulfilment of the individual. (Kedourie 1985, 99–100)

This is the same argument Anderson (2006) presents to his readers: the century of Enlightenment brought an end to a lived-in world ordered by script language offering privileged access to ontological truth, divinely-ordained monarchies, and a temporality where history and cosmology were indistinguishable (ibid., 36). When the old religious certainties disintegrated, rationalist secularism demanded a new remedy against a mortal existence shaped by loss and death and the onset of a secular "modern darkness" (ibid., 11). The world, in the words of Max Weber (2009, 139), had become "disenchanted". Enter nationalism.

However, Smith's own account speaks of belonging throughout, offering the 'crisis of dual legitimation' as the entry point for modern nationalism (A. D. Smith 1971, 230–54; Hutchinson 1987, 196–210). The traditional society and its *Weltanschauung* (world view) were challenged by the advent of the scientific state. Religion was the answer to "social

psychological needs to explain human suffering and evil" (A. D. Smith 1971, 236) and provided "the basic assumptions upon which social and political institutions have been founded" (ibid., 327) – all of this was undermined when the scientific state overtook divine authority. The need for theodicies, however, did not vanish. Religious revivals began to look to a glorious past for future action. Step-by-step, the people's religion became "an expression of the creative genius of the people, expression of its inherent, but at present moribund, nobility and native energy" (ibid., 249).

The ethnic community, instead of being the mere vehicle of religious ideas, was consequently put on a pedestal: the ethnic group came to the fore, firmly wed to the powerful modern state. And here Smith again presents an intrinsic need for the energising "living presence of traditions" (A. D. Smith 1991, 20), those memories, myths, and symbols from the communal days of yore that create a "sense of solidarity among most members of the community" (A. D. Smith 2004, 185) and satisfy "the drive to live in an efficient, orderly state and civil society" (A. D. Smith 2000, 22). Ethnic myths are resources to be exploited for the generation of political cohesion (A. D. Smith 1991, 22), creating and preserving "the networks of solidarity that underpin and characterize nations" (A. D. Smith 2004, 189–90). In short, "cultural identities serve important purposes and meet vital needs" (A. D. Smith 2010, 139).

We learn through Smith's account that ethnic myths of belonging reaching back into the *longue durée* are part and parcel of modern nationalism: despite all transformations, most modern nations share some features with the *ethnies* that begat them (A. D. Smith 2004, 68). They are responsible for ensuring solidarity among a nation's members. Smith, however, does not take it further than that – he cannot explain where the origins of the fact that nations

rarely do without an ethnic founding myth lie.[11]

I have argued so far that to understand the captivating power of nationalism and the scope of possible social change, we cannot take the emotional appeal of nationalism for granted. Özkırımlı proposes a social constructionist framework. This is promising, but does not go far enough, as it cannot explain where the human habit of creating social rules – the 'everyday' – comes from. We need to look at the origins of society, the building blocks of social action: ultimate causes, not proximate ones, have to be scrutinised (J. Alcock 2001). This allows us to search for the roots of preferences, i.e. the reasons why certain societal structures were preferred over others and why they developed.

This, however, is only one part of the equation. The other is how the underlying roots of nationalism impact the possible extent of social change. Therefore, I propose to combine the search for underlying causes with Özkırımlı's social constructionist framework that helps us to think about how to *unmask* and *reform* dominant social structures and, by doing so, to be critical of the current status quo (Hacking 2000, 19–20). In other words, we have to make provisions for the individual not only to have certain qualities that makes nationalism a possibility, but also to have agency and therefore the possibility to resist.

This takes us back to Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. It is based on what he calls the "*dialectic of control* in social systems" (ibid., 16) and enables us to think about how individuals are at least partially able to take control of the social processes in which they necessarily take part. Giddens depicts social structures neither as external to human action, nor "as a source of constraint on the free initiative of the independently constituted subject" (ibid.). Giddens rather refers to those social practices reproduced across time and space as

[11] For that matter, neither can D. Miller (1993, 9), who merely assumes a need for solidarity: "That we need such solidarity is something that I intend to take for granted here."

exhibiting ‘structural properties’, institutionalised features of societies. He does acknowledge the constraining power people face in their conduct (I. J. Cohen 1989), as structural properties “express forms of *domination* and *power*” (Giddens 1984, 18). However, structure is not external to subjects, but internalised as memory traces and social practices. Agents and structures are not separate entities, a ‘dualism’ as Giddens has it, but a ‘duality’. Both are two sides of the same coin. Individuals do not stand outside structural principles and properties, for they do not stand outside time and space but are situated in both.

Agency, according to Giddens (1984, 14), refers to the ability “to act otherwise” and “to make a difference”. Agency is particularly important for social change, because it means that an actor acts for a certain reason: intentional behaviour intends to bring about a certain goal and requires the presence of a conscious decision maker, somebody who proactively seeks to change the current status quo. Agency entails that a different future is possible and that the future remains to some degree uncertain. Until we die, “there is always something the Self is not yet” (Berenskoetter 2011, 653). The self remains, for a lifetime, incomplete and in transition. Because of this permanent incompleteness and orientation towards the future, the self is not a present being, but a possible-being.

An actor who has agency and who sees the future as incomplete is indispensable for social change. Social change implies a critical moment, a certain deviation from the current state of affairs. Means have to be found to emancipate people “from the spell which human relations exert over them” (Adorno 1976, 120–21). Without the individual agent, we would have to resign ourselves to suffering an Orwellian dystopia of the helpless individual petrified in the presence of overwhelming social structures. Change, i.e. real structural transformation, needs the loophole of individual agency, the ability for self-reflection, which

makes the future unpredictable.

At least theoretically, this remains *always* a possibility – "so long there is difference, there is a potential for change" (Hopf 1998, 180). It is vital to keep in mind that the very discourses that assert themselves upon violation, for instance by meting out punishment against a transgressor, do so precisely because they *are* under threat from alternatives. If a discourse were secure, it would not need to reaffirm itself. Social discourses, as ubiquitous as they might appear, are never omnipotent: "However potent the dominant nationalist discourse may be", Özkırımlı (2017, 224) asserts, "the society, precisely due its internal diversity, produces alternative projects (identities, values and so on) in defiance of the much-desired homogeneity."

The individual is a bearer of structural properties and as such either transforms or sustains structural properties through the reflexive monitoring of the conditions of the social system and the principles undergirding the organisation of society. The individual is a radical part of the reproduction and transformation of society, its values, beliefs, and norms. During the process of reproduction – and transformation, of course – the individual knows 'what's going on': it possesses the ability of what Giddens calls 'discursive consciousness'. The individual is not simply manipulated by an invisible hand – on the contrary, it actively reflects upon its condition and how to proceed. Society does not operate independently of "the motives and reasons that agents have for what they do" (Giddens 1984, 181). Structural confinements are not like "an earthquake which destroys a town and its inhabitants without their in any way being able to do anything about it" (ibid.). Structural confinements, in fact, rely on people. If those actors sustaining a certain social reality would disappear overnight and be replaced with a different set of people, their own social reality would disappear with them.

Structures only exist as long as there is "continuity in social reproduction across time and

space" (ibid., 212), as long as they are continuously recreated by those living today and those to come. There is no social tendency that "could not be altered *if* the individuals concerned both wanted to alter it and possessed the appropriate information" (Watkins 1959, 506). Therefore: even if individuals feel themselves attracted to social phenomena like nations, this fact does not turn them into "structural idiots" (E. Adler 1997, 325), or "puppets operated by structures they cannot see" (Burr 2003, 121). They are not "*bloody silly*" (Thompson 1978, 148), or "pawns of society, devoid of initiative" (Mandelbaum 1959, 488). So, we can expect that individuals provided with a set of information that contradicts the current social status quo would, as soon as a tipping point is reached, dismantle a dominant discourse. Change is therefore possible, but our experiences regarding divided societies tells us that this is difficult. To fully understand *why* the acting individual resists the dismantling of those social structures with toxic properties we need to enquire what motivates the individual.

I have argued the following in this introductory chapter: to understand the sociological force of (ethnic) nationalisms, A. D. Smith's ethno-symbolism, with its latent focus on the pervasive, solidarity producing power of ethnic myths, symbols, and memories, is yet the most convincing approach. Özkırımlı's critique seeks to include the notion of the everyday, i.e. nationalism reaching the daily lives of its participants, to attain a more satisfying explanation for nationalist sway. In return, however, Özkırımlı does not disclose where this *need* for the everyday comes from. Smith speaks throughout of belonging, often indirectly so, as the sociological force that is responsible for nationalism's societal reach. Within this notion, the origin of nationalism lies. To get to it, we must look beyond the sociological reality of society and look at that entity that causes society in the first place: the individual.

The second concern I sought to tackle is the problem of change. For change to transpire in any society, we need the individual as a purposeful actor that is not entirely subdued by

social forces. This is despite the impact powerful structures have – as exemplified by the Shankill Butchers for instance. Gidden's position is the compromise, presenting the individual as neither subdued nor completely independent. We can now see how questions of nationalist appeal and social change are linked: if we adopt a broad social constructionist framework that is located at the crossroads between materialism and idealism on the one hand, and structuralism and individualism on the other, we can study everything that is part of the "unitary process of the creation of society" (E. Adler 1997, 332). This position

> is interested in understanding how the *material*, subjective and intersubjective worlds interact in the social construction of reality, and […], rather than focusing exclusively on how structures constitute agents' identities and interests, it also seeks to explain how *individual agents* socially construct these structures in the first place. (ibid., 330)

In short, we can study how individuals build social structures that guide them which, however, never fully leave their grasp and therefore leave open the possibility of change. Adler's mentioning of the material world as a part of the equation leads us back to the individual – if social structures rely on the individual for a confirmation of their existence, why then are individuals prepared to construct social structures which, from the perspective of the innocent by-stander, are highly undesirable (because they are susceptible to violent outbursts and mob rule)? To understand the nationalism that Smith hints at, we need to enquire why the individual is prone to behave one way and not another. And for this, we need the explanatory potency of evolutionary biology.

Contra Butler (2006), who overlooks the fact that "a socially constructed reality presupposes a reality independent of all social constructions" (Searle 1996, 190) we must concede that there is a physical reality 'out there' unaffected by human language. It exists independently of human doing, but it is socially formed through the application of discourse (P. T. Jackson 2008, 140; Sismondo 1993, 516). Social reality, the world we face on a day-to-day basis,

emerges because physical objects are endowed with purpose through the collective understanding that is discourse. Here, where interpretative and positivist epistemologies, idealism and materialism intersect, we have to look for a human need to belong as an obstacle for both constitutive constructionism and social change. Any explanations for the origins of nationalism, its power, and therefore any impediments towards change need to consider both the purposive, reflexive agent and its intersection with structural and material constraints. This has consequences for Northern Ireland and beyond. Social change or dealing with the past is possible, but is liable to certain constraints. To elucidate those that lie at the very heart of the human experience, we must turn to the constraints the acting individual faces in relation to its daily social conduct: the biological, i.e. evolutionary constraints. Incorporating "biology and evolution simply offers a more complete explanation of humanity" (Hatemi and McDermott 2011, 38) by taking humanity's physical, *viz.* biological, existence into account.

Why use evolutionary theory? Because it has the prowess to lay bare the roots of our existence, as there is overwhelming evidence that evolution exists across the natural spectrum (ibid., 22). Evolutionary models provide "insight precisely in the theoretical lacunae […] where socialization models fail to account for differences in behavior when socialized the same: on the origin of preferences" (ibid., 14). Ruse (2008, 51) puts it simply: "Because it explains so much". Acknowledging that socialisation cannot be *everything,* evolutionary theory stands out as the only convincing way of explaining the rest (Futuyama 1983; Zeigler 2014). An evolutionary approach is therefore indispensable for a complete explanation of nationalism that does not rely exclusively on socialisation, but, nonetheless, does not require the abandonment of critical thinking (Pinker 2003, ix). As much as the social construction of society manifests itself as the middle ground between idealism, materialism, individuals, and structures, it would be unwise to gainsay the fact that biological

constraints pull idealism, individual agency, and structural components in their direction. Since we seek to explain the ultimate causes of social action, we cannot ignore the possibility that there exists a biological reality which will limit our options in a post-conflict society. In the next chapter, I will explain to what extent our evolved existence poses limits to social change.

1. A human need to belong: The deep origins of social meaning-making

This chapter elaborates on the idea of a human need to belong through the lens of evolutionary theory and establishes belonging as the central obstacle towards social change in divided societies; central because it is inalienable and will be reclaimed if denied. Most of the approaches that have sought to provide an evolutionary perspective fall into the sociobiological spectrum: most prominently van den Berghe's approach on kin selection. The kin selection approach, however, fails to take the connection between genetic characteristics and our cultural abilities fully into account. Van den Berghe acknowledges the cultural side of nationalism, i.e. that the nation often does not amount to more than biological fiction; Smith's ethnic myths are, after all, myths. Therefore, what makes nationalism so convincing is not kin selection, but that humans have evolved in small-scale environments which favoured the emergence of a pro-social psychology. Anatomically modern humans have lived for most of their existence in small-scale, foraging societies and this is, indeed, where our genetic and therefore psychological makeup finds its origins. Our social emotions, which guaranteed that social norms and values are observed, predate the year 10,000 BCE. Linked cultural practices such as social ostracism ensured that cooperation between people who were not genetically linked was made possible – in the environmentally unstable surroundings of the late Ice Ages, cultural practices that enabled people to establish who is to be trusted and who is to be avoided proved to be of enormous evolutionary advantage. In particular, it relieved people of the problem of 'making all these decisions' all over again. Herein lies the origin of the human desire for stable, predictable social patterns: people seek to avoid basic anxiety and strive for ontological security. We crave special inter-human bonds and 'sacred' beliefs and narratives which provide routinized practices and habitus. These practices form the human need to belong and lie at the heart of the appeal of nationalism in times of modern large-scale living.

Sociobiological explanations

If we want to understand the evolutionary evolved relationship between the individual and society – and how this affects the way we think about nationalism – then we need to include the insights that have come out of the fields of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Sociobiology, "the study of social behavior from a biological perspective" (D. S. Wilson and Wilson 2007, 329), was pioneered by E. O. Wilson.[12] Wilson's approach was controversial, the most common accusation brought against him being that of genetic determinism, of genes determining and controlling and human behaviour being subsequently entangled in a cobweb of unchangeable destiny (Dunbar 1987). Sociobiology, its critics claimed, was interested in upholding a status quo and discouraging social reform in general (Segerstråle 2007, 81). Wilson (1980a) hit back at his critics, accusing them of misreading his writings

[12] See E. O. Wilson (1980b); Lumsden and Wilson (1981; 1983); D. S. Wilson and Wilson (2007). See also Naour (2009) for an overview over E. O. Wilson's works, and Segerstråle (2000) for a detailed account of the debate on sociobiology.

deliberately. Today, an increasing amount of political science literature making use of evolutionary psychology, which closely resembles earlier sociobiological approaches, has invalidated much[13] of the fiery criticism of earlier years. Thus, evolutionary approaches have been used to explain voting behaviour (Hatemi et al. 2007; Fowler, Baker, and Dawes 2008; Fowler and Schreiber 2008), as well as the pervasiveness of certain political attitudes and ideologies (Alford and Hibbing 2005; Amodio et al. 2007; Verhulst, Eaves, and Hatemi 2012) and norms in general (Axelrod 1986).[14]

(Most) sociobiological authors have noted that humans are neither programmed machines nor animals acting according to instinct, or what the genes 'tell' them to do. People are not flies, Lumsden and Wilson (1983, 153–154) ironically remarked: on the contrary, the mind does intervene constantly. Then, to argue that human beings are part of an evolutionary process is not to justify a status quo or to partake in discourses which seek to uphold the subordination of social groups on the fringes of society, but to acknowledge that humans are not utterly blank slates, *tabulae rasae*, who have to rely exclusively on their own cultural inventions (Pinker 2003; Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby 1992). As much as humans show behavioural plasticity and are defined by world-openness, they have nonetheless evolved from feral origins: *Homo sapiens* "like all the other animals, owes [its] existence to the process of evolution" (Tönnesmann 1987, 177). If we acknowledge that Darwin was indeed right, an explanation of human behaviour relying wholly on cultural interpretation is unconvincing. If culture was the only driving force chiselling out human behaviour some societies would look radically different to others (Ruse 1979). However, this is not the case. R. Fox (1989):

[13] But not all of it, see my discussion of Salter (2003) later.
[14] On the general topic of evolutionary psychology and the exact differences from sociobiology see R. Wright (1996), Barrett et al. (2002), Hampton (2009), Buss (2008), LaFrenière (2011), and Hatemi & McDermott (2011).

> If the new Adam and Eve could survive and breed – still in isolation from any cultural influences – they would eventually produce a society that would be likely to have laws about property, its inheritance and exchange; rules about incest and marriage; customs of taboo and avoidance; methods of settling disputes with a minimum of bloodshed; beliefs about the supernatural and practices relating to it; a system of social status and methods of indicating it; […] myths and legends; dancing; adultery; homicide; kinship groups. (21–22)

In short, a theoretical 'new' human society would still resemble current human societies in all their variations. These variations can be very distinct, but they reflect a "psychic unity of [humankind]" (ibid., 25) nonetheless.

All human societies reflect certain social patterns and regularities which make them distinctively human. This does not mean that universal processes produce universal results. Human societies are indeed remarkably different – but this does not mean that varieties in human societies are nothing but different answers to the very same questions that a common human nature poses. A 'nature vs. nurture' debate, hence, is out of place, as 'both' can be the only logical answer (Shaw and Wong 1989, 66). What then is human nature? Human nature is comparable to what Bhaskar (1979) called 'casual laws': it is not like experimental natural sciences which, in closed systems, can produce repeatable patterns of events. Rather, human nature resembles the open systems where the transfactual activity of recurrent mechanisms co-determines the actual outcome. Human nature as casual laws means tendencies. Human nature is not like the stone which, as soon as it is tossed into the air, falls to the ground in a predictable fashion, but like the bird that is affected both by physical forces and internal information-processing (E. Adler 1997, 320).

R. Fox (1989, 20) points out that all children possess the capacity for grammatical, i.e. human, speech. Despite the huge varieties in languages all around the world, speech patterns can be reduced to 'deep structures', generic axioms which reveal a 'universal grammar' enabling all children to pick up *any* human language as their native tongue. Human nature

is similar. Humans are born with a certain set of universal biological templates: a 'biogrammar' (Sanderson 2001), a 'deep social structure' (Chapais 2010), or *Anlagen* (van den Berghe 1978), behavioural dispositions (not pre-determinations) which are universal or nearly universal because they are stable across cultures and/or can also be found amongst other higher primates. Sanderson (2001, 124–25) lists the following as human universals: non-linguistic vocal communication like cries and squeals; language; family, marriage, kinship systems; making or using fire; group living and sociability; socialisation practices such as children imitating their elders; social cooperation; religion; music, dance, and art in general; concepts of property; incest avoidance.

I suspect that the origins of nationalism and collective identities can be traced back to human dispositions as described above. What happens if we ignore those tendencies responsible for the making of collective identities we can see by the example of Richard Dawkins (2007), who explicitly sets up evolutionary biology as a tool to convince the religious fundamentalist masses of their erring ways: Dawkins repeatedly shows a deep lack of understanding of simple sociological and social psychological principles that are the result of human evolution. He never asks *why* religious fundamentalism is so appealing to so many people (ibid., 15). For Dawkins, it seems religion itself is the real culprit, ignoring other factors that could be responsible for why organised religion continuous to be a force to be reckoned with. He thus commits the Marxist fallacy: according to the Dawkins narrative, there is nothing standing between the religious person and their self-enlightenment; people will easily shed their core beliefs upon being aggressively told that they are wrong. Dawkins does not use evolutionary biology to understand religion but to denounce it. For him, religious practices are a residue of human evolution, easily discarded: "We are built as gene machines […], but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators" (Dawkins 1989, 201).

However, it is never that easy: the rebellion against that 'tyranny of the selfish replicators' can indeed go very far, but also has its limits. For instance, we all cherish those beliefs that shape the way we perceive and interact with the world around us. To change these deep-seated beliefs that are often passionately held is an arduous task – they are the deeply emotional, non-rational creeds that contribute to who we are as a person. Demonising a national and religious 'other' as "dishonest, liars, fools, and knaves, incapable of responding honestly to the real world, and preferring to invent a false, pernicious, and delusionary world into which to entice the unwary, the young, and the naïve" (McGrath 2005, 9) is unlikely to elicit a (positive) behavioural response. An informed understanding of evolutionary tendencies on the other hand can tell us why change to deeply embedded ethno-national identity beliefs is hard to come by, why this is the case and where we are to go from there. We should accept "that there is such a thing as human nature, and seek to find out more about it, so that policies can be grounded on the best available evidence of what human beings are like" (Singer 2009, 348). This is the approach I will pursue for the study of nationalism.

I argue that a *human need to belong* which is expressed in humanity's social nature is a part of what constitutes human nature, i.e. human dispositions. This observation is imperative for explaining the appeal of nationalism: it means that humans seek ontological security in their daily lives by simplifying the world around them.

Human needs and the explanatory deficiencies of kin selection models

What are human needs and why are they important for the study of nationalism? Human needs theory traces its roots back to Maslow (1943; 1987), and was later picked up by participants in the fledgling field of peace and conflict studies, most importantly by J. W.

Burton (1990; 1997; 1998) and Galtung (1978; 2007).[15] Human needs theory postulates that humans need to fulfil certain intrinsic human needs. Basic human needs "will be pursued by all means available" (J. W. Burton 1990, 36) because they are essential and not malleable. Needs are "tied to the concept of necessity" (Galtung 1978, 5), because they give us an idea of what constitutes human, and in return, non-human life. Moreover, they are also universal and exist in all cultures (J. W. Burton 1997, 35).

Universalism cannot mean that there is *one* list of human needs that is true everywhere, for everyone, and at any time. Rather, universalism implies that human beings have always had to grapple with "something of that kind, in very different ways" (Galtung 1978, 6). How exactly needs can be satisfied indeed depends on the social setting one finds oneself in. From this follows that human needs, if denied, will ultimately be pursued using alternative routes and mechanisms: if people cannot fulfil their basic needs within the status quo, they will go out of their way to find alternate venues that will do so, even if that means open rebellion against the social system that denies them their dignity (Sandole 2001). Existing social institutions that deprive people of their needs engender structural violence directed against those responsible for having created them, in an often desperate and violent attempt to fulfil what cannot be denied. If basic needs are not met, at least not to a certain extent, "some kind of fundamental disintegration will take place" (Galtung 1978, 7).

Socialisation processes that are not compatible to human needs, Burton (1990, 33) writes, "will lead to frustrations, and to disturbed and anti-social personal and group behaviors". Basic needs will be pursued regardless of cost, as long as one is physically able to do so (J. W. Burton 1997, 37). Extremist social behaviour is therefore not the result of "some biological deficiency" (Clark 1990, 37) or "some intrinsic barbarity from our supposedly

[15] For further contributions see Sites (1973), Lederer (1980), Davies (1973; 1988), and Sandole (1990).

bestial origins still lurking inside us" (ibid.), but occurs because we have "become blind to the kind of society that satisfies our deepest human needs, and in having constructed, through a long series of deficient social visions, institutions that deny rather than satisfy those needs" (ibid.). Political extremism is the result of circumstance, and not an intrinsic psychological flaw of mentally disturbed individuals. Extremist ideologies are "pragmatic responses to desperate situations" (J. W. Burton 1990, 45).

Maslow's (1943) original conception of basic needs mentions five different need categories:

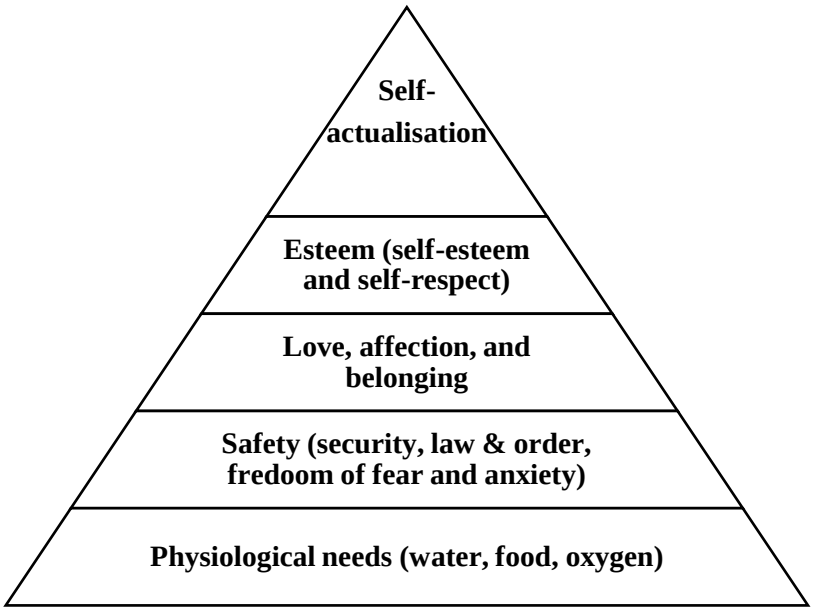

Figure 1: Maslow's pyramid of needs

Maslow constructed his needs theory in form of an upward-leading pyramid which implies a clear hierarchy of needs. The next level of needs only becomes relevant to the individual in the moment when the lower-tier need is saturated. A starving person does not desire physical security until their need for food is satisfied. As more and more needs are fulfilled, the individual begins to flourish: it benefits from "more profound happiness, serenity, and richness of the inner life" (Maslow 1987, 57). Lower-tier needs, especially physiological and security needs, are more important as they are linked to the individual's very survival. While

individual self-actualisation can be postponed, mere survival cannot: “Respect is a dispensable luxury when compared with food or safety” (ibid.). Higher needs privation also does not “produce so desperate a defense and emergency reaction as is produced by lower deprivations” (ibid.).

Galtung (1978, 14) and Galtung and Fischer (2013, 35–36) identify four definite needs:

1. security needs against individual and collective violence;
2. welfare needs for nutrition, water, air, and sleep, for protection against diseases, the environment, and excessive strain;
3. identity needs for closeness and against alienation, such as for self-expression, self-actuation, happiness and joy, affection and love, for a sense of purpose and meaning of life, and roots, belongingness, support, and esteem, i.e. association with similar humans;
4. freedom needs to avoid repression, such as choice in receiving and expressing information and opinion, occupation, place to live, and mobilisation.

Maslow and Galtung largely overlap in their construction of needs, especially in the area of physical survival, as embodied in the need for nutrition, security, and belongingness (what Galtung calls ‘identity needs’). What Galtung discards is the perception of a needs hierarchy, both on a normative as well as empirical basis. According to him, lower-tier needs do not have to be fully satisfied for the next level to become relevant: a hungry person also cares for their personal safety as well as freedom of speech. Only when a need is absolutely neglected will other needs lose importance: a starving person, for instance, will only care about food. Besides, Galtung dismisses the distinction between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ forms of needs, especially the notion that lower needs are more substantial than higher, more aloof, needs.

What implications do human needs have for the study of nationalism and social change? As I said before, I contend that there is universal need to belong buried within the human psyche. This belonging must be satisfied, one way or another. Nationalism’s asset is that it can do so

on a large-scale basis, taking into account the gregariousness of the human existence. Galtung was right to stand back from Maslow's implied needs hierarchy: more sophisticated desires such as for self-actualisation (Maslow) or freedom of speech (Galtung) can, depending on social context and circumstance, have equally disruptive consequences on the social structure. Moreover, it makes sense to go a step further and consider what unites all these different needs. There indeed is a common denominator: human needs are social human needs which can only be satisfied in a collective environment. To take Galtung's list as an example: security needs can clearly only be fulfilled in a group setting, the latter providing protection and stability in the hour of need. Similarly, welfare needs, if we exclude individual bodily needs like the need for sleep, are much easier to gratify if pursued in a group.

I will now proceed with the question of the origin of a human need to belong. If there is an evolutionarily evolved basis to it – and I propose that this is indeed the case – then this will have severe implications for our understanding of nationalism and social change. In the words of Sandole (1990):

> given this assumed, intimate connection between needs and biology, it is important to explore the biological basis of needs, in order to have a better sense of what they are, what they are 'meant' to do, and how they may facilitate or inhibit moving beyond the nation state. (65)

The first step to do so is to recognise the gregarious nature of human needs, leading us to the problem of altruism and why people cooperate.

Evolutionary-biological approaches in general have seen somewhat of a comeback in recent years. According to Neumann (2014), a return to biology and psychology is necessary for a better understanding of the social and human action as a whole. As already mentioned, Brubaker questions groupist assumptions – i.e. using the group level as the level of analysis – by investigating the psychological processes involved in performing social behaviour. In

Ethnicity Without Groups (2006a, 3) he announces "the return of biology" to the study of race and ethnicity, while delineating a constructivist response to developments in biomedicine, forensics, and genetic genealogy (ibid., 48-84). Meanwhile, Pierre van den Berghe (1978, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1981, 1994, 1995)[16] remains the foremost proponent of the sociobiological critique of modernist theory in the field of nationalism studies (A. D. Smith 1998, 147). Two recent contributions also play with a similar sociobiological approach: Gat (2013) deserves to have a special mention, as he comes to conclusions similar to the approach I will propose. Gat stresses the evolutionary relationship between genes and culture: people have *evolved* to recognise those who are similar to themselves as their compatriots. Gat's weakness is that he leaves most of the details unexplained – he elaborates on van den Berghe in his second chapter (ibid., 27–43), but devotes the greater part of his work to a historical overview of how politicised ethnicity extended from kinship communities to nations. Gat notes that the spell of nationalism can only be explained if it is seen as the tip of iceberg, as the modern equivalent to primordial forms of political ethnicity that have their origins "deep within the human psyche" (ibid., 17). Hence, modern nations are blown-up constructs of much earlier associations based on kinship (ibid., 39). Gat's focus on the human capacity for culture is a very important observation, turning the spotlight away from van den Berghe's emphasis on ethnicity as kinship, towards the impact of the human capacity for cultural behaviour. Gat is aware that he is shifting the focus: "evolutionary studies of ethnicity and nationalism, though very cognizant of the role of culture have not realized how uniquely ingrained in our species it is and how it reinforces kin relatedness in creating large group identity and solidarity" (ibid., 42). However, he remains vague.

The most promising proposal then comes from Grosby (2005) who, as already noted, stands

[16] See also James and Goetze (2001) edited collection of essays on evolutionary theory and ethnic conflict, as well as Goetze's (2001) overview over sociobiology and nationalism.

on the perennialist side of the historiographical debate. In his chapter on 'human divisiveness' (ibid., 98–115), he hints at possible merits of including biological facts into an explanation for the human tendency to organise divisively along the lines of kinship, the nation being one example. Grosby sees the human capacity for self-awareness as including an equal awareness of its own deficiencies, in particular suffering and death. "In response to this openness", he surmises, "the mind seeks out and establishes varieties of order that provide structure to experience" (ibid., 109). Nationalism, thus understood, is an answer to a human longing to reduce anxiety. Grosby unfortunately does not elaborate. I will now outline van den Berghe's account and include additions made by Rushton and Salter, followed by my own response: Elaborating on Grosby's proposal, I will emphasise a need to belong that expresses itself as a need for ontological security.

What sociobiological accounts have tried to explain is how altruistic behaviour in large social collectives, where those who are genetically related to oneself cannot be identified in an obvious way, is possible. Behind these deliberations lurks an old evolutionary dilemma: from an evolutionary perspective, altruistic behaviour would be to the disadvantage of the reproductive fitness of the individual. If I sacrifice myself for the wellbeing of the group – and this is the ultimate form of cooperation – I deprive myself of the ultimate goal: reproduction. Why then should an individual perform those altruistic acts that are quintessential for cooperation, but which put the individual itself at an evolutionary disadvantage? How do systems of social cooperation deal with defectors, members who do not contribute to the concerted effort but nevertheless cash in on the overall benefits of ongoing cooperation? From a biological-evolutionary perspective, these are vital questions, as they stand in the way of the methodological individualism to which most followers of Darwin subscribe (Richerson and Boyd 2001b, 191).

Natural selection[17], one of the main forces driving natural evolution, functions on the genetic level of the individual, not groups, and refers to "differences in reproductive success […] among individuals in nature" (Trivers 1985, 22).[18] It is the result of a struggle for existence which follows from the rapid rate at which organisms tend to reproduce and the finite resources a given environment can provide. Observable, phenotypical behavioural traits and physical characteristics that are the outcome of random genetic mutation are maintained by natural selection if they are conducive to an individual's fitness, but jettisoned if they reduce an organism's reproduction rate. This leads to a process "whereby small, but favorable, differences are passed on to the offspring and ultimately achieve common expression in future generations" (Naour 2009, 25). Natural selection works towards the benefit of the individual organism and its reproductive success, not the species. Altruistic characteristics, the integral component for social cooperation to flourish, are therefore unlikely to be preferred by natural selection running its course.

William D. Hamilton (1963) solved this puzzle by observing that altruistic acts were not random, but had to be directed to genetic relations, as genetic kin has a higher chance of bearing the same altruism alleles[19] that make the altruist act. According to Hamilton's rule, altruistic behaviour will be picked up by natural selection "if the costs of performing the behavior are less than the benefits discounted by the coefficient of relatedness between actor

[17] By tracing the evolution of cooperation in humans, I will follow the traditional (and Darwinian) model that sees organisms evolving step-by-step and in a continuous, but slow fashion (Sheldon 2001, 1). Macro-evolutionary changes concerning the evolution of new species may be explained by differing models: phyletic gradualism links micro-evolutionary processes to macro-processes, explaining the emergence of new species through the continuous accumulation of small changes via the route of natural selection (Lewin and Foley 2004, 51). Punctuated equilbrium, in contrast, holds that new species emerge suddenly and then remain in a state of equilbirum for the rest of their existence (Gould and Eldredge 1977; Gould 2001, 2002).

[18] Evolutionary forces other than natural selection also work on the genetic level of the individual, not the species; genetic drift, for instance, postulates that not-so-fit individuals can serendipitously outcompete fitter competitors if chance works in their favour, see Greene et al. (1980).

[19] Alleles are forms of a gene sitting on a particular site (locus) of a chromosome. In diploid organisms, such as humans, two alleles of the same gene occupy the same location on homologous chromosomes. The dominant variant of the two alleles will determine the phenotypical aspects of genetic characteristic that will be displayed (Hine and Martin 2015, see entry 'allele').

and recipient" (Boyd and Silk 2006, 202). This solves the fitness problem: by favouring those who carry our genes, we might not promote our fitness directly but *indirectly* (West, El Mouden, and Gardner 2011, 233; Pievani 2011, 46; Degler 1991, 280).

Kin selection increases our indirect fitness and therefore our overall fitness. For example, parents and offspring as well as siblings share 50% of their genes, whereas half-siblings, grandparents and grandchildren, uncles and aunts, and nephews and nieces share 25%. People care for those who bear their genes – and the closer a genetic relation is, the more cooperation and altruistic behaviour can be expected. Altruism, according to van den Berghe (1994, 96), is a "misnomer". What appears to be a selfless deed on the surface, is in reality genetic nepotism, a "surreptitious form of self-love" (Atran 2010, 302) and the unconscious promotion of individual genetic interests: "No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside.[…]. Scratch an altruist, and watch a hypocrite bleed" (Ghiselin 1974, 247). Individuals, as affected by their genes, are "strategists, calculating as it were the best way to behave in order to further their own inclusive fitness" (Segerstråle 2007, 83). This notion, that natural selection must be considered from "the gene's eyes view" (ibid., 91), was communicated also to a larger audience by Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1989).

Now, today's modern reality is the very opposite of small, intimate groups of kinfolk and everyday acquaintances: it is an anonymous society uniting people who know of the fleeting nature of their encounters. Nonetheless, there is a seemingly endless number of examples of people cooperating even to extremes. People have always and will always wantonly sacrifice themselves in the name of collectives which go far beyond the village or town where people meet and know each other on a day-to-day basis. Looking at the narrow streets of West or East Belfast, where terraced house upon terraced house adjoins its neighbour and where

"communities were so tight-knit they could tell where you came from just by your accent, in the same city" (Arthur 1988, 2), to cooperate or simply to stick together must have seemed the natural thing to do. However, the 'Troubles' happened on a much larger scale, as national identities were invoked, be it in sectarian opposition or in headstrong endorsement, pledging allegiance to people living far beyond the immediate neighbourhood. How could this be possible?

Given that large groups often comprise members that exceed the next of kin, the crucial question is how these groups can sustain lasting cooperation and ensure that people will be ready to defend group boundaries in times of upheaval. Here van den Berghe comes into play. He extends the "biological golden rule" of "give unto others as they are related unto you" (van den Berghe 1981, 20) to the nation. The ethnic group becomes an "extended family" (ibid., 25). Because kin selection leading to altruistic behaviour amongst immediate kin proved to be evolutionary successful, it was "culturally used, extended, manipulated and elaborated on" (van den Berghe 1979, 214). Ethnicity thus became something to be carried around – a "man-made ethnic uniform" (van den Berghe 1981, 29) – and a visible marker setting one apart from those that are not to be trusted. Tattoos, body painting, clothing, and headgear are such obvious ethnic badges. Language is an excellent cultural boundary, since it is difficult to fake: most people who acquired a foreign language and did not grow up amongst the 'natives' will retain an accent that will distinguish them. The tribe, *ethnie,* and nation became the homeland, people, and family referred to in the national anthems that speak of the revered 'motherland' and 'fatherland' (Lauenstein et al. 2015). But as van den Berghe indicates, it cannot be genes alone. According to him, kin selection must be reinforced by forms of reciprocity and coercion or some other cultural mechanism of prestige-biased transmission which indirectly supports cooperation by making information about an individual's past behaviour readily available (van den Berghe 1981, 8–11). He

concedes ground to a cultural explanation of large-scale cooperation: ethnicity, he says, is mostly "pseudo-kinship" and "a biological fiction" (van den Berghe 1979, 212). Because ethnic groups and nations dress up as kin systems they become so appealing, despite van den Berghe's suggestion that this is just a big ruse.

Others have argued that nations and ethnic groups are actually more than just fiction. Rushton's (2005, 500) genetic similarity theory, for instance, stresses that what often appear to be cultural divides actually correspond to an underlying genetic reality. Due to assortative mating, the preferential mating between people sharing similar genetic characteristics (ibid., 494), and other cultural practices, genetic similarity might not only be replicated in the direct offspring but extended a hundred generations down the line. "Elizabeth II", Rushton says, is "considerably more genetically similar to William the Conqueror than she is to an average person alive today" (ibid.). Ethnic groups adopting similar practices thus turn out to be linked through genetic relatedness. A similar result can be achieved via limited dispersal ('population viscosity'), where interaction between neighbours reinforces genetic relatedness because they stick spatially together (Platt and Bever 2009, 370; West, El Mouden, and Gardner 2011, 238).[20] Brubaker confirms that not all genetic differences between ethnic groups can be consigned to the realms of fantasy: differences between ethnic groups hailing from different continents are not just cosmetic but "medically significant" (Brubaker 2015, 53). Social understandings of race and ethnicity might often be crude, as they are the result of boundary-making processes, but they do reveal rudimentary information about genetic ancestry (ibid., 83).

Salter (2003) perverts this reasonable observation by turning it into a political programme.

[20] Proximity-as-kinship-cue is similar to the practice 'exploited' by the cuckoo: because it is in my nest it must be related to me (Park 2007, 869).

As stated above, most sociobiological authors have denounced the view of humans as programmed genetic machines – not so Salter.[21] He proposes a form of universal nationalism that strengthens the ultimate 'genetic interest' of dominant ethnic groups (Salter 2003, 190).[22] Ethnic states should be entitled to protect themselves against the genetic decline that sets in when "the rest of the world floods in" (ibid., 187) – this can only be done when state borders are congruent with ethnic, i.e. genetic borders. Salter's aim, in his own words, is not to "explain human behavior, but rather to offer social and political theory about what individuals should do if they want to behave adaptively" (ibid., 325). As Gray (2005) points out, "Salter uses evolutionary theory not to explain behavior but to prescribe it". Applying the battle cry rhetoric of the far-right[23] throughout his monograph, he denigrates the multiculturalism of the "establishment" (Salter 2003, 147) as an evolutionarily unstable strategy for the ethnic majority. For Salter, multiculturalism results in the genetic displacement of the dominant *ethnie* (ibid., 189). "What we should do", Gray says, giving a summary of Salter,

> is discriminate by race. We should do this because it is in our genetic interest to do so. Races differ genetically, and we share more genes with people of our own race than with those of different races, so it is in our genetic interest to favor our own race. (2005)

Salter explicitly demands a right for ethnic majorities to establish their own genetic apartheid regimes, asserting that

[21] Although another warning might be in order: Rushton (2005, 499) unabashedly quotes Salter without caveat, while E. O. Wilson, who ironically dismissed the accusation that he was advocating human pre-determination, praises Salter's *On Genetic Interest* on its back cover: "How sad. How disillusioning", in the words of Gray (2005).

[22] Salter quotes Herder as his witness, but as A. D. Smith (1998, 147) points out, Herder's idea of the natural nations *qua* organic nations has nothing do with sociobiology. Herder was long dead when Darwin and Mendel appeared on the stage of world history, making it somewhat unlikely that he had a thorough understanding of evolutionary biology and genetics.

[23] Salter's involvement with right-wing politics in Australia (*Sidney Morning Herald*, 29 January 2017) and his online diatribes against "Europe's political class" embracing "the most aggressive form of multiculturalism, in which the establishment forms an alliance with minorities to dominate the majority" (Salter 2016) leave little doubt about his agenda.

> political and economic tragedy that has always accompanied attempts to institute extreme humanism across whole societies has been caused in part by the lack of human sympathy on the part of the humanist elites for the people they come to rule. (Salter 2003, 177)

This is inclusive fitness thought through to its unsavoury end – for him, human beings are not political or cultural beings but genetic reproduction machines alone. Salter's racial mania most disturbingly paints a very bleak image of humankind: like house flies, our primary target should be to care for our direct and indirect genetic fitness by caring for those who are close genetic kin, just because we are animals, too. This is not only morally bankrupt, but – in particular for the sake of my own argument – it also captures how people like Salter disregard the evolutionarily-evolved human capacity for cultural behaviour.

Kinship does not always have to mean *genetic* kin. Although population genetics have their explanatory value, they cannot convincingly show why inclusive fitness should be the centrepiece but not the human ability to arrive at cultural perceptions of kinship in a different way. This is not to argue that people stand outside the models originally proposed by Hamilton: *H. sapiens*, like other animals, is part of an evolved framework that makes us care for our kin relations. But, for evolutionary reasons alone, humans have gained the capability to do so in multifarious tribal ways that cross merely genetic boundaries. Kinship does not need to go down the route of genetic relatedness, as Salter or even Rushton have it. The capability to imagine ourselves as part of a multifarious variety of communities is one of the aspects that make us truly human: humans can deeply care about their football teams, but house flies cannot.

This brings us back to Geertz's (1996, 42–43) participants' primordialism of assumed blood ties and kinship: what matters is not whether or not they are objectively true, but that they are lived out as true and meaningful (Bouchard 2013a, 277). For Reynolds (1980), this is a crucial objection because it renders a sociobiological approach – and its underlying logic of

genetic fitness – inconsistent, remarking that "unless his primordial inter-group theory based on sociobiology can explain why the new non-genetic transmission has to follow the logic of the old genetic one, it breaks down" (ibid., 311). Reynold's objection is valid and a look at the underlying population genetics of Northern Ireland and the UK exemplifies his objection.

In their study on the genetic structure of the British population (see Fig. 2), Leslie et al. (2015) sought to track immigration movements in the British Isles from the Neolithic period onwards. They based their data on research participants from rural areas whose grandparents were born within 80 km of each other, thus excluding modern-day immigration during industrialisation and later. The study also excluded any population movement from Ireland to Britain, hence the UK's Irish legacy (especially within Northern Ireland) does not appear. We see that the genetic data roughly matches the modern nations, dividing mainland Britain into genetically related sub-groups of 'Scotland/north England', 'central/south England', and Wales, including expected particularities like the genetic uniqueness of the population of Orkney due to its Norwegian influence. This

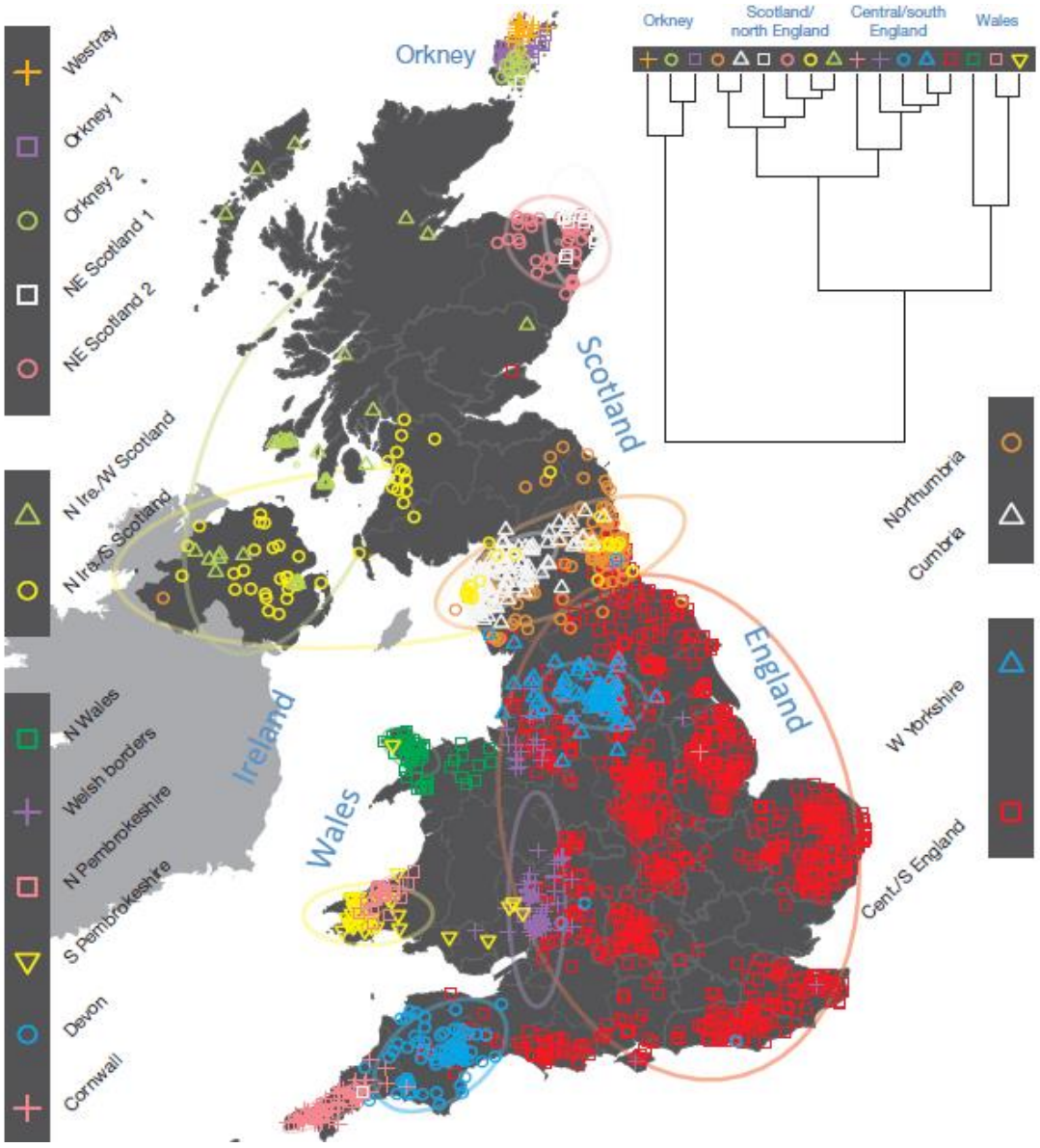

Figure 2: The genetic structure of the UK (Leslie et al. 2015, 310)

confirms a model of genetic similarity based on limited population dispersal that does not necessarily require kin selection through discrimination (West, El Mouden, and Gardner 2011, 238).

There are however other political particularities that cannot be explained using a genetic model alone, one of them of course being Northern Ireland. The population movement from Lowland Scotland and the English borders into Ulster does reflect the impact of the Ulster Plantation, with the influx from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland probably representing

an earlier population movement between Ulster and Scotland. Again, the study excludes any genetic influence from the modern-day Republic of Ireland; but if we presume that the study did not distinguish between Protestant/unionist and Catholic/nationalist participants – and it nowhere mentions that it does – we are safe to assume that there are enough people in Northern Ireland who declare themselves to be nationalist but who also carry a genetic heritage stemming from the continuous population movement between Ulster and Scotland and indeed the Plantation itself. We see this confirmed in the local 'name game'.

While there are surnames which are seen as 'Protestant names' (often of Lowland Scots origin) and 'Catholic names' (often anglicised Gaelic names), such stereotypes veil the fact that the genetic boundaries between communities are much more porous than some might think – however, culture can set effective boundaries where genetics cannot, making sure that the boundary itself does not disappear due to inter-marriage practices. But there are also exceptions: sometimes, surnames even indicate an opposite heritage. Former unionist PM Terence O'Neill shares his name with an IRA volunteer buried along Bobby Sands (Sands being a common English name). Other republicans such as Gerry Adams or Danny Morrison also inherited surnames that are of English or Scottish origin. Others tried to bring identity and personal heritage into line, such as the IRA grandees Proinsias Mac Airt – born as Francis Card – and Seán Mac Stíofáin, who was born to English parents as John Stephenson (English 2012, 112; 126).[24] The desire to amalgamate kin origins with tribal ties can prove to be disastrous: Lenny Murphy, one of the Shankill Butcher gang, inherited a typical Irish Catholic name, although he was born into staunchly Protestant area. His family's neighbours suspected Lenny's father William of being a Catholic and took his reticence for a guilty plea. Lenny, who preferred his mother's Scots maiden name Carson, was bullied at school as

[24] As Max Weber (2000, 6) astutely observed: "Indeed, everywhere the especially radical 'nationalists' are often of foreign descent."

‘Murphy the Mick’ (‘Mick’ being a derogatory term for Catholic people) and, by the age of ten, had embarked on a journey to violence (Dillon 1990, 1–5). Biological descent is often specious and human kinship systems are sometimes not organised along biological lines at all. Fosterage, whereby the upbringing of one’s children was entrusted to political allies, was widely practiced in medieval Ireland, to the effect that individuals developed stronger emotional ties to their foster parents than their genetic family (Duffy 1997, 23). It follows that humans practice ingroup loyalty and altruism in a variety of settings and not only in the ‘traditional’ sense through inclusive fitness practices.

Tajfel (1970) for instance showed that people are natural altruists even when they are aware that no genetic connection is given – people are primed to practice in-group loyalty, even in absence of a competitive situation between groups. In his minimal group experiments, people were given random group identifications and were then asked to rate other individuals who were only identifiable by their group membership. As it turned out, the participants distinctively favoured those random individuals who shared their own, random, group affiliation. Social categorisation, i.e. the division of people into random groups, is therefore enough to generate intergroup competition and give an incentive for to pursue strategies of in-group preference (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 48–51; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 38–39; Turner 1978, 101–4). M. Levine et al.’s (2005) findings go into a similar direction: in their experiment, participants – all of them self-declared fans of Manchester United FC – were brought into a situation where they were given the choice to give or not to give a helping hand to a random stranger who either wore a Manchester United strip, a neutral one, or the shirt of Liverpool FC, Manchester United’s rivals. While the results showed no evidence of out-group denigration – people did not distinguish between the passers-by who wore neutral sports clothes or the Liverpool shirt – participants were more likely to help perfect strangers who also showed their affection for Manchester United. Showing the tribal symbol

immediately led to positive action towards another member of the in-group, even if that in-group was as spurious[25] as football team allegiance. "[A]s constituted from birth to death and even beyond", Sahlins (2013, 89) says, "kinship is culture, all culture". Sahlins' statement involves a grain of truth but does not dispute the need for some form of kinship (and indeed all human cultures practice kinship): there is a need for kinship conduct, but not necessarily for kinship conduct on the basis of genetic relatedness. Genetic models that link ethno-nations and biological kinship cannot fully explain the pervasive appeal of nationalism.

This interim conclusion brings us a step closer to understanding how a need to belong and nationalism intersect. Granted, the van den Berghe model reserves a place for culture as the progenitor of ethnic markers, but it remains, as the Reynolds objection shows, more of plaster put onto a theory that does not quite seem to fit. Van den Berghe's (1981) ethnic tribes appear to be easily duped into believing that they really deal with genetic kin relations: "one intuitively expects fellow ethnics to behave at least somewhat benevolently toward one because of kin selection" (25). The problem is that this *intuitively* implied trust towards others who, yes, talk and look like us, but nevertheless might be (genetic) strangers, remains enigmatic.

Two reasons, therefore, speak against an explanation of nationalism as genetic kinship: modern nations sometimes do match genetic borders and we see this confirmed in nations that have been ethnically homogeneous for a long time, such as Japan. However, this model cannot explain why Northern Ireland, where a genetic division into two warring tribes appears to be more than questionable, has a history of ethno-national strife, while Cornwall and Devon, where genetic differences neatly match modern county borders, mostly disagree

[25] Spurious because in-group membership is easily faked, as anybody, fan or not, can purchase merchandise of a particular team: "talk is cheap and so is hair dye" (Richerson and Boyd 2005, 213).

about cream teas. Furthermore, models of kinship that stress genetic origins miss the point of what makes us fully human: our evolved capacity for cultural behaviour. If we bring culture into the equation, the picture becomes one that tells of longing for *some* form of kinship. Genetic kinship and cultural modes of kinship are expressions of the same need, the latter being an elaboration of the former. Theoretically speaking kinship could take an exclusively civic basis, as in the form of Habermas' (1990) *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism), the "least dangerous form of social-political cohesion" (Müller 2009, 23). Habermas understood constitutional patriotism radically as a "post-national, universalist form of democratic political allegiance" (Müller 2006, 278) that had become imperative in a post-Auschwitz world: "the overcoming of fascism forms the particular historical perspective from which a post-national identity centred around the universalist principles of the rule of law and democracy understands itself" (Habermas 1990, 152). A true feeling of identity could be born out of a common perception of freedom and political rights alone, as well as through the rational will of the citizens "to be part and to participate" (Schölderle 2010, 338). However, such purely civic forms of collective 'kin allegiance' are much harder to find, which means that other forms of allegiance must be cognitively more readily available.

To sum up: kinship ties are established and maintained out of necessity and not because they necessarily reflect a genetic reality; they fulfil a certain psychological function for the individual. This is the real gravitational pull of nationalism: human cooperation evolved within the framework of inclusive fitness, as shown Hamilton and others, but it leaves out an important part of the story of human evolution. What is more important is not inclusive fitness in the genetic sense but to understand *why* the faking of familiarity and depicting of the nation as a super-family blown out of proportion is so attractive even in cases where a genuine genetic link is dubious (see Northern Ireland). For the explanation I propose we

have to place *H. sapiens* at the intersection where our evolved psychological makeup and our cultural prowess, and more specifically the capability to live in large-scale communities of the size of nations, meet. Here, the human need to belong, a more sophisticated reworking of the inclusive fitness models that applies to all animals, is located. This need 'demands' simplicity in our social world, seeking to replicate the small-scale environment of our evolutionary ancestors. It also means that humans demand ontological security and will reclaim it by any means possible, if it is denied.

I will now outline the evolution of this need to belong, which needs to be seen in the context of how our genes and our inclination towards cultural behaviour have evolved together and have led to a pro-social human psychology. I will break the undertaking down into two parts: firstly, I will explain the role that epigenetic rules play. Epigenetic rules are best understood as the preference of one mental process over another, and as organic processes which feed on culture to assemble the mind and channel its operation (Lumsden and Wilson 1981, 349). Epigenetic rules in return are the product of adaptations to a changing environment as well as the result of a gene-culture co-evolution, showing how the mind and genes can evolve together. Secondly, I will explain how belonging – being an epigenetic rule – is the result of a gene-culture co-evolutionary process that has made humans hyper-social, creating a psychological makeup that expects the social world to be easily navigable through the prevalence of social norms, a development that culminated in the belonging to the imagined communities of nations. The last part of the chapter will then be committed to describing the need to belong in more in-depth detail, focusing on how belonging is expressed through ontological security.

Origins of cultural cooperation: Gene-culture coevolution and epigenetic rules

As with the sociobiological approaches described by van den Berghe et al., the need to

belong needs to be located within a larger framework that seeks to explain the existence of human sociality and altruism. Humans need each other's company, and from an evolutionary point of view this absolutely makes sense. The social transformation of important information via teaching and imitating enables an individual human organism to exceed its own creative capacities. Social animals are always evolutionarily-successful animals. Cooperation is crucial as *H. sapiens* did not, from an evolutionary perspective, succeed because of their superior intelligence, but because they are specialised in social skills: it was our "groupish nature" (D. S. Wilson and Wilson 2007, 342) and "our ability to function as team players in coordinated groups enabled our species to achieve worldwide dominance" (ibid., 343). Knowing that other group members act with purpose and not just fortuitously is an incredibly powerful engine for social development. The ability to share attention, and a high level of awareness, optimised group behaviour and contributed to humanity's social nature: only humans have the capacity to point things out to others, only humans hold objects up to show them to others, only humans convey subtle messages by laughing in a group context (Tomasello 1999; D. S. Wilson and Wilson 2007, 343).[26]

Although social capabilities and systems of learning can be found in many animals, *H. sapiens* mastered the area of intra-species cooperation due to the adaptation of language. Language allowed for systems of culture and their principles to be expressed, maintained, and passed on. Language optimised the sharing of information, not only enabling cooperation but also sustaining it by making the cultural constructs that maintain cooperation – myths and stories perpetuating social norms and values and establishing the dos and don'ts – a possibility. These social institutions build upon the evolved psychology of individuals and "have the effect of co-ordinating behaviour, maintaining order, and enhancing the well-

[26] Recent insights into animal behaviour, however, indicate that chimpanzees are equally able to pay attention to their partners' actions in a collaborative task. Such behaviour could be seen as strategic collaboration (Melis and Tomasello 2013).

being of either the whole or parts of any group" (Foley 2001, 172). This is the key for an explanation of the *feasibility* of nationalism and national identity as well as the pervasiveness of ethnic myths and narratives: human cooperation is the result of an evolutionary interplay between genes and culture, deeply ingrained in the human existence, and it builds upon the expectation that the social world is structured and therefore easy to navigate.

Earlier I mentioned that the human mind is not one driven by genetic default settings alone. The human mind is a thinking entity which actively deliberates on how to proceed in a certain situation. Human minds are not "insectlike, waiting to be imprinted on a single mode of action by early experiences" (Lumsden and Wilson 1983, 127), but guided by thinking processes based on learning and active reflection.[27] What genes nonetheless do is to "generate organic processes […] that feed on culture to assemble the mind and channel its operation", processes that are called 'epigenetic rules' (Lumsden and Wilson 1981, 349).

Epigenetic rules are tools for simplification, forming mental biases and leading to central tendencies in behaviour (Shaw and Wong 1989, 73). These behavioural "rules of thumb and habit" (ibid., 76) counter uncertainty and bring order to the social world by prescribing paths that have proven their worth in the past (ibid., 75). It is easy to understand why this strategy of forming epigenetic tendencies is of enormous adaptive value: confronted with an overwhelming amount of information to process, the human brain looks for preferable behaviour which has proven to be rewarding in order to escape the dilemma of having repeatedly to face the same decisions. The human mind, Clark (2002, 270) remarks, is "no match for the overly complex reality in which it is immersed. We must simplify the world around us in order to live in it meaningfully". Ignoring new information in this context is

[27] The mind, of course, has a material basis: "mental events are identical with physiological events in the brain, and most probably the coded pattern by which particular sets of nerve cells are electrically charged" (Lumsden and Wilson 1983, 76).

energy-saving behaviour (Hatemi and McDermott 2011, 16).

Konner (2002) gives an example of how epigenetic rules can develop a formidable, because biased, answer to environmental pressures and thus increase the fitness of the organism involved:

> Imagine a population of perching birds in which some individuals *learn* to like a new kind of berry – say, blueberries. These individuals start nesting in blueberry patches, and their offspring learn to like blueberries just as they did. Eventually, just randomly, the genetic shuffle produces a few individuals who like blueberries right off – they don't have to go through the process of learning. These birds may be favored by selection – blueberries are a readily available food, and a gene-coded taste for them means some nestlings start eating them sooner than others, in turn gaining weight and maturing faster, doing better in reproductive competition, and so on. Eventually we have a generation in which all, by genetic propensity, are very fond of blueberries *without* learning. (23)

Human culture also can work as an evolutionary booster, taking the role of the environmental pressures – the occurrence of blueberry bushes – mentioned in the example above, and thus influence habitual behaviour patterns. Gene-culture coevolution describes this process: genes and culture are linked and changes in the one necessarily leads to change in the other. Cultural activity sustained over a long period of time can therefore have an impact on human evolution and form epigenetic rules. It can have a powerful impact on natural selection and can even drag the genes along (Lumsden and Wilson 1983, 154). Cultural innovations throw "new variations into the teeth of natural selection" (ibid.) and thus alter the epigenetic tendencies over the course of generations. Such a mind produced by gene-culture coevolution creates a world where in return behaviour is indeed varied, but where biological dispositions make certain choices more likely than others (Naour 2009, 36). Both genes and culture are

> held together by an elastic but unbreakable leash.[28] Culture emerges and advances in development by means of innovation, and the introduction of new ideas and artifacts from the outside. However, it is constrained and directed to some extent by the genes. At the same time, the pressure exerted by cultural innovation affects the survival of the genes and ultimately alters the strength and torque of the genetic leash. (Lumsden and Wilson 1981, in: Naour 2009, 36)

Cultural innovations impact genetic evolution. However, since cultural evolution happens at a distinctly quicker pace – see my next point – cultural innovations leaving the well-worn path 'suggested' by the epigenetic will have consequences for their human bearers.

In conclusion: gene-culture coevolution is based on a complex relationship between both genes and culture and who leads the way is often difficult to tell: "Culture is on a leash, […] but the dog at the end is big, smart, and independent. On any given walk, it is hard to tell who is leading who[m]" (Richerson and Boyd 2005, 194). What is also clear is that the 'leash' or 'rubber band' of the epigenetic rules will always accompany all forms of cultural evolution – the one cannot go without the other. Cultural prowess is not the result of "Promethean genes" (Lumsden and Wilson 1983, 56) which propel humankind outside its evolutionary history. The ability to perform cultural acts is not an additional layer hovering over the biological foundation, but the result of evolution and natural selection. At time it pushes our genes, but never to the extent that it can completely outperform its origins. Although it sometimes might seem that culture can break free, this is not the case. The history of the cultural evolution of humankind is evidence of this, because it has led to a pro-social psychological makeup that indeed assembles the human mind.

[28] The metaphor of a rubber band is more fitting, Naour (2009) writes, and I agree: the rubber band "represents genetic predisposition and the environment produces the stimulus forces that stretch the rubber band. The rubber band will always tend toward a particular position of equilibrium but is not as controlling as a leash" (36).

Cultural group selection and the evolution of a pro-social psychology

Boyd and Richerson (2009) estimate that around 100,000 years ago humans took up the habit of living in larger tribal societies of a few hundred to a thousand[29], in what is commonly described as foraging or hunter-gatherer societies. How could cooperation be guaranteed in such groups? One could expect genetic selection to work on the level of groups instead of individuals (D. S. Wilson and Wilson 2007; D. S. Wilson and Sober 1994): acts of altruism are to the detriment of the individual, if we consider the individual alone; but because cooperative groups outperform those groups that are less cohesive, genes responsible for keeping the group together prevail and spread amongst the members of successfully cooperating collectives. What speaks against this theory is that natural selection on the level of the genes is a slow process that happens over the course of centuries and millennia. Since most human groups and bands have never lived in complete isolation, genetic migration and permeable group boundaries between groups prevent stable group variants from being established, diminishing the possibility of genetic inter-group competition and hence selection (Richerson and Boyd 2001a, 202). Although theoretically possible, this model does not work in the real world.

In comparison, cultural group selection also focuses on groups, but focuses on cultural practices instead of genes: groups that cooperate successfully because of their superior cultural abilities outcompete groups which are less cooperative. Culture is also much quicker than genes: once genetic traits favouring cooperation are established by natural selection, newcomers to the group imitate successful behaviour, thus ensuring that genetically different migrants are fully integrated and cooperative behaviour can be sustained – when in Rome,

[29] Nuer tribes of what is modern day South Sudan for instance had between 10,000 and more than 40,000 members (Richerson and Boyd 1999, 265).

do as the Romans do (Soltis, Boyd, and Richerson 1995).[30]

Hence, culture is hugely advantageous because it can do things genes cannot, especially as it is not restricted to the same slow speed. In environments in which change occurs rapidly and learning is costly, social learning is particularly expedient since it decreases individual costs for finding out what works and what does not. This is the reason why cultural learning had become particularly valuable in the last half of the Pleistocene ('The Ice Ages')[31], when climate conditions were unstable and rapidly changing. During the Pleistocene, environmental conditions fluctuated and glacial periods of dramatic drops in temperature, precipitation, and CO_2 supply alternated with warmer interglacial periods at high speed (Richerson and Boyd 2000, 13–15). It was in this period when natural selections made *H. sapiens* a "hyper-cultural" (Henrich and Henrich 2006, 224) species, as cultural behaviour that could increase social behaviour and refine social skills was a tremendous advantage in the chaotic conditions of the Pleistocene. Humans learn, teach, and imitate like no other species in the animal kingdom. Human also create symbolic writings that reify what has been learned across generations, making sure that knowledge does not die with its progenitor.

Culture dragged its genetic foundations along at this point in history: as societies grew more social, new social dispositions comprising emotions such as shame and guilt emerged,

[30] As West, El Mouden, and Gardner (2011, 246–48) note, cultural group selection is a bit of a misnomer since it is 'merely' a new way of looking at an old problem. The old models of group selection as proposed by Wynne-Edwards (1962) and mentioned above cannot exist in the real world. Wynne-Edwards suggested that natural selection would favour groupish traits, since cooperative groups would always outcompete selfish ones. However, group selection can only occur in situations where in-group members are genetic clones or the reproductive success amongst group members cannot differ (West, El Mouden, and Gardner 2011, 246). Then, maximising individual success would be the same as maximising group success. Again, this is unlikely to happen. All group selection models work according the principle of inclusive fitness; this is also true with cultural group selection, where groups do not compete on a genetic basis alone but through different cultural traits. Successful group competition will benefit the reproductive success, i.e. the inclusive fitness, of the individual. By stressing the role culture has played in human evolution we are looking at Hamilton's/van den Berghe's model from a more convincing perspective – the underlying mathematical mechanism that pertains to individual fitness is the same.

[31] The Pleistocene spanned from 2.6 million to 11,700 years ago (K. M. Cohen et al. 2013, 200–201).

increasing the chance of norms being followed and of social deviants being put into their place. Unorthodox behaviour was met by forms of ostracism ranging from rebukes, to criticism, ridicule, shaming, and even capital punishment (Boehm 2012).[32] Emotions functioned as "guarantees of threats and promises" (Sterelny 2003, 140) and signalled reliability. Therefore, they are a powerful means to elicit certain patterns of human behaviour. As we know, anger can motivate high-risk behaviour, while sympathy can be a powerful motivation for considerable sacrifice (ibid.). These emotions guarantee successful cooperation amongst individuals who would otherwise be disinclined to do so. Gintis et al. (2003) argue that people are intrinsically prepared to cooperate, even with non-kin: people have "a predisposition to cooperate with others and to punish those who violate the norms of cooperation, at personal cost, even when it is implausible to expect that these costs will be repaid either by others or at a later date" (ibid., 154). For human cooperation to be stable and worthwhile, mechanisms of social ostracism were needed.

Behaviour experiments such as public goods games confirm an inclination towards cooperation that is enforced, because individuals are not an indistinguishable, anonymous mass but can be separated into co-operators and defectors (Gintis et al. 2003, 159–62). In said games, participants are granted anonymity, i.e. their behaviour cannot be tracked. They are given tokens and are asked to pool, or not to pool, their resources. As the outcome is distributed evenly, the best option for each individual player would be to pay all their tokens into the community fund. While this setup will work at first, levels of cooperation will deteriorate significantly in later rounds, because anonymity makes it easy to defect or free-ride on the joint effort. However, if conditions of anonymity are removed and co-operators and free-riders can be identified, cooperation will soar, either due to pre-emptive obedience

[32] See Rilling et al. (2002) for congruent evidence from the neurosciences.

or because free-riders are revealed and punished (see figure below). If punishment is removed, cooperation will hit rock bottom again. In conclusion: cooperation is only stable if it is buttressed by a mechanism that identifies team players and deserters. People are self-interested players – a result of natural selection seeking to improve individual fitness – but have learned to cooperate in large groups and will quickly establish mechanisms of cooperation that make cooperation a lasting and productive endeavour.

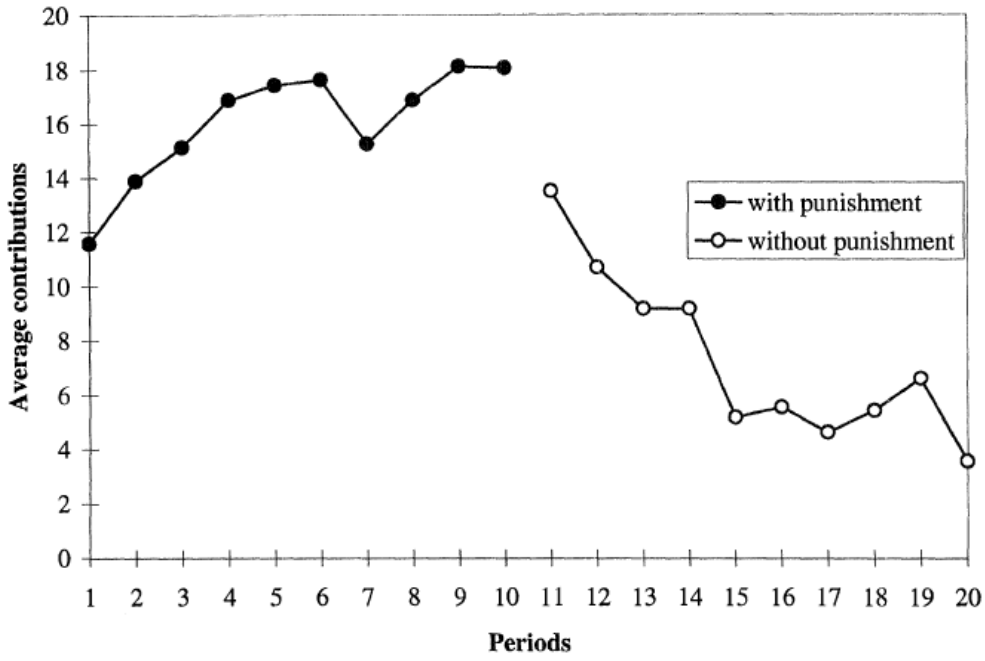

Figure 3: Levels of cooperation amongst partners, anonymity removed (Fehr and Gächter 2000, 989)

In order to avoid problems of defecting and free-riding, cooperation must be arranged in a way that allows for its participants to meet again. Mutual cooperation which is beneficial to the individual can only be stable "if the future is sufficiently important relative to the present" (Axelrod 1984, 126). For 'tit-for-tat' cooperation to be successful in large groups, the future must cast a long enough shadow. By making interaction more durable and frequent, participants are urged to keep to their promises and not to desert a cooperation arrangement. Large-scale cooperation needs another form of Axelrod's (1984) shadow of the future, and this can best be achieved by changing the payoffs: "If you avoid paying your

taxes, you must face the possibility of being caught and sent to jail" (133). Such a prospect will make defection less attractive. Something similar to retribution is needed to encourage cooperation amongst people who are not obviously linked, be it genetically or spatially – anarchy in the overarching social system must be reduced.

Reputation, tied up with punishment, can be a means to achieve that goal. A reputation mechanism ensures that individuals engaging in a group framework base their willingness to cooperate on available favourable or unfavourable information vis-à-vis potential partners (Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman 2014). This requires the existence of something akin to 'common knowledge', agreed rules, values, norms, and a mechanism of mutual monitoring which assures that those agreed rules are followed. Violations of rules and norms leads to poor reputation, a type of punishment which in its weakest expression can mean malicious gossip directed at the transgressing individual and ostracism, gaol, and mob violence in its stronger manifestations. What particular form of retribution follows a norm violation depends of course on many variables, i.e. the respective context. All forms of reputation loss raise the incentives for others to stick to their commitments, as the transgressor becomes a more and more unreliable partner. Past behaviour thus shapes future expectations. This obviously ensures that individuals will care for their reputation, driven by a fear of ostracism, and avoid those who do not share in the proper behaviour prescribed by the group's majority. Humans therefore have, as Henrich and Henrich (2006) argue, a pro-social psychology that cares for complex systems of reputation which in return permit cooperation amongst non-related kin. This pro-social psychology is an epigenetic rule and as such embodies the human need to belong.

Instead of 'pro-social psychology' we could also employ the term 'tribal instincts', as proposed by Richerson and Boyd (1999, 2001b, 2001a) and Boyd and Richerson (2009,

2010). The hazy terminology used by Richerson and Boyd could, of course, be accused of being another "just so" (Hatemi and McDermott 2011, 31) story, in particular because earlier instinct theories have been dismissed as describing "something mystical and intangible" (Snyder 1972, 87).[33] Both 'instinct' and 'tribal' have unpalatable overtones: the term 'tribal' has often been conflated with cases of religious or ethnic conflict, evoking images of supposedly savage barbarians who cannot come to their senses: media reports on the irrational "*Big, Mad Children*" (Foster 2008, 124) and "warring tribes" (Dixon 2008, 336) have lastingly coined the public image of Northern Ireland as Britain's atavistic backwater. Karl Popper referred to 'tribal instincts' as one of the most primitive human motivations, attaching them to the collective identities, such as nationalism, which he despised and from which we should free ourselves (Vincent 2006, 161).

Nonetheless this biased psychology (the 'tribal instincts'), as the product of those gene-culture processes described above, expresses itself tangibly as a pro-social psychology that expects the social world to be divided into symbolically marked groups (Richerson and Boyd 2005, 214). The multitude of forms these symbolically-marked groups can take is a credit to humans as social constructors; but there always has be one sort of 'tribe', for better and worse. Human culture *always* establishes systems of norms and beliefs that dictate "how to recognize who belongs to the tribes, what schedules of aid, praise, and punishment is due to tribal fellows, and how the tribe is to deal with other tribes – allies, enemies, and clients" (Richerson and Boyd 2001b, 190). During the course of human evolution, human cultural norms put selective pressure on individuals to develop cognitive abilities that allowed for living in groups governed by social norms and values. Repeated rounds of cultural group selection, in return, ensured that the groups with pervasive group norms prevailed against

[33] See also my earlier criticism of van den Berghe's assumption that people are intuitively prepared to follow the call of their ethnic communities simply because they dress up as fake families and pretend genuine genetic relatedness.

other groups which showed less inclination towards group behaviour and cooperation (Richerson and Henrich 2012, 57). Within norm-governed groups, a propensity for showing off group markers developed, a simple but effective way of ordering the social world by tying social interaction to an idea of who can be trusted (the in-group) and who should be shunned (the out-group). Members of the in-group were 'marked' as co-operators who cared about their standing within the cosmos of the in-group, because they were visibly subject to in-group control. These mechanisms of symbolically-policed systems of cooperation would reappear later as ethnic and national boundary signifiers, simply because they simplify, to a very high degree, the daily social interaction the individual finds itself in.

Distinctions between in-groups and out-groups led to different languages, dialects, customs, habits, norms, and values, while group cooperation and social stability were increasingly maintained by underlying "systems of cosmology, religious belief, and moral order" (Foley 2001, 173). These developments made it easy to be "nice to people who talk like you, dress like you, and act like you" and to be "suspicious of everyone else" (Richerson and Boyd 2005, 224). Humans learned to favour people who are similar to themselves and to establish boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. Group cohesion deepened the more members of an in-group became alike and the more differences between in-groups and out-groups grew. Thus, humans evolved at the nexus of culture and genes into hyper-cultural animals who expect group behaviour that is delineated by visible marks and upheld by social norms and values.

Human behaviour is shaped by these visible marks and social norms that delineate in-and out-groups. To fast forward: in Northern Ireland we equally find symbols designed to mark a particular territory; murals with political themes, kerbstones painted in either red-white-and-blue or orange-white-and-green, and Union Flags and Irish tricolours adorning streets in residential neighbourhoods. It is not difficult to imagine that in a divided society, where

social facts and norms are fiercely defended, social penalties punishing transgressions can be more than mere derisive laughter. It was common IRA practice to target civil collaborators with the 'Orange state', Catholics and Protestants alike, such as handymen working at Army bases or salesmen doing business with policemen (English 2012, 276–77). Or consider the case of a woman in Ardoyne, a staunchly Catholic and Republican area in north Belfast, who showed the audacity to support Terence O'Neill's[34] efforts of wooing the Catholic community by welcoming him to her house: her house was tarred. By talking to the main representative of what Republicans considered to be the corrupt system of British imperialism, she clearly had broken the rules (Walsh 2015, 39).

But the atavistic tribalism of the Pleistocene that seems to resurface in the modern era is not yet nationalism. The constraints of the Pleistocene era obviously limited the types of human societies available to tribal ones of relative small-scale. Then, the advent of agriculture escalated the total number of human communities; not only did agricultural practices provide a much more nutritious diet, the fact that hunters and gatherers had to be mobile had also limited potential population growths: at the eve of agriculture, the world's population was about six million, in contrast to the more than seven billion people alive today; a multiplication by 1,200 in just 11,000 years (Bocquet-Appel 2011, 560). When the glaciers receded around 10,000 years ago and environmental conditions not only improved but also stabilised, loose life in bands gave way to life in small villages. During this Neolithic Revolution, the tribal cultural and genetic transformations which had evolved as adaptations to the unstable conditions of the Pleistocene suddenly enabled much more: as soon as external environmental pressure faded away, sedentary human farmer communities began to spread, slowly assimilating and replacing hunter-gatherers. Through the adaption of

[34] Then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and leader of the UUP (both positions held 1963-1969).

agriculture, “world history became a human story” (Barker and Goucher 2015, 8). 5000 years ago, villages grew into the first human cities, when humans began to cultivate the fertile lands they found in Mesopotamia and Meso-America (Harman 2008).

Whitehouse et al. (2014) link the spread of agriculture to the routinisation of religion: thus, the cultural practices that were held back during the Pleistocene period made imagined communities on a grander scale possible for the first time in human history. Originally, religious practices bound together small tribal bands; but with agriculture as its engine, much larger sets of identity could be produced. Religious practices moved towards a doctrinal mode of religiosity based on rituals that were both frequent and low in arousal. Routine rituals could coordinate the more complex and sophisticated work tasks of husbandry and arable farming (ibid., 134–36). Hunting game only required sporadic and very specific forms of cooperation within a group. Agriculture, on the other hand, needed routinized forms of labour. Related activities such as clearing, planting, and harvesting had to be planned in advance and performed at the right time and according to the seasons (Atkinson and Whitehouse 2011, 59). Religious events and meanings effectively organised these systems of collaborative labour. Subsequently, doctrinal forms of religion became highly routinized and policed by an emerging priesthood and other guardians of orthodoxy, who guaranteed that standard practices were being followed. People of the same faith but could thus easily perform and take part in the same rituals, because it became possible “to participate in liturgical rites on autopilot (so to speak)” (Whitehouse 2004, 94). Since they were performed on a high frequency basis, the rituals achieved a certain sense of permanency and were turned into marks of identity. It is no coincidence that we see similar processes of cultural and linguistic standardisation in the age of nationalism, the pinnacle of anonymous large-scale collectives, as described by Gellner (2006).

As Gat (2006, 160) points out, the Neolithic Revolution was not a threshold that was immediately crossed about 10,000 BCE, but a process that took thousands of years to unravel. This cultural evolution from tribal societies to chiefdoms to city states and the (proto-) nations of ancient Egypt (Gat) or medieval England (Greenfeld) was not the same in all parts of the world. Julius Caesar observed the emerging urbanisation of the Celtic core land as late as the first century BC (ibid., 178) – the chiefdoms of Ireland did not find their end until the early 17th century, in Scotland until the 18th century. Nevertheless, the overall speed of the Neolithic Revolution was remarkable. The city of Uruk in Mesopotamia could boast a population of twenty-five thousand and city walls of ten kilometres as early as 3100 BCE (Podany 2014, 17). While human evolution seems to have almost dragged on during the Pleistocene, with *H. sapiens* appearing as early as 315,000 years ago (Hublin et al. 2017), the first 10,000 years of the post-Pleistocene (Holocene) period radically changed the way people lived. It was, indeed, a 'sprint to civilisation' (E. O. Wilson 2012, 97).

While humankind used its cultural capacities to build up societies of ever-increasing size, genetic adaptations could not keep pace. They did not happen – or have not happened – as *H. sapiens* has lived for 90 per cent of its existence in foraging, tribal societies (Harman 2008, 6): the "breathtaking increase in social scale and complexity has occurred so rapidly that it has not been accompanied by any significant changes in the social human instincts" (Richerson and Boyd 1999, 265). Genetics changes that *have* happened in humanity's recent history are mainly an answer to localised environmental pressures, such as diseases and food sources, but are not remedies for humanity's modern emotional ailments which appeared as social collectives grew bigger and bigger. Our pro-social, pro-small-scale psychological makeup constrains behaviour, furnishing people with

> basic predispositions, emotional capacities, and social skills that are implemented in practice through highly variable cultural institutions, the parameters. People are innately prepared to act as members of

> tribes, but culture tells us how to recognize who belongs to our tribes, what schedules of aid, praise, and punishment are due to tribal fellows, and how the tribe is to deal with other tribes – allies, enemies, and clients. (Richerson and Boyd 2001a, 205)

Modern human social institutions are therefore work-arounds for our Pleistocene selves (Richerson and Boyd 1999, 266): our 'tribal' instincts. They are adjustments to a psychology which had evolved to work in societies that were much smaller in size and much less complex in their needs. These work-arounds are necessarily rather "imperfect and clumsy" (ibid., 268) and the result of human culture 'beating' human dispositions only to be pulled back in line.

Modern large-scale living which began with agriculture and has reached its apogee in the hyper-globalisation of the 21st century necessitates these cultural work-arounds which break a complex world down into smaller, more familiar pieces resembling human life in the pre-Holocene eras. Human institutions and identities do not have to be fashioned around genetic kinship – human culture makes much more varied forms of association possible – but they have to be tribal, or *intimate*. They are cultural maladaptations and, from the gene's-eye view, 'big mistakes'. Human culture is a powerful adaptation because of its inherent speed, yes – but the human ability to apply rapid cultural adaptations opens up the possibility of culture getting carried away. Richerson and Boyd (2005) call this an unavoidable design trade-off:

> Our culture is a lot like our lungs. They both work great for their evolved functions, but they also make us susceptible to infection by pathogens. You would be a lot less likely to catch either a serious respiratory disease or a selfish cultural variant if you kept away from other people as much as possible. We have evolved to take much greater risks with both sorts of diseases, because contact with others has many benefits. Culture gives us the ability to imitate things essential to human life, but it also makes us take up bits that cripple and kill […]. (188)

Human culture, equally, is not without its downsides. At the beginning of this chapter I discussed the idea of basic human needs, noting the universally social environment in which

they have to be fulfilled. Following Richerson and Boyd's tribal instinct hypothesis, I argue that human sociality and cooperation beyond kith and kin evolved through cultural group selection, as part of a gene-culture coevolution, in the Pleistocene era and as an answer to immediate environmental pressures. With the environmental instability of the Pleistocene in the past, human cultural aptitude now worked without external constraints. Large-scale societies flourished that culminated in the nation states that we know today. At the same time, nations are a 'big mistake': they are built on a human psyche not adapted to living in large-scale communities.

Therefore, and although we live in large societies reaching far beyond the tribes of hunter-gatherers, we still have to break a complex world down into digestible pieces in order for cooperation to be feasible. This part of the human condition is made up of 'tribal instincts' – people seek an environment which makes it easy for them to establish 'who is who', who is to be trusted and who is to be avoided, in order to be able to cope with what our daily lives require. It seems to be appropriate, especially for the sake of precision, to replace 'tribal instincts' in favour of a term of less equivocal character: because humans show a predisposition for the familiar, for cooperating in a 'tribal' group, does not automatically imply in-group favouritism for genetic relations. What people wish, rather, is to fulfil their "psychological need to belong" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 498).

Belonging expressed: The need for ontological security

Our need to belong manifests itself in two ways: firstly, humans need deep and meaningful relationships, i.e. "affectively positive interactions within the context of long-term, caring relationships" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 522), similar to Ainsworth's (1985, 1989) 'affectional bonds'. Secondly, humans have a need for a prevalent, consistent world view that expresses itself as a need for habit, routine, and social stability in general (Giddens 1984,

1990, 1991). This need for affectionate bonds and social stability are part of the concept of ontological security and the ultimate result of the need to belong – I will elaborate on this thought on the following pages. Giddens (1990, 94) explicitly sees the origin of ontological security in the development of basic trust in the infant whose relationship to the caretaker inoculates the child against future feelings of emotional *Angst*. However, I want to stress the evolutionary origins of ontological security in the pro-social psychology described above, which is responsible for securing order and stability. Ontological security therefore should be seen as a transcultural human need (Kinnvall 2004, 757; Zarakol 2017, 50; Mitzen 2006, 345).

Again, human bonding ultimately originates in the logic of kin selection: by showing devotion towards their children and by investing in their upbringing, parents would enhance their inclusive fitness quotient. However, affective bonds also have to be considered in the context of our pro-social evolution that expects the social world to behave in a 'tribal' way. The strongest bonds have been associated with the relationship between mother and infant (Klaus and Kennell 1976), although similar strong bonds have been observed between father and child as well as between siblings and other kin. These bonds still play an important role in most human cultures, which explains why we see the imagery of parental and filial relationships mirrored in the 'fatherland' and 'motherland'. Although stable, lasting, and emotionally meaningful bonds are often associated with the alleged core family, i.e. mother, father, and children, special bonds can also be assigned to entities outside of the immediate context of inclusive fitness (Holy 1996, 166).

This need for affective bonds has two characteristics. Firstly, people need frequent personal contact with a significant 'other'. Secondly, this bond must be stable, marked by affective concern, and continuation. Likewise, Ainsworth (1989) sees affectional bonds "as a relatively long-enduring tie in which the partner is important as a unique individual and is

interchangeable with none other. In an affectional bond, there is a desire to maintain closeness to the partner" (711). Bonds are always experienced as and linked to positive emotions, while the possibility of losing them is the cause of strongly negative emotions: "People feel anxious at the prospect of losing important relationships, feel depressed or grief-stricken when their connections with certain other people are severed, and feel lonely when they lack important relationships" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 506). Affective bonds also provide psychological security and comfort – a lack of them can lead to a feeling of "basic anxiety", the perception of "being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world" (Horney 1949, 41), similar to a child whose individual needs for guidance and warmth are being denied. We feel lonely and distressed if we lack meaningful social contact which has the potential to fulfil our need for belonging. People facing social isolation or suffering from clinical depression tend to spend less time with family and friends and deal with severe grief, like the death of a spouse, child, or close friend. We can therefore say that intimate social ties contribute to well-being and happiness: "Social isolation," on the other hand, "is strongly related to various patterns of unhappiness" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 510).

Because most of us link strong inter-personal bonds to the "*obliged affections* and *affective obligations* of family feeling" (Bourdieu 1998, 68), i.e. affection for partners, parents, siblings, and children, affective bonds felt for biologically unrelated important 'others' often adopt the language of the surrogate family. Ainsworth, drawing on Weiss (1982), mentions the example of army buddies forging lasting bonds under conditions of physical and psychological stress: "The partners seek proximity to each other; they give care and protection to each other; each feels more secure when with the other; separation or threat of separation occasions anxiety, and loss would certainly cause grief" (Ainsworth 1989, 714). Experiences of active combat function as a powerful catalyst which can help an arbitrary group of people to work together, especially if they share the same emotions of elation and

loss, such as a successful stand against an overwhelming number of opponents or the death of a 'significant other' party member (Elder Jr. and Clipp 1988; Whitehouse, McQuinn, et al. 2014). They indeed become the 'brothers in arms' that Shakespeare's Henry V invokes.

The second characteristic of the need to belong manifests in the need for routines and habits that are embedded within a prevalent communal narrative. This *habitus* is an anchor that enables humans to live their lives in the 'everyday'. Human origins in the Pleistocene push people towards creating societies that routinize and trade on resilience against rapid change and "indirectly dispose agents to undertake institutionalised forms of conduct" (I. J. Cohen 1989, 53). As I explained previously, cooperation relies on cultural practices. Clark (2002) argues that so-called ideological culture underlies other expressions of culture. I would equally propose that ideological culture, the "shared meaning system to coordinate the social whole" (ibid., 184), underpins the social world. Ideological culture is what holds a society together, setting the scene for all the rest. Its content is basic, of pivotal importance and interest, and usually not up for debate – it is "sacred", as Clark (2002, 264) says, or "fundamental", as Howard (1991, 190) has it. Ideological culture embodies the "intellectual, moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community" (LeVine 1984, 67) and the "dominant stories of their cultural group – be those stories scientific, civic, moral, mathematical, religious, historical, racial, or political in nature" (Howard 1991, 190).

Changes to these sacred beliefs come slowly dripping, if at all. Because they are basic and tell us "what things an individual and a whole society *ought* to do" (Clark 2002, 236), they are here to last: they are made for the "*long durée*" (Bouchard 2013b, 4). The collective provision of the 'sacred' is often, but not necessarily, linked to identities that thrive on organised forms of traditional religion (Jonathan Fox 2001, 59). Despite the still-widespread prevalence of such patterns of organised religion, 'religion' can mean more and does not

require belief in a deity (C. Taylor 1999, xiii). What religion really provides is a certain *Weltanschauung*, frame of reference, meaning system, or value orientation (Jonathan Fox 2001, 59–60). Being a member of a nation can be felt to be equally satisfying and relieving as adhering to traditional forms of faith as it provides a coherent set of beliefs. The 'good' can be "whatever is picked out as incomparably higher in distinction" (C. Taylor 1989, 92), although it must contain some sort of *Heilsgeschichte* ('story of salvation') that elevates the good onto higher moral ground. Lifestyle enclaves that are "formed by people who share some feature of private life" (Bellah et al. 1986, 335) are related to belief and identity: we say 'I am a passionate golf player'. The difference is that these social niches are usually not sacred but of minor character. We have many sub-beliefs, in a way, but only one core belief or set of beliefs. If the government was to ban a hobby of ours we would be upset, for sure, but we would find a way to move on. If the government made expressions of national identity a punishable offence, then our core values would be violated. Moving on then becomes nearly impossible.

As Hobsbawm (1992a) has shown, much of what people consider to be sacred includes a certain element of invention and social engineering.[35] What we believe in and the memories and experience we attach to it are however not objects which can easily be passed around and replaced, because they are emotionally too powerful. Many of the symbols and rituals that go with the 'sacred' might be constructed and sometimes even "lapse into sheer machinations" (Bouchard 2013a, 277), but often enough they are "lived as true and meaningful" (ibid.) by those affected by them. The 'sacred' is, after all, sacred because of "a vivid emotional rooting, and a close fit with the major concerns of challenges" (ibid., 278)

[35] The constructed character of cultural 'sacredness' is often revealed by less successful projects: efforts to promote an Ulster-Scots language and identity as an alternative to an Irishness have enjoyed mixed success: in an infamous incident, loyalists tore down Ulster-Scots street signs in East Belfast because they mistook Ulster-Scots for Gaelic. This reveals much about missing grassroots support [Mccall (2002, 206); see also McCoy and O'Reilly (2003)].

of the members of a collective. Ultimately, sacred cultures are

> shared social patterns of interaction which are accumulated, and modified, over generations; they are maintained by people living in groups through stories and customs. Embedded in the language itself, as well as in the stories and customs, are the basic perceptions of a people about human nature, human relationships, and the place of humans in the universe. These basic beliefs justify the social institutions of a society, through being woven into its myths, into its 'sacred meaning' or 'religion', which also confers an identity on each individual. (Clark 2002, 232)

Collective narratives are another way to talk about the 'sacred'.[36] They are the "sticking plasters" (Overing 1997, 7), the "national glue" (David and Bar-Tal 2009, 364) in the case of nations, for regulating social relations and providing the needed guidelines. They are "symbolic statement[s] about the social order", reinforcing "social cohesion and functional unity by presenting and justifying the traditional order" (ibid.). Narratives

> build togetherness beyond cleavages and conflicts, they provide security by projecting consistent visions of the world […], they mobilize populations toward particular goals or wide-ranging social change, they help conceal or overcome contradictions and shortcomings […], they secure required support for institutions to function, and they allow a society to respond positively to any kind of challenges. (Bouchard 2013a, 277–78)

Narratives are about the world in general, its character and essence: the things that provide the main framework for conduct. Schöpflin (1997) sees the purpose of narrative as giving sense to the world surrounding the individual and creating a logical order of things:

> It acts as a means of standardization and of storage of information. It provides the means for the members of a community to recognize that, broadly speaking, they share a mindset, they are in much the same thought-world. […]. At the heart of this argument is the proposition that myth [narrative] is vital in the establishment of coherence, in the making of thought-worlds that appear clear and logical, in the maintenance of discourses and generally in making cosmos out of chaos. (20)

[36] The study of social narrative is necessarily multi-disciplinary and contributions to the field have come from a wide arrange of disciplines, including literary theory, psycho-analysis, sociology, history, social anthropology, and psychology. In recent decades, narrative theory has seen an upsurge in the area of psycho-analysis in particular. For example see also Crossley (2000), Hammack (2008), McAdams et al. (2006), Cohler (1982), Bruner (1986; 2004), and Mishler (1999).

Narrative replaces chaos with the meaningful social world required for cooperation purposes. Similarly, Hammack and Pilecki (2012) see narratives as a "cognitive process of meaning-making" (78)[37]. Narrative creates "*meaning in solidarity*" (ibid., 84) and provides "reasons for doing and not doing" (Bruner 1991, 4) through a joint *ethos* based on common principles, beliefs, ideals, and worldviews (Bouchard 2013b, 5). In brief, it lends itself to being an anchor for the individual in community and its norms.

We need such core beliefs because people are seeking routines, a 'basic security system' that guards them against the upheaval that sets in when social cooperation breaks down. This tendency disposes humankind to match their behaviour to the guidelines built into society, although such a disposition usually does not directly impinge on behaviour but rather supplies the "overall plans or programmes […] with which a range of conduct is enacted" (Giddens 1984, 6). Our species evolved in a small-scale environment where genes and culture co-evolved to guarantee cooperative behaviour – in large-scale communities it is the genetic rubber band appearing again. Cooperation cannot succeed in a society that is essentially ontologically insecure: there *must* be a certain daily routine, day-to-day life that points individuals taking part in a social collective into a certain direction. This is normally achieved by norms, values, and underlying beliefs as well as the social identities linked to them. Without these auxiliary social means, social institutions – such as "social networks, economic institutions, forms of justice, and processes of group decision-making" (Clark 2002, 264) – could not linger. Without them, life is destined to become disorderly, overpowering, and simply unbearable.

Much of the knowledge that any individual makes use of in order to navigate through the pandemonium of daily life Giddens (1984, 4) calls 'mutual knowledge', i.e. agreed formulas

[37] Emphasis removed.

which are applied in a certain reoccurring situation. This again makes sense from the evolutionary perspective I described: humans evolved in small-scale settings; much of our daily existence depends on taking the grand social structures that surround us for granted. The mutual knowledge that is part of daily encounters is not 'up for debate' and directly accessible to the discursive consciousness of the actor: "Most such knowledge is practical in character: it is inherent in the capability to 'go on' within the routines of social life" (ibid.). Practical knowledge follows from structural properties, or social institutions, which provide the routinized practices and mundane customs that are carried out and observed by the majority of a social collective (Giddens 1979). Having the practical knowledge of the rules of these social institutions and being able to apply it in the right spot at the right time empowers us to move on and, at the same time, reproduce the structural property which caused us to perform a specific routine in the first place. Giddens (1984):

> we can say that awareness of social rules, expressed first and foremost in practical consciousness, is the very core of that 'knowledgeability' which specifically characterises human agents. As social actors, all human beings are highly 'learned' in respect of knowledge which they possess and apply, in the production and reproduction of day-to-day social encounters. (21–22)

Social rules are like mathematical formulae, "generalizable procedure[s]" (ibid., 20) or "typified schemes" (ibid., 21), which are routinely applied but which are "only tacitly grasped by actors" (ibid., 22). The practical knowledge of these routines is what orders our daily lives – and frees the individual from ontological insecurity, "a sort of unprecedented confrontation between the subject and the world" (Bourdieu 1977, 73). Bourdieu talks of "habitus" or "durable dispositions" (ibid., 72), i.e. principles of the structuring of practices, which make a co-ordination of practices possible. *Habitus* creates patterns of familiarity and commonality and turns social life into the "mastery of a common code" (ibid., 81) and a world "riddled with *calls to order*" (Bourdieu 1998, 54). It determines what is considered to be reasonable or unreasonable behaviour (Bourdieu 1977, 77) and produces a

"commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus of the meaning […] of practices and the world, in other words the harmonization of agent's experiences" (ibid., 80).

This of course involves the "forgetting of history" (ibid., 78): history is ossified and turned into nature, obliterating the origins of conduct. Without an external incentive allowing for a discursive moment, a *habitus* is not questioned. And there is no reason for doing so, seeing that it establishes our daily lives and routines – it is like the background noise hidden from our senses and of which we are not acutely aware. By taking part in *habitus*, we become part of a bigger picture that existed long before us and will most likely outlive our own existence. We experience *habitus* as a *fait accompli*, its origins disguised by 'genesis amnesia' (ibid., 79):

> … in each of us in varying proportions, there is part of yesterday's man; it is yesterday's man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result. Yet we do not sense this man of the past, because he is inveterate in us; he makes up the unconscious part of ourselves. (Durkheim 1938, 16; in Bourdieu 1977, 79)

Discursive action, the moment in time when the individual pauses and actively starts to think about what they are doing, is the exception to the rule. Traditional intentionality is only switched on when our daily routines fail.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) use the terms habitalisation and institutionalisation to explain how social order as routines is established. Habitualised action frees the individual from the burden of "all those decisions" (ibid., 71) and delivers psychological relief by establishing a stable background which reduces the amount of necessary decision-making. It also makes sure that recurring situations do not need to be explained anew every time. 'World-openess' becomes 'world-closedness' and unpredictable human interaction becomes predictable and

what is considered to be everyday life, the "profanum" (Clark 2002, 267). Besides, institutionalisation is intrinsically historic: institutionalised patterns outlive the individual and even generations and, as time goes by, are more and more seen as an objective truth: "Institutions are […] experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 76). Through institutionalisation, everyday life acquires the characteristic notion of 'this is the way things ought to be'. Therefore, humans face a pronounced need for anxiety avoidance which asks for basic beliefs that provide "the rhythm and the melody that orchestrate the coordinated acts of the society" (Clark 2002, 267) as well as affective bonds to significant others. They are the ingredients of ontological security and they help us to avoid basic anxiety.

Basic anxiety is the opposite of ontological security, and what happens when belonging breaks down. It describes more than just the feeling of being lonely; it has a distinctively metaphysical nature: basic anxiety is what Heidegger (1967) described as *Angst*. Our ordinary life takes the form of familiarity, of 'being-at-home'. We follow our daily routines, putting our trust into the assumption that, in the main, nothing really changes. Today is the same as yesterday, tomorrow will be the same as today. We know that upon returning from work, our home, the place where we live, will still be there. Our past experiences of 'returning home' reassure us and lull us into a soothing sense of security. Because we *know* that our home is waiting for us, we do not experience the unsettling thought of 'but what if not'. We continue our daily routine of coming home, eschewing thoughts of possible disasters which might befall us. An ontologically secure person therefore "does not worry about the meaning of life, or of his or her life, or of its purpose; s/he does not worry about the social world collapsing" (Croft 2012, 221) – in short: an ontologically secure person is at ease with themselves and the world around them, firmly entrenched in the here and now.

Ontological security, as Giddens (1991, 38) points out, is more than just a cognitive matter, but a deeply emotional affair. Trust, again, is crucial, because trust in our relationships and the stability of the social world surrounding us gives us the hope and courage to carry on and live fulfilled, meaningful lives, protected from the existential dread that threatens our being. This is the state of being 'at home', "a domain where people feel most in control of their lives because they feel free from […] social pressure" (Kinnvall 2004, 747). Ontological security provides the individual with a "protective cocoon" (Giddens 1991, 44), a sense of "relative invulnerability" (ibid.) that shields the individual from physical and psychological harm and disintegration. Protected by this state of feeling at ease, the individual "will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity" (Laing 1965, 39).

However, ontological security is more than mere pathological attachment to routines, habits, and relationships. At its best, it is also a tool that gives the individual the chance to adapt to the change and uncertainty that is inevitably part of life, guaranteeing a sense of stability in times of disorder (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 35). Faced with the chances and changes of this world, the ontologically secure person can prevail against its challenges. Being ontologically secure means possessing a certain degree of flexibility that is linked to an established sense of emotional reassurance that makes the "leap into the unknown possible" (Giddens 1991, 41). The leap into the unknown is connected to a sense of reflexibility and creativity that opens up the opportunity to invigorate monotonous routine without realising that on the other side of routine "chaos lurks" (ibid., 36).

This creativity, this possibility of change, is desirable. Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger see a certain amount of anxiety as an ingredient necessary for individual self-determination (Magurshak 1985, 175). For Kierkegaard anxiety is "the sine qua non for existential development" (ibid., 171) and makes a life away from "boredom" and "a continuity in

nothingness" (Kierkegaard 1980, 133) feasible. It gives the individual the chance to live a meaningful life, an "authentic existence in which the future is primary" (Magurshak 1985, 180–81). While the ability to adapt to shifting conditions is an advantage, ontological security nonetheless has to be seen as a "constructed certitude" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 23) that makes change to routine and *habitus* possible, because change is delivered as part of that very sense of self-confident certainty. Change of narrative therefore does not violate the *habitus*, the 'sacred' narrative, if it happens *within* its boundaries. For an individual with a well-developed idea of basic trust, the feeling of anxiety – "freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility" (Kierkegaard 1980, 42) – is not necessarily to be feared: "It may, instead, even be welcomed in calling for change, dynamism and renewal" (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 35).

The question, however, remains of how much change is possible before the constructed sense of security breaks down, before creativity turns into the experience of personal meaningless that comes with radical narrative breakdown and the loss of ontological security, the chaos that Giddens speaks of. This *Angst* is the very opposite of this feeling of ontological security: it is the unforeseen breakdown of the daily routine, the moment when we painfully become aware of what we have lost. Allport (1979, 368) describes anxiety as "a diffuse, irrational fear, not directed at an appropriate target and not controlled by self-insight". Anxiety is diffuse and free-floating, an "unconsciously organised state of fear" (Giddens 1991, 44) that attacks the core of self-identity and leaves us stranded, unable to give answers to the basic questions of 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' (ibid., 66).

Withy (2015, 3) compares the feeling of anxiety to being ill: suddenly we remember the comfortable state of not being ill, although we never cherished the sensation of absence of pain when we are healthy – we simply took it for granted. When our common sense understanding of the world is lost, we become radically aware that for us everything has

changed: the world is slipping away from our grasp. Our familiar environment has been turned upside down, replaced by a sense of feeling uncanny, to use another of Heidegger's terms, "*unheimlich*" (1967, 188), 'not-being-at-home.'[38] Thus, "the uncanny feeling reveals, through breakdown, those aspects of human life that we do not normally see" (Withy 2015, 3), lifting the veil of constructed ontological security and looking at the radical freedom behind it. This is again "the anxious possibility of *being able*" that Kierkegaard (1980, 44) speaks of, but this time the possibility of freedom that does not reveal itself as creativity but as 'dizziness': "He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy", Kierkegaard (1980, 61) said. Dizziness is existential anxiety, a "weakness in which freedom faints" (ibid.). The individual is threatened by everyday experiences, stunned by the possibility of freedom: subject to anxiety and dread, it succumbs to its fears and loses its sense of self and agency (Croft 2012, 221). What was previously taken for granted is gone: "Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individuated, but *as* being-in-the-world. Being-in enters the existential 'mode' of *not-being-at-home*" (Heidegger 1996, 176). In his memoir *Killing Rage*, the IRA dropout Eamon Collins described how he gradually lost faith in his own republicanism, slowly realising that his coherent worldview grounded on republican doctrines was a chimera. Leading a double-life for a while, his mental state declined when he realised that he had lived in a "fantasy world" (Collins 1998, 243), being "terrified" (ibid., 267) upon realising that his *terra firma* was gone.

In what is always a traumatic experience, basic common sense disintegrates, and thoughts of the future become distressing. The ontologically insecure person lacks a sense of temporal continuity. Because nothing appears secure, thoughts of the future are filled with dread.

People need a *habitus* or narrative that orders social life and grants continuity. Without a

[38] 'Not-being-at-home': Heidegger plays with the literal meaning of the (German) word *unheimlich*.

sacred, basic *habitus*-narrative, and the routinisation of everyday life that follows, societies fail to deliver their innate promise of cooperation, as social relationships could not be turned into reliable patterns. Narrative breakdown is felt as a state of anxiety, ontological insecurity, and deprivation: "those situations are lived not as an achievement but as a deprivation, a state of disarray, which generates anxiety and spawns efforts among the elites to fill a void" (Bouchard 2013, 284). They are like the characters in Beckett's *Endgame* who physically survive, or like Arendt's "shipwrecked mariners on an island scavenging for whatever resources can be found after the catastrophe that landed them there" (Klusmeyer 2014, 147). But "survival is a Pyrrhic victory at best" (Dan P. McAdams 1985, 3) when all you can do is to ramble on, pointlessly and without direction. "Life, without feeling alive", as Laing (1965, 40) notes, is very Kafkaesque.

The total annihilation of belonging and descent into a state of anxiety is one of the characteristics of totalitarianism, where it is utterly achieved (Arendt 2017, 573). People are tossed about like leaves in the wind, because there is no independent law or morality left that could make a distinction between right or wrong – appeals to justice are hopeless. Totalitarianism executes the laws of history and nature, the "suprahuman forces" (ibid., 606), without bothering to work through human actors that would translate the divine will into mundane laws. The movement of history or nature itself becomes the law and an unstoppable force that blows unhindered across the plane of human existence.

As there is no communal narrative that could provide security and stability – as explained, totalitarianism ultimately is unpredictable and cannot be reined in – it becomes the apogee of not-belonging, Daily life becomes unpredictable as fortuitous terror reigns. This "atmosphere of madness and unreality, created by an apparent lack of purpose" (ibid., 583) finds expression in concentration camps, its inmates turned into "living corpses" (ibid., 591)

who only know “nihilistic self-annihilation” (Rensmann 2014, 94). Not only are they subjected to the arbitrary will of their torturers, but they are held in a place where time and space have ceased to exist. Prisoners are robbed of their identity and individuality and reduced to a number: “The concentration-camp inmate has no price, because he can always be replaced; nobody knows to whom he belongs, because he is never seen. From the point of view of normal society, he is absolutely superfluous” (Arendt 2017, 581–82). The past, the necessary anchor for the today and tomorrow, ceases to exist. The inmates’ death thus “merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed” (ibid., 592).

Concentration camps are extreme cases and it would be pointless to rely too much on comparisons. But the loss of security due to a breakdown of social narratives is what set Northern Irish society in the 1960s literally aflame. Faced with ontological insecurity and the danger of their need to belong being violently disrespected, people either turned to the gun themselves or fled into the arms of nationalistic politicians, orange or green, who promised to restore the ontological security that they needed: people need to belong, one way or another, because our evolutionary history pushes us towards creating forms of institutionalised everyday life. Anxiety also plagued Eamon Collins when he abandoned his republicanism and the IRA: with “no comrades, no community, no identity” (Collins 1998, 280) left, he decided to “hold on to the only source of security” (ibid., 284); in his case, this meant forging a new relationship with the police as a collaborator. Although he felt “sickened” (ibid., 280) by the thought of his change of allegiance, his self-declared “desperate need for self-preservation” (ibid.) urged him to conspire with the forces of the state that he previously had conspired to murder. The state of ontological insecurity was unbearable.

To escape this dreaded state of anxiety, ontological security has to be guaranteed not only in

the ephemeral present, but also in the foreseeable and more distant future. We constantly plan and reach for a future which does not turn our life upside down, mostly with regards to events we perceive as negative, although all kinds of events can derail our mental self from its rails. We *want* to know what will become of us. Ontological security as part of a need to belong is characteristically temporal. We need to make ourselves at home, in an ontological sense, and take part in a collective 'sacred' belief which guarantees a future: "we need to perceive the groups to which we belong as having continuity across time" (Sani et al. 2007, 1131), because "in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become and of where we are going" (C. Taylor 1989, 47). Lowenthal (1985) outlines the importance of the past for our sense of ontological security, as past experience is the only experience we can fall back on:

> Without habit and the memory of past experience, no sight or sound would mean anything; we can perceive only what we are accustomed to. Environmental features and patterns are recognized as features and patterns because we share a history with them. (39)

The past is reaffirming, strengthening our belief in the present and future by reassuring us that both will closely resemble what has been: "Preservation invokes the continuance of practices which supposedly date from time immemorial; changes, if any, have been superficial, inconsequential" (ibid., 40). Past experiences set a precedent for the present and give guidance for the future: "This is how it's always been done" and "Let's not set new precedents" (ibid.).

It implies a moral judgement, as well: what has proven to be successful in the past, ought to persist. Being aware of the past means taking part in "an immense unbroken stream that has flowed over this scene for more than a thousand years" (Hoskins 1963, 228). "We are all", Kohn (1944, 5) says, "subject to the immense power of habitude" and the "reassuring sight of the familiar" that is part of our existence. Orange parades are a good example, since their

justification relies exactly on this identity-creating processes that amalgamates the past, present, and future; because their forefathers have tread the same paths and participated in the same rituals, today's generation of Orangemen are determined to continue: it is *their* land because it was also the land of the ancestors of their community. The land thus becomes a land of the past: "Like migratory birds, we return to the same scene every year. […]. We tread well-trodden roads that our own blood have walked for many generations, be it to a country lane, to a rural church or through a little village or down a main thoroughfare into a town" (R. D. Edwards 2000, 34).

Increasing our stock of knowledge about the essence of what we recognise as our familiar space – to "look at every feature with exact knowledge, able to give name to it and knowing how it got there, and not just to gaze uncomprehendingly at it as a beautiful but silent view" (Lowenthal 1985, 62) – is concomitant with the realisation that we are part of a bigger picture and not a single leaf hopelessly tossed about in the wind. The more we know about our past, the more our *Angst* diminishes. This sense of the past helps us to escape the present and acts as an "antidote to the frenzy of modern life" (ibid., 50) where individuals who seek "the intimate good old days just gone" (ibid., 53) can find "a more relaxed, less stimulating existence" (ibid., 50). We also value architecture that give the impression of ancientness, although most of us would not wish to live in places that are truly so. What we treasure is a mixture of both old and new, the past merging with the present. They are the old and the new together, present and past, justifying the present and enlightening the future. They stand for what Lowenthal (1985) called a 'diachronic continuity', a "living past bound up with the present, not one exotically different or obsolete" (ibid., 62). On the other hand, architecture that seeks to distant itself from the past is frequently decried as an 'eyesore' and as being 'cold'.

Being embedded in a narrative landscape, we engage with its dominant cultural meaning and the 'sacredness' ascribed to it, bundled up in some form of collective identity that looks to the past for sustenance. In short, we are engaged in an act of continuous remembrance that sustains the 'sacred' narrative in our lives. Remembrance often happens in a passive way, as described above, and as a part of the 'banal' everyday (Billig 2010). It can also take the more active form of commemoration at heritage places. As "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" (Rodman 2003, 205), they are living cultural resources and the sites of active collective identity building and maintenance at which we "rehearse master narratives that represent collective autobiography, sustained and remembered through ritual performance" (L. Smith 2006, 65). Anniversaries of battles, celebration of independence days, or the onetime revealing of a monument are intentionally public and aim to make themselves felt as discursive moments, interrupting daily routines.

Remembering the past in the passive 'everyday' or through the active act of commemoration turns past events into a manual for the present and future: this is how it has been, and so shall it be in the future. Such acts of reification with the individual bound up in it are a necessity for communal life to endure, for the "reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced" (Arendt 1998, 96). Past has to be turned into future: "Without remembrance and without the reification which remembrance needs for its own fulfilment […] the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been" (ibid., 95).

I have so far argued that humans need to belong, i.e. that they possess a need for affective bonds and a grand narrative, or *Heilsgeschichte*, that corrals the possibilities of social life, making it predicable and institutionalised. We can say that humans are prone to enjoy

stability and coherence in those ‘sacred’ beliefs that cater for their need to belong and make the ordinary ‘everyday’ possible. There is also a deep-seated need for a clear understanding of the past: communal narratives and the *habitus* that is derived from it can only be based on perceptions of the things that have been. Only through the past is a future conceivable, and with that future a sense of stability and order. This does not mean that people cling compulsively to their routines and habits. Even if humans aspire to a future that does not come as a surprise, a different future is still conceivable – but it will have to come in a way that does not radically alter the relationship between past, present, and future on which ontological being is built. I will return to the subject of change at the end of the next chapter. For now, I want to conclude that humans have an evolved preference for intimate relationships and “uncertainty reduction and achieving meaning and clarity in social contexts” (Marilyn B. Brewer 2011, 130). This is how ontological security manifests itself and this is also where belonging is located; it still remains to be shown how nationalism in particular creates it.

2. Nationalism as belonging (and its consequences)

This chapter seeks to clarify why nationalism has been especially adroit in establishing belonging. Three notions are of importance here: prejudice, popular sovereignty, and banality. These three ideas make nationalism an extremely powerful sociological force that orders inter-human relations on a large-scale, establishing habitus in its wake. This panders to the human need for belonging and ontological security. I will engage with the literature on social psychology to make clear how the individual creates belonging and argue that the notion of prejudice is crucial – prejudice is the cognitive tool that orders the social world. If prejudice becomes linked to popular sovereignty, inter-human dealings become predictable, potentially on a very large scale as individuals are turned into 'us' and 'them': 'us', the national people who own the national state and 'them', who per definition are excluded. Democracy understood as popular sovereignty elevates prejudice to the defining attribute of inter-communal relations: it creates ontological security by excluding the national 'other'. The third notion, banality, finally establishes the national habitus: nationalism penetrates our everyday lives through its symbols and other banalities which speak of a reliable ethnic past and futures. In Ireland, nationalism has indeed been the promise of popular rule: popular ascension in the 19th century gave an all-Ireland Catholic majority the chance to make the state 'theirs'. Various movements and leaders understood the power of arming, ideologically and literally, the people with that very idea that left Ireland's Protestant minority, the 'other', staggering. This has established a historical precedent that provides belonging. For change to transpire, the core of these narratives has to be acknowledged. As much as we are cultural beings who constantly leave the environment we evolved in, we are also conservative beings prone to preserving the status quo.

Belonging by excluding: The universality of prejudice

In the previous chapter I argued that people need to belong: they need a *habitus* of stable patterns structuring their daily lives as well as special bonds in the shape of intimate relationships. It is a need because it cannot be ignored – since it is part of human evolutionary heritage, belonging is a need that concerns all. A *habitus* – consisting of durable social dispositions which determine reasonable and unreasonable behaviour – is therefore fundamental and imperative, because it is a cultural process demanded by a mind that has been shaped by gene-culture coevolution. It remains to explain *how* nationalism creates belonging and why, especially when we look at Northern Ireland, it has been so successful in providing *habitus*.

I will seek to do so in three steps, using the interlocking notions of prejudice, popular sovereignty, and banality. The first step towards explaining the relationship between belonging and nationalism is to clarify how belonging is created in the individual: this must be done by establishing the connection between 'self' and 'social' and its implications. Using

insights from social identity theory, I argue that belonging is always established through the universal notion of prejudice and other cognitive devices which order the social world in a very efficient manner. By establishing boundaries against those who are not part of an in-group, a sense of belonging as ontological security is brought into being. The second step – and here methodological individualism and sociological converge – is to acknowledge that democracy understood plainly as popular sovereignty transports prejudice onto the level of whole nations: national identities thus organise the social environment on a large scale. Nationalism amalgamated the state apparatus with its new owners, the people, the plebs of the "despised, stupid masses" (Schulze 1998, 155) who were "seeking from their rulers, the noble and clerical parasites, their rights as useful members of society" (ibid.). This act of identifying the state with a certain people is in itself an act of prejudice. It ordered the social world by linking the ownership of the state to an in-group vis-à-vis an outgroup which is excluded: nationalism clearly established who is part of the state and who is not. In the third step, the modern nation state anchors nationalism as prejudice in the daily lives of its citizens. Nationalism is the "daily plebiscite" that Renan (1996, 53) spoke of, because it establishes the *habitus* of excluding those who do not belong to the nation in the 'everyday' where belonging happens: nationalism stops the process of social atomisation that leaves the individual "cast adrift in a region of great moral uncertainty" (D. Miller 1993, 15).

Prejudice, popular democracy, and the banality of nationalism in the 'everyday' combine to create *habitus* within the boundaries of a nation state; because the nation is always of a certain size, nationalism simplifies the picture by excluding the national 'other'. This is what gives nationalism its emotional vigour. Using the example of (Northern) Ireland, I will show how history in the north has unfolded along the lines of prejudice, popular sovereignty, and banality. I will end with an outlook on the consequences of the interplay between these three conceptual forces, reintroducing the theme of social change: because nationalism builds on

the human desire for ontological security, radical changes seeking to undermine the status quo are unlikely to transpire – human beings are conservative beings.

To begin with, a discussion about a human evolved need to belong cannot be complete if we do not take the cognitive consequences of such a need into account – if we say that humans need to belong, then this need has a psychological basis that stands wedged between biological origins and sociological implications. The framework connecting the 'self' and 'social' is provided by social identity theory (Tajfel 1969; 1978; 1979; Tajfel and Turner 1979) and self-categorisation theory (Turner 1984; 1985); together both make up the social identity approach that is concerned with "the processes that surround the way in which people define themselves as members of a social group" (Reicher, Spears, and Haslam 2010, 45). Thus, social identity "explores the phenomenon of the 'in-group' and 'out-group', and is based on the view that identities are constituted through a process of *difference* defined in a relative or flexible way dependent upon the activities in which one is engaged" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 25). The crucial insight here is that the 'self' does not define itself in relation to other individuals but through group membership (Reicher, Spears, and Haslam 2010, 48). And where there is an in-group, there is also an out-group which does not provide belonging.

The sense of belonging I have outlined in the previous chapter, expressing itself as a need for *habitus* and ontological security, is therefore always a process of differentiation between the in-group where belonging and ontological security can be found and the out-group where the 'self' is not a home. This is always a cognitive process – differentiation means putting people into categories; belonging means to simplify the social world around us. For Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979), social relationships fall into a interpersonal-intergroup continuum, according to which the interactions between individuals not only depend on the

individual characteristics of individuals and their personal relationship, but also on aspects of their group membership (D. L. Hamilton and Sherman 1996, 347–48).

Individuals are never just that but always participants in collective identities. For that reason, the interpersonal extreme on Tajfel and Turner's scale is unlikely to be found in the real world – individuals are always defined, to a certain extent, through group membership. On the other side of the spectrum, the more a social relationship builds on intergroup behaviour, the more depersonalised the other individual at the receiving end will become. Because there is no interpersonal extreme, human relationships always rely on crude prejudice about the world and the putting of things and people into categories. To what extent the intergroup extreme occurs will depend on the respective context of a given social situation.

Hence, it is clear that all social identities rely on an understanding of what they are not, as they locate the individual within an in-group and start a process of demarcation and creating boundaries, in short: ordering the social world. Belonging means to pigeonhole those who are not part of that social identity that caters for ontological belonging. To be able to understand a situation and to adapt one's behaviour accordingly is of huge evolutionary advantage: as long as we do not know an individual or cannot make use of additional information, we use prejudice, i.e. action will be explained in terms of permanent characteristics that allow for predictability (Tajfel 1969). Prejudice, for instance in the form of stereotypes, is an "inescapable adjunct to the human activity of categorizing" (Tajfel 1979, 429) and as such are neither good nor bad: they fulfil a function. As Fiske says, they are not "the purview of a disfavoured few, those with abnormal impulses" (Fiske 2005, 36). All humans have such a "requirement for simplification" (Tajfel 1969, 93) and a "need to render the world predictable" (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 78). Prejudice is universal in scope because it orders all possible facets of human life, i.e. not only the social world but its interaction

with the non-human world, too. The difference is of course that if a dictionary uses a "bluejay to stand for all birdsville, emus and ostriches and penguins and eagles [will] not go on the attack" (Roger Brown 1986, 595). Birds do not care if they are being pigeonholed – but people do.

In the previous chapter I argued for the existence of behavioural "rules of thumb or habit" (Shaw and Wong 1989, 75) countering "uncertainty by prescribing paths of action that have worked, in the past" and permitting "the efficient management of considerable information" (ibid.). Prejudice is one of those rules of thumb: the human brain seeks an escape route out of the dilemma of facing the same decisions again. It therefore prefers to stick to behaviour that has proven its value (Pinker 2003, 203). This means that the human brain focuses "on past experience and successes" (Johnson and Levin 2009, 1599) – never change a winning team, so to say: "rocking the boat to advocate some new and unproven revision of policy" (ibid.) should be avoided. Prejudice helps to create order in a complicated social universe (Eriksen 1993, 24). Bias is undeniably part of the human experience, acting like a filter which influences how we perceive and make sense of what we consider to be reality: we indeed "do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see" (Lippmann 1922, 81). This is a very basic principle of human life and a crucial part of how belonging is created in the actual world. What, then, is prejudice? Prejudice can manifest itself in two ways and two consequences: stereotyping and high entitativity, which in return lead to infra-humanisation and a biased intake of information. Before I link prejudice to nationalism, I will explain these two notions that make up prejudice as a psychological principle.

A stereotypical prototype can be defined as "the average or most typical member of a category" (ibid.), a 'fuzzy set' which people use to organise their category perceptions. Thus, during social encounters individuals are compared to a category expectation, and if the

expectation is confirmed, then the opposite individual is assimilated into that expectation: the prototype is reinforced (Operario and Fiske 2002). Especially in environments where only limited information about an 'other' is available, people actively seek to confirm and stick to a stereotype crutch. Humans are cognitive misers – "mental sluggards" (Johnston and Macrae, 589) – especially when facing strenuous tasks and environments. Stereotyping provides a remedy by bringing "the world into sharper focus" (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 75) and "prescreening" (Bodenhausen and Lichtenstein 1987, 879) available evidence. In situations without emotional involvement, when stereotypes are just a "moderately useful classifying device for lack of anything better to rely on" (Tajfel 1979, 431), prototypes will be easy to change.

The opposite is the case when stereotypes involve high emotional stakes. Here, stereotypes fulfil their function of providing security and avoiding anxiety most radically, because they create prejudice against members of an out-group, those who are being frowned upon for being different and those who are seen as a danger to the belonging provided by the in-group's social identity. Such stereotypes working as a protective wall will necessarily lead to negative prejudice about the character of an out-group and, on the other hand, create a certain in-group bias towards that social identity that caters for special bonds and the 'sacred'.[39] But in-group bias, the cherishing of one's own identity, does not necessarily imply out-group dislike (Mummendey, Klink, and Brown 2001, 168–70; Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002, 579). We see such behaviour often enough in the world of competitive sport. Rooting for 'our' team and cherishing its achievements does not automatically entail a denigration of the opposing team – only when there is a special relationship, a history,

[39] In-group bias is the "the systematic tendency to evaluate one's own membership group (the in-group) or its members more favorably than a nonmembership group (the out-group) or its members" (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002, 576).

between the two sides will the taunts and jeers be dug out. Only

> When an enemy threatens all or nearly all our positive values [do] we stiffen our resistance and exaggerate the merits of our cause. We feel – and this is an instance of overgeneralization – that we are wholly right. (If we did not believe this we could not marshall all our energies for our defense.) And if we are wholly right then the enemy must be wholly wrong. (Allport 1979, 27)

The 'opponent' thus becomes one entity; individual differences between separate out-group members disappear. There remains only one single opponent to deal with, i.e. the homogenous, nefarious out-group, being held at bay by the erection of a psychological distance between 'my' group and 'their' group (Ostrom and Sedikides 1992; Brewer, Weber, and Carini 1995): 'they' are naturally different because they possess an essence which distinguishes them by birth from us. *They* are what they are and what *they* are cannot be undone. Such essentialism is the very opposite of the idea of ethnic and racial groups as social constructs (Leyens et al. 2007, 142), as the other group is perceived to have unchanging qualities. Hunter, Stringer, and Watson's (1991) study on intergroup violence in Northern Ireland has shown that violent out-group behaviour is predominantly related to the out-group's internal essence ('they are rotten to the core'), while violence committed by the in-group is explained through external influences ('we had no other option'). Johnson and Levin (2009) call this the fundamental attribution error: "People tend to attribute the behaviour of others to 'dispositional' causes (their characteristics, personality or intentions), while one's own behaviour is attributed to 'situational' causes (such as limited choices, necessity or competing concerns)" (1597).

This second principle of prejudice, entitativity, has been used by Hamilton and Sherman (1996), building on Campbell (1958), as a unit of measurement regarding how an individual

perceives other individuals.[40] Entitativity is defined as the assumption of unity, consistency, and essence in the personalities of individuals: "The perceiver assumes unity in the personalities of others, and persons are seen as coherent entities; therefore, one's impression of another person should reflect that unity and coherence" (Hamilton and Sherman 1996, 337). At least three principles of entitativity can be distinguished: firstly, inferences are drawn which can explain the true essence of a person's character. Secondly, the perceiver expects a person's character and behaviour to be temporarily stable. Thirdly, inconsistencies about a person's traits, those that do not fit into the picture, will be rectified.

Hamilton and Sherman use entitativity in the context of interpersonal contact; under conditions of social competition it can also be transferred onto the intergroup level: people can perceive whole groups as being high in entitativity (Marilynn B. Brewer, Weber, and Carini 1995, 38–39). Out-group members will then lose their individuality: they will become de-individualised and the undeniable fact of their out-group membership will take precedence. The detested out-group will "seem like a kind of person" (Abelson et al. 1998, 246) with person-like features, such as an identity and personality. The out-group will also be understood as an active, plotting organism with "hopes, plans, intentions, grievances, moods" (ibid., 248), as a synchronised mass that by adopting the same flags, emblems, and so on will be stigmatised as planning and organising against the in-group. Perceiving the out-group as high in entitativity leads, in particular in situations where social anarchy is feared, to "moral disengagement" (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 81). The world descends

[40] See Gil-White (2001) for a similar line of reasoning: he proposed that humans have evolved to process ethnic groups as different species. The ugly duckling, reared as a duck despite its peculiar appearance, will therefore always turn out as what is was born to be – a swan. Nature cannot be fooled, as even the best 'duck rearing' cannot turn a swan into duck. This primordial line of reasoning is the creed of all ethno-nationalists, see the case of Jean McConville; a mother-of-ten, McConville was abducted and murdered by the IRA in 1972, allegedly for having passed information to British authorities (a claim dismissed by the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman after a formal investigation). Born into a Protestant family, she remained a suspect in her community despite her conversion to Catholicism. Entitativity is, however, a more flexible analytical tool. See also Boyer's (1998) concept of intuitive ontology, a "set of quasi-theoretical assumptions about their underlying properties and definite expectations about their observable features" (878).

into black-and-white, enabling a "fast, parsimonious, unequivocal, and simple understanding of the situation. It provides absolute clarity as to which group should be blamed for the conflict and violence, pointing at the delegitimized one" (ibid.). Moral disengagement follows: empathy will be refused, as the out-group's basic needs will be considered to be contrary to the "supreme goal of containing the enemy" (ibid., 89–90).

This has two consequences: firstly, partial dehumanisation (Louis, Esses, and Lalonde 2013), referred to as infra-humanisation by Leyens et al. (2000), Vaes et al. (2003), Leyens et al. (2007), and Vaes et al. (2012).[41] Infra-humanisation is the process "by which people consider their ingroup as fully human and outgroups as less human and more animal-like" (Leyens et al. 2007, 140). Out-group members are perceived as subhuman; by being different from 'us', 'they' possess less human characteristics. This does not require the complete dehumanisation that is crucial to genocidal thinking (since 'they' are just rats, vermin, and cockroaches, one should not feel remorse when exterminating them), but rather the denial that the out-group can experience truly human emotions (Viki and Calitri 2008, 1055). Primary emotions, for instance fear, surprise, anger, joy, can be found across the animal world. Only secondary emotions – hope, regret, enthusiasm, remorse – are reserved for humans. Because 'they' are cold and vicious, 'they' lack these attributes: they are maniacs, terrorists, fascists, imperialists, Nazis, or simply "Taigs or IRA scum" (Hall 2013, 4). One Palestinian civilian describes his views about Israelis in the following way: "There are no civilians in Israel. All the Israelis are military. No woman, no children, no ordinary people struggling to survive. Only massed ranks of soldiers, not quite human" (Vaes et al. 2012, 85). The author Harrish-Gershon (2013, 145) on the other hand describes his original views of Palestinians like this: "They are all programmed, robotic, repeating the same predictable refrains while marching".

[41] 'Mechanistic dehumanization' (Haslam 2006) and 'lesser-perceived humanity' (Schwartz and Struch 1989) are aligned concepts.

The ‘other’ is seen as distinctively flawed, evil, less human, and determined to destroy the in-group.

The second consequences of stereotyping and high entitativity is an information bias which selects specifically the piece of information that fits the picture – contradictory information is omitted, while ambiguous information is distorted and reinterpreted in order to suit the stereotype (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 87; Operario and Fiske 2002). Vallone, Ross, and Lepper’s (1985) study of the hostile media phenomenon found that pro-Israeli and pro-Arab partisans perceived the media coverage of the 1982 Beirut Massacre in completely opposite ways, despite having been exposed to the very same accounts of the event. Both sides reported that the media was biased against their own group. The hostile reaction was extended to reports that avoided taking sides in the first place and which assumed a hue of grey between the extremes of white and black. The tendency to consume information that confirms a certain prejudice is widely known – we all read those newspapers that cater to our political opinions. Most major newspapers in Northern Ireland have a substantial reputation for community ingratiation: the *Irish News* is seen as a nationalist newspaper, the *News Letter* as its unionist equivalent, and the *Belfast Telegraph*[42] as unionist leaning. The *BBC* is accused of all sorts of things: of showing a pro-republican (*BBC* 27 October, 2009b; *News Letter* 22 September, 2017b) or an anti-republican (*An Phoblacht* 27 October, 1998) bias.

Any information inconsistent with the stereotype can be acknowledged but at the same time will be incorporated into the stereotype. Discrepancies are then noted as exceptions to the rule. The stereotype is re-fenced and an inconvenient unthinking is avoided, including

[42] These alignments are more obvious in the respective sport sections. While all newspapers cover the English Premier League (football), the *Irish News* focuses on the Gaelic games. Ulster rugby, while more or less absent from the *Irish News*, is a pet passion of the *Belfast Telegraph*. Ulster Rugby is often seen as a middle-class Protestant domain.

bothersome feelings of guilt about in-group behaviour (Allport 1979, 32). Northern Ireland sees a particular manifestation of this phenomenon called 'whataboutery', the "long standing tradition in Northern Ireland of using past sins visited by either community (or the British or Irish state) upon each other to avoid uncomfortable questions about one's own past or contemporary responsibilities for making peace" (Lawther 2014, 70). For instance, the DUP's own Gregory Campbell asked at Westminster in the aftermath of the Saville Inquiry[43]: "Why were soldiers required in the Bogside on January 30, 1972? What was the level of murder and terror that required a military presence on that day? Who were the leading participants in terror during the build up to the day itself?" (*Londonderry Sentinel* 10 January, 2013). While the finding of the inquiry was somewhat accepted, the overall prejudice – that the unionist community and the British state could not be blamed for the outbreak of violence – was left untouched by accusing the nationalist community of having created the need for military presence. As one observer has it: "The respondent retrenches his/her position and rejigs the question, being careful to pick open a *sore point* on the part of questioner's 'tribe'. He/she then fires the original query back at the inquirer" (Fealty 2005).

Stereotyping, high levels of entitativity, and the consequences of infra-humanisation and information bias are a means of ordering the social world: they break down complex issues into small pieces. Without them, no routines, no belonging, no *habitus* could form, as our lives in general would be overbearing. One part of this ordering principle is that prejudice can become an antecedent to its own occurrence, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy and a "vicious cycle of behaviors […], which feed each other and lead to the continuation of the

[43] The Saville Inquiry was commissioned by then PM Tony Blair to examine the circumstances of the killing of 14 protestors on Bloody Sunday (1972). Its 2010 report (see Bloody Sunday Inquiry 2010) largely exonerated the victims from any wrongdoing, laying the blame on British Army personnel. The publication of the report was followed by an official apology by PM David Cameron.

intractable conflict" (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 86). Allport (1979): "If a man enters a group believing that all those present feel aggressive toward him he will probably behave in such a defensive and insulting manner that true aggression will be evoked" (159). Allport gives another example: if "we expect the new maid in our family to steal, and if we betray this fact, she may be goaded onto doing so if only to avenge the insult" (ibid.). Such stereotypes and prejudices are difficult to challenge, because they are "inflexible mental structures" (Johnston and Macrae 1994, 582) which facilitate the process of making "sense of a complex stimulus world" (ibid., 581–82): they are a tool to avoid anxiety which endangers the social identity that creates belonging. Prejudice is therefore an inescapable feature of human life. But even if inescapable, not all expressions of prejudice are inevitably equally strongly felt and expressed. In those minimal groups mentioned earlier we expect prejudice to be equally minimal. If the intergroup extreme mentioned at the beginning is approached, prejudice will be extreme, turning individual members of an out-group into an indistinguishable, hostile mass.

One factor conducive to the intergroup extreme being approached is the perception of perceived threat, in particular if that threat is directed against what I have described as the 'sacred' (Rupert Brown 2010, 163–64). If one's sacred identity is perceived to be under attack, ontological insecurity – "dread of life" (Allport 1979, 368) – sets in and anxiety takes over (Kaufman 2001, 36). On the level of the group, anxiety is captured in Lake and Rothchild's (1996) notion of 'collective fears of the future':

> As groups begin to fear for their safety, dangerous and difficult-to-resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence. As information failures, problems of credible commitment, and the security dilemma take hold, groups become apprehensive, [...] and conflict becomes more likely. (41)

As I have argued in the previous chapter, people seek to avoid conditions of anxiety and will

take precautions against them. In the absence of obvious protection, people will strive to alleviate such situations by 'arming' themselves, for instance by "erecting agencies with effective authority and extending a system of rules" (Waltz 2010, 111). These rules will give emotional protection to the individual by solving "the basic sectarian question" (F. Burton 1978, 66), i.e. that of what side of the divide a specific person is on (T. Wilson 2010, 222). In pre- as well as post-conflict situations, ideology and increasingly hysterical and toxic public discourse will establish or reaffirm boundaries between 'us' and 'them' and increase prejudice all around. We can compare this predicament with the security dilemma of international politics: "Groups or individuals living in such a constellation", according to Herz (1950),

> must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. (157)

Stephan, Diaz-Loving, and Duran (2000) and Brewer (2011) distinguish between two basic kinds of threat that can increase the possibility of anxiety: realistic threats which endanger the political and economic well-being of the in-group as well as its physical survival, and symbolic threats which are threats to an in-group's morals, values, norms, and beliefs. Symbolic threats are also *real* threats, because they create a threat to belonging and ultimately a threat to political and physical survival. Fear of extinction, "that 'our' people, 'our' cause, 'our' culture, 'our' history may not survive" will "elicit the most violent and extreme reactions" (Chirot and McCauley 2010, 62). In such intractable social situations, belonging becomes "competitively interdependent" (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 45) and therefore mutually exclusive. The fulfilment of a group identity will be based on zero-sum claims (Agnew 1989; Northrup 1989). Such intractable conflicts persist for a long time and become imprinted on the collective memory of the participant groups. They involve physical violence and they are irreconcilable, because all sides view their respective goals as

antagonistic (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 58–61).

The social history of Northern Ireland is of course full of examples of the intergroup extremes that lead to stark expressions of prejudice. McKay (2005), for instance, quotes a woman who is visibly upset about what she considers to be a radical demographic change towards Roman Catholics in her home town:

> What do these people want? They've all the pubs in the town only two, all the bookies, and they're working as doctors and solicitors and I don't know what else. There's a lot of them in Woolworth's and the post office. What more do they want? I know Protestant girls and boys have got good education and they're working in that carpet factory. What more do the Catholics want? (126)

And:

> If I had my way, I'd burn every one of those tricolours down. If they are nationalists, they shouldn't be here taking our British money. Let them go to the Free State if that's what they want. I have had every window in the house broken. On Monday or Tuesday you couldn't get into the post office for prams and there they are, getting their children's allowances. (ibid.)

This (extreme) opinion has negative stereotypes assigned to a collective and that does not allow for individual differences: according to the woman, Catholics do not know their place (they are "working as doctors and solicitors" while Protestants have to labour in a carpet factory), 'they'[44] are 'taking over' by outbreeding Protestants ("On Monday or Tuesday you couldn't get into the post office for prams")[45], they are beyond reason ("I have had every window in the house broken") and therefore only understand the language of violence

[44] 'Us' and 'them' are not innocent words, either. Cp. Perdue et al. (1990): "Words such as *us* or *them* used consistently and contiguously with names for novel groups or target persons may therefore produce classically conditioned affective responses to those names (and, by extension, those persons). Thus, merely encountering the word *us* in association with a group label or with the name of a group member may, with repetition, condition a positive predisposition toward that group or person – even if the person or group is novel or was previously evaluatively neutral. The word *them* co-occurring with the name of a group or person could establish much fewer positive associations (and perhaps even some negative responses) to that group or person" (476).

[45] Catholics "breed like rabbits and multiply like vermin" (*BBC* September 12, 2014b) according to Ian Paisley, reflecting the fear of a united Ireland through the backdoor (or bedroom). The nationalisation of sex and birth rates is not uncommon in ethnic conflict, for instance see the Kosovo War (Mertus 1999) or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Fargues 2000).

themselves ("If I had my way, I'd burn every one of those tricolours down"). Furthermore, they are disloyal to the state ("Let them go to the Free State[46] if that's what they want") and cunning (they desire a united Ireland, but nonetheless take social benefits from the British state). Other stereotypes depict Catholics as 'brainwashed', 'priest-ridden', and 'superstitious'.[47] Sectarian slurs such as 'Papists', 'Fenians' or 'Taigs'[48] are the undisguised expressions of such sweeping judgements.

One of the most extreme examples of stereotyping is the equalling of a Catholic group identity to terrorism: because they are Catholic, they *must* be IRA members. When a UVF bomb destroyed McGurk's bar in North Belfast in 1971, sources at Stormont immediately denied any Loyalist involvement. Because McGurk's was known as a 'Catholic bar', it was suggested that the explosion had been the result of a bomb stored and hidden away on the premises (McKay 2008, 27). In 1972, young Patrick Connolly was killed in his Portadown home when a hand grenade was thrown through a window into his house. Again, because the family was Catholic it was alleged that a bomb had exploded prematurely.[49] Loyalist paramilitaries even sought to benefit from such prejudices: in 1975, the Miami Showband was stopped by rogue members of the security forces on their way back home from a concert. Their plan was to plant a bomb on the tour bus, "to give the impression that these 'Irish' showbands were involved in something sinister" (Cadwallader 2013, 99). Although the plan failed – the bomb immediately exploded, killing two of the assailants – the UVF nonetheless

[46] In this case a derogatory term for the Republic of Ireland.
[47] Although the Catholic Church has lost its once predominant and highly influential position amongst the nationalist populace in (Northern) Ireland, the religious labels of old linger on, if only to distinguish between nationalists and unionists. ''Even if you are an atheist, you are either a Catholic or a Protestant atheist" (Demerath III 2000, 131) or even, in what has become somewhat of a Northern Ireland running joke, a Catholic or Protestant Jew (*New York Times*, 15 June 1995; *BBC* 2012a).
[48] "The only good taig is a dead taig" (Shillue 2003, 10), in the charming words of the loyalist icon Billy Wright. 'Taig' is an anglicised version of 'Tadgh', the Gaelic word for Tim. Unlike the now somewhat self-ironic 'Paddy', Taig remains a sectarian insult.
[49] Years later, an HET report found that the grenade used in the attack was of British Army origin and had probably been stolen from an Army base (Cadwallader 2013, 26).

issued a brazen statement accusing the musicians of having been involved in IRA terrorism.

To summarise: belonging is created through prejudice, i.e. stereotyping, increased levels of entitativity, infrahumanisation, and an information bias. Everyday life which is catered for by the *habitus* and sacred narrative relies on a simplification of the world, both material and social. Under certain conditions, when an 'other' threatens the sense of belonging and belonging itself becomes a zero-sum game, prejudice skyrockets. Nationalism, because it always demands that the state has to belong to 'the people', creates belonging through prejudice on an increasingly large scale. I will elaborate on this notion now.

Excluding the 'other': Nationalism and popular sovereignty

The link between prejudice and nationalism, between the individual and how belonging is created, is that nationalism is always ethnic (to varying degrees). Hence, nationalism is *always* exclusionary. Meinecke (1970) and in particular Kohn (1944) established a strict dichotomy of nationalisms, distinguishing between a civic and Western form of nationalism and an ethnic and Eastern style, setting the tone for a debate continued by Plamenatz (1973), A. D. Smith (1986; 2000), Greenfeld (1992), and Mann (2005).[50] According to Kohn, nationalism west of the river Rhine relied on civic institutions and not on a manipulation of myths, symbols, and identities by a nationalist intelligentsia. Western nationalism was first and foremost a political phenomenon linked to individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism. This civic form of nationalism grew out of the emphasis on individual rights advanced by the Enlightenment and was put to political usage in the universal rallying cry of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights" (Conseil constitutionnel 2016), it was proclaimed in August 1789. A civic conception defines the nation "as a community of destiny defined by a common body of law, which applies to all

[50] See also Kuzio (2002), Muro and Quiroga (2005), and Jaskułowski (2010) for an overview and criticism on Kohn's strictly binary definition.

citizens and is in turn the origin of all legislation" (Muro and Quiroga 2005, 11). Civic nationalism is therefore primarily constitutional and voluntaristic in its outlook. Rousseau's *Social Contract*, originally published in 1762, and his credo to liberate every man who, despite being born free, remains in chains, could be seen as the epitome of civic virtues.

The constitutional patriotism mentioned earlier falls into this category. Sternberger proposed a patriotism that would take belonging or "feeling at home" (Müller 2007, 21) for granted, but at the same time would be based on an attachment to democracy and the legal and political institutions of a particular constitutional tradition. Habermas on the other hand shifted the focus to the public sphere where "citizens could recognize each other as free and equal, engage in democratic learning processes and subject each other's claims to the very universal principles which they endorsed patriotically" (ibid., 24). Patriotism, thus understood, involves a thinking and learning process that would negotiate inherited cultural traditions and enrich them with universalist ideas of the rule of law as the guarantor of democratic principles.

Yet, notions of identity and belonging usually fall into the remit of the so-called Eastern nationalisms, which are often portrayed as toxic and illiberal (Kuzio 2002, 22–23): their self-image is organic, conceiving the nation as

> a spiritual principle and as a seamless whole transcending individual members; the members are bound together by a myth of common origins and a shared historic culture, and they form a single cultural community living according to vernacular codes in a historic homeland. (A. D. Smith 2000, 6)

Those who do not belong to the organic community are barred from it, making it easy to establish belonging: 'those who do not look and speak like us are unlike us.'

Exclusion is however not idiosyncratic to the purely ethnic forms of nationalism. This is

reflected in one major enigma of civic nationalism: that democracy is by definition exclusionary and always needs an ethnic-cultural program to define who is part of the nation and who is not. Even civic nationalisms must find an answer to the question of 'who is who'. As mentioned above, nationalism is the populist call for state appropriation. This does not inevitably result in democracy in the modern sense – that is, respect for minority rights, separation of powers, freedom of speech etc. – but the will of the self-declared people represents the be-all and end-all. And although that nationalism, as Hobsbawm (1992b, 87) rightly remarks, was originally state-based rather than build upon elements of ethnicity, the act of turning subjects into citizens

> tends to produce a populist consciousness which […] is hard to distinguish from a national, even a chauvinist, patriotism – for if 'the country' is in some way 'mine', then it is more readily seen as preferable to those of foreigners, especially if these lack the rights and freedom of the true citizen. (ibid., 88)

This is the key point: a state has to belong to *somebody* (O'Duffy 2007, 12). If its affiliation was merely defined in universalist terms, *anybody* could claim a particular state as theirs. We see this confirmed in Breuilly's (1993) definition of nationalism. Nationalism, according to him, is "just one particular form of politics" (401).

In his approach, Breuilly deprives the origins of nationalism, such as identity needs, of a central position and focuses rather on the "political rationality" (ibid., 398) of mass politics, the organisation and management of large social group for political purposes. Nationalism thus becomes an effective way of mobilising people for political objectives, for separation, reform, and unification in opposition to nation and non-nation states (ibid. 1993, 9). The goal of nationalist movements, especially opposition movements, is to own the state. And although he reduces nationalist aspirations to the target of being in possession of the state apparatus, he concedes the importance of a *political* identity. Without such, no national

movement could name its objectives and canvass for support, i.e. coordinate, mobilise, and gain legitimacy. The state, again, has to be owned by a *specific* identity collective – and often, this meant the incursion of ethnic elements that were readily accessible to the main body of the population:

> All that there *was* was the people and peculiarities of the region: its inherited *ethnos*, speech, folklore, skin-colour, and so on. Nationalism works through *differentiae* like those because it has to. It is not necessarily democratic in outlook, but it *is* invariably populist. (Billig 2010, 11)

Coming back for a moment to Rousseau: what appears to be a purely political nation is actually the inclusion of one sort of people – the national citizens – and the exclusion of the 'other'. In his *On the Government of Poland*, Rousseau (2005) claims that national institutions are what

> form the genius, character, tastes, and morals of a people, what make it itself and not another, what inspire in it that ardent love of the fatherland founded on habits impossible to uproot, what make it die of boredom among other peoples in the bosom of delights of which it is deprived in its own. (III)

He rejects the "general inclination in Europe to take on the tastes and morals of the French", seeing it necessary "to maintain, or reestablish these old practices, and to introduce suitable ones, which are specific to the Poles" (ibid.). A Polish state must be of Polish nationality and for a Polish people who "direct their opinions and their tastes so that they will be patriots by inclination, by passion, by necessity" (ibid., IV). A. D. Smith (2000, 9) compares Rousseau's "naturalistic dimension" to Herder's perception of the organic nation. Ironically, Rousseau's (2005, III) own advice to the people of Poland to despise the 'barbaric' Russians makes Rousseau much more *völkisch* than Herder ever was. Herder explicitly emphasised that there was no such thing as a *Favoritenvolk* (Adamson, Carlbom, and Ouis 2014, 36), but that one had to have "the capacity to feel oneself into [...] the minds, motives, moods, purposes, aspirations, habits, and customs of those different from ourselves" (Barnard 2003, 6). While Herder deemed it to be nature's plan to cherish one's own authentic culture and traditions,

he also abhorred thoughts of imperialism and foreign conquest (Viroli 1997, 123). People should be attentive to each other, and "extend their capacity for experiencing the pain and humiliation of the deprived and marginalized in this world as if it were their own" (Barnard 2003, 12). This commendable thought is difficult to maintain when popular sovereignty deliberately blurs the line between the individual being and the national people. The individual disappears, and all that is left are collectives competing for state ownership.

Rousseau disagreed: for him, those who take part in the general will become one people, but at the same time remain individual citizens. The individual "while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before" (Rousseau 1968, I, 6). However, this is an inherent contradiction. Not only do Rousseau's national individuals see their motives united "so that their powers are directed by a single motive and act in concert" (ibid.). Each and every one who submits to the general will become "an indivisible part of the whole" (ibid.). There is no discrepancy between the individual and the collective in Rousseau's political construct, since whoever refuses the general will be constrained by the whole, "which means nothing other than that he shall be forced to be free" (I, 7).

It seems that the individual, for Rousseau, is on the losing side. This tendency is already visible in Rousseau's overgeneralising recommendation to the 'Polish people' regarding the 'Russians'. Not only did Rousseau wed the state to a specific people with unambiguous characteristics, he also removed the demarcations between the individual self and the collective – it is 'us', the nation, and 'them', the outsiders. This thought finds its apotheosis in Fichte's musings on the nation: the individual cannot be considered in and of itself as it only derives meaning from being part of the whole; all individuality therefore has to be rejected as the individual counts for nothing (Kedourie 1985, 31; Aichele 2016, 254–55). The rational individual has no interest outside of the collective and has to be united with the

self-interest of the whole, the whole being an extension of the self (Fichte 2008, 16–17): the nation constitutes "a totality that in all its individual parts is driven and animated by the same single interest" (ibid., 19). Nationalism turns collectivistic, assuming the form of a "collective individual possessed of a single will" (ibid., 11) and relies on the construction of "the *nation-as-this* and the *people-as-one*" (Kinnvall 2004, 758). If this collective entity is attacked, the uniqueness of its parts is lost, turning nationalism into a conflict between 'us' and 'them', as "no one can injure any one of the members without attacking the whole, still less injure the whole without each member feeling it" (Rousseau 1968, I, 7).

Hence, nationalism has always an ethnic element to it. "Even constitutional patriots", Müller (2007, 39) concedes, "do not come from nowhere". Although they express universal norms and values, they do not operate outside of a given cultural context. "The best means to be faithful to universal norms and to render them actionable" is therefore "to enter and enrich the ongoing conversation about a given political culture" (ibid.). That 'given political culture' will always remain nation state specific. All nationalisms, because they are always populist and always concerned about acquisition or refashioning of state power, are exclusionary. If you want to know who you are, you need to know who you are not – this is what social psychology teaches us: "If my national culture and history define who is within my community, then they also define who is outside – beyond and excluded from it" (English 2011, 2). According to English,

> much of the appeal of nationalism lies in this attachment to the idea of the national community possessing full sovereignty over itself as a free and independent unit. […] Central to nationalism's appeal is this idea, that by sharing equally in the power which governs us, we are made truly free. (ibid., 3)

The 'appeal' is buried in the perception that 'we' are not 'them' (Morrow 2017, 4). It creates belonging because it makes the social world easier to imagine.

I have shown that prejudice always relies on what has come before, the history and past of previous encounters: prejudice equips those relationships 'that have not worked' with strong stereotypes, high entitativity, and increasing infra-humanisation. Prejudice is "pessimistic common sense" (Howe 2002, 212). In cases where communities that strive for national belonging reach the point of democratic, in the mere populist sense, awakening through a self-understanding that an 'other' has to be excluded *by all possible means*, popular democracy functions as an amplifier of previous ethnic relationships. These are intractable conflicts because they build on a hardened perception of prejudice (prejudice that is universal, but in non-conflict societies often not easily pointed at). Here, social change that seeks to leave the zero-sum game of belonging becomes almost impossible, because *prejudice becomes belonging*. Attacking prejudice undermines the prevalent sense of ontological security – and that, of course, cannot be tolerated. In the following, I will trace the development of democracy in Ireland, demonstrating how popular sovereignty provides a sense of ontological security, and in return, how prejudice has become linked to a sense of national belonging.

The advent of nationalism and populism in Ireland is inextricably linked to the members of the United Irishmen, Ireland's first nationalist movement, and Daniel O'Connell, founder of Ireland's first mass national movement. The French Revolution provided the United Irishmen with a message: that "people's participation rather than just their acceptance of their lot was a practical possibility" (Kee 2000, 41) and that "English power had to be replaced by Irish power" (English 2007, 111). Subsequently, English power was met either through reform or, from 1796 on, by increasingly radical methods culminating in open rebellion. Thus, the notion of the Irish state was indeed connected to 'the people'. Identification with the common people of the day was carried to extremes by the flamboyant Lord Edward FitzGerald and his wife, both making a deliberate effort to embarrass

themselves in the eyes of their social peers by "going among the ordinary people, talking to them, drinking and dancing with them, listening and persuading, seeking not their votes but their commitment to his [Lord Edward's] cause" (Tillyard 1998, 171). The common people began to take centre stage; their cause became fashionable. Theobald Wolfe Tone[51] outlined his political credo in three resolutions: firstly, English influence in Ireland was declared to be "the great grievance of the country" (Kee 2000, 50); secondly, "that the most effective way to reform [Ireland] was by a reform of Parliament" (ibid.); and thirdly, and most importantly, that "no reform could be any use unless it included the Catholics" (ibid.). Even before that, the *Volunteer Journal* had already declared that "When the men of Ireland forget their destructive religious prejudices, and embrace each other with the warmth of genuine religious philanthropy, then, and not until then, will they eradicate the baneful English influence" (ibid., 49–50). This was important, as the vast majority of Ireland's population were of Roman Catholic faith and therefore by definition excluded from a United Kingdom that saw itself as a bastion of Protestantism (and in particular Episcopalianism).

The difference between the United Irishmen and O'Donnell lay in their conception of the Irish nation. The United Irishmen, many of their leaders liberal Presbyterians, saw themselves at spearhead of a movement that would unite Catholic and Protestant to the common denomination of an Irish nation. At the turn of the century, Ireland saw a window of opportunity for common political action between Catholics and Presbyterians who themselves were the disenfranchised part of wider Protestantism. The United Irishmen and

[51] As one of the founding members of the United Irishmen, Tone's grave at Bodenstown, Co. Kildare, is the site of an annual Irish Republican pilgrimage. Although his posthumous fame exceeds his contemporary importance "certainly everything about his life", according to Elliott (2012), "his intense loyalty to friends, his capacity for sacrifice, his inflated sense of honour, his rakish youth and dramatic death – is the very stuff of romantic legend" (401).

their agitation are proof that this window existed; how big it was is another question[52], as even the egalitarian spirit of liberal Presbyterianism reflected prevailing 'anti-Popery' prejudice against a dumbstruck Catholic mentality that had to be freed from its subjugation to Pope and priest. The Presbyterian self-image "was one of the northerners leading their slavish countrymen to salvation", as Elliott (2012, 113) writes, and of uniting the country under their own aegis. The liberal brand of Irish Presbyterianism waned when Catholic Ireland itself pounded at the door of Westminster, *demanding* emancipation. At this point, that idea of an Ireland for both Protestants and Catholics died. Despite sporadic alliances between Catholic and Presbyterian tenants against Episcopalian landlords during the land struggle[53] in the second half of the 19th century, Catholic and Presbyterian unity never returned as political project: Irish Ireland, populist and nationalist, was to be Catholic alone. Unionist Ireland was to be Protestant, i.e. Episcopalian and Presbyterian (Akenson 1992, 146–47).

Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association, one of the first mass movements in European history, carried the torch of politicising the bulk of the people, i.e. the largely Gaelic-speaking, disadvantaged Roman Catholic majority who stood outside the political system.

[52] The rebellion of 1798 quickly descended into a sectarian disaster – at least in southern Ireland – as exemplified by the massacre committed against Protestants at Scullabogue. In 1798, fear was rife amongst the rural Wexford population, fear of the mysterious, always-conspiring Orangeman and his legendary hatred for the Catholic. The Protestants who stood out were seen not as individuals "who were good or bad for their own personal qualities, but first and foremost characterised by belonging to a resented race" (Cullen 1980, 95). "All Protestants", Pakenham (2000, 191) writes, "were regarded by the mob as Orangemen, unless they could prove it otherwise, and as Orangemen they deserved the same fate as they were said to have been planning for Catholics – extermination". This conduct was deeply regretted by the Wolfe Tone: "if in consequence of the measures in which I have been engaged misfortunes have been brought upon this country, I heartily lament it […]" (Elliott 2012, 380). While the liberal radicalism of Presbyterianism indeed offered an opportunity to alter the course of Irish politics, it also underestimated the resentment and mistrust that already existed (and which exploded as soon as violence was introduced).

[53] The mistreatment of tenants and the omnipresent fear of eviction made temporary cross-community alliances possible. For instance, the liberal Presbyterian *Londonderry Standard* newspaper barely lamented the murder of the feared Anglo-Irish landlord, the Earl of Leitrim, in 1878: he had known "one remedy for the peccadilloes of his tenants – eviction" (Bew 2012, 46). However, it must be said that Leitrim's mistreatment of his tenants was also rumoured to be of a sexual nature, which would have added to the antipathy the local people felt against him.

O'Connell organised his movement along peaceful lines; its alliance with the Catholic clergy ensured that discipline was maintained and violence kept at bay. This was remarkable, as subsequent campaigns assumed a revealingly sectarian character, directed against the "Orange bloodsuckers", the "exploiters of the Catholic people, enemies and bigots" (Boyce 1990, 45). O'Connell was first and foremost a Catholic leader, whose legitimacy was ensured through the Catholic Church. O'Connell, aware of this, hardly even ventured into Ulster. His rallying cry that there was "no longer a Catholic party opposed to a Protestant party" and that the "fading remnant of the Ascendancy is at the one side, the Universal People at the other" (Foster 1989a, 306) proved to be an empty phrase.

Behind this "war of words" (ibid.) and pacificsm "in, so to say, its most violent form" (Macdonagh 1985, 78) stood a message to the Protestant establishment, an "implicit threat of mass disobedience, of a unilateral withdrawal of allegiance, even of a refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the state" (Foster 1989a, 298). Wellington, Irish himself though of Ascendency ilk, recognised the potential of Catholic mass disobedience himself, acknowledging that something had to be done to address Catholic grievances lest "something more militant might replace O'Connell's movement" (English 2007, 129). O'Connell had thus "demonstrated clearly the coercive power which might be exercised over parliament by popular agitation" (W.E.H. Lecky, in: English 2007, 130).

And successful he was: remarkably, at the 1826 general elections, Catholic freeholders defied their landlords and voted for O'Connellian candidates. Emancipation was now to be invested "with a kind of millennial sentiment, a sense of people coming out of bondage and casting down their 'foes'" (ibid., 38). This sentiment was institutionalised in the core of Irish nationalism: that the Irish nation, the bulk of the people, was Catholic and that its political awakening was ultimately to the detriment of Protestant Ireland, Presbyterians and

Episcopalians alike: by the 1840s, "Catholicism had been securely identified as the national experience" (Foster 1989a, 317). This history of dragging the Irish nation, the people, into the political arena is crucial for understanding the problem of social change in Northern Ireland, because it meant bringing the state into the hands of an Irish Catholic majority whose national existence threatened the sense of belonging of a Protestant unionist minority. Ethnic myths and democracy came together and, so to speak, solidified antagonistic community relations which relied on prejudiced perceptions of the respective 'other'. Not only Northern Ireland's – see Bourke (2012, xviii) – but all of Ireland's modern political history thus became a struggle for ontological security by finding belonging in political inequality, i.e. the rule of the ethnic majority. Democracy in Ireland *was* prejudice because it meant, north as south, the expulsion of the 'other': "Membership of the majority determined membership of the state: conversely, membership of the minority meant exclusion from effective sovereignty" (ibid., 4).

After O'Connell, Home Rule and Parnell became unionism's nightmares.[54] Lord Randolph Churchill's assessment that "*Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right*" (Rhodes James 1959, 234) had become a reality. It was the underlying fear of an Irish Catholic conspiracy, in Ireland and beyond, which drove the crusade against three consecutive Home Rule bills:

> Catholicism was regarded as an oppressive backward religion and the fear that Home Rule would result in Rome Rule was genuine. Protestants visualised a Dublin government putting education entirely into the hands of the Church and forcing their children to attend Catholic schools and reserving public

[54] The Land League that Parnell had championed and its call for religious unity against landlordism were largely ignored in Ulster. In 1881, Michael Davitt told a Land League meeting at Loughgall, Co. Armagh, that landlords were "all of one religion – their God is mammon and rack-rents, and evictions their only morality, while the toilers in the fields, whether Orangemen, Catholics, Presbyterians or Methodists, are the victims". The league was quickly denounced by the Grand Orange Lodge "as a conspiracy against property rights, Protestantism, civil and religious liberty and the British constitution" (McKay 2005, 134). It cannot be denied of course that this fear of the national 'other' was not a one way street – for instance, the experience of the Great Famine, depicted by later nationalists as attempted genocide at the hands of the British government, was used to keep alive the memory of "Anglo-Protestant malign intention" (Githens-Mazer 2006, 91) and to prove that British influence in Ireland was deliberately "evil and destructive" (Cronin 2001, 147).

> employment exclusively for Catholics. (Bardon 1992, 407)

The fear of Home Rule – or worse: independence – and being dragged into a state that would be stridently Catholic and Anglophobic[55] was rampant. Unionists had no desire to be part of the Celtic chimeras which drove the imaginations of radicals such Padraig Pearse or Alice Milligan.

Craigavon's infamous statement – that the southern Irish state was boastfully Catholic and that, in return, there was nothing wrong with declaring Northern Ireland to be a Protestant state with a Protestant parliament (Bardon 1992, 538–39) – stood symbolically for the imagination of Northern Ireland as one state for one people. When Basil Brooke – "the Colebrook Hitler" (ibid., 538), as he was unsympathetically nicknamed – clamoured about "the Roman Catholics […] endeavouring to get in everywhere" (A. Jackson 2003, 230), the message was clear.

Ethnicity (mainly religion) and politics had become one, despite earlier attempts by figures such as Douglas Hyde, the first (Protestant) president of the Gaelic League, to fashion an Irish identity that was not divided along ethnic and political lines.[56] In its 1937 constitution the new Irish state was defined as a Catholic state for a Catholic people, granting the Catholic Church a special say in national affairs. Unionist responses were business as usual: "The responses of the entrenched Unionist government continued to follow the Pavlonian dictates of sectarian reassurances – exacerbated by the apparent erection of a triumphalist Catholic

[55] Anglophobia – "the inborn hate of things English" according to the IRA's Ernie O'Malley (English 2016, 95) – was prevalent amongst Gaelic Leaguers at the turn of the century: writing about her visits to England, Rosamond Jacob spoke "contemptuously of everything from the landscape to the faces of people on the street" (Foster 2015, 18). In 1913 she "violently disagreed" (ibid.) with Jim Larkin's assessment that labour issues in Ireland and in England were the same; such an argument, she said, would represent "a revolting unwholesome Englishness" (ibid.).

[56] See Hyde's (1904) *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*. Ironically, at the occasion of Hyde's state funeral, Eire's political elite had to hide in an alleyway near St Patrick's Cathedral, as the Catholic Church did not allow its members to attend Protestant services (Egleson Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991).

republic" (Foster 1989a, 557). In Northern Ireland, the unionist state became the state of Protestant self-determination vis-à-vis rival aspirations towards popular sovereignty in the south (Bourke 2012, 192).

It must be emphasised that the national dilemma that was fortified from the 19th century onwards did not come out of nowhere. Again, "what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsia" (A. D. Smith 1999, 10). History, the past, played a decisive role in forming a Protestant consciousness shaped by a perception of the insidious Irish-Catholic 'other'. As I said before, ontological security through prejudice relies decisively on an understanding of previous inter-group relations, on the notion of what has been. If ethnic symbols are to facilitate cooperation by indicating who is to be trusted and who is to be mistrusted, a generic track record of the ethnic 'other' is needed. This track record indeed existed within the Irish-Gaelic experience which, even before its politicisation, was defined by a defensive reaction when it encountered the planter 'other'. The experience of the United Irishmen shows that Ireland at the beginning of the 19th century was not predestined to ethnic conflict. But the difficulties liberal Presbyterianism had with overcoming its own prejudice against Irish Catholicism shows that prejudice – 'the way it has been and should be' – had created in-groups and out-groups amongst the people of Ireland; these were proto-national entities that could already provide belonging at the eve of the entry of the disenfranchised Irish Catholic subjects into the arena of mass politics.

Although the nationalist in general is a "social and political archaeologist" (A. D. Smith 1999, 176), who digs up the ethnic past, more or less reconstructs it, and puts it to modern political use, in Ireland outright nationalist engineering that could point at the communal

'other' was kept to a minimum. Whereas elsewhere crossing the threshold into modernity was linked to the disruption of traditional patterns of community, in Ireland industrialisation processes were kept to a minimum. Where they transpired they did so within the demesne of Protestant Ulster – economic inequalities only widened the gap within the ethnic communities whose politics, from the 16th century onwards, had unfolded along distinctive community lines. These lines were the result of the repeated encounter between the native and the 'other'; in a way, Ireland's history, despite the absence of the subversive power of industrialisation, has always been a history of social disruption, because the 'other' that could not be absorbed was a lasting reminder of the in-group's status as a threatened entity. Protestant settlers in Ireland and especially in Ulster settled "under conditions of maximum insecurity" (Lyons 1979, 134), and this condition indeed became "a permanent part of their psychology" (ibid.). This 'psychology' meant a psychological bias in-favour of the in-group against the 'other' who was looked upon with suspicion.

These patterns of mistrust in Ireland emerged from early on and did not come out of nowhere; ultimately, they were the outcome of agential forces, specifically the English (and later British) crown seeking to defuse a hotbed of rebellion and sedition that always carried the danger of aligning itself with Catholic Spain and France. Processes were set in motion that were to shape the relationship between the inhabitants of the island.

Following the spirit of colonial expansion in the Americas, the native Irish were expropriated, and their land given to settlers who, because of their Protestant religion, were deemed to be loyal subjects (Bardon 1992, 124). From Elizabethan times onwards – the question of who was entitled to own Irish land was not going to be solved until the Wyndham Land Act in 1903 – the economic and political practices of quasi colonisation resulted in a form of 'culture clash' on all levels. We see this, for instance, embodied in Hugh O'Neill,

who, after having been made Earl of Tyrone, led an armed rebellion when the encroaching agents of the crown began to threaten the time-honoured way of life of the aristocratic Gaels (ibid., 94). We see this also in the laments of Henry Sidney, Queen Elizabeth's Lord Deputy, who complained about the patchy command of English shown by his Irish allies, seeing their refusal to speak English as a sign of political disloyalty to the crown (B. Cunningham 2011, 166). From the early 17th century comes Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*[57], in which he offered his Norman and Gaelic – read: Catholic – contemporaries a joint history, excluding those who were not Irish-born, such as the recently arrived Protestant settlers (B. Cunningham 2000, 110). Only Catholics could be the rightful owners of Ireland and the church of St. Patrick. Keating cultivated a sense of belonging against the New English, the Protestant upstarts.

By the 17th century community relations as such not only existed, but increasingly had a religious dimension, especially in Ulster where English and Scottish 'undertakers' had been promised land, and, out of necessity, employed the Gaels as a workforce for their prospering farms and towns. Unlike the Old English of Norman stock, the Ulster planters were from early on warned that the removal of the native inhabitants was the "fundamental reason" (Foster 1989a, 77) for their enterprise. This proved to be unworkable, but the Ulster Planation turned out be more successful than similar enterprises elsewhere in Ireland, not least because Co. Antrim and Co. Down benefited from their geographical proximity to Scotland. The pattern that emerged was one of increasing separation and disassociation. Settlements developed which would determine community relations for a long time to come. For example, in London-Derry, where the local population was not allowed to migrate into the town centre, the Gaelic population was given the Bogside area outside the town, adding to the unease of the Protestant population within the fortified city. Standing on those city

[57] Literally 'Compendium of Wisdom about Ireland' (S. J. Connolly 2007, see entry Keating, Geoffrey).

walls it would have indeed been easy to conjure up the image of a religious minority besieged by a hostile enemy host. This Protestant people – "[a]nxious, rootless, looking for identity in a strange land" (MacCulloch 2010, 756) – stuck to a Presbyterian mind-set that was particularly well-adapted to the austere frontier environment it encountered, but which was also susceptible to hysteria and conspiracy theories.

From the early modern period onward, pre-national ethnic identities emerged following "social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories" (Barth 1998, 10). Foster (1989):

> what must be grasped from the early seventeenth century is the importance of the plantation idea, with its emphasis on segregation and on native unreliability. This attitude helped Ulster solidify into a different mould. The reliance of the planters upon the Irish, economically, was combined with an obsession about their religious, and therefore political, untrustworthiness. (78)

In his poem *The Colony*, John Hewitt imagines the encounter between planter and native: "They worship Heaven strangely, having rites/ we snigger at, are known as superstitious/ Cunning by nature, never to be trusted" (2007, 39). Mistrust combined with prejudice about the 'other' became pervasive; only the in-group could be trusted as a safe haven for both physical and psychological well-being.

In October 1641 rebellion spread through Ulster, stoked by Gaelic discontent. Massacres such as the drowning of Protestants at the bridge crossing the river Bann at Portadown proved to the Protestant mind that their fears of the native 'other' were justified, providing memories of Catholic disloyalty and disingenuousness for centuries to come (Canny 2001, 485). What is more, the Norman settlers who had preceded the Protestant plantations now reached a point where "an exclusively religious identification was […] taking over: a symbolic conjunction came about of Old English and Old Irish against the Protestant threat"

(Foster 1989a, 89). It is telling that members of this coalition referred to themselves as the 'Confederate Catholics of Ireland'[58] in contrast to a Protestant 'other'.

Nationalism as popular sovereignty subsequently translated this baggage of antagonistic community relations – crude stereotypes, yes, but meaningful nonetheless, because they provided belonging – into national narratives. After O'Connell, and the nationalising of prejudiced collective identities, patterns of belonging intensified, and their abandonment became increasingly unlikely. The 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland were therefore the end product of an historical pattern which had shaped Ireland since the end of the 16th century and resurfaced periodically. Historically strained relationships between two separate nations, experiencing the history of their shared island in mutually exclusive ways, conditioned political projects and rendered the notion of one Irish nation void: if anything, there were two, its members accusing the 'other' of political machinations and schemes. While the Catholic majority disregarded the genuineness of Ireland's political and religious minority, even questioning its very existence, Protestants in Ireland and specifically in Ulster feared the political aspirations of their neighbours, whose historical experience was so different to theirs, all the more when they were directly singled out as targets. Two separate cultural, religious, and in the end political traditions – both creating national belonging.

Symbols of banality and power: Nationalism reaching out for the 'everyday'

The last step in the evolution of nationalism as prejudice was its banality. Because nationalist *habitus* permeates the everyday, its inherent message has been made part of the everyday of thousands and even millions of people. Nationalism reached the everyday and began to intervene in people's daily lives, establishing itself as the main canvas on which our lives

[58] The often used term 'Confederation of Kilkenny' is a 19th century invention and not contemporary, see Cregan (1995).

are painted.

Much of this was made possible through technological and social advancement which had taken place since the nation had begun to be imagined in newspapers and books (Anderson) and in mass education (Gellner). The modern state and the nation it promoted became ubiquitous:

> In the course of the nineteenth century these interventions became so universal and so routinized in 'modern' states that a family would have to live in some very inaccessible place if some member or other were not to come into regular contact with the nation state and its agents: through the postman, the policeman or gendarme, and eventually through the schoolteacher; through the men employed on the railways, where these were publicly owned; not to mention the garrisons of soldiers […]. (Hobsbawm 1992b, 80–81)

The nation began to penetrate the masses. This everyday nationalism, 'banal nationalism' according to Billig (2010), takes its vigour from Renan's (1996, 53) remark that the nation is a "daily plebiscite" that cannot be understood if it not analysed from below. According to Billig (2010), the national people are constantly reminded that they live in a nation that is 'theirs', and for that "banal words, jingling in the ears of the citizens, or passing before their eyes, are required" (ibid., 93). Banal nationalism

> operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted, and which, in so doing, inhabit them. Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making 'our' national identity unforgettable. (ibid.)

Nationalism understood as banal is unlike any other form of identity, i.e. it is always present as a concomitant background noise which might be toned down but cannot be switched off completely. It enforces its presence without being intrusive and "without the vulgar business of pointing" (ibid., 108), going "unnoticed even by speaker or writer" (ibid., 107). Nationhood is the "taken-for-granted part of the landscape of things" (Jon Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, 537) which people talk *with* and not *about*. The nation is

> an unselfconscious disposition about the national order of things that intermittently informs talk. The nation in this sense is a way of seeing, doing, talking and being that posits and sometimes enacts the unproblematic and naturalizing partition of the world into discrete ethnocultural units. (ibid., 140)

In banal nationalism, national identity is reproduced in a rather unreflexive fashion (Edensor 2002, 17), in the process creating Bourdieu's *habitus* and everyday routine – "terra firma" (ibid., 19) – that helps us in our day-to-day goal of avoiding ontological insecurity. This does not mean that nationalism is salient to every social encounter (see Brubaker 2006, 363), but that it establishes its presence through small things that go largely unnoticed but intermittently appear as signposts which point into a given direction that knows no alternative.

This is how banal nationalism establishes belonging: through routinisation that embeds social interaction within a nationalist narrative (McCrone 1998, 171). 'Everyday performances' are essentially nationalist and encompass those actions that are done but not thought about, and which are achieved through popular competencies, such as knowing when to attend school, when to stop for lunch, or when to watch football games at the weekend. These performances are often learnt in youth, through family and friends as well as at school, linking the individual one to the many, creating the illusion of a shared national collective united by a joint culture. Separate spaces are "sewn together to constitute a powerful sense of national spatialisation" (Edensor 2002, 51). Intermittently, nationalism emerges on the surface of society in order to reify its *habitus*: these are A. D. Smith's symbols of the 'nation'. They are "mundane signifiers" and "vernacular features" (ibid.) that appear as everyday objects, but are symbols that firmly express state ownership: they create the boundaries of belonging. Banal objects can be weather charts, for example. The charts used by newspapers and TV outlets in the UK depict both Great Britain and Ireland, although the forecast itself usually only includes Northern Ireland, "as if the rest of the island didn't

exist or was some kind of North Korea behind an iron curtain" (*Irish News* 18 December, 2017). National weather does not extend to south of the Irish border – only British weather is national weather. This is a mundane act of creating belonging through exclusion.

National symbols are objects which make sense only in a British context. Monolingual road signs indicating distances in miles rather than kilometres clearly demarcate Northern Ireland from the Republic. Other objects go unnoticed until they are absent, such as the Union Flag printed on driving licenses[59] or the crown adorning pint glasses (*Morning Advertiser* 04 January, 2018). Stamps are issued by the *Royal* Mail and bear the countenance of the reigning monarch; red post boxes carry his or her royal cypher. Given unionism's strong institutional attachment to the institution of the monarchy (see D. W. Miller 1978, 3), a major blow was dealt to the unionist community when the *Royal* Ulster Constabulary was renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland (English 2016, 135; McKittrick and McVea 2012, 265). The RUC, like no other institution, was a powerful symbol of unionist belonging, a daily reminder of who was in charge of exercising state power. In 1999, the Patten Report on police reform confirmed that

> The problem is that the name of the RUC, and to some extent the badge and the uniform too, have become politicised – one community effectively claiming ownership of the name of 'our' police force, and the other community taking the position that the name is symbolic of a relationship between the police and unionism and the British state. (Independent Commission on Policing 1999, 99)

Repealing these symbols necessarily interrupted belonging; if they represented a taken-for-granted status quo that indicated that the unionist population was sovereign, their disappearance was a powerful reminder that that status quo was indeed gone.

[59] Since 2015, British driving licences bear the Union Flag in England, Scotland, and Wales. Northern Ireland's deliberate exclusion from the scheme sparked Unionist anger (*BBC* 05 January, 2015a).

Other acts also express community allegiances, like the wearing of strips used by Gaelic football teams[60] – "politicised Irish culture" (Hall 2013, 20) – or the two big Glasgow football clubs, Celtic FC and Rangers FC.[61] Some symbolism goes so far to as to rid itself of political content, becoming the sole expression of community demarcation. A Protestant community worker in loyalist circles observed:

> I asked a group of young Protestant males: What do you like? 'Rangers.' What do you dislike? 'Celtic.' Why? 'We just hate them.' […] So, you hate Celtic, you love Rangers, but you don't know why you burn the bonfire. Why do people walk on the Twelfth of July? 'Dunno.' Not one of them knew! So, they are sectarian, but none of them knew why they were sectarian. They know nothing about their own history, even to have a constructive conversation with someone about that history. If they are only getting a load of sectarian guff, that's what they're going to believe. (Hall 2012, 23)

In such circumstances "symbolism is everything" (Hall 2013, 12).

This does not mean that there is not a variety of experiences available within Northern Ireland, depending on location, class, and education. For instance, in the student area of Belfast-Stranmillis around Queen's University or the more affluent "leafy suburbs of south Belfast" (*Belfast Telegraph* 9 August, 2016) symbolism retreats, as residential areas are either more integrated or have a transitional character. This allows for a more anonymous lifestyle void of the intruding drawing of territorial lines (Jarman and Bell 2009, 7). Such anonymity is virtually impossible in smaller communities where 'everybody knows everybody' and the symbols of belonging persevere.

[60] The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was founded in 1884 as the sporting equivalent to the Gaelic League, seeking to promote 'authentic' Gaelic games to the detriment of foreign, i.e. English, games (football, cricket, and rugby). The GAA was from early on a very political organisation, infamously barring members of the British security forces from joining – a ban not lifted until 2001 (*The Guardian* 18 November, 2001). Unionists have therefore always looked upon Gaelic games as a smokescreen for Republican activities. In 1975, a UVF gang directly targeted (and subsequently murdered) a group of GAA supporters on their way home from a game in Dublin, equating their interest in sports with political activism (Cadwallader 2013).

[61] Nonetheless, Republican hatred of Britishness stops short of including English football. On the Falls Road "there is a pub called *The Red Devils*, a Man United supporters club. And up and down the Falls you'll see kids with their Man United tops, their Liverpool tops, Arsenal... whatever" (Hall 2013, 15).

Castlederg in Co. Tyrone, for example, is a small rural town precariously situated three miles from Co. Donegal, and which has seen an increasing number of contentious parades in the past. Here, where people know and are known, community backgrounds can easily be derived from family names and thus be associated with a certain street or neighbourhood. This leads to the construction of subconscious mental maps "used to guide and structure personal routines and practices" (Jarman and Bell 2009, 7), creating and reinforcing daily routines which reflect sectarian division (F. Burton 1978, 64). Due to these mental maps, "you would know what area was Protestant and what area was Catholic"[62] (Hamilton et al. 2008, 36), and subsequently sidestep a certain street while on the way to work, dodge a particular bus stop while wearing the 'wrong' symbol, such as a school uniform, and avoid particular pubs after nightfall. Equally, mental maps include the knowledge of which places in town were designated as neutral spaces which could safely be frequented by anybody, such as shopping centres and corner shops serving members of both communities (Jarman and Bell 2009, 12).

The unambivalence of nationalism also shows itself by permeating mundane politics which have to be played out in a state-nation context, too:

> Liberals, socialists and feminists, whatever ideals for the future are entertained, cannot pretend to a present absent-mindedness which forgets which is 'their' nation. We, too, inhabit this world of nations. We, too, are being primed – or rather we participate in the priming of ourselves. Our words, also, reflect the conditions of their utterance. (Billig 2010, 126–127)

Every time the 'social' takes place within the boundaries of the national discourse its prevalence remains uncontested, its predominance maintained and reproduced. It would be wrong to interpret this as an act of negligence, because social facts – to come back to Durkheim's term – are not viciously pulled over their victims. The difficulties we have in

[62] Emphasis removed.

locating the signifiers of our *habitus* speak for the sense of belonging that they define, making it unnecessary to question them. In a divided society, where the symbols of belonging ossify upon violation, this is an obvious problem for political actors who deliberately seek to position themselves outside the context of bifurcated politics.[63]

Nationalism, through its banal symbols, establishes the framework in which everyday life happens. As argued previously, nationalism is like the Roman god Janus, present both in the past, present, and future, thus creating a pervading sense of familiarity. The myths of the past and their banal symbols which pervade the present provide ontological security, because they speak of stability and reliability, in divided societies more than anywhere else. Despite Hobsbawm's (1992b) assurance that nationalism, because it was it bound up with the advent and demise of capitalism, was "historically less important" (191) and that nations would retreat before and be "absorbed or dislocated by the new supranational restructuring of the globe" (ibid.), it remains unexplained why this efficient way of ordering the social world should suddenly abate. In Northern Ireland, a putative identity that sees itself as neither fully Irish nor fully British appears to be on the rise and of increasing appeal, especially amongst younger and more highly educated people. The actor James Nesbitt (Carruthers 2013, 287–88) and the golfer Rory McIlroy (Burgess 2015, 98–99) are the most public and prominent representatives of this trend. By and large, however, orange and green nationalisms are still cornerstones of all levels of society.

Conservative beings: Human adversity to radical social change

The appeal of nationalism therefore builds upon a human preference for the familiar, for

[63] In 2012, when councillors from the Alliance party, holding the balance of power in Belfast City Council, met the Sinn Féin endeavour of removing the Union Flag hoisted over Belfast City Hall with a compromise, they saw themselves exposed, especially in traditionally unionist East Belfast where the Alliance's Naomi Long had been elected MP, to a DUP/UUP driven campaign framing Alliance as 'sell-outs' bent on making Belfast "a cold house for Unionists" (CAIN 08 February, 2013).

simplifying the social world and upon the assumption that this discourse that speaks of belonging becomes anchored in the daily lives of its participants:

> Nationalism could only have worked, in this sense, because it actually did provide the masses with something real and important – something that class consciousness could never have furnished, a culture which however deplorable was larger, more accessible, and more relevant to mass realities than the rationalism of our Enlightenment inheritance. (Billig 2010, 22)

An antagonistic experience of the past has led to divided perceptions of the nation in Ireland, each side at pains to stop the out-group from domination and national self-fulfilment, incorporating the fear of the other into their respective in-group's self-understanding. Separate traditions, each upheld by the stereotypes about the 'other', stereotypes reproducing themselves through a vicious circle that is helped on its way by prejudice resulting from collectivising and infra-humanising attitudes. These prejudiced narratives have been institutionalised into the everyday.

As much as stereotype and prejudice are then the mechanisms that eventually stand behind the unruliness so often associated with ethno-nationalistic conflict, in Ireland and elsewhere, they are far from being the 'Dark Gods' that Gellner was so eager to dissociate from the study of nationalism. Rather, they must be regarded as universal features of the human existence and as an "evolutionarily-developed mechanism that increases the likelihood of survival by allowing fast thinking and providing a basis for immediate action in uncertain circumstances" (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 26). Hence, prejudice that comes with the perception of high entitativity *has* to be robust and resilient against sudden change. If not, its psychological value of protection against an out-group which, due to direct and indirect experience, is perceived as a hazard to the in-group's way of life, would be negligible.

As Gadamer (1979) and Sandel (2014) argue, human beings are always historical beings standing in tradition. We are perforce prejudiced beings, because "history does not belong

to us, but we belong to it" (Gadamer 1979, 245). Gadamer and Sandel were not the first to have made that point. David Hume had argued in a similar vein: human beings were "determined by custom to transfer the past to the future" (Hume 2016, 158), as without customs "we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses" (ibid., 126). To impose abstract principles against the habit of a social order would have adverse consequences. For Edmund Burke, similarly, a pre-existing social order was more than just the whim of a fleeting world. Rather, it set "the practical conditions under which both theory and practice have to be carried on" (Pocock 1987, xliv). To be human was to inhabit a culture which prescribed the circumstances of daily conduct and which in return gave "every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect" (Burke 1987, 7): context gives the moral and practical reasons for acting. This critical view of Enlightenment – the individual unbound from societal constraints – constituted Burke's rehabilitation of prejudice. Customs, values, and institution – in short: tradition – are those prejudices which largely constitute a political community.

Herder, like Burke, defended tradition as an important ingredient of society's well-being and, famously, defended national cultures as something natural and given (Herder 1969a, 324). He attacked these 'idle cosmopolitans' who sought to leave the national state behind as quickly as possible. National prejudice, so to say, had its part to play:

> prejudice is good, in its time and place, for happiness may spring from it. It urges nations to converge upon their centre, attaches them more firmly to their roots, causes them to flourish after their kind, and makes them more ardent and therefore happier in their inclinations and purposes. (Herder 1969b, 187)

People could only appreciate each other if they appreciate themselves, their own nations, and their own cultures.

From this point of view, prejudice is a rational judgement – despite the fact that often enough

it is clearly not – because the person-in-history recognises the validity of tradition and accepts its decisions as sensible and true. People who are part of the cobwebs of Irish history are in a sense post-modernists who "are saying what they think is true and doing what they think is right" (Spitzer 1996, 95–96), looking to 'their' historical experience as a guide to the present – even if that leads, from a more removed point of view, to historical ambivalence. If people value their in-group because the identity flowing from it provides belonging and security, then they are eager to see this identity preserved. Any radical changes to this self-understanding that would profoundly alter the status quo will be dismissed – and often emotionally so.

Change has to be gradual and must stand in tradition, i.e. it must keep the basic architecture of the narrative that provides belonging intact. Change must always come slowly to keep up the pretence of eternal changelessness: "Never shake the machine too brusquely" (McArthur 1997, 126), in the words of Rousseau. Moderation – "a disposing, arranging, conciliating, cementing virtue" (Norman 2014, 230) – must be the guiding principle, and reform, not revolution, the ambition. The fabric of society cannot be replaced without jettisoning our own place in it, and such a wanton act would end the only reasons for acting and living that we have in the first place (Pocock 1987, xliv) – this is the problem of ontological security lurking again. A society must have a distinct commitment to its own past. Social change is often necessary to remedy acute grievances; but through all changes society's core has to remain recognisable. This frame of mind, which has been identified with the political life of Burke, is worth quickly revisiting in order to show that its promise of moderated change fails to deliver in the context of ethnic nationalism. Meaningful change to ethno-nationalism narratives is *always* radical change and therefore abortive.

Burke's stance on change was twofold. On the one hand, he strongly advised it. For instance,

he recognised the slave trade as the moral denigration that it was, as a violation of natural law, but one that was culturally ingrained. Slavery had to be abolished, but this had to come about step-by-step. He feared that an immediate abolition of slavery would do nothing to change people's minds. Hence "better to allow the evil, in order to correct it, than by endeavouring to forbid, what we cannot be able wholly to prevent, to leave it under an illegal, and therefore an unreformed, existence" (Frohnen 2005, 197). Abolition had to come through the back door, gradually, giving time for those cultures that institutionalised the practice to adapt. This might not be very satisfying prospect, but Burke's point is that moderate change conducted on a gradual basis will eventually reach its target, slowly but surely. Change becomes the art of what is possible at a particular moment in history. Even if change comes slowly, it *will* come: "The force of the pendulum is the same whether it swings quickly through the widest arc or slowly as it approaches a state of rest. And yet the striving never ceases" (Herder 1969b, 188). National narratives that are banal and turned into everyday belonging give the impression of unchanging immortality – but because they belong to the individuals who constitute them, they can be moved by slow but steady progress. It has to be recognised, though, that the wider narrative of British identity was not built around the institution of slavery. It was deeply ingrained within an imperial self-understanding that justified the ways of racist supremacy, but it could also be discarded, if its abolition was handled in a prudent manner.

Burke's second thought on change can be found in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, his stubborn and passionate plea against the deliberate undermining of what makes the core of a given, traditional social order. For Burke, the French Revolution culminated in a literal tragedy: the audience bursts on the stage; the play is finished and leaves both the audience and the actors staring into the abyss, because nothing new can be created if there are no cornerstones left upon which to erect a new building. This is the kind of political

turmoil that is based on radical simplifications and will be fundamentally lacking in political wisdom (Ballestrem 2007). Burke contrasts the French example with the Glorious Revolution at home, 100 years before. Burke disowns the principles of Jacobinism – the attempt "to eradicate prejudice put of the minds of men" (Burke 1999, 356) – and the right of the people to overcome the political system as they seem fit. Burke's comments throughout most of the *Reflections* are geared more towards correction than real change: changes had to be "confined to the peccant part only, to the part which produced the necessary deviation" (ibid., 19). What Burke withholds is that the 'peccant part' was a Catholic king despised for his attempts at religious toleration. The Glorious Revolution assured that Catholic subjects 'knew their place' as second-class subjects. It was made possible because it was consistent with the self-understanding of Britain as a Protestant country.

The bottom line for change in divided societies must be that change only happens in small steps and only as long as the construct that is being altered remains intelligible. Herder, unlike Burke, built progress into the essence of the national existence. For Herder, tradition without progress was "like a plant without water" (Barnard 1969, 50–51), progress without tradition "like a plant without roots" (ibid., 50). Progress however was confined to run along a prescribed path: the plant always remained a plant of the same variety. Ethno-national narratives rely on a ubiquitous form of prejudice that represents the assumption that the nation is the nation of a specific people. It is this 'core' that cannot be undone without dismantling the narrative itself. Even if these narratives, objectively, do not contribute to societal wellbeing, they do provide a sense of belonging in the face of perceived turmoil. This does not bode well for peacebuilding efforts that seek to 'deal' with that past that provides the ontological solidification that communal narratives of conflict are after.

I argued before that ontological security also has a certain element of anxiety to it, making change to narrative and *habitus* possible. According to Rumelili (2015, 13–17), peace processes and conflict resolution have to make use of these anxieties in order to galvanise societies stuck in their old ways of ethno-nationalist antagonism. The anxiety Rumelili speaks of is created by removing the object of fear, i.e. the ethnic 'other', from the national narrative. By doing so, anxiety is increased, and ontological security subsequently decreased. In order to arrive at a "new understanding of ontological security" (Çelik 2015, 67) and to keep creative anxiety from turning into existential anxiety, an "alternative system of meaning with comparable certainty" (Rumelili 2015, 17) inaugurating "new habits and routines" (ibid.) has to be introduced. Rumelili, however, gives no account of how this can be accomplished. The replacement of the core of a communal narrative appears to be akin to replacing the heart of the patient who is fully conscious of what is happening. Radical change to established ethno-nationalist narratives, I argue, is next to impossible, because humans are conservative beings seeking to maintain their sense of security. But again, even the nationalist *Heilsgeschichte* is not resilient to change, although nationalist entrepreneurs often go out of their way to give the impression that it is. This, of course, is for a reason. Radical breaks in narrative can have severe consequences, as they are experienced as something deeply negative. People will scour for alternatives; 'neo-traditionalist' (A. D. Smith 1998, 189) movements will shoot up, bent on reviving old morals and conventions and rectifying the loss of ontological security.

The second part of the thesis will now turn to a concrete example of narrative change, i.e. Irish republicanism, and will analyse how this narrative remained intact, i.e. how a rift leading to widespread internal dissent was largely avoided. Although the focus will be on narrative transformation, it is crucial to keep in mind that the change that happens or does not happen takes place *through* individuals as the participants in and bearers of (national)

narratives. Successful change hence depends on bringing the people along who see their identity needs fulfilled by the narrative in question, while avoiding those changes that would open the question of ontological security. Here, evolutionary-psychological and sociological matters, individual and society, intersect. Bearing in mind what I have argued in this chapter, it will become clear that the change that *did* happen – and I am using the republican vicissitude that turned armed freedom fighters into constitutional politicians as an example – did so because no red lines within the narrative of Irish republicanism were crossed, i.e. because 'belonging' was respected. On the other hand, those efforts that were after *real* change petered out. In Chapter four, this will be exemplified using the example of Irish socialism, an (unsuccessful) undercurrent within Irish republicanism that never really went away.

3. Irish republicanism I: The change that could be

In the third chapter, I will seek to apply the insight gained above to the topic of social change in Northern Ireland, specifically the republican narrative as embodied by the Provisional IRA and later Sinn Féin. Which change has happened and why? The main question to be addressed is the conundrum of how the Adams leadership successfully turned the republican movement from the 'cutting edge of the IRA' into a governing party sharing governmental responsibilities with the DUP. I argue that the gradual policy shift from the Armalite towards the ballot box was made possible because the underlying prejudice against unionism was kept intact – despite an obvious change in attitude towards it away from outright denial of its British essence towards the language of compromise and national reconciliation. While the armed struggle could finally be dropped, the notion that unionism as British-nationalist ideology remains something to be outwitted lingers. By preserving underlying prejudices against unionism, the republican movement's need to belong has been catered for and republicanism as a nationalist creed, seeking a united Ireland via an erosion of the everyday Britishness of Northern Ireland, has been defended.

Irish republicanism as narrative

To recapitulate: in the previous chapter I argued that tangible incarnations of stereotypes, increased entitativity, and infra-humanisation are part of national narratives that create the 'everyday'. They embody those experiences which structure and order the social world, making inter-human dealings predictable. What fades into the background in times of enduring social peace, remains ever present on the "ethnic frontier" (F. Wright 1988, 1) where settlers and natives are approximately evenly numbered and locked into relations of mutual self-assertion: individuals are turned into 'them', the national 'other', the very embodiment of the mischievous opponent plotting for the usurpation of state power and therefore the incursion against belonging. This is the continuing dilemma of Northern Ireland. If we acknowledge a conservative-leaning inclination against radical change violating understandings of belonging, the question arises as to what kind of change *is* possible. It is indeed important to keep in mind that social change always remains a possibility. The very notion that prevalent social structures assert themselves upon encountering resistance challenges the assumption that structures of social conflict are rigid entities. We can therefore confidently dismiss a theory of 'no change possible', but the question of the character of change remains.

Burke's and especially Herder's perception of social transformation which leaves the pillars

of society intact is crucial, because it can easily be applied in societies emerging from conflict; or in the case of Northern Ireland: societies stuck in a conflict limbo where the old narratives of ethnic and national dispute persist. Change must respect the human need to belong. However, this means that rampant prejudices linked to national, popular narratives will not easily subside. In the following, this point will be elaborated on, using the example of the dominant republican narrative as it has been promulgated by the Provisional IRA and later Sinn Féin. In the last chapter, the transitions within the preeminent republican discourse – 'the change that did happen' – will be juxtaposed with the complicated relationship Irish republicanism shares with socialism: 'the change that did not happen'. To chart the course of Irish republicanism, it will be necessary to take a step back and widen the analytical perspective to a broader sociological point of view, showing how republicanism as narrative caters for individual belonging.

Irish republicanism, in general terms, can be identified as a narrative, or *habitus*, previously defined as the rules and regulations that define conduct in the social world. Narratives, we remind ourselves, 'are about the world in general, its character and essence: the things that provide the main framework for conduct'. Narratives find their origin in the human tendency to give order to the world: they provide reliable structures, usually by excluding those who do not belong. National narratives are therefore individual prejudices played out on a much more encompassing scale. From an evolutionary point of view, this, again, makes sense.

Without reliable structures that provide for a sense of belonging in otherwise diffuse social interactions, cooperation breaks down and, in its most brutal form, re-emerges as lived ontological insecurity. Any social narrative providing belonging relies on prejudice as a bulwark against disorder. Prejudice orders the social world, in particular in the face of a

perceived threat. The narrative of unionism[64] has, as I have said before, often been the epitome of an Ulster frontier spirit which from early on encountered a belligerent 'other'. This 'other', at least from the times of O'Connell onwards, came in the form of Irish Catholic nationalism. Northern Ireland's competing 'sacred' beliefs were thus couched in the language of "ritualised deterrence" (F. Wright 1988, 115). Irish nationalism, and traditional republicanism even more so, relied heavily on the exclusion of the unionist 'other' from the idea of an Irish state that could only be Gaelic and/or Catholic. Unionists were neither of these things. This is *the* core statement within the narrative of pre-revisionist Irish nationalism; any attempt to dissolve this core would ultimately lead to splits amongst the most committed, as more and more bridges were crossed that had to be burned down as soon as one had reached the other side. It also explains the difficulties republican organisations have faced when they try to cloak socialism in the language of political Irishness. More of this later.

The republicanism of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin has undoubtedly been the dominant form of Irish republicanism in the North of Ireland since it emerged from the riots of August 1969. Other competitors were quickly sidelined, militarily and later politically. Until its declaration of a permanent ceasefire in 1972, Goulding's Official IRA, the remnant of the Provisional walkout, had been able to keep certain strongholds, in particular in the Lower Falls in Belfast – although it had found its left-wing self-understanding quickly at odds with the violence which was employed to keep potential recruits away from the competing Provisionals. Its political incarnations – Official Sinn Féin and later (Sinn Féin) The Workers' Party – were able to gather a certain political momentum in the politics of the Republic of Ireland, in particular in the 1980s. However, such episodes of political and

[64] From now on I use the term 'unionism' to mean the adherence to some form of Britishness in Northern Ireland and the vision of Northern Ireland's place as being within the union with Great Britain.

military relevance were overshadowed by the military and, from the 1990s onwards, political successes that the Provisionals could boast.

Other groups which appeared at times of republican infighting equally shared the fate of greater or lesser irrelevance. Neither Costello's Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) – a particularly violent OIRA offspring which rejected the Official's 1972 permanent truce – nor Ó Brádaigh's Republican Sinn Féin, nor any other dissident organisation which emerged found itself anywhere near the centre of contemporary events.[65] Irish republicanism of the Sinn Féin/PIRA ilk has therefore undoubtedly been *the* focal point of what became known as the 20th century 'Troubles'. Despite the Provisionals' undeniable role as the eye of the storm, their dogma has seemingly undergone radical change over the course over the last forty years or so. Given my focus on the topic of 'change', the republican narrative of the Provisionals and Sinn Féin will be the main point of discussion in this chapter, beginning with a short summary of events.[66] I will draw a conclusion similar to Bean (1994, 2007), doubting that the republican metamorphosis regarding their attitude towards unionism

[65] Dissident republicanism has spawned a multitude of political organisations – often with what appeared to be their respective 'armed wings' – as soon as Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA decided that the time for 'new departures' had come, such as the legitimisation of Leinster House (Republican Sinn Féin/ Continuity IRA), the end of the armed struggle (32 County Sovereignty Movement/ Real IRA), and the acceptance of policing under the PSNI (Óglaigh na hÉireann/ Republican Network for Unity). In 2016, Saoradh, linked to the New IRA, was founded (*Irish News* 26 September, 2016). According to Patterson (2011, 90), dissident republicans remain a "significant minority" in Northern Ireland, mostly because they can count on localised pockets of support along the border counties (Fermanagh, South Armagh, East Tyrone), the Lurgan/Craigavon area, and parts of working-class West Belfast. Dissident republicanism dismisses the 'peace strategy' of Sinn Féin and accuses the party of having sold out republicanism by abandoning the armed struggle and becoming part of the political system both in the north and south of Ireland. From this point of view, Sinn Féin are the true 'dissidents' (Currie 2011, 168). In urban areas dissident groups have also taken over the Provisionals' role of community policing, in particular through punishment shootings against suspected drug dealers and others involved in anti-social behaviour. Dissidents remain a threat to public security and the police insofar as they are armed. However, these organisations rejecting the peace process and its agreements lack influence in the wider republican community, as their ambit does not extend beyond the influencing factors of regionalism, see above, and/or existing family ties or other significant individuals linking the prospective recruit to the dissident tradition (J. Morrison 2011, 25–32). Meaningful leadership necessary to convince a wider audience of dissident merits, especially in the absence of an oppressive 'orange state', currently does not exist beyond a local level.

[66] The course of republican transformation has already been traced multiple times in the literature, so a short summary of events will have to suffice here. See for instance Moloney (2003), Alonso (2003), Rafter (2005), Tonge and Murray (2005), Bean (2007), Patterson (1997), Tonge (2005, 102–22), Ó Broin (2009), and Frampton (2009). The focus on the republican side is of course not to negate the profound processes of (limited) transformation within the DUP in particular since the beginning of the peace process, see Tonge et al. (2014).

amounts to more than a "linguistic turn" (Bean 2007, 175). Focussing on mainstream republicanism, I shall address the question of what kind of change is possible if the republican goal of a united Ireland is not to be utterly discarded. The argument is that national narratives that provide belonging in the individual only do so as long as they can provide stability to the social world by excluding the national 'other'. Revising this core would have opened up the Pandora's box that is the threat to ontological security – hence, it had to be avoided.

Sketching the 'earthquake': republican vicissitude from violence to pinstripe suits

The Provisional IRA and its political offspring (Provisional) Sinn Féin were founded in December 1969 in reaction to the riots that had rocked Belfast and London-Derry that same year, although Sinn Féin remained largely overshadowed by its armed kindred spirit, the Provisionals. It was not voting for Sinn Féin which was to bring about a united Ireland, but, in the words of Martin McGuinness, "the cutting edge of the IRA" (*BBC* 2014a). Adams, writing from prison and adopting the pen name of 'Brownie', was convinced from early on that the armed struggle had to be supplemented by 'active abstentionism', i.e. alternative, republican-sponsored government structures at community level (Lynn 2002, 79). In 1977, at the annual republican hero worship at Bodenstown, the republican luminary Jimmy Drumm set out Adams' agenda: republicanism had to resonate "with the mass of the Irish people" by linking the armed struggle to "the everyday struggles of people" (ibid.).

And although the Adams and his 'Young Turks' had been effectively running the IRA from the mid-1970s on onwards, Sinn Féin was still marginalised in 1983 by its big, armed sister organisation when Adams became party president in 1983. In 1979, Adams had spoken for the first time of republican belief which needed to be "updated" in order to suit "today's conditions", including building "a strong political alternative to so-called constitutional

politics" (ibid., 105). When Gerry Adams took over the leadership of Sinn Féin in the wake of Bobby Sands' victory in the 1981 Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election, the way was paved for a republicanism increasingly shaped by pragmatic thinking.[67] From early on, Adams realised that the armed struggle alone would not win a united Ireland, even more so in the south where people were oblivious to the politics of violence that took place in the north. Formal politics were now seen as beneficial to the republican cause and complementary to the Provos' armed campaign. Or, as Danny Morrison infamously asked at Sinn Féin's 1981 Ard Fheis: "Who really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object, if, with a ballot paper in one hand and the Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?" (Rafter 2005,114). From 1981 onwards, when local elections in Northern Ireland were finally contested, Republicans sought to develop a republican veto by integrating the armed campaign and the political, thus 'sickening' the British into withdrawal. Ignoring Ó Brádaigh's misgivings about mainstream politics[68] and encouraged by the electoral successes of Bobby Sands, the republican movement crossed the red line of parliamentary politics and decided in 1986 to take their seats at Dáil Éireann (Moloney 2003, 287–88). Pragmatism stood once more behind the decision to accept that the republicans' rejection of Leinster House was only shared by "a very small section of our people" (Sinn Féin 1986, 8), especially in the south. Sinn Féin's "Vietnam moment" of "fighting while negotiating" (Frampton 2009, 24) soon reached it limits. During most of the 1980s, Sinn Féin took no more than 13.4% of the nationalist vote in General and local Council Elections, clearly defeated by the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP). Besides, the Hillsborough Agreement between the governments of Britain and Ireland made it clear

[67] Sands was elected an MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone while on hunger strike in Long Kesh 1981 (CAIN 2016d).

[68] See Ó Brádaigh's (CAIN 2016b) speech at the Ard Fheis in question. "Shame. Shame. Shame" was McGuinness's answer to Ó Brádaigh's suggestion that the Sinn Féin leadership was "intent on wedging the Republican Movement onto a consitutional part" (Sinn Féin 1986, 26). From a traditional republican perspective, history has vindicated Ó Brádaigh's concerns.

that a permanent deal without republicans but including the moderates of the SDLP was within the realms of possibility. Responding to this threat, a new 'pan-nationalist' strategy was designed, intended to push the combined parties of Irish nationalism into an increasingly green direction. Sinn Féin, after years in isolation, struggled to remain relevant. What Adams and McGuinness had anticipated appeared to become reality: "it would not matter one iota what republicans said if no one was prepared to listen to them" (ibid., 58). The launch of a 'peace strategy' and an increasingly articulate presentation of nationalist demands was an answer to this (see Sinn Féin 1987).

The ensuing dialogues between Hume-Adams and Adams-Haughey in 1988[69] propelled Sinn Féin into the heart of Irish politics. The publication of *Towards a Lasting Peace* (Sinn Féin 1992a) constituted a crucial shift in republican ideology: the British government should join the ranks of persuaders, there was no timetable for British withdrawal demanded, and it was indeed recognised that unionists had to be persuaded, and not bombed, into a united Ireland (Tonge and Murray 2005, 181–82). In the same year, Jim Gibney sought to dissipate any doubts about the direction the republican movement was taking by instructing the assembled members that republicans could not allow themselves to be "trapped inside a complex web of struggle from which they can't or don't emerge", incapable of recognising "that there is a different world to the one that existed in the mid '60s" (Sinn Féin 1992b). The TUAS-document[70] – 'Tactical Use of Armed Struggle' (Frampton 2009, 87) – prepared the rank-and-file for the dawn of a new chapter in the republican struggle that now gave primacy to peaceful methods.

Despite the violent intermezzos that followed, including the bombings of Manchester and

[69] See Sinn Féin (1988) for the Hume-Adams talks. The talks between Haughey and Adams were led by Haughey's advisor Martin Mansergh, as Haughey in his official function as Taoiseach was not prepared to meet Adams personally (Rafter 2013, 169).
[70] See Republican Movement (1994).

Canary Wharf in 1996, and the frustration over the faltering inclusion of Sinn Féin in political talks, the 1994 IRA ceasefire, renewed in 1997, finally culminated in the declaration of a permanent end to the Provisional's campaign in 2005. Meanwhile, Sinn Féin had given up on what was previously thought to be an axiom: abstaining from the loathed Stormont assembly overseeing the six 'occupied counties'. Sinn Féin had conclusively become the "boss of the Republican movement" (English 2012, 393). This very movement which in 1981 had so defiantly declared that "only through armed struggle will we be listened to, only through the struggle waged by the Irish Republican Army can we win national freedom" (English 2012, 212) entered the Stormont executive in coalition with the DUP – and with former IRA commander Martin McGuinness as its Minister of Education and later Deputy First Minister.

The move away from the Armalite towards a strategy of 'Armalite and ballot box' and eventually 'ballot-box-only' embodied a radical transformation which only a few in Northern Ireland could have imagined. The IRA's training manual had once very clearly spelt out that the IRA were "morally justified in carrying out a campaign of resistance against foreign occupation forces and domestic collaborators" (CAIN 2016c). By 1995, the armed campaign, despite the bombings of 1996, had been reduced to a threat that was more than anything implied: the IRA had become a bogeyman to frighten unionists. In the same year, Gerry Adams infamously declared that "They haven't gone away, you know" (*The Independent* 13 September, 1995), meaning the Provisional IRA. In 2006, Adams could declare that it was now Sinn Féin that was "not going away" (*The Telegraph*, 18 February 2006).[71] The IRA was now beyond its expiration date. Back in 1985, Martin McGuinness had still defiantly declared "that winning elections and winning any amount of votes" will

[71] The announcement in January 2017 that Michelle O'Neill would replace Martin McGuinness as head of Sinn Féin in the north spoke volumes: O'Neill is the first Sinn Féin leader without a past in the IRA (*The Guardian* 23 January, 2017b).

certainly not "bring freedom in Ireland" (*BBC* 2014a). In 2009, the same McGuinness, now deputy prime minister of the 'statelet' he had pledged to destroy, stood next to Chief Constable Hugh Orde denouncing the murder of a policeman by dissident republicans: "These people are traitors to the island of Ireland", he said (*BBC* 10 March, 2009a). Tough words from the man who was the IRA's very own Chief of Staff from 1978 to 1982 (Moloney 2003, 213). It seems as if Sinn Féin has indeed resigned itself to "administering Partition in the North" (Hall 2013, 5). When the Provisional IRA decided to end its war, a united Ireland had not been achieved. Hence, it is tempting to conclude that the Provisionals have in fact lost the war.[72]

Danny Morrison, who for a long time has been the public voice of the Adams/McGuinness leadership, mentions the end of abstentionism, the abandonment of the Republic's territorial claim on the six counties, the acceptance of some sort of Stormont regime, and the quasi recognition of a unionist veto as some of the "bitter pills" (Tonge and Murray 2005, 234) the republican movement had to swallow. To this enumeration we can confidently add the acceptance of the Northern Irish police service and compliance with the Mitchell Principles (Currie 2011, 169). The latter demanded commitment to "democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues" (Whiting 2015, 128) and a process of decommissioning, effectively bringing the Provisional's armed campaign to an end and heralding the beginning of republican politics which left no doubt that the Armalite had overstayed its welcome.

With hindsight it is possible to see the transformation of the Provisional IRA into Sinn Féin as a step-by-step slippery slope at the bottom of which many a republican woke up only to

[72] Or as one former IRA prisoner sums it up: "We lost. We just didn't get our united Ireland" (*BBC* 2014a).

ask themselves how they got there in the first place.[73] This is certainly true with prominent critics of the Adams squad like Anthony McIntyre and Brendan Hughes. The question of when during the long march towards constitutional politics the decision was made to quit Armalite and Semtex, and the role Gerry Adams played in all this, has been a rather sore one. It is generally agreed that Adams indeed played a major role in developing the pragmatism that eroded republican traditionalism from the late 1970s onwards (Mallie and McKittrick 1996, 9).[74] The problem with hindsight and Moloney's (2003) account of the PIRA is that it suffers "from a desire to see everything through the lens of the 'peace process'" (Frampton 2009, 4) in combination "with a need to understand almost all developments within republicanism as stemming from the assumed machinations of Gerry Adams" (ibid.). Tonge and Murray (2005), for instance, hold that the ending of abstentionism was no scheme to coax Republicans into full acceptance of constitutional politics. Frampton (2009) takes the same line, arguing that the republican leadership was not satisfied up to 1990 that an unarmed strategy was feasible.

Lynn (2002), however, identifies a 'learning curve' which emerged during the period between 1975 and 1977, when the Brownie articles appeared in *Republican News*. As Danny Morrison acknowledged, his 1981 speech on the 'Armalite and ballot box' was driven by an element of "playing to the gallery" and "pandering" (Alonso 2003, 117) to those who thought that contesting elections and fighting in arms were mutually exclusive. Equally, Ó Broin (2009, 239) suggests that the emerging republican leadership around Adams had a Damascene conversion quite early on during the campaign for political status in Long Kesh

[73] "One activist compared the process to a parked car being moved an inch a day down the driveway outside your house. After a while the car has shifted from the house to the road but no-one ever saw it move or can understand how they got there" (Moloney, in: McIntyre 2008, xii–xiii).

[74] And Brendan Hughes concurs: "I don't think that anyone can take away from Gerry that he is an intelligent man and a very shrewd operator. I don't know anyone else in the whole Republican movement, during my history of involvement, that could have brought this movement to the position that it's in today" (Moloney 2011, 291).

and the subsequent electoral victory of Bobby Sands. This assumption makes Alonso (2003, 139–40) pan the republican leadership for having sent the new influx of recruits that joined the IRA after the 1981 hunger strikes out to die for Ireland, while the leadership was already convinced that the armed struggle itself was futile. In contrast, there is nothing that would indicate that the larger portion of the Provisional movement, at this point in history, was not confident regarding a victorious outcome of the armed struggle.

I would dispute the notion of an Irish Republican Army which could not see the futility of its own existence while being duped by Gerry Adams, the infallible "Pope of the Provisionals" (ibid., 133), into something it actually did not want.[75] Like any organisation adopting the organisational structures of an (insurgent) army, the PIRA benefited from a certain corps spirit, a loyal commitment to one's brothers in arms, and a tendency to 'just follow orders'. The strong ideological commitment of the rank-and-file and the influence of the charismatic Gerry Adams certainly helped to guarantee the unity of the republican movement. However, it is at least doubtful whether the Provisional movement, despite its authoritarian and anti-democratic setup, functioned as a quasi-Orwellian movement under the tight grip of its leadership. It is true that, as in the cases of Hughes, McIntyre, Ivor Bell, and of course Eamon Collins, internal quarrels could become very personal, and McIntyre's (2008) reckoning with Gerry Adams is a powerful reminder of how the Provisionals were prepared to smash internal resistance. Adams' skilful manoeuvring could also be very subtle: for instance, he was known for letting political allies speak for his positions (O'Doherty

[75] This of course contrasts Alonso's (2003) republican interviewees who point out that the loyalty of many IRA members was exploited by its leadership and that "a lot of IRA people have very closed minds" and "assume that the IRA is right even when they are wrong" (127). As with Brendan Hughes' gloomy assessment – "I was one of those who went along with Gerry for so many years without realising the direction he was taking us" (Moloney 2011, 291) – it is unclear to what extent such statements are motivated by personal grievances against particular personae, especially Adams. See also Bernadette Sands McKevitt's accusation that her brother Bobby had not died "for nationalists to be equal to British citizens within the Northern Ireland state" (Tonge and Murray 2005, 214).

2017, 184) and deflecting criticism by giving ambiguous and nebulous answers (ibid., 221).

But even if the Provisional IRA, like all armies, and Sinn Féin, like all ideological movements, were inherently authoritarian, it does not mean that dissent was impossible; and the fact that Republican Sinn Féin (RSF)[76], the League of Communist Republicans (LCR)[77], and the 32CSM could be formed at all proves this point. A 'learning curve' in the form of more than 30 years of persuasion was needed because the republican movement as a whole could not be swayed, willy-nilly, without endangering its unity. This learning curve helped the Adams leadership to convince the wider movement of "*realpolitik*" (D. Morrison 1999, 236). Here, individual belonging, narrative, and societal change interlink. If we acknowledge that the wider republican movement had to be persuaded for the Adams strategy to come to fruition, then this could only be accomplished in a most gradual, conservative, and pragmatic way that took heed of the identity needs of his adherents.

The pragmatism introduced by the Adams and McGuinness leadership ignited a debate about what parts of the republican agenda had to be considered core principles and what should be seen as 'cheap talk', something that could easily be adjusted to fit societal changes. The discussion regarding ending abstentionism from the Dublin parliament in 1986 is crucial for an understanding of what Adams and company meant by 'pragmatism' – and by extension it also shines a light on why the republican movement over a period of 30 years did not see

[76] Following Sinn Féin's decision to take their seats in the Dublin parliament in 1986, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh formed RSF as a republican alternative stressing the movement's unbending Fenian credentials (English 2012, 251–52).

[77] The LCR was formed by Tommy McKearney and Pat Mullin (also following the 1986 vote). The League was mainly a prison phenomenon and had some support amongst republican prisoners discontented with the route Sinn Féin and the IRA were taking. McKearney took an orthodox Marxist-Leninist line intended to counter the conservative broad-church tendencies within Sinn Féin. The LCR's main theoretical contribution was to revive republicanism as a mass phenomenon via a new Republican Congress [see English (1994, 56–58) on the original inter-war Republican Congress]. McKearney asserts that the LCR's failure to develop an on-the-ground presence outside the prisons was mainly due to Sinn Féin's/the IRA's unwillingness to tolerate competitors [see O'Ruairc (2001) for an overview of the LCR].

a split of the magnitude of 1969.

For the Adams leadership only one principle mattered and that was to eschew yet another one of the "'glorious defeats' with which our past is littered" (D. Morrison 1999, 292). In his speech addressing the 1986 Ard Fheis, Adams fervently asked the Sinn Féin membership not to be dogmatic but to be flexible about achieving the ultimate goal of a 32-county Republic. Winning, simply put, was important and not the way victory was achieved. No form of rev olutionary work was deemed to be superior to another (Sinn Féin 1986, 14): "sitting back and citing principles" might please certain republican egos, but "it will not beat the British" (Tonge and Murray 2005, 160–61). The end would finally justify the means.

This is the fundamental agenda standing behind Sinn Féin's peace strategy. By giving up on abstentionism, relinquishing their resistance to enter a new Stormont regime, and quitting physical force republicanism, it would appear that Sinn Féin and the Provisionals have sacrificed most of their maxism on the altar of constitutional politics. Nonetheless, Sinn Féin is still very much alive as a political party[78] and dissident republicans remain marginalised amongst the majority of mainstream republicans. The reason for this is that despite changes in rhetoric, the core of the official republican narrative remains mostly unaltered and is the single characteristic of the republican movement which continues to be practically unaffected.

I argued above that national narratives can be changed if the change happens at a reasonable pace and leaves the core of the narrative in one piece. The Adams leadership achieved just that, but it required a republicanism which could legitimately portray itself as 'still winning', i.e. as outcompeting the unionist 'other'. It meant that the relationship to the unionist 'other'

[78] Sinn Féin won 24% of the vote in the 2016 Assembly elections, as well as 27.9% in 2017 (*BBC* 2016b, 2017b). In the 2017 General Elections, Sinn Féin scored 29.4% (*BBC* 2017a). Sinn Féin therefore remains the major 'green' party in Northern Ireland.

had to remain unadulterated: unionism, despite all changes, still needs to be beaten in the quest for achieving the nationalist dream, i.e. a united Ireland from Derry to Cork. This is the core of republican-nationalist ideology, the core which is as yet untouched and secures the survival of the Sinn Féin meta-narrative and by extension individual belonging. I will now trace and analyse the relationship between republicanism and unionism since the beginning of the 'Troubles', showing that the relationship to unionism was never fundamentally altered and ontological insecurity was hence avoided.

Republican denial of unionism: 'Colonial dupes'

From 1969 to today, two stages of republican engagement with unionism can be distinguished: during the heyday of the Provisionals, denial of unionist identity – often, but not always, combined with violence against the Protestant community – dominated the republican ethos. From the late 80s and early 90s onwards, unionism was publicly acknowledged as a legitimate political identity; in the mid-90s, then, the importance of 'national reconciliation' was increasingly stressed.[79]

First, unionism was openly disparaged as a fake identity. Those who saw themselves as unionists were merely deluded: they were "caught in a trap of history and are unable to liberate themselves" (Bean 2007, 229), and, echoing Rousseauian doctrine, had to be forced to be free. As Bean (2007, 230) crisply states: "Attempts to understand the 'Unionist ethos' and to define the conflict as one grounded in 'different heritages and different identities' were regarded as ludicrous and a product of [self-delusion]". The conflict was framed as one of colonial domination. Britain and its artificial creation, Northern Ireland, were responsible for lingering violence and sectarianism. Unionism was the result of this 'divide and conquer' policy. "The system established by Britain in the 6 counties", Adams (1986, 89) wrote in his

[79] Separating the issue of republican attitude towards unionism into two separate stages can only be an approximation, but it helps to identify the change of rhetoric that took place.

The Politics of Irish Freedom, "created and constitutes the prop on which sectarianism depends. Its essential basis is the holding by a 'pro-British' national minority of a position of privilege over a disposed majority". Sinn Féin rhetoric oscillated between the unvarnished depiction of unionism as a British creation, the fuming accusation that Unionists had sold 'mother Ireland'[80] to a foreign oppressor, and the belittling of their neighbours as some sort of adolescent going through a "desperate identity crisis" (ibid., 124).

This attitude towards unionism has a long tradition within Irish nationalism.[81] When Carson's UVF formed to resist the introduction of Home Rule, Joe Devlin, the hero of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Belfast, declared that "all the talk about civil war in Ireland was humbug, sham and hypocrisy" (Hepburn 2008, 144). Ulster, according to Devlin, was bluffing. Republicans followed the line of reasoning that expected that unionist resistance could be easily overcome, seeing as their identity was a scam and a "pathetic imitation of English traditions" (B. O'Brien 1993, 88). Unionists, from the republican perspective, were actually the victims of British imperialist ploys who had taken their Irishness away from them.

Unionists were Irish, both culturally and politically, their identity therefore had to be overcome, not respected (Patterson 1980; D. W. Miller 1978). More bluntly put: "they're Irish men [sic] who don't know they're fucking Irish men" (Alonso 2003, 163). Unionists were condescendingly dismissed "like little children"[82] (ibid., 162). They were looked upon

[80] See Padraig Pearse's poem *Mise Éire* ('I am Ireland') quoted by Adams (1986, 137) in his chapter on national culture: Mór mo náire!/ Mo chlann féin do dhíol a máthair ('Great is my shame!/ My own children have sold their mother').

[81] Neither was it restricted to republicans in Northern Ireland. The narcissistic Republic erected in the south bearing the hallmarks of Éamon de Valera denied that any meaningful political division based on religion existed. Unionist unwillingness to come into a united Ireland was simply attributed to the schemes of perfidious Albion. For de Valera, unionists were "fundamentally Irish" (Bowman 1982, 318).

[82] Even in 1993, Gerry Adams still patronised Unionists as living "in the shadow of the empire and the shadow of the Orange Hall" and as the "human faces of this very negative connection": "At times", he said, "my heart goes out to them" (Bean 1994, 19).

as a “non-people” (English 2010, 81) that was “caught in a trap of history” (Bean 2007, 229) and could only be set free from their role as the neo-colonial administers of Britain’s economic and strategic interests by removing the British presence in Ireland. In the words of Adams (1986, 89): “The ‘pro-British’ elements will face up to the reality of the situation only when the British prop and the system which uses them as its tools and its Stormtroopers is removed”. Unionists would wake up and realise that Ireland is and always has been one nation, artificially kept apart by religious sectarianism induced by Britain (F. Wright 1988, 158).

Republicans, in a nutshell, expected unionists to wake up from their slumber sooner or later. For republicans, removing the British presence was key. Once Britain was gone, stripping unionists of their British identity would become “a matter of businesslike negotiations” (Adams 1986, 124). The denial of unionism as a meaningful identity fulfilled a banal function: it allowed republicanism to portray their struggle as morally justified, as anti-colonial and anti-sectarian, and as a battle against a nefarious British state and its colonised stooges, whose identity, following the example set by Fanon (2004, 9), had become superfluous. To accept the pronounced wishes of the unionist community while continuing an armed insurrection against the state they deeply identified with would have cost the moral high ground: it would have revealed that unionists, as Irish nationalists, had a legitimate interest in settling the constitutional question in a way that did not violate their own sense of belonging. However, since the republican claim to state power inherently clashed with unionist adherence to the United Kingdom, unionism had to be rejected as a non-identity. This was done in three ways, each of them affirming the core of the republican narrative: firstly, unionists were presented as being internally divided. Secondly, the estrangement between mainland Britain and Ulster was noted. Thirdly, the conditional loyalty of loyal Ulster was pointed out.

The first argument emphasised the difficulty unionism has always had in clarifying what entity it was actually loyal to. Whereas Irish republicans are straightforward in providing an answer to the question of which nation they are subject to – the Irish Republic – for unionists the nation is often a conflictual interplay between an affiliation to both Britain and the province of Ulster. Todd (1987) broadly distinguishes between an Ulster British identity and an Ulster loyalist identity, similar to McAuley's (2010) categories of civic and cultural unionism, or Mulholland's (2000, 7–11) assimilatory and segregatory unionism. The former is more obviously British, as its adherents look at least as much to London as they do to Belfast. It celebrates links between Ulster and Britain in the fields of economics, industry, and welfare, making it a less parochial narrative grounding that stresses the wider British-identity community. It also demarcates itself strongly from working-class people and Ulster loyalists in particular, who are often dismissed as intolerant, irrational, and uncouth.[83]

Ulster loyalism has a stronger element of 'Ulster' to it and is often part of a working-class identity construct. Ulster loyalism stresses the parochial self-understanding found in Orange parades. Ulster loyalists see themselves as the shock troops of the Union, defending the Empire against its multifarious enemies. They also show a fierce pride for having "built and fought for the British Empire and paid the ultimate sacrifice" (Todd 1987, 6), at the Boyne as well as at the Somme. In rural Ulster, Northern Ireland's bible belt, this is aided by a strongly felt persuasion of evangelical supremacy, belief in divine election, and hostility to Roman Catholicism and Ecumenism (Tonge et al. 2014, 83–88). While it is clear that loyalists indeed feel a strong cultural attachment to 'Ulster' as their homeland, the British

[83] See again McAuley (2010), who also speaks of a 'liberal unionism' and an 'intellectual unionism' which largely coincide with the 'new unionism' of the post-Trimble era. New unionism perceived itself as a "positive and flexible force within the peace process" (ibid., 72), building on the notion that safeguarding the union meant extending its support base. As such, it understood itself as the reverse image to "loudmouth Unionists" (ibid., 73).

lens on Ulster has never been fully abandoned. In the 2011 census, 48% of people in Northern Ireland declared themselves to be at least somewhat British (NISRA 2014, 46).[84] Ulster loyalism is therefore not a nationalist vision in itself (Nelson 1984, 12).[85]

All shades of unionism also share a common political bond, despite certain overtones of class conflict, because they are part of the same nation. Orangeism and loyalism have never been simple tools in the hand of the bourgeoisie. Often enough, they stood at odds with its established leadership, in particular on labour related issues (Patterson 1980, xii). Working-class unity across the divide, however, was always short-lived, mainly because labourism was heavily underrepresented amongst the unskilled and semi-skilled workers who tended to come predominantly from a Catholic background. Trade unionism in Northern Ireland had a strong standing amongst the skilled Protestant workmen of the shipyards (Patterson 2005, 156). As personified in William Walker, James Connolly's unionist antagonist (Howell 1986, 102–4) and Harry Midgley (Walker 1985), labour always looked towards Britain, making sustained labour unity a difficult project to achieve (T. Wilson 2010, 51–

[84] 'Somewhat' implies that respondents define themselves at least partially as British (the NISRA report uses the categories 'British only', 'British and Irish only', 'British and Northern Irish only', and 'British, Irish and Northern Irish only' for that purpose). In Rose's (1971) survey, 56% defined themselves as either 'British', 'Ulster', 'Sometimes British – sometimes Irish', or 'Anglo-Irish' (485). Given the rising numbers of those who declare themselves to be 'Catholic' and an unidentifiable 'none' category between 1971 and 2014, it is safe to assume that the various forms of Britishness are not on the wane (cp. Rose 1971, 476–77 and NISRA 2014, 91).

[85] This does not mean that flirtations with the idea of an independent Ulster did not exist, a whim that reappeared intermittently when Britain's policies towards British Ulster fell short of Ulster's expectations. In 1972 – the year direct rule was introduced – Kennedy Lindsay (1972) proposed an independent Ulster linked to the UK through an allegiance to Crown and Commonwealth. This scheme found support with a certain part of Ulster Vanguard, William Craig's UUP splinter party, which in the early 70's favoured a federalist UK (Ulster Vanguard 1972; D. W. Miller 1978, 153–55). Lindsay went a step further, suggesting that only an Ulster parliament under the control of (Protestant) Ulstermen could keep Westminster from selling the province into a united Ireland. He desired, in his own words, a state that was "deeply British" (Lindsay 1972, 19) but would circumvent the recalcitrant London parliament that did not really understand Northern Ireland. Lindsay's emphasis on Ulster does not amount to full-fledged nationalism, because Ulster is still imagined as part of the British nation united under the same crown: one nation, but two states. Lindsay's idea failed to garner significant support amongst unionists. In March 1978, John McMichael and his Ulster Political Research Group, a think tank linked to the UDA, published a discussion paper named *Beyond the Religious Divide* that outlined an independent Ulster forged around a common sense of identity beyond unionism and nationalism. This most radical proposal, again, failed to make an impact on either side of the divide (Hall 2006, 5; P. Taylor 2000, 162).

53). Working-class unity quickly crumbled if tested, revealing the structural weaknesses of the labour movement in Northern Ireland. The Outdoor Relief Riots[86], one of the few examples of united political actions between Catholic and Protestant workers in the 20th century, were thus quickly followed by the sectarian riots of 1935. Loyalists did not, and could not, became Irish nationalists overnight (Hepburn 1990; Bew and Norton 1979). Working-class loyalism has always been part of the same nation that linked working-class to bourgeoisie and Ulster to Britain; the bridge across the class divide could be crossed. This is what republicans did not or did not want to understand.

Secondly, republicans built their analysis of unionism on the observation that its Britishness was always called into question by the remainder of the UK. Republicans have been eager to point out that, despite the claims of Ulster unionists themselves, people and political elites in Britain feel ashamed of Northern Ireland, as reflected in republican derisions of unionists as cultural impostors mimicking English traditions. Cochrane (1997, 387) concludes that from the standpoint of Scotland, Wales, and England "unionists are adopted children rather than blood-kin, a vestige of empire building from a previous age, not an integral part of the nation". Nairn (1977) also reflects this attitude: for him, unionists are not and never have been fully British, but somewhat trapped between Irish and British nationalisms. Echoing the republican argument of Unionists as puppets of British imperialists, Nairn asserts that "they were always, and they still remain, profoundly and embarrassingly different from the society they imagine they are a frontier *of*" (ibid., 234). As such, Ulster unionists are apparently "hopeless caricatures of their fatherlands" (ibid.). There is of course something to be said about the particular oddity that is Northern Ireland: neither murals bearing the countenance of the Queen, nor Orange parades (with the notable exception of Glasgow and

[86] In 1932 the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland was skyrocketing. Support in form of a small cash payment was given to the unemployed in exchange for manual labour. The unrest won a doubling of the relief rate.

to a degree Liverpool), nor kerbstones decked in red, white, and blue are a common sight anywhere else in the UK. Harold Wilson's notorious rant against loyalists, denouncing "those people who spend their lives sponging on Westminster and British democracy" (H. Wilson 1974) and Maudling's résumé of his first visit to Northern Ireland as Home Secretary – "what a bloody awful country" (Beattie Smith 2011, 221) – sum up the confusion displayed by parts of the British establishment when looking across the Irish Sea.

But are they really not 'British'? The exit of the UK from the European Union driven by an aggressive rhetoric of anti-immigration and English nationalism has put the notion of a 'modern' Britain contrasting an atavistic Ulster into doubt. Resuscitating 19th century 'Rule Britannia'-jingoism as an alternative project to 'Cool Britannia', mainstream politicians as well as a sizeable part of the British population increasingly question Britain's multi-ethnic composition and cosmopolitan outlook (see Hobolt 2016; Calhoun 2016): the "Union Jackery" (Nairn 1977, 241) so commonly associated with Northern Ireland has become as popular in Surrey and Sussex as it is among the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone. The annual outcries against public personae refusing to the wear the armistice poppy resemble similar controversies in Northern Ireland.[87] 'Vote Leave and take back control' might not constitute an Ulsterisation of mainstream British politics, but puts the assertion that loyalists and cultural unionists would display "a form of Britishness unrecognized and unrecognizable in other parts of the UK" (McAuley 2016, 61–62) at least into question.

The third dispute revolves around unionism's political faithfulness to the British nation and

[87] For instance, the TUV's Samuel Morrison called a student motion demanding the ban of the sale of poppies at Queen's University Belfast "sick" (TUV 2014). FIFA's decision to ban poppy-armbands during a football match between Scotland and England evoked similar reactions. PM Theresa May called the verdict "utterly outrageous" (*The Guardian* 07 May, 2016). Both the Scottish and the English Football Associations defied the football governing body's decision (*BBC* 17 November, 2016c; *The Independent* 23 November, 2016). In 2012, the London-Derry-born football player James McClean received widespread abuse on social media as well as death threats for his refusal to wear the poppy (*The Guardian* 18 November, 2012). His continual non-compliance has now become a recurring media event (*The Independent* 31 October, 2015).

the conditional nature of its loyalty to British policy makers. In true Presbyterian covenanting tradition, open defiance against the monarch and parliament are not directed against the institution of the British state per se, but against a state that has broken its vows (D. W. Miller 1978, 5). This radical stance allowed the 'Gentlemen of Derry' to shut the city gates in 1688 against the forces of James VII and was resuscitated when loyal Ulster signed its Solemn League and Covenant against Home Rule – and it lives on in the conditional loyalty of Paisley and his successors (Akenson 1992, 97–150). For D. W. Miller (1978, 47), Ulster unionists are not fully British because they evoke a form of loyalty "incompatible with the acceptance of full implications of British nationality". In Protestant Ulster, the British nation could therefore never evoke the "semi-automatic trust on which modern democratic nation-states rely to establish consent" (ibid., 4). But the idiosyncrasies of the Scottish Covenanting position which has always been part of the unionist psyche, allowed for popular sovereignty to be invested in the monarch instead of parliament, as is the case in most modern nation states. The monarch represents the popular will of the national people without the fickle intermission of a parliament. Sovereignty, in both cases, rests with the people and allegiance is given to the same state – one popular nation, imagined in different ways.

These three challenges to Ulster's British identity have helped to shape the republican discourse of unionists as colonial frauds and charlatans. Carried to its logical conclusion, one has to infer that unionists were indeed incarcerated in a real life panopticon, unable to shake off their status as "victims of false consciousness" (Kilmurray and McWilliams 1998, 160). Despite the prevalence of this thinking especially during the 1970s and 1980s, invoking a need to belong, again, explains the intransigence of British-unionist identity. For unionists, Britishness is not an 'obstacle' but an essential part of their way of life. Without the union, their national identity *vanishes*, and chaos ensues. And this has always stood in stark contrast

to “a nationalist movement which consistently refused to recognise that the Ulster Protestants were not part of the Irish nation” (Patterson 1980, 145), and, invoking the language of de-colonisation, insisted that Ulster unionism was doomed to be discarded on the rubbish dump of history. Irish nationalists throughout history assumed that the slightest disagreements between middle-class unionists and loyalists meant that the ‘misled’ Protestant working-class were waking up to shed their shackles by uniting themselves with the Irish Catholic worker. Such reasoning was based on the assumption that what once was could be again: unity between Irish people of all denominations as portrayed by Tone. However, that “brief, shining moment of possibility” (Hanna 1998, 115) that was the radical Presbyterianism of the United Irishmen was long gone. Catholic Ireland was lost to progressivism when its political fate was linked to O’Connell and his alliance with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. From 1830 onwards “no northern Protestant could think about the future of Ireland without first thinking of O’Connell’s movement” (F. Wright 1996, 20).

Catholic Ireland had become a danger to the British identity of northern Protestants; Irish nationalism was now firmly built on the inherently antagonistic assumption of ‘not being Protestant’: “Irish began to mean Catholic” (ibid., 50). If Catholic emancipation had been granted earlier without having to be forced from the political establishment by the means of a Catholic mass movement, the relationship between nation and religion would have been weaker and national unity between radical Presbyterianism and the Irish masses might have been possible – despite the long history of religious animosity. However, this window of opportunity to end the animosity between natives and settlers was squandered. Ulster’s Presbyterian liberals, who were used to leading the way for Catholic emancipation, turned about and fled in horror from the tide of politicised Catholicism – and no political movement in the later years of the 20th century could reverse the bond that now tied the majority of

Ulster's Presbyterians to the union.

This brings us to the place unionism has held within the narrative of republican nationalism. The aggressive denial of unionist identity always sat awkwardly with republican self-understanding. Republicans saw and see themselves as genuinely anti-sectarian, fighting for that "dream of Wolfe Tone, a united Irish republic" (Sinn Féin 1996) – a republic which would "unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter" (Sinn Féin 2006). White (1997) supports the republican claim that the armed campaign was never sectarian, or directed specifically against the Protestant population, because republicans primarily targeted members of the British Army and attacked Catholic members of the security forces at a level consistent with their representation in these organisations (ibid., 46–48). This is to suggest that the Provisionals were fighting a non-sectarian war against a foreign oppressing force – a war that sometimes got out of hand, for instance when Protestant businesses in Newtonbutler and Rosslea/Roslea in Co. Fermanagh were put in the crosshairs (Patterson 2010, 347).

When it did get out of hand, it was often in a blatantly sectarian fashion, such as at the massacre of Protestant workmen at Kingsmill in 1976 or the attack on Tullyvallen Orange Hall near Newtonhamilton in 1975 (English 2012, 171–72). Other IRA missions backfired tremendously, such as the 1993 bombing intended to kill the leadership of the UDA meeting above a chip shop on the (Protestant) Shankill Road which instead killed ten innocent people (P. Taylor 1998, 338). These incidents have always been a source of embarrassment for the republican movement and the various IRAs have indeed a long history of distancing

themselves from such attacks.[88]

The massacre at Kingsmill stands out as a particularly heinous act.[89] The murders were not claimed by the Provisional IRA but by the 'South Armagh Republican Action Force', a "flag of convenience" (P. Taylor 1998, 196) for Provisionals.[90] An investigation by the Historical Enquiries Team found that the "dreadful murders were carried out by the Provisional IRA and none other" (*The Irish Times* 22 June, 2011) and that "the motive was purely sectarian with each man being murdered solely because he was a Protestant" (*News Letter* 17 June, 2011). Twelve days later, *Republican News* issued a repudiation: "The Irish Republican Army has never initiated sectarian killings, and sectarianism of any kind is abhorrent to the Republican movement and contrary to its philosophy" (English 2012, 173). In a similar attempt to disassociate the movement from sectarian attacks, Brendan 'Bik' McFarlane was ruled out of joining the H-Blocks hunger strikes in 1981 because of his conviction for the murder of five Protestants during the attack on the Bayardo Bar on the Shankill Road (P. Taylor 1998, 238). The link between political goals and sectarian murder was of course a PR disaster for republicans. But even if we take into account that sectarianism – the deliberate targeting of Protestants who were not part of the unionist state apparatus – was not republican policy (O'Duffy 1995), we are still left with a consistent pattern of attacks on unionist security forces. These aggressions were the most visible violation of a unionist identity as false consciousness.

RUC and UDR recruitment was traditionally high in the border counties. In these beleaguered communities adjoining the territory of the Republic of Ireland, attacks on part-

[88] See for instance republican amends after attacks on Protestant churches during the War of Independence (T. Wilson 2010, 135).
[89] A busload of workmen was stopped by a group of republicans and asked about their religious affiliation. One Catholic workman was told to run, the rest of them – all Protestants – were mown down (P. Taylor 1998, 196).
[90] And similar to the loyalist UDA, who claimed responsibility for physical violence by adopting the *nom de guerre* of the Ulster Freedom Fighters.

time members of the security forces going about their daily business as farmers or bus drivers were not only experienced as traumatic ordeals because of the human tragedy involved, but also because it was plainly obvious that locally-recruited members from the Protestant communities were being shot dead (Patterson 2010, 353). This might not have been sectarianism in the religious sense, but it was a clear strike against unionist communities in the political sense. Republicans blamed the British 'Ulsterisation' policy, shifting the day-to-day security responsibilities from the British Army to RUC and UDR, for having sectarianized the conflict (Adams 1986, 121). Tommy McKearney (see English 2012, 174) maintains that it was not the IRA but the British government who insisted on the primacy of RUC and UDR. The unionist state forces are again presented as a non-entity, as the misguided lackeys that came between the real participants of the conflict: the IRA and the British state. From this perspective, IRA forces had no other option but to engage RUC and UDR. However, during the Border Campaign, the IRA leadership had made the deliberate decision not to target 'B-Specials'[91] as they had done during the War of Independence, when the killing of a local shopkeeper and 'B-Special' in Rosslea/Roslea set off an avalanche of tit-for-tat burnings (T. Wilson 2016, 183–84). This was despite the fact that the 'B-Specials' played an important role in the government's security response (Patterson 2010, 343–44). As Patterson notes, this decision was probably not very popular amongst the rank-and-file – it is unlikely that this was any different when the armed campaign was resumed in full force from the 1970s onward.

Attacks on the forces of the state in the north stood in stark contrast to the absence of a coherent Provisional campaign against the forces of the Irish Republic. Before the days of Sinn Féin as a mainstream political party, Irish Republicans of all hues were keen to castigate

[91] Following the Hunt report in the 1970s, the Ulster Special Constabulary (commonly known as 'B-Specials') were disbanded and re-established as the UDR.

and ridicule the other state on the island of Ireland. For Peadar O'Donnell, the Free State was a "British institution" (English 1994, 57). For a Cork-based IRA splinter group the Irish government was "Her Majesty's Loyal puppetry in Leinster House" (Irish Revolutionary Forces 1966, 3). The rejection of this apparent "vassal parliament" (C. C. O'Brien 1978, 30) was reflected in the Provisional IRA's training handbook: only the Provisionals, as the representative of the 1918 Dáil Éireann, should be seen as the legitimate government in Ireland. All other parliaments "claiming the right to speak for and to pass laws on behalf of the Irish people are illegal assemblies, puppet governments of a foreign power, and willing tools of an occupying force" (Irish Republican Army 1993, 289). Not only were the British Army, RUC, and UDR, as one expects, decried as "illegal armies and illegal forces" (ibid., 290), but so were the security forces of the so-called 'Free State'. Resistance against such "foreign occupation forces and domestic collaborators" was deemed to be "morally justified" (CAIN 2016c).

Despite such bellicose sabre-rattling against the southern political establishment which was often indifferent to the situation in the north[92], republicans were painfully aware that only a tiny minority in the south accepted the Provisionals as a 'government'. Vociferous attacks on the Republic were contradicted by statements that removed it from the line of fire. In 1986, McGuinness proclaimed that "we are not at war with the government of the 26 Counties" (Sinn Féin 1986, 26). According to Coogan (2000, 257), 'Standing Order No.8' also explicitly instructed IRA members that Gardaí[93] were not to be regarded as targets. Institutions and representatives of the Republic of Ireland were rarely attacked, although the 'Free State' should have been as guilty of cementing partition as the 'orange state' in the

[92] The apathy shown towards the situation in the north made Gerry Adams on one occasion decry "Fine Gael as the Irish political wing of Margaret Thatcher's British army" (Sinn Féin 1986, 6).
[93] An Garda Síochána is the police force of the Republic of Ireland.

north. The attacks that did happen were, once again, a continuing source of embarrassment for the movement.[94] In 1983, the PIRA attacked Brian Stack, chief prison offer at Portlaoise Prison (Stack died later in 1984). Sinn Féin and Provisionals denied involvement until 2013, when it was revealed to the victim's sons that members of the Provisionals were indeed responsible (O'Doherty 2017, 276–84). The IRA upheld that the deed had not been sanctioned by its army council; Austin Stack, one of Brian Stack's sons, disputes this (ibid., 283). In any case, the reluctance of the Provisional movement to concede guilt in this matter, whether it was a rogue deed or indeed officially sanctioned, indicates that the sabre-rattling against the Republic had no substance because the southern state was officially off-limits.

The reason for republican acquiescence to the existence of the southern partitionist state went deeper than an awareness of the futility of a war against a state which enjoyed the good will of most of its citizens. Most northern republicans saw their struggle as a campaign for unification with the Republic of Ireland. It was not seen as a campaign for a utopian state based on Tone's writings which would fundamentally renegotiate the relationship between Catholics and Protestants, creating a new Irish nation.[95] The fight was for an absorption into an Irish Republic that republicans recognised as *theirs* and which, first and foremost, would have been the apotheosis of their core agenda, i.e. the defeat of unionism. It is true that there

[94] According to Coogan (2000, 425–26), the murder of Garda Michael Clerkin in 1976 was a direct violation of the aforementioned standing order. Clerkin was lured into a booby-trapped house near Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Sinn Féin called the murder "an outrage" (McKittrick et al. 2007, 683). There were few other deliberate attempts by the Provisionals to take the lives of Gardaí. Garda Sam Donegan was killed by a roadside bomb in 1972 (ibid., 197). Patrick Kelly of the Irish Defence Forces was shot dead alongside Garda recruit Gary Sheehan while coming to the rescue of a kidnapped man (ibid., 969). In 1980, Garda Seamus Quaid was killed when he and another officer stopped a suspect car (ibid., 839–40). In 1996, Garda Jerry McCabe was killed during a botched PIRA post office heist (ibid., 1393–95; *The Irish Times* 07 June, 2016).

[95] On a different level, this is mirrored by the discussions surrounding the all-Ireland rugby team, which brings together players from the Republic and Northern Ireland. At home games, the tricolour and Irish national anthem are used along with rugby anthem *Ireland's Call* and a cross-border flag featuring the logo of the Irish Rugby Union and the coat of arms of the four provinces of Ireland (Tuck 2003). At away games, The Soldier's Song and the tricolour are omitted, thus creating a 'neutral' Irish team – much to the chagrin of republicans. One Sinn Féin councillor reviled the "West Brits" of the Irish Rugby Union for their "inferiority complex and anti-national attitude" (*TheJournal.ie* 21 September, 2015). In a similar vein, Watterson (2017) denounced *Ireland's Call* as "wrong" and a "sop to Ulster players". The latter article was promoted by *An Phoblacht* on its Facebook platform (28.01.2017).

was also some thinking about how unionism could be accommodated and not defeated. The most sophisticated attempt was *Éire Nua* (New Ireland), the brainchild of the Ó Brádaigh leadership that was abandoned when the Adams leadership began to tighten its grip on the movement (Moloney 2003, 181–85; Mulholland 2007, 402–3). The policy paper resembled earlier proposals during the Home Rule crises to accommodate unionist fears by the route of a 'Home Rule within Home Rule' (Hepburn 2008, 145). Ulster was to receive its own parliament within an independent Irish state, although with a unionist majority greatly diminished. However, it is difficult not to have perceived such safeguards as window dressing disguising the 'defeat' of unionism, i.e. the end of Northern Ireland's association with the UK.

Hence, Irish nationalism as seen by republicans has one particular goal: an Irish state for an Irish people, in truly Rousseauian fashion. Individuals need to belong. This psychological imperative is fulfilled on the societal level through the nation where the unionist 'other' has, by definition, no place; and this is its core statement. According to Greenfeld (1992), German nationalism similarly emerged as an ethnic phenomenon which could not exist by itself and without "an expression of existential envy, *ressentiment*" (ibid., 372). German nationalism only made sense when compared to an adversary, a French counterpart. It *needed* a 'significant other'– first France, then England, then the Jewish people. Something similar happened regarding the Irish republicanism which dominated the streets of West Belfast and beyond, with its anti-unionist rhetoric and violence. In the last chapter, we saw how the same problem had plagued Irish republicanism from Young Ireland to the generation of 1916: republicanism expressed itself as a strident form of Anglophobia. The same defensive

reaction was directed against those who adhered to a unionist identity.[96]

Republican denial of unionism rehashed: Acknowledgement and 'reconciliation'

Then, in the late 80s, something changed – at least seemingly. Coinciding with the first tentative steps towards the peace process and the first signs of a pan-nationalist front, unionism was now openly acknowledged as a legitimate form of political and social identity. For another one of Alonso's (2003) interviewees,

> The biggest revolution within republicanism has been the recognition that there are a group of people who consider themselves to be British and that we have to somehow contend with them, not in a contentious way, but have to reach an agreement with them. (162)

What already was quite clear to the upper echelons of the movement at end of the 1970s was elevated to official policy: it was the admission that the IRA was not capable of "bombing one million unionists into a united Ireland" (ibid., 163). In his 1992 speech at Bodenstown, Jim Gibney ruefully admitted that the "deadly sound of gunfire" (Sinn Féin 1992b) had deeply alienated unionists and widened the sectarian gap between Catholics and Protestants. The policy document *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland* (Sinn Féin 1992a) introduced a "new realism" (Frampton 2009, 75) into the relationship with unionism. A simplistic 'Brits out' was now replaced by the demand that Britain should persuade unionists that a united Ireland was to their own advantage.[97] Unionists had to be convinced, their aspirations and fears could no longer be simply ignored. It was recognised that "a lasting peace on this island without the active participation of the northern unionist/protestant population" (Sinn Féin 1997a) was not feasible. Unionists had to be accommodated and their identity respected:

> We recognise that a section of the people of Ireland cherish a British heritage. We do not seek to end

[96] And of course those within the nationalist community who dared to dissent: those who stood for a "West British, shoneen ethos" (Adams 1986, 141) and the 'cowards' in the SDLP, the "Stoop Down Low Party" (Maye 2000, 353).

[97] These were of course empty words as it was extremely unlikely to happen. Nonetheless, it shed a new light on an old issue.

> the expression of this legitimate sense of identity. […]. When Irish Republicans talk about British interference and the British presence we do not mean the Unionist section of the people of Ireland. Being marginalised, abandoned and disempowered is wrong for nationalists. It would also be wrong for unionists. (Sinn Féin 1997b)

The British identity of unionists might no longer have been deemed to be 'wrong', but for republicans it still stood in the way of an all-Ireland majority who wished for a united Ireland. The problem of nation and the state again becomes obvious. Popular nationalism implies that the state has to belong to a people which, most likely, is defined in one ethnic way or another. Since Britishness expressed itself not only in cultural but also in political, unionist terms, the views of a unionist minority, even if they were now accepted as such, impeded the exercise of national self-determination, i.e. "a nation's exercise of the political freedom to determine its own economic, social and cultural development, without external influence and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity" (Sinn Féin 1988). At the 1988 talks with the SDLP, Sinn Féin emphatically stressed that when "a people are divided in political allegiance the democratic principle is that majority rights should prevail; the more so when such fundamentals as national rights are in question" (ibid.). Unionists might be recognised as a minority; however, "Nationalists and democrats cannot concede a veto to unionists over Irish reunification. To do so would be to concede a veto on the exercise of national rights to a national minority and would flout the basic principles of democracy" (ibid.). British influence through its national minority in Ireland was judged as a "direct contravention of the principle of national self-determination and […] therefore a

denial of democracy itself" (Sinn Féin 1992a).[98]

Around the time of the Good Friday Agreement, a new discourse stressing the importance of dialogue between unionists and republicans as well as the necessity for a process of reconciliation began to be deployed, which since then has stayed with the party (Sinn Féin 2007). In 2012, Sinn Féin's National Chairperson Declan Kearney touched off an initiative christened *Uncomfortable Conversations*, which invited representatives from various backgrounds and traditions to submit their views on the subject matter to *An Phoblacht* (Rowan 2015, 160–61).

In the lead article, Kearney called for "a new language" to be introduced and republicans to "become more intuitive about unionist apprehensions and objections" (*An Phoblacht* 02 March, 2012a).[99] A compassionate, imaginative dialogue was needed "to better understand the respective experiences of each other" (ibid.). Republicans had a duty to "consider very carefully what more we can do to engender trust and confidence with our unionist neighbours" (CAIN 2016a). Most importantly, republicans should "recognise the healing influence of being able to say sorry for human effects of all actions caused during the armed struggle" (*An Phoblacht* 02 March, 2012).[100] These conversations, based on a notion of "parity of esteem and equality" should "threaten no one" (ibid). In their policy document

[98] The notion that a majority should have the right to overrule an embattled minority, especially when 'fundamentals as national rights' are at stake, reveals a very one-dimensional understanding of democracy. See No. 51 of the *Federalist Papers*: "Whilst all authority in it will be derived from and dependent on the society, the society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority" (A. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay 2009, 120). Democracy cannot be reduced to an exercise in popular voting. Democracy is not the tyranny of an unchecked majority: "Democratic procedures of government like decision by the majority are expected to operate for the benefit of a community of citizens – for the benefit, in other words, of what we term a nation-state, not for a sectional interest in what might be called a 'majority state'" (Bourke 2012, xx). I profoundly disagree with Greenfeld's (2016, 2) view that "authoritarian democracies are democracies too."

[99] See also contributions to the same series by Loughran (*An Phoblacht* 01 October, 2015), Maskey (*An Phoblacht* 07 March, 2016b), and Austin (*An Phoblacht* 01, Feburary 2016a).

[100] This was also reiterated by Kearney when he apologised "for the pain experienced by the RUC family during the war, the suffering caused to the unionist section of our community, the human tragedy of the Shankill bomb being one instance of that" (*BBC* 27 August, 2015b).

Towards an Agreed and Reconciled Future (2016b), Sinn Féin returned to the topic of reconciliation. Republicans were again encouraged to recognise "the existence of different narratives" (ibid., 7) and to reach out to their unionist neighbours, something that Martin McGuinness claimed to have achieved through his meetings with the Queen in 2012 and 2014, thus "offering the hand of friendship to unionists through the person of Queen Elizabeth for which many unionists have a deep affinity" (*An Phoblacht* 28 June, 2012b).

The Good Friday Agreement compelled republicans to accept a unionist veto. Not only did the Republic of Ireland relegate its territorial claim on Northern Ireland to a mere aspiration, but the peace settlement made it clear that a united Ireland could only come about if Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as two separate entities voted in favour of unification. By accepting the Good Friday formula, republicans formally endorsed the notion that unionists could not be coerced into a united Ireland against their will. However, Sinn Féin needed to prove that their republican credentials were still intact when they completed their *volte-face* and entered the devolved Stormont parliament in 1999. The way forward was to show that only the tactics had changed, not the goal. This meant demonstrating that republicans were 'still winning' – that accommodating unionist concerns would still somehow advance the struggle. Hence, adapting to unionism had to fall short of approving of unionism as a *political* identity (Bean 1994, 18–19). Reconciliation and dialogue are conceived of as tools working for a united Ireland or at least as a means to convince the republican grassroots that a rise of Sinn Féin in the Republic and within Northern Ireland can actually repel unionism.

Unionists, even amongst the moderate UUP, hesitate to engage in a reconciliation process which they do not perceive as an empathic engagement but as republican propaganda (Little 2012, 89–91). Since dialogue is not seen as an external solution to conflicting narratives

based on zero-sum assumptions, reconciliation becomes another device to perpetuate those narratives that are being maintained by a heartfelt prejudice against the 'other'. From a republican point of view, reconciliation has to serve the erosion of unionism through compromise while the Northern Irish state persists – and to explain to unionists "that when the inevitable occurred, they had nothing to fear" (Patterson 1997, 262). Unionists are assigned the part of passive recipients, they are invited to embark on "a journey to a destination which they had repeatedly made clear they had no wish to reach" (ibid.). It is not unsurprising, Little (2012, 85) writes,

> that reconciliation in Northern Ireland is regarded by many people as an ideological tool rather than an institutional process concerned with the amelioration of substantive social and political disagreements or a means by which perpetrators of violence express contrition for their wrongdoing and victims exercise forgiveness.

Thus, a fundamental element of reconciliation, the mutual admission of guilt and wrongdoing which leads to the forming of new relationships between former belligerents – "so that the parties are no longer preoccupied with focusing on the issues in a direct, cognitive manner" (Lederach 1997, 35) – cannot take place. Although, as we have seen, republicans do admit the pain and suffering IRA actions have caused, it is also implied that their campaign was justified *despite* the human costs involved and that the republican dead and their families deserve the same status as victims as RUC and UDR officers killed by IRA volunteers. The language of compromise – 'we have all done things we regret' – is used to name and shame those in the unionist camp who decry such as efforts as attempts to rewrite history and moral ambivalence (Lawther 2014, 62). Distrusting most of Sinn Féin's proposal regarding reconciliation, unionists are apt to reject Sinn Féin's offers, putting unionism not only on the defensive but also feeding into Sinn Fein's grievance narrative which stands and falls with unionism's apparent 'not an inch' mentality. Unionists portray Sinn Féin's initiatives as fighting their war by other means (Lawther 2014, 83; Bean 1994,

26) and working for a "reunification by stealth" (Bean 2007, 197).

Unionist intransigence that dismisses the "poor man's post-modernism of 'story-telling' where the 'police story' or the 'army story' has the same truth value and moral content as the 'former combatants' story" (ibid., 67) could indeed be seen as just as another example of the 'no surrender' mentality which keeps unionists locked in a world of black and white. Unionism's defiant stance that the IRA 'is not a discourse' but altogether evil, should not exclusively seen as evidence for a lack of political leeway in the unionist camp, but also as a building block of republican strategy. The republican narrative indeed relies on unionist knee-jerk reactions that convey the impression that unionism is still a supremacist ideology which simply does not want to cooperate and treat the nationalist population of Northern Ireland as an equal partner. Unionist fears of a 'culture war', the collusion debate, and most recently unionist backing for 'Brexit' can thus be presented as proof that the radical elements of unionism are still in charge and actual reform of Northern Ireland is untenable (O'Doherty 2017, 319).

Current sentiments amongst unionists and especially Ulster loyalists are dominated by the fear that republican 'reconciliation' is first and foremost a byword for republican efforts to strip Northern Ireland of its British identity. Grand Master Edward Stevenson of the Orange Order accused republicans of "engaging in a cultural war to erode all symbols of Britishness" (*BBC* 12 July, 2013) and of attacking the political identity of Ulster unionists. For him, the "shameful decision to strip down the union flag from Belfast City Hall, following on from the outrageous naming of a children's play park in Newry after an IRA terrorist, are just some examples of the so-called 'shared future' envisaged by Sinn Féin" (ibid.).[101] Loyalists see the peace process not as a solution to past hostilities but as cunning tool employed by

[101] The Newry and Mourne Council named a playpark in Newry, Co. Armagh/Down, after IRA hunger striker Raymond McCreesh (*BBC* 05 December, 2012b).

Sinn Féin: it is a war fought through the means of political negotiations (Nolan et al. 2014, 97).

This of course echoes the hostile position that had put the DUP in opposition to the Good Friday Agreement. Even after the St Andrews accord the DUP did not sell the peace agreement as a unionist agreement to its electorate. Thus, Sinn Féin's cantankerous behaviour regarding symbols of everyday Britishness is taken at face value. The vote at Belfast City Hall is interpreted as a "callous attempt by Sinn Féin to sterilise Northern Ireland and to show the Republican movement and their grassroots support that there is no longer a British presence in the 6 counties" (ibid., 98). The subtle but steady 'sterilisation' of Northern Ireland in local town halls and council chambers cannot be countered by unionists, which in return results in discontent. While republicans used to be clearly identifiable as 'the enemy', now they come in the mischievous form of 'peacemakers' and politicians wearing suits and ties:

> the Provos tried to bomb and shoot us into an all-Ireland for years and they couldn't do it. Now they're trying to do it in a different way by taking away our culture. There's still a war going on, but this time it's without bullets and bombs. We have given everything, the RUC and the UDR they've been disbanded, all the emblems of the Queen are gone, now they're trying to take away our flag. (McAuley 2016, 145)

The peace process, thus, is linked to an erosion of banal nationalism and belonging. Such opinions reflect that, for the wider unionist community, the peace dividend in the form of a unionist veto against a united Ireland has not paid off. Rather, the flag protests reflect "the protesters' sense of insecurity and alienation from the institutions of power in post-Agreement Northern Ireland" and "heighten a sense that 'the tables have turned' for unionists" (Nolan et al. 2014, 95). Sinn Féin's cause of making Northern Ireland a shared space is felt as a direct attack on the inherently British character of the state and its unionist citizens. The following statement sums up the discontent felt in many loyalist areas:

> I challenge you to go into any pub on the Shankill, or around here, and see what people talk about – and it is this fear of their Britishness being slowly taken away from them. It may not be happening right in our face, it is a slow process. And when you talk about gaining from the peace process, I am not aware of any working-class unionist/loyalist community which has really benefited, in real terms, from the peace process. (Hall 2012, 23)

Another issue of contention is the republican watchword of 'collusion'. Whether or not state collusion, i.e. paramilitaries working as informants or members of the RUC and UDR leading a double life as UVF and UDA associates, was widespread is still largely contested. Although some incidents during the 'Troubles', such as the murder of the Miami Showband by members of the infamous Glenanne gang, have indeed been established as solid examples of verifiable acts of collusion, the extent of it is unclear. Authors such as Cadwallader (2013) support the view of collusion amounting to more than acts of black sheep combined with professional ineptitude of careless individuals, pointing out a direct involvement of the British security forces that served a larger political purpose. Others, such as Desmond de Silva in his report on the killing of Pat Finucane, recognised "that a series of positive actions by employees of the State actively furthered and facilitated his murder" (de Silva QC 2012, 23); however, he rejected the idea of "an over-arching State conspiracy" (ibid.). Following Justice Cory's report on collusion in 2003, a number of state-sponsored inquiries investigated the role that the RUC and Army played in other high-profile cases such as the killing of Rosemary Nelson (Morland, Strachan, and Burden 2011). A Police Ombudsman's report also found evidence of collusion between the RUC and the UVF death squad which killed six innocent people in a pub in Loughinisland (Sinn Féin 2016c). An ongoing campaign also seeks to achieve the establishment of an independent inquiry into the 1971 Ballymurphy killings committed by the same Parachute Regiment that some months later saw itself again the centre of attention in London-Derry (*The Guardian* 26 June, 2014a).

More recently, the decision of the majority of the British electorate to leave the European

Union has opened another field of opportunity on the republican front. In the document *Towards a United Ireland*, Sinn Féin (2016a) depicts 'Brexit' as proof of the undemocratic nature of the union.[102] Gerry Adams described a hard Brexit, which would see no special status for Northern Ireland, in combination with London's intention to leave the European Convention on Human Rights, as "a hostile action" (*The Guardian* 21 January, 2017a). There is if course always the possibility that a hard Brexit turning the Irish border into the EU's external frontier will remind both mainstream and dissident republicans of its lingering presence. Since the end of military checkpoints across Northern Ireland, border controls have also been a thing of the past, removing the border itself from the immediate republican agenda. The possible reintroduction of border controls will act as a powerful reminder of the presence of the unionist state (Guelke 2017, 51). Given a lack of leadership within the dissident movement and meaningful alternatives for mainstream republican voters – although this can surely change – it is likely that the reappearance of a hard border would provide the Sinn Féin narrative with new fuel to play out its role as a nationalist resistance in the heart of unionism.

What is probably even more important is that unionist blunders such as Brexit can reinvigorate support for Sinn Féin amongst the wider nationalist community. This part of the nationalist population of Northern Ireland has benefited from the peace dividend, and in the absence of discriminatory policies directed against their community identity, live comfortably with the constitutional status quo. It remains to be seen whether a hard Brexit, reintroducing the visible borders of the British state against the explicit wish of the nationalist community, will lead to an upsurge of support for a united Ireland amongst those who otherwise would feel at ease within a reformed unionist state – a recent survey for

[102] 55.8% of the electorate in Northern Ireland voted for 'Remain'. The unionist population, however, provided the bedrock for the 'Leave' vote (*BBC* 2016a).

instance found that more than 50% of Catholics could vote for a united Ireland in case of a 'hard' Brexit (*BBC* 21 May, 2018).

Culture war, collusion, Brexit; all rely on one central expectation: unionist intransigence and its inherent logic that 'no surrender' means 'no surrender'. By refusing to accommodate Sinn Féin's peace agenda of equality and reconciliation, the unionist state is once more presented as incorrigible; and, from a nationalist perspective, as an entity to be abolished by voting for a united Ireland. Speaking at a public event in 2014 and in a way almost uncharacteristic of the prudent strategist Adams, he said about Sinn Féin's equality agenda:

> But what's the point? The point is to actually break these bastards – that's the point. And what's going to break them is equality. That's what's going to break them – equality. Who could be afraid of equality? Who could be afraid of treating somebody the way you want to be treated? That's what we need to keep the focus on – that's the Trojan horse of the entire republican strategy is to reach out to people on the basis of equality. (*BBC* 25 November, 2014d)

Arlene Foster called it a "mask slipping moment" (ibid.). Adams' comment did not come out of nothing, but followed Gregory Campbell's infamous 'Curry my yoghurt' gaffe.[103] Adams later clarified that he was referring to "bigots and racists" (*The Guardian* 25 November, 2014b) and not unionists in general. But it is those unionists, the 'bigots', in Adams' words, that republicanism is counting on.

In a speech commemorating IRA luminary John Joe McGirl, Martin Guinness (Sinn Féin 2013b) restated some of Sinn Féin's peace policy commitments: unionist identity was acknowledged ("I am entirely comfortable with unionists seeking to express a British identity in a sensible and non-confrontational fashion") and so was the fact that they have come a long way ("the vast majority of unionists want to see this process succeed. They are

[103] 'Go raibh maith agat, Ceann Comhairle' ('thank you, Speaker') is a phrased used by nationalist MLAs when addressing the Speaker. The DUP's Gregory Campbell ridiculed it by turning the phrase into the nonsensical 'Curry my yoghurt can coca coalyer'. Campbell later refused to apologise (*BBC* 04 November, 2014c).

not interested in re-fighting battles that are long over, or harking back to a time that has long gone"). However, the unruly elements within unionism are again invoked:

> Political unionism needs to realise that nothing can be gained by continually feeding the insatiable appetite of those who see life through a red, white and blue prism. They are violently opposed to this process because at the heart of it they are opposed to Equality. […]. So the choice for unionism is very clear – [to] share power on the basis of equality and real partnership – and when you do that you will find genuine nationalist and republican partners – or pander to rejectionists who abhor equality, fairness and parity of esteem. (ibid.)

Unionism is given the choice: either to 'equalise' and erode the British identity of the unionist state, thus creating a rising republican tide that would force unionists into compromises regarding the national question, or – and this is what McGuinness did not dare to say – to face the consequences. The idea of "parity of esteem" (Sinn Féin 2013a) within Northern Ireland is thus seen as an interim stage: although no tricolour might be yet hoisted above Belfast City Hall, having no flag at all is still more *Irish republican*, i.e. non-unionist, than accepting the fate of a visible Union flag. Unionist intransigence regarding the equality and reconciliation agenda might even be more beneficial to the republican agenda: it creates a lasting incentive beyond the core republican electorate to vote for a united Ireland.

To conclude: Sinn Féin's Ó Broin (2009, 274) claims that the Good Friday Agreement ushered in an era of "conflict resolution" which saw Sinn Féin tackling "the social, economic, political and cultural causes of conflict" – all despite unionism's active attempts to obstruct and minimise Sinn Féin's efforts to get to the root of the conflict. However, in an act of self-contradiction, Ó Broin quotes his fellow TD Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: "Sinn Féin does not regard the Good Friday document as a settlement. But we do believe that the new political scenario can "provide a basis for advancement" (ibid., 275). Sinn Féin is indeed convinced that "for unionists this is as good as it gets, for nationalists it's just a start" (ibid., 276). The agreement does not constitute a new start that would mark the beginning of a

reconciliation process; this would require an acceptance of the agreement as the end of history – and not as another way to undermine the position of unionism. Eamonn Mallie also offers a damning assessment of republican intentions: "all the post '98 grievances are being lumped into a Sinn Fein narrative, which presents republicanism as the epitome of peace and reconciliation, whilst the big bad Unionists are obstructive, regressive and just plain ignorant" (Mallie 2017).

It can therefore be said that "traditional teleology still obtains, notwithstanding fashionable pluralist language of conflict resolution and peace process" (Bean 1994, 24). This teleology demands that, in the words of Michelle O'Neill, "the north isn't British" (*Belfast Telegraph* 03 October, 2017). The Good Friday Agreement was presented to the republican grassroots not as (some) unionists wished to understand it – i.e. as a final settlement which cemented Northern Ireland's position in the UK – but as a transitional document which would still demand that unionists alter their political being. It was made clear that the war was still going on, but was now fought on a different, more promising turf. The peace process created a community "on the march" (Frampton 2009, 128), a community which was bound to unsettle unionists and create uncertainty amidst their ranks. As Frampton (2009, 77) correctly observes: "Sinn Féin remains fundamentally unaltered at an ideological level."

More than ever, and in contrast to the above, Sinn Féin stresses that "the type of nation-building and island-wide reconciliation […] Sinn Féin is working towards is not about grafting the North onto the current political, cultural and economic status quo of the South", but "about the creation of a new, agreed Ireland for all of us who share this island" (Sinn Féin 2016a, 26). For Sinn Féin there is no contradiction between a united Ireland and unionism, hinting that in a new Ireland Irishness, Britishness, and unionism can be equally accommodated (Sinn Féin 2016b). For republicans, the year 1798 still lives on, not as a ghastly spectre but as a real, achievable political project. This act of political manoeuvring

denies how the political developments of the past 200 years have driven a wedge between the two traditions, firmly establishing unionism as a component part of a wider British nationalist ideology. Irish unity would end unionism "as both a political and electoral force" (*News Letter* 05 December, 2016) – therefore, "Irish unity and unionism cannot co-exist" (ibid.). Furthermore, it would herald the end of Sinn Féin republicanism, since the foundation of its narrative, to counter the unionist state, would disappear. But as long as Sinn Féin can sustainably prove that they, in the words of John Joe McGirl, are still attempting to "win the peace" (Sinn Féin 1986, 22) by causing unionism as a political force to retreat, the Good Friday Agreement will not become the equivalent to Michael Collins' Treaty and Sinn Féin's republican credentials will remain intact.

As has been shown by Mitchell, Evans, and O'Leary (2009, 407), part of Sinn Féin's electoral surge is the result of former SDLP voters switching their partisan allegiance. Unlike 'convinced' republicans, these votes for Sinn Féin do not automatically imply a vote for a united Ireland. They are votes for conflict regulation, not for the politics of conflict per se, and aimed at preserving as much influence for the nationalist-Catholic community within the resurrected Stormont regime as possible. Having increased its support base, Sinn Féin had to incorporate moderate voices with pragmatic views on the national question itself. Such partisans accept 'parity of esteem' at face value – they want to see identity politics enforced, but, at the same time, accept consensual politics with a unionist 'other' (Mitchell, Evans, and O'Leary 2009, 405). For Sinn Féin, this involves the danger of losing the goal of a united Ireland out of sight and antagonising its core support. Part of Sinn Féin's peace strategy therefore has to be to convince the republican core of the party that policy moderation is only a means to an end. Brexit, as shown, can be a new venue to keep up the pretence that Sinn Féin are still fighting for a united Ireland. Dissenting voices accusing the leadership of a "metamorphosis from standing four square on four feet to standing on their

hind legs, a la the pigs in Animal Farm" (*News Letter* 02 January, 2017a) could thus be contained.

We can see how republican change that put an end to the Armalite has come about: the "glacial change" (Patterson 2010, 699) from the denial of unionist identity to the language of reconciliation became possible because no radical break with the dominant republican discourse, which sees antagonism against unionism at its centre, was attempted. The adjustment in republican doctrine became possible because the republican *raison d'être* that unionism "remained something to be outmanoeuvred and, ultimately, defeated" (Frampton 2009, 79) was left untouched. The Adams and McGuinness leadership indeed moved "slowly and carefully" (McIntyre 2008, xii). But this means that Sinn Féin republicanism, in line with what I argued in the previous chapter, is still a narrative of *prejudice* which jealously guards the sense of belonging and ontological security that it stimulates. Stereotypes of unionists as sticks-in-the-mud living in the past – previously cast as colonial dupes with a false sense of identity, now as old reactionaries who do not want to share 'their' state – still buttress republican assumptions. While infra-humanisation, the belief that the 'other' side is slightly less human, is in its most vile incarnation more or less missing, republicans still hold that the unionist unwillingness to acknowledge British state actions points towards a lack of "imagination, generosity and compromise" (Sinn Féin 2016b, 7). Despite republican efforts to reach out to the unionist community, 'they' show a distinctive lack of remorse. Finally, the republican narrative still demands the ultimate act of high entitativity: that pro-British sentiments which demarcate unionism as a distinct, unitary expression of a political out-group have to be pushed back. This is not to say that the change which did come about had no implications – as long as dissident republicans cannot benefit from the repeated deadlocks at Stormont, political bickering between two political parties with diametrically opposed goals is preferable to open violence. It is also clear that

republicanism as defined above is also antagonistic to true conflict *resolution*.

We can now compare republicanism thus understood with a republicanism that, if thought through to the end, *is* conflict resolution because it would bridge the ethno-national divide: this was the watchword for Irish socialism, a political discourse that took up where the United Irishmen and their promise of unity between unionism and nationalism had left off, encouraging the working classes to move beyond the ethnic divisions of 'orange' and 'green'. However, socialism in Ireland failed. If Adams' republicanism flourished because it did not go against the grain, Irish socialism was destined to be stillborn as it threatened the national *habitus* and, by extension, belonging.

4. Irish republicanism II: The change that could not be

The change within republicanism as described in the last chapter stands in stark contrast to the socialist language which 20th century Irish republicans tried to fuse with Irish nationalism. The socialist project, however, proved to be a profound failure, pointing towards the incompatibility of nationalism and socialism as political ideologies. Socialism demanded the unity between Irish and British workers in Ireland – and a radical revision of republicanism as an anti-unionist force. My thesis, as argued in the previous chapter, therefore is confirmed: narrative change must be conservative change that does not burn the bridges one needs to cross in order to reach the other side. Irish socialism stands out as the change that could not be.

The politics of illusion: Socialist Ireland

The history of socialism in 20th century Ireland is – as elsewhere – first and foremost a history of failure. The social strata it called upon – rural Catholic Ireland and the nationalist and unionist working-classes in the industrialised centres of Belfast and Dublin – reacted with indifference or outright rejection. Socialism was forced into a conversation with nationalism, making it impossible for the former to ignore the latter. This inherent conflict between socialism and nationalism was going to torment the Irish left for much of the 20th century. This of course was true for much of Western Europe. In Britain the working-classes were notoriously content to be part of a political system they recognised as 'fair': "They inherited traditions", according to McKibbin (1984), "which both burdened and liberated it, an ambiguous set of social values which it shared with other classes and which gave legitimacy to institutions and sentiments whose ideological power precluded a revolutionary rhetoric" (310). The working-classes took their place within the Empire that was ruling the waves and beyond; and the "no-nonsense British workingman" (ibid., 319) felt no inclination to endanger their absolute gains within the British nation. Elsewhere Wilhelm Liebknecht, father to Karl, grew tired of socialist struggle within democratic structures that were essentially bourgeois; he proclaimed that socialism "is simply a question of force which cannot be resolved in a parliament" (Mulholland 2012, 129). In Russia it was declared that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (ibid., 133) had to protect revolutionary successes against the class enemy and those caught within false consciousness. Thus, the working-classes

either remained inert or, as in Russia, Liebknecht-style revolution was turned into a farce.

What makes the case of Ireland stand out is that the question of socialism was even more precarious due to the presence of a national 'other'. There was, therefore, not much hope for socialism – if, as in Britain, the working-classes were content with the breadcrumbs that fell from the imperial table, why should socialism succeed in country where nationalism was very much part of the banal and 'everyday'? Socialist rhetoric nonetheless never fell silent throughout the 20th century; the flame, though dim, was carried on until the fall of the Soviet Union had apparently ushered in the end of history. Socialism's internationalist slogans that spoke of unity and joint struggle must have appealed to certain republican thinkers who found themselves in a divided society, where the working-classes were not only guilty of submissiveness but displayed the notorious habit of having a go at each other.

In the end, nationalism almost always emerged as the more powerful societal force, because it pandered to the human inclination for social stability. If the republican change from the Armalite to constitutional politics avoided a split because no red lines were crossed, i.e. its relationship to the unionist 'other' remained unadulterated, socialism's failure to drag Irish nationalism along indicates that a certain red line was indeed crossed. This red line, again, is the unionist 'other'. If the unspeakable was carried out, if unionism came dangerously close to disappearing from republican self-understanding, splits in the ranks of republicanism followed.

Most Irish nationalist enterprises, either outright republican or with a republican tinge, have reached a similar conclusion regarding their Protestant neighbours but often with very different implications for their own movements. It is indeed Sinn Féin's achievement *not* to have suffered the devastating blow that came with a seemingly radical alteration of traditional republican politics, either leaving space on the radical fringe or condemning

themselves to obscurity of various degrees. It is of course important to keep in mind that the politics of the (Northern) Irish left was mostly played out against a backdrop of communal violence, either in the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish War or during the modern 'Troubles'. This made it very difficult for socialism to recruit for its cause. Against the wider background of historical communal division in Ireland and the ongoing politics of ethno-nationalism, Irish socialism nevertheless stands out, to use Patterson's term (1997), as 'the politics of illusion' – the change that was not going to happen. The discussion must start with Marxism itself and its relationship to nationalist ideology before it can turn to Ireland. This makes it necessary, in the words of Hobsbawm (1977, 22) to do "combats with the ghost of Luxemburg" and, as Nairn (1977, 82–90) and Löwy (1998, 53–59) have shown, with the ghosts of Lenin and Marx as well.[104]

The name of Rosa Luxemburg, founding member of the anti-war Spartacus League and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), still stands at the crossroads of nationalism and socialism, although her influence on socialist world politics was always limited. The reason for this is that her socialism was accompanied by an intense dislike for the national – and indeed very stridently so. For Luxemburg, the national state was inherently bourgeois and supporting it therefore a dangerous ideological mistake (Forman 1998, 89). Disillusioned with the German workers who had thrown the International to the winds to march off and die in the trenches, Luxemburg had even pondered committing suicide in order to arouse the German working-classes from their slumber (Schütrumpf 2006, 34). Unlike Lenin, and in particular unlike somebody like Ireland's James Connolly, Luxemburg never saw any revolutionary potential in the nation. It was class alone to which the worker should be devoted. She attacked Lenin's right to self-determination as an "empty petit bourgeois

[104] For an overview of socialism and its ambiguous relationship to nationalism, see Nimni (1991) and Forman (1998).

phraseology and humbug" (ibid., 81), generally denying that socialism could ever be introduced using the route of nationalist politics. Luxemburg vehemently hit out against popular referenda on national self-determination in Finland, the Ukraine, Poland etc. In the face of the "mental constitution of the peasant masses and large parts of the even more indifferent proletarians, the reactionary tendencies of the petit bourgeois and the multifarious means of manipulation through the bourgeois" (Luxemburg 2006, 83), popular referenda could only benefit the "demagoguery of the bourgeois classes" (ibid., 84). Nationalism, following Luxemburg, is a plaything of the ruling class, always a false consciousness employed against the revolutionary proletarian masses. Nationalist revolutions, because they necessarily include the bourgeoisie and their power apparatus, would always constitute conservative counter-revolutions.

Both Marx and Engels would have disagreed with such an analysis. Of course, neither of them was a nationalist. Nationalism could never be a goal in itself, but only a stepping stone towards world communism. The working-class had to fulfil its historic task as the gravedigger of the capitalist system – the internationalism of Marx and Engels was a caveat that liberation could not stop at a specific border. The world, not the political nation, had to be liberated. Marx and Engels were very clear that particularism such as nationalism could not be separated from proletarian struggles in other countries. Workers were thus admonished to keep in mind that the entire proletariat had the same interests. The working-class, "always and everywhere" had to "represent the interests of the movement as a whole" (Marx and Engels 2005, 21). Even if the slogan "Working men of all countries, unite!" (ibid., 52), sitting so prominently at the end of the *Communist Manifesto*, was interpreted as an appeal to unity within a given country, the proletariat was reminded that they had "a world to win" (ibid.). National loyalty is conditional loyalty – it serves the cause of class struggle and has to be abandoned if it loses its revolutionary character (Hobsbawm 1977). Every

national demand, something that Lenin subsequently elaborated on (see Lenin 1950a), must be interpreted from the angle of class struggle.

Marx made this point of the limitations of national demands very forcefully, even finding – ironically, given his influence on later feminist and post-colonial thinkers – a positive side to colonialism, which he saw as bound up with the arrival of capitalism and the development of class consciousness (Eagleton 2011, 219; Lockman 2010, 85); besides, Engels did not grant the right of nationhood to all peoples, only those who were deemed to be "*necessary peoples*" (Engels 1973b, 152). The application of the nationality principle to the Serbs and Croats was for instance seen as an "absurdity, got up in a popular dress in order to throw dust in shallow people's eyes" (Engels 1974, 384). Although Engels oscillated in this question between being arbitrary – lumping together Wales and the Isle of Man – and being misled by nationalist propaganda[105], he made it clear that national stirrings had to serve the cause of internationalist class struggle.

Marx and Engels advocated German solidarity with Poland after the 1846 Kraków Uprising (Engels 1973b; Marx 1973) because the rebellion advanced "the cause of all peoples" (Engels 1973a, 108). Marx showed a similar attitude in relation to the case of national liberation in Ireland which, first and foremost, would encourage the English workers to seek their own social emancipation (Marx 1977, 592). Although each working-class had to fight their own corner and their own bourgeoisie, their separate struggle shared in the same goal: the advent of communism (Adler 1978, 132; Halliday 1999, 79–80). Until then, the working-classes were reminded that "The working men have no country" (Marx and Engels 2005, 30) and never to "make a fetish of the national question" (Lenin 1950a, 365–66). In

[105] Engels compares Wales to Italy which could apparently boast a "history of 2,000 years, and an unimpaired national vitality" (Engels 1974, 384), falling for a perennialist argument that equates modern Italy with ancient Rome.

communism, the end of history, all class antagonism and all nation states would disappear (Lenin 1950b, 416). The Herderian dream of different cultures sitting side by side, united in peaceful harmony and coexistence, would prevail – in the form of world socialist republic (Löwy 1998, 61–62).

In what way is this relevant to Northern Ireland? Ian Paisley once said of the more or less reformist Terence O'Neill: "A traitor and a bridge are very much alike for they both go over to the other side. It was the bloody hand of a traitor that he (O'Neill) held" (Tonge et al. 2014, 11). Paisley's diatribe contains a grain of sociological truth. Marxism, because of its internationalist outlook, *always* requires one to 'go over to the other side'. While, in the case of Germany, solidarity with the Polish revolutionaries was required, in the case of Ireland internal division between orange and green would have to be crossed. Even if the working-classes would settle the score with their respective national bourgeoisie, the spirit of international brotherhood and solidarity was to prevail. From this perspective, the specific question of who was an Irish worker and who was not was unimportant because it stressed the divisive, bourgeois side of nationalism. After all, an independent Irish state was never the end goal in the first place. However, Irish socialism was never able to transcend the national question, leaving behind a devastating track record for the Irish left. The power of nationalism became insurmountable: nationalism, understood as popular sovereignty, guaranteed a solid world order by keeping 'us' and 'them' apart. Socialism on the other side was handicapped from the beginning, because its agenda set out to complicate the picture. This, according to Bar-Tal (2001) involves

> uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk-taking. Societies involved in intractable conflict […] know how to cope with violent conflict and its threats and dangers; some have very successfully adapted to this situation in the past. The hope for peace, in contrast, demands new solutions to new situations of peacemaking, which the collective orientation of fear inhibits from developing. (605)

Not only is this a testimony to the reach and sociological power of (Irish) nationalism, it is

also an indicator of the extent of possible change within national narratives. If nationalism caters for a wider societal need to belong, then reaching out across the divide of separating historical experiences becomes very difficult.

The first person to face the dilemma of nationalism and socialism was the founding father of Irish socialism, James Connolly (1868 – 1916).[106] Following Marx's (1977) own musings on the Irish question, Connolly assumed that the socialist revolution would come from the disgruntled Irish working-class which, unlike its complacent English equivalent, was not utterly useless (Boyce 1982, 304). Connolly's rhetoric on the role of the national socialist, however, showed how easy it had become for orthodox socialism to be swept away by the tide of Irish nationalism. Connolly gave a scathing answer to the scores of Irishmen joining the British Empire in the First World War: "no agency less potent than the red-tide of war on Irish soil will ever be able to enable the Irish race to recover its self-respect or call upon the Irish race or establish its national dignity" (Howell 1986, 143).[107] As Howell remarks, such an analysis came dangerously close to Pearse's ethnic phantasms about the necessity of blood sacrifice for Kathleen Ni Houlihan.

Connolly, in contrast to Marx, also looked to the ethnic to justify his amalgamation of the national and the socialist. While Catholic Ireland was readily acknowledged as an authentic expression of the people, unionism was not (Whyte 1991, 176; Martin 1982, 58). In his reflections on 'Celtic communism', Connolly outlined radical potential in the backwardness of the Irish peasantry, firmly sticking to a Gaelicised interpretation of Irish history: Connolly claimed that the Irish peasantry still cherished the living memory of common proprietorship

[106] On Connolly in general, see Greaves (1961) and Morgan (1988).
[107] Ironically John Redmond made the opposite argument. Through its blood sacrifice in the Great War, Ireland had proven its loyalty to the Empire but also its worthiness to be granted Home Rule (A. Jackson 1999, 169): "No people can be said to have rightly proved their nationhood and their power to maintain it until they have demonstrated their military prowess; and although Irish blood has reddened the earth of every continent, never until now have we as a people set a national army in the field" (Finnan 2004, 100).

(J. Connolly 1968, 60). The Irish peasantry, being 'backward' only to the disinterested bystander, already possessed "the counter-cultural consciousness that would be the basis for the syndicalist cooperative commonwealth" (Lloyd 2003, 353). This Gaelic past was presented as an alternative history "whose radical potential lies not in its fulfilment or overcoming of but in its obliquity to modernity" (ibid., 361). For Connolly, the memory of a Gaelic, pre-colonial past had revolutionary potential.

His pamphlet on *Labour, Nationality and Religion* (1935), in which Connolly replied to the Catholic Church's accusation that socialism was promoting atheism, made for an even more bizarre case. Despite Marx's dictum that religion represented a certain stage of historical development and not a perpetual truth, Connolly claimed that Marx was merely arguing for religious freedom (J. Connolly 1935, 63–64). Socialists, in fact, had always defended the Catholic Church "from the attacks of unscrupulous Protestant historians" (ibid., 73). Echoing the Weberian argument, Connolly argued that Protestantism was intransigently linked with the rise of capitalism – i.e. the reformation was merely "the capitalist idea appearing in the religious field" (ibid.) – which severed the individual from their link with priest and church. Thus, human beings were turned into "isolated units in a warring economic world" (ibid.). Why the working-class remained in a state of religious dependency, ergo trapped in false consciousness, while capitalist excesses already insinuated the dawn of communism, Connolly did not explain.

In his essays Connolly clearly aligned himself with the dominant social forces of his time. Even if he was convinced, as were later Irish socialists[108], that both Irish Catholics and Protestants were part of a yet-unformed Irish nation, it remained his secret how Gaelic mysticism and ingratiation with the Catholic hierarchy were supposed to convince Irish

[108] See, for instance D.R. O'Connor Lysaght's (Dorn, 1973) position on the matter.

Protestants of his sincerity towards socialist iconoclasm. Connolly saw sectarianism as a bourgeois smokescreen, but failed to make clear how his pledge of allegiance to Irish Ireland could fulfil the internationalist promise of socialism.[109] Apart from lip-service paid to the finitude of the nation state under socialism (J. Connolly 1934, 17) and a vague reference to common suffering between Protestant and Catholic workers that would be a basis for joint action (J. Connolly 1968, 42), Connolly remained quiet on that subject. McGarry and O'Leary (1995) doubt whether Connolly's political strategy could be dubbed 'anti-imperialist', since it lacked a clear strategy for undermining the transnational basis of capitalism: "Irish nationalist 'anti-imperialism' was limited to extricating Ireland from British control and therefore was not anti-capitalist" (142). Connolly's participation in the Easter Rising was hence "the product not of the triumph of his ideas", that is republican socialism, "but rather of their inadequacy" (English 1994, 25). If anything, a Yeatsian terrible beauty was born to deepen the rift between orange and green. The Marxist stumbling block – that capitalism was not accompanied by an emergence of transnational class loyalties – was particularly fateful in Ireland.

The playwright Sean O'Casey, as Howell (1986) points out, had it right: Connolly de facto ceased to be a socialist when he subordinated the plough and the stars, the shibboleth of Irish socialism O'Casey had designed himself, to the banner of bourgeois nationalism. In O'Casey's own words: "the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his eloquent lips was silent forever, and Irish Labour lost a leader" (ibid., 141). For O'Casey, the Irish Volunteers Connolly sought to co-opt were essentially "Grattan's Tinsel Volunteers" (Murray 2004, 89), a violent, petty distraction from the cause of labour. There

[109] See also William Walker, Connolly's sparring partner on the unionist side, whose suggestion to link all Irish workers to the metropolitan heartland (i.e. Great Britain) was deficient as well, as it equally ignored existing community divisions (Patterson 2009; J. Connolly and Walker 1974). Both Marx and Connolly tremendously overestimated the Irish peasantry's appetite for radical social upheaval. After a series of Land Acts had made peasant proprietorship possible, the land question was by and large settled (Hazelkorn 1983, 82).

is much to say about O'Casey, because, motivated by a similar socialist agenda, O'Casey was in a way the anti-Connolly. *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), set during the Easter Rising, gave O'Casey the opportunity to stress the irreconcilable differences between nationalism and socialism. In the play, Irish nationalists and British soldiers alike emphasise their socialist credentials but fight each other on opposing (national) sides, because they consider it to be their patriotic duty to do so (O'Casey 2001, 88). Clitheroe – whom O'Casey makes a volunteer in Connolly's Citizen Army – dies with the most patriotic words on his lips: "I'm proud to die for Ireland" (ibid., 83). His behaviour reduces socialist solidarity to an absurdity, for the act of national liberation becomes an act of national vanity. Connolly himself shared a similar fate when his legacy became intertwined with Pearse and company. Connolly the socialist was turned into Connolly the national martyr. Any sense of socialism's dictum to reach out to the 'other' worker was thus immediately lost. Hobsbawm (1977) sees Luxemburg's standpoint vindicated, arguing that

> an Irish workers' party would today be more politically significant and promising if Connolly had not, by his rebellion and death identified its cause with Catholic-nationalist Fenianism, thus effectively making impossible a united labour movement of North and South. (11)

Marx's prediction that capitalism's hegemony would ultimately be challenged by an emerging transnational class was thus stymied, even if we only consider working-class loyalties within the confines of Ireland. Connolly's participation in 1916 was an act of desperation and bandwagoning with bourgeois forces who, for better or worse, at least did *something*. For Connolly, the national revolution was a necessary detour. From a Marxist-orthodox position, his appeasement policies towards Celticism and the Roman Catholic Church might have been a mistake – the question is: did he have any choice? As argued above, Adams and McGuinness could not have brought along the republican rank-and-file if the leadership had decided to step out of the dominant republican narrative; Connolly's socialism faced the same problem. The nationalist detour to socialism, however, became the

journey (ibid., 17).

The other change that could not be

There are many more examples of organisations and leaders in the history of 20th and 19th century Ireland that illustrate the limits of possible narrative change. The Official IRA/Workers' Party, John Hume and the SDLP, Gerry Fitt, Joe Devlin, and Charles Stuart Parnell do not have much in common at first glance. Separated by time and ideology, they are nonetheless linked by their efforts to break the mould and convert the Protestant-unionist 'other' to their cause. All of them failed to achieve their goal, either condemning themselves to obscurity or leaving the domain of Irish nationalism altogether. Neither Irish socialists nor conservatives were able to escape the predicament of the politicisation of belonging. I will discuss three further examples[110] as they pertain to the limits of left-wing change, and then end with Joe Devlin and Parnell, the vanguard of Irish nationalism at the turn of the last century.

The Official IRA (OIRA), the parent organisation of the Provisionals, positioned itself

[110] The temporal jump from Connolly to the second part of the 20th century is not to conceal the importance of republican socialism in the years between the two world wars. This period of socialist agitation is inextricably linked to the names of George Gilmore (1935; 1966) and Peadar O'Donnell, as well as the political projects that were Saor Éire ('Free Ireland') (English 1994, 124–38) and the Republican Congress (ibid., 185–215). Many of the problems that plagued earlier and later political endeavours – see the following lines – that sought to address the "dual desire for social change and national reunification" (ibid., 133) could also be found here, especially the divide between countryside and urban areas, and within the latter, the division between Protestant and Catholic workers. O'Donnell failed to solve the Connollite dilemma to unite the country's overwhelmingly rural, small farmers with the working-classes in Belfast (ibid., 130–33). O'Donnell's campaign against land annuities (ibid., 86–95) – tenant farmers who had bought their land from their landlords were technically still in debt to the British Exchequer – failed to galvanise the countryside and was quickly co-opted by Fianna Fáil as a policy of social conservatism. Urban (Catholic) workers showed little interest in the issue (Patterson 1997, 45). Saor Éire was founded with the explicit intent to combine socialism with an Irish-Gaelic cultural worldview (English 1994, 127) that reduced unionist identity to a scam which, in the words of O'Donnell, could "be taken down and cast away" (ibid., 136). Prayers at meetings, according to one IRA member, "showed you how seriously they were taking their socialism" (Patterson 1997, 58). Republicans during the years of the Congress equally underestimated Protestant resistance and their deep-rooted anti-republicanism (English 1994, 201).

against its chief competitor by going down the route of left-wing politics.[111] This move, soon enough, put the 'Sticks' outside of the traditional republican camp, again exemplifying change that the republican narrative could not absorb. The other is the case of the 'greening' of the SDLP, which resulted in bickering with some of its self-declared socialist founding members, most notably Gerry Fitt.

As described earlier, in the years leading up to the split in 1969, the IRA's focus under Cathal Goulding was very much on building a mass movement that would take the organisation away from its limiting focus on violence; this was the main lesson learned from the failures of the Border Campaign. The importance of social agitation was stressed and so was left-wing politics in general. The republicans saw themselves as the driving force behind a National Liberation Front, including Labour supporters, communists and other activists, emphasising the need for electoral politics and political education in trade unions (Patterson 1997, 142; Hanley and Millar 2010, 116–17). Under the influence of Roy Johnston, Desmond Greaves, and Anthony Coughlan as well as the Wolfe Tones Societies and Connolly Association, republicanism was revived along more open, non-sectarian lines (English 2012, 85–90). However, this tentative attempt to 'normalise' the Northern Irish situation by employing tactics which left-wing organisations elsewhere in the UK relied on ended abruptly with the return to violence in 1969. At this point, the split into Provisional and Official ranks transpired.

What led to the rift in the republican ranks? The imminent point of contention was of course

[111] The socialism debate of course also resurged within the Provisionals, echoing the original split that had brought about the Provisional IRA. Adams' attempt to oust the old guard by accelerating the armed struggle was accompanied by a policy programme of revolutionary socialism ('32-County Democratic Socialist Republic') reminiscent of the days of O'Donnell and the Republican Congress. The policy paper even allowed for the expropriation of small farmers – the nightmare of rural Ireland, which, as always, was very much disinclined to such reveries (English 2007, 257). Adams was forced to recant and declared that there was "no Marxist influence within Sinn Fein; it simply isn't a Marxist organisation" (Moloney 2003, 188). Caught up in the hunger strikes of the 1980s, the priorities of the movement shifted and the resurgence of socialist policies soon abated, leaving only empty phrases behind (ibid. 183–90).

the lack of commitment to the IRA's traditional role, the armed struggle. The split itself occurred over Goulding's proposition, presented at an Army Convention in December 1969, that the movement should join a national liberation front with the radical left and that abstentionism should be dropped. While the latter, when the circumstances had changed, was eventually condoned, the former seemed to be more of a no-go. As English (2012, 130) remarks, the Provisionals' relationship with leftism was "complex". Members of the Provisionals were often very eager to use socialist language. Marian Price, for instance, declared that republicanism and socialism were intertwined: "I really don't think you can have the one without the other" (ibid.). In 1993 Gerry Adams proudly declared that the long-term goal was "for a thirty-two-county, democratic, socialist republic based on the 1916 Proclamation" (ibid., 346). The Green Book itself stated that "the Army are intent on creating a Socialist Republic" (CAIN 2016c). Such statements fit the wider republican framework which stressed the organisation's anti-colonial and anti-imperialist credentials. The prison experience in Long Kesh during the 1980s also had hefty left-wing undertones, with literature by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and the standard-bearers of de-colonisation, Fanon and Marighella, widely consumed (Alonso 2003, 25; English 2012, 232–34). Although English (2016, 129–30) identifies socialism as an important secondary goal of the organization, the degree of meaningful commitment to socialism that went beyond pseudo-intellectual tempering with trendy slogans to buttress populist propaganda was probably low. It is true that the Provisionals saw internationalism as an important part of their self-image, linking themselves to other left-wing organisations engaged in self-declared anti-colonial struggles:

> [The Republican movement] stands with our Celtic brothers and the other subject nations of Europe, and with the neutral and non-aligned peoples of the Third World; it seeks a third, socialist alternative which transcends both Western individualistic capitalism and Eastern state capitalism, which is in accordance with our best revolutionary traditions as a people. (CAIN 2016c)

Bobby Sands (1998, 178–79) even went as far as to celebrate an English rebel: "It marched

with Wat the Tyler's poor,/ and frightened lord and king […]/ It is the 'undauntable thought,' my friend,/ That thought that says 'I'm right!'". Today, Sinn Féin emphatically sympathises with the Palestine Liberation Organization and secessionist movements in the Basque Country. However, such professions of sympathy are easily made, because they simply reproduce the situation in Northern Ireland somewhere else. The waving of Palestinian flag at Glasgow Celtic football games to show sympathy with the Palestinian becomes more an expression of the desire to 'show' the loyalist 'other' who identifies with the Israeli side. Similar to Frank Ryan's relationship to Nazi Germany, such internationalism is no more than "an adroit diversionary reaction conditioned by atavistic Anglophobia" which "must produce, yet again, a rancid and self-congratulatory form of nativism" (Foster 1989, 16).

Genuine internationalism would imply the forging of links that *matter*, i.e. with the British and unionist working-classes. Apart from intermittent contacts on the leadership levels, this never happened. What did happen, as already elaborated, was the denial that unionist identity accrued to anything meaningful. A Belfast IRA leader's comment on the Provisionals' attitude towards socialism was probably close to the truth: "We could never come to terms with the Goulding IRA which is now Marxist and socialist. We are republicans and our notions of a free Ireland are based on Christian principles and democracy" (English 2012, 131). Catholic imagery and Gaelicisms infused the understanding of democracy and who was part of the Irish nation (and who was not). It also speaks volumes that socialism often enough was decried as distinctively 'foreign', i.e. un-Irish, as members of the Official movement were told to "fuck off to Vietnam" (Hanley and Millar 2010, 154) by their Provo equivalents. That organisation, the Official IRA, was now a separate entity, still pursuing the left-wing agenda that the Goulding leadership had opted for before the split in 1969. However, the Officials soon faced the same problem that had led to the clash with the traditionalists in the first place: social agitation, if not socialist politics, versus pursuing the

nation question. The question of who owned the state in the north of Ireland could, again, not be ignored.

Most OIRA volunteers did not join for the sake of left-wing politics, but simply because the Officials were the predominant republican organisation in the recruit's local area. Especially after internment was introduced on 9 August 1971, calls to revive mass mobilisation in support of civil rights and to desist from offensive military action fell increasingly on deaf ears. By 1972 the northern cadre had grown impatient with the southern leadership. On being lectured, in typical Marxist fashion, that the British soldiers stationed in Northern Ireland were also victims of the capitalist system, one volunteer replied: "hang on a minute, these people are shooting us right, left, and centre and raiding our homes and beating our people … and you're coming up here to preach to us and then heading back down to fucking Dublin. What the fuck do you know about it?" (ibid., 219). There were, of course, moments when working-class affinity shone through the thicket of communal violence. One member of the Officials involved in Joe McCann's famous act of clemency towards three loyalist hostages from Sandy Row described talking to their prisoners as a 'road to Damascus' experience that made him discover that the loyalists were "working class men like yourself" (ibid., 163). Such episodes were grossly overshadowed by devastating mistakes, tactically and ideologically, such as the Aldershot bombing in 1972. The Dublin leadership increasingly felt that it was drawn into a civil war they never wanted and into a military competition with the Provisionals whose actions assured that the "flame of sectarianism" was now "being fanned by every bomb" (ibid., 184). On 29 May 1972, a ceasefire, not very-well received by the rank-and-file in Belfast, followed.

The Officials, at least their upper echelon, tried to distance themselves from physical force republicans – "Glasgow Celtic supporters, backward nationalists, people on the make and general ne'er-do-wells" (Patterson 1997, 145) – and the general Catholic defender spirit they

stood for. While Sinn Féin would end their isolation by seeking like-minded 'green' allies amongst the SDLP and Dublin governments, the Officials – now operating under the name Sinn Féin - The Workers' Party (SFWP) – rephrased the national question by getting rid of it. In its seminal publication *The Irish Industrial Revolution* (IIR) (1978), the party disassociated itself from nationalist ideology, denouncing it as a bourgeois tool that had kept an industrial revolution in Ireland at bay (Patterson 1997, 169). What was happening here was that the SFWP, by seeking to turn social agitation into honest class politics, tried to abandon the rules of the patriot game.

Firstly, it was stated that nationalism missed the point since British imperialism had long been superseded by American capitalism as the prime mover in Irish politics. Besides, nationalism was always the nationalism of everybody, i.e. all social classes, and as such insufficient: it could not elevate itself above the narrow confinements of "moralistic republicanism" (ibid., 26) and would resist its own reduction to class politics. Commenting on the inter-war republican Liam Mellows, Patterson (1997, 27) reasoned that mere "tapping into perceived social discontent" never signifies a socialist turn. The removal of British troops was "symbols not substance" (SFWP 1978, 8), as the Irish workers would be as unfree in an Irish Republic as in the northern statelet. The IIR pamphlet summarised:

> For us the national question can only be formulated as peace among the divided working class in the two states in Ireland so as to allow a united Irish working class to conduct democratic and militant struggle for the creation of an industrial revolution in all Ireland and overthrow of Anglo-American imperialism, and ultimately the construction of an Irish Workers' Republic. (ibid.)

With the publication of IIR the debates about the future direction of the party and whether or not to retain the nationalist shibboleth 'Sinn Féin' in the party's name continued. In 1982, Sinn Féin The Workers' Party ultimately became The Workers' Party (WP), determined to condemn the violence that had linked it to terrorist machinations and repelled potential voters

in Protestant areas.

The WP, again, desperately tried to reach out to the unionist 'other', for instance by canvassing in areas usually not associated with the republican heartland (Hanley and Millar 2010, 495). There was surely a certain naivety in the WP's desire to reach out to the Protestant working-class rank-and-file[112] – but unlike Connolly, who was swept aside by the tide of armed republicanism and his own ignorance about unionist identity, the WP's abandonment of nationalism at least spared it the fate of being commandeered by traditionalists. In the political climate of Northern Ireland, however, this refusal to play the nationalist game meant political insignificance. Finally, by 1980 and at a point when the leadership of (Provisional) Sinn Féin was about to embark on their arduous journey towards parliamentary politics, most of the WP's cadre had all but lost their interest in the armed struggle and political nationalism (ibid., 518).

The party's revisionist stance towards nationalism was heavily influenced by the intellectual output of the British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO), although the organisation originally proved to be highly critical of the WP's nationalist origins in the OIRA (ibid., 279). The two nations theory, based on the assumption that unionists were more than just Ireland's *Lumpenproletariat* and the lackeys of British imperialism, constituted BICO's core message: there were two Irish nations, not one (BICO 1975; Callender 1972). Sinn Féin – for tactical reasons mostly – began to change its rhetoric on unionism as an empty identity from the late 1980s onwards, while its anti-colonial stance is largely intact. Thus, Sinn Féin remained, and still remains, committed to an anti-unionist cause. As soon as the concerns of the unionist 'other' were taken into consideration, the WP's republican credentials were

[112] As Handley and Millar (2010, 502) point out, a later pamphlet named *The Case for Devolved Government in Northern Ireland* (WP 1985) postulated, again erroneously, that class was the most important cleavage in Northern Ireland society. See also McGarry and O'Leary (1995, 164).

revoked (BICO 1977, 3). Nationalism as political aspiration had to be abandoned, because "as long as the majority of Catholics are Nationalists, the internal defences of the state must be kept up" (Boserup 1972, 21).

BICO's harsh stance on Irish nationalism was criticised for ignoring the flaws of the Stormont system altogether (Whyte 1991, 183), apparently creating some sort of Orange-Marxist ideological construct (McGarry and O'Leary 1995, 148–51). But, for Bew and Patterson, who had joined SFWP in 1977, "a decisive break with Irish Marxism's subordination to bourgeois ideology" (Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson 1979, 221)[113] was necessary; leaving the Irish nationalist camp was the *only* way, not least because of the historic patterns between the two communities, to reach out to the working-class 'other', since "the demand for Irish unity by the Catholic left, the attempt to reconcile socialism and nationalism, leads it to adopt impossible theories and to tilt at windmills" (Boserup 1972, 29). BICO was also involved in the creation of a socialist pressure group named 'Socialists Against Nationalism', which, despite its obscurity, illustrates the revisionist stance the WP adopted: the group called for the wish of the unionist majority to remain part of the UK to be respected – the dreaded 'unionist veto' – and called upon the southern state to recognise the current constitutional status of Northern Ireland (Socialists Against Nationalism 1979a; 1979b). Both demands ultimately came to pass, however under the aegis of Adams' Sinn Féin and as a part of reformed republicanism that was, after all, still recognisable as such. The WP's belligerent attitude towards republicanism and its efforts to break the nationalist narrative dominated by the anti-imperialist stance put it outside the ethnos of Irish nationalism. Its goals, as laudable as they might have been, remained unfulfilled and the party itself a peripheral matter.

[113] Ironic words in the case of Paul Bew, who later became an informal adviser to the unionist leader David Trimble and in Fittian fashion, see below, a member of the House of Lords (*The Guardian* 09 March, 2004).

The contradictions between socialist internationalism and nationalist obstinacy, between conflict resolution and belonging, could also be found in the SDLP, which had arisen out of the heady days of civil rights agitation in Northern Ireland. The SDLP had the Connollite dilemma[114] already written into its constitution, describing itself as both socialist ("To organise and maintain in Northern Ireland a socialist party") and nationalist ("To promote the cause of Irish unity based on the consent of a majority of people in Northern Ireland") (McAllister 1977, 39). Although the SDLP was founded and has always been a party for a united Ireland, its goal was to be achieved through persuasion and not coercion – herein lies the revisionist core[115] of the SDLP but also its inherent contradiction. By 1972 the SDLP had reversed much of its revisionism, withdrawing to familiar nationalist territory as the party's optimism was caught up by the events of the period. In its policy paper *Towards A New Ireland* (1972), joint sovereignty was proposed as an interim solution – an interim solution until unification with the south. Crucially, unionist refusal to agree to a united Ireland was seen as a temporary problem. If their (religious) identity could be adequately protected, they would soon or later acquiesce to a united Ireland (McLoughlin 2010, 43).

Here, SDLP policy in 1972 uncannily resembles Sinn Féin policy 30 years later: unionism's British identity was dismissed as artificial. The continuing polarisation of Northern Ireland was required to do homage to the prevailing identity needs of the nationalist population. Thus, the limits of narrative change again became more than obvious, as the SDLP could not renounce its nationalist roots if it did not want to risk its own irrelevance. This conundrum proved to be crucial during and after the Sunningdale negotiations, as the SDLP purposely

[114] The SDLP, and the clue is in the name, is of course not a revolutionary party and unlike Connolly is committed to social democracy. From its outset, the party entertained fraternal links to the British Labour Party (which does not field candidates in Northern Ireland). The SDLP thus takes the Labour whip at Westminster (A. Alcock 1994, 89–90).

[115] The party's constitution also ranked the socialist principle of the party first while nationalism was only mentioned on fourth place (McAllister 1977, 40).

sold the agreement to the nationalist community as something that it never was: a precursor to a united Ireland. Although the Sunningdale document effectively recognised the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, it was the party's presentation of the agreement as an essential nationalist document which brought about its demise, raising "the spectre of Hibernia irredenta and the idea of the impending destruction of Ulster unionism" (McLoughlin 2010, 55).

For the SDLP, the failure of the Sunningdale experiment was a fiasco. For a short time afterwards, the party scaled back its all-Ireland ambitions. Part of this plan was the notion of an 'agreed Ireland' which sought to assuage unionist fears and pay tribute to their political tradition (M. Cunningham 1997, 19). In the face of unionist obstinacy and a rising tide of hardliners within the SDLP and the wider nationalist community, *Facing Reality* (1978) also turned to the London and Dublin governments (Tonge 2005, 108). The Irish dimension of the Northern Irish problem was again stressed, as the two capitals were asked to enter discussion on socio-economic matters – unionist hardliners were to be ignored and side-lined.

John Hume was eager to stress that an 'agreed' Ireland was unlike a 'united' Ireland. "If we get an agreed Ireland", Hume said, "that is unity. What constitutional or institutional forms such an agreed Ireland takes is irrelevant because it would represent agreement by the people of this country as to how they should be governed" (McLoughlin 2010, 66). But the term itself was woolly – on purpose. Similar to Gerry Adams' tendency to remain vague and ambiguous on contentious topics, "Humespeak" (McLoughlin 2008, 96), of which the discourse on an 'agreed Ireland' was one example, entailed much manoeuvring around the eddies of political life in Northern Ireland. But the concept was rather unappealing to unionists. As one observer had it: "Protestants are really puzzled by what they feel is the ambiguous attitude of Catholics and their failure to define ordinary concepts in a clean,

straightforward way" (Griffin, Dean Victor in: M. Cunningham 1997, 13). Such sentiments that accuse Catholics per se of mischievous plots are rarely free of a deeper-seated sectarian attitude, but the 'agreed Ireland' notion which was intentionally based on an element of doublespeak never boded well for attracting the approval of the unionist 'other'. Despite all revisionist efforts, Hume, driven by the 'greener' elements within his party, kept the SDLP firmly established within the nationalist camp and as such as a safe haven for closet republicans who abhorred IRA violence.

Change had to be kept within the constraints of the dominant nationalist narrative. Bew and Patterson's (1985) assessment of Hume's 'agreed Ireland' idea is sobering. According to them, "[h]e was completely incapable however of doing more than produce superficially new and attractive versions of what were in fact traditional nationalist notions" (ibid., 99). For Bew and Patterson, Hume's understanding of reconciliation and agreement was a mere "verbal sleight of hand" (ibid.) intended to obfuscate the traditionalist notion that the British state had a duty to coax unionists into a united Ireland. This, again, is the conclusion Adams and McGuinness arrived at much later, outlining the extent of possible narrative change within mainstream Irish nationalism and republicanism in the north. The concept of a 'third way', an 'agreed Ireland', was deliberately contradictory: designed to be appealing to unionism through the reworking of language but at the same time keeping the all-Ireland dimension alive through a vague reference to the Republic. This is how far revisionism could go, but no further. Equally, all efforts to reach out to unionism proved to be pointless while the SDLP was still operating within the framework of Irish nationalism, as can be seen by the example of Gerry Fitt.

Fitt, one of the SDLP's founding fathers, began as a straightforward nationalist politician, supporting republican prisoners and marching at the annual Easter parades. Fitt himself

described himself as a Connollite socialist. Whatever his views of himself, he was certainly not a revolutionary. However, he embodied the Connollite dilemma in one person, swaying between expressions of fervent Irish nationalism and socialism depending on who was listening. Fitt inherited the quandary of the labour movement in the north, which, always, had to work with an audience that was "inward-looking to an obsessive degree" (Walker 1985, 142). Given the appeal of nationalism understood as belonging, this is not surprising. The national question always lurked beneath the surface and like its electorate, the labour movement was split amongst partitionists, anti-partitionists and those desperately seeking to distance themselves from the constitutional question (Walker 2005, 232–36). Like the early Harry Midgley, prominent amongst the Northern Ireland Labour Party, Fitt had to be "all things to all men" (Walker 1985, 31) in order to increase his electoral chances.

Terence O'Neill accurately described Fitt when he accused him of political opportunism and of being "the chameleon which changes its colour to suit its background" (Murphy 2007, 112). The question is again whether Fitt had much choice, in particular after 1969 when the demand for hard-line republican principles was skyrocketing amongst his voters. But for all his political wavering and his intermittent nationalistic clattering, he was convinced that the SDLP needed to reach out to unionism. In his own words:

> during my political career I have sought to unite and serve the working-class people of this area, irrespective of religion or political adherence, and so hasten the day when all people of the six counties will find their true place in the establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic for the 32 counties of this island. (ibid., 113)

With this, he very much stuck to the Conollite ideal, but the confines of Irish nationalism thwarted attempts at power-sharing, of which Fitt increasingly became a fervent supporter. Power-sharing could not happen as long as the SDLP pursued an all-Ireland agenda (hence the SDLP's turn to Dublin and London after the failure of Sunningdale). Here, the dilemma of an Irish nationalism in the north resurfaced: it was essentially directed *against* unionism.

In the mid-70s, he became increasingly disillusioned with Irish nationalism as a political project, feeling bitter about the nationalism certain SDLP members had displayed during the Sunningdale negotiations and the agreement's all-Ireland dimension. Ending partition would not solve the conflict overnight and from 1974 onwards, the year of the Sunningdale failure, he vehemently endorsed power-sharing between nationalists and unionists as the only way forward.

When his own party began to circumvent unionist intransigence by looking towards London and Dublin, Fitt, along with his party colleague Paddy Devlin, grew apart from the party they had co-founded. Devlin complained that "[a]part from the people immediately around Gerry Fitt and myself, the character of the party had changed. […]. The party was now populated with straightforward nationalists who were Catholic by religion and conservative in economic and social policies" (Devlin 1993, 277). Devlin, who harshly criticised the SDLP's decision not to contest the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election that saw Bobby Sands elected, soon left. For Fitt, the SDLP had lost the very progressiveness that was its founding myth, becoming very much like the conservative, nationalist milieu it had to appeal to if did not want to concede ground to the Provisionals.

This also explains his confused attitude towards Irish nationalism: personally, he could lament that "[e]very day the SDLP was going more nationalist, more Catholic and more anti-Prod" (Murphy 2007, 279), while publicly he contributed to the ascension of Margaret Thatcher by resisting PM Callaghan's efforts to increase the number of Northern Irish MPs on the grounds that such a move would strengthen the unionist hand. Murphy (2007) concludes:

> Despite his non-sectarian socialist rhetoric, and some cross-community support, Fitt was in essence a nationalist. The explanation for this dramatic *volte face* lies – to a large degree – with the power-sharing experiment. Fitt's early nationalism became less important than an internal Northern Ireland

> solution, and he clung tenaciously to the belief that amity between politicians could be established, and that it could lead to the formation of a devolved form of government with power-sharing. (276)

In the end, Fitt could only argue for détente with unionism *outside* mainstream nationalism. His refusal to follow the greener elements in his party after the publication of *Facing Reality* eventually contributed to his departure. In 1983 he lost his West Belfast seat to Gerry Adams, and after republicans had ravaged his house, Fitt defiantly accepted a peerage to the House of Lords. He, who by his unionist opponents was once denounced as 'Fenian Fitt', had now become 'Fitt the Brit', proving that there was little middle-ground that allowed for non-aligned politics. Ultimately, his nationalism, throughout his long career, collided with his self-declared socialism and while Gerry Fitt the politician was able to attract some Protestant working-class support, his association with the nationalist SDLP capped any headway.

In this, it is fitting to also compare Gerry Fitt to Joe Devlin, the champion of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Belfast around the turn of the century. Devlin's and Fitt's biographies overlap; a fact that was not lost on Gerry Adams, who believed that Gerry Fitt was actually the reincarnation of Devlin – as Hepburn notes, Adams did not mean this a compliment (Hepburn 2008, 282–83). Like Fitt, Devlin came from a Catholic labour background without being revolutionary. He also sought to build up Protestant support for a party that was largely Catholic (ibid. 55). Devlin, again like Fitt, could not operate outside the mind-set of Irish nationalism; throughout his career, he had to present himself as a 'good Catholic' as he vied against the Catholic hierarchy and for votes (ibid., 73). This is what made the more secular (and more extreme) elements of Catholicism, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), so attractive to him, as they stood outside Episcopalian supervision. The AOH, the Catholic counterpart to the Orange Order, provided grassroots Catholic structures that could be exploited for party purposes – it also had a strong footing in the United States (ibid., 91). Devlin was aware that the AOH's Catholic ethos and extremist aura stood in direct conflict

to the Protestant community whose approval was necessary for home rule to succeed. But Devlin "had noticed the power of history and pageantry to revive political movements, and the AOH could assist in this" (ibid., 93). Devlin, like Hume, pandered to the prejudices of his nationalist environment. Like Fitt, it is unlikely that he had much choice (ibid., 282).

This became clear with the rising tide of the Volunteer movement and Sinn Féin as the Home Rule movement began to crumble under its own defeats. The Irish Party could not control the radical elements who, after the execution of the ringleaders of Easter 1916, were turned into modern martyrs. Constitutional nationalism that had sent Catholics into the trenches on the continent became discredited (although West Belfast stayed loyal to 'their' Joe Devlin) (ibid., 181). Like Fitt, Devlin's policy of advocating both moderation (parliamentary politics and allegiance to the Empire), nationalist reform (home rule), and militancy (flirtation with the AOH and the Volunteers) did not pay off. When the political situation in Ireland came to a head after Easter 1916, the radical secessionism advocated by Sinn Féin – 'ourselves alone' – was a secure choice for a Catholic electorate that felt little sympathy for Britain, the national 'other', because "nationalism's political orthodoxy was still one of resentment and conflict. Nationalism was defined by reference to its enemies and far and away the greatest of these was England" (Wheatley 2005, 255). Once the masses got involved in full, the Volunteers could not be controlled by the forces of modesty: "The Irish party did not generate the 'great wave' of Volunteering and could not control it. It could only be swept along" (ibid., 258). In the following General Election, Sinn Féin won the day and the Irish Parliamentary Party – the party of conciliation – was maybe not obliterated, but heavily weakened. In the times of turmoil, a defensive narrative directed against a national 'other' again prevailed.

The theme of wavering on the national question we also find in Parnell himself, the great standard-bearer for Home Rule Ireland. There are again grave differences between

somebody like Fitt (and even Joe Devlin) and somebody like Parnell, first and foremost because Parnell was Anglo-Irish and a Tory at heart. Nevertheless, even without socialist credentials his nationalism underwent a similar phase of transmutation, equally conditioned by the thorny problem that Irish nationalism could not appeal to unionists. During the early years of the Land War, Parnell had built his political support amongst the Fenian militants, before committing himself to the settlement of the land question within the constitutional framework of the United Kingdom (Bew 1980, 24, 30).

Parnell earned his political spurs as MP for Meath, the seat previously held by John Mitchel's[116] brother-in-law. The local anti-Home Rule newspaper noted that the county was becoming "more and more intensely national. We believe the most outspoken candidate of the Mitchel tradition in Irish politics will be elected" (Bew 2012, 28). Parnell involved himself in activities that were to be become hallmarks of later republicans, such as the campaigning against maltreatment of Irish political prisoners (ibid., 30), and the cultivation of radical support abroad (ibid., 31–32), by declaring that England could only be moved by the extreme: "Why was some measure of protection given to the Irish tenant? Why was the English Church disendowed and disestablished?", he asked at a rally in Glasgow. The answer was 'Fenianism': "These things were obtained because there was an explosion at Clerkenwell, and an attack upon the police van at Manchester" (ibid., 33). As so often with the leaders of constitutional nationalism in Ireland, we also find the threat of implied violence with Parnell: the agrarian troubles in the second part of the 19th century had proven that things could escalate very quickly – if the British establishment found no agreement with the 'respectable' elements of the Irish nation (A. Jackson 1999, 120; Maume 2017, 78).

[116] John Mitchel (1815-1875) was one of the radical leading members of Young Ireland. His *Jail Journal* remains a key text within the doctrine of Irish republicanism. Mitchel later escaped from the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) to the United States, where he became a fervent supporter of the Confederacy and slavery (S. J. Connolly 2007, see entry Mitchel, John).

Parnell, like Fitt (and Midgley), also had "to be all things to all men" (Bew 1980, 49): he was "a conservative, constitutional nationalist with a radical tinge" (Bew 2012, 189). Although Parnell acted within the constraints of Irish nationalism by giving, for example, the Catholic clergy a role in the selection of MPs, his politics were similarly the politics of conciliation. Throughout much of his career, Parnell was removed from the particularities of Ulster – as so many Irish nationalists before and after him – reducing Protestant concerns to the concerns of the Protestant landlords like himself (Bew 1980, 82). This radically changed during and in particular after the infamous divorce crisis, at a point when Parnell did not rely anymore on the whims of his own party. By 1891, he could more or less freely argue that "until the religious prejudices of the minority, whether reasonable or unreasonable, are conciliated … Ireland can never enjoy perfect freedom" (ibid., 142). Bew concludes that "Parnell's attack on his party's traditional views on Ulster in 1891 may be regarded as a proof that he was virtually the captive of Catholic nationalism during the entire period when he was supposed to be its unrivalled autocratic leader" (ibid., 143). Similar to Fitt, only by leaving mainstream nationalism could he argue for a politics of unionist rapprochement. Had Parnell opted, from early on, to advocate a two nations stance regarding Ulster, it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded; it is more likely, as Bew (2012, 198) surmises, that such a move would have only accelerated a revolutionary takeover of the Home Rule movement.

We therefore see that the dilemma of nationalist change has always been one of taking the overarching narrative of Irish nationalism for granted. The actors and organisations mentioned – the WP, Hume, Fitt, Joe Devlin, Parnell – all stood for different shades of Irish nationalism. But whether they were outright conservatives – as in the case of Parnell – or of some socialist hue, there could only be *so* much change before running into danger of violating the borders of the narrative of Irish nationalism. At least in the north, where the unionist 'other' lingered in the nationalist narrative, the potential for revision was limited.

Parnell, Devlin, and Fitt had their own revisionist moments, but only as soon as they had stepped outside of the demarcated boundaries of mainstream nationalism. Hume successfully played the green card – but he paid the price of nationalist posturing by establishing the SDLP firmly as the Catholic party that it remains to this date, just as the skilful manoeuvring of Adams, who steered the republican movement away from the Armalite towards a party of self-declared reconciliation with the unionist 'other', became feasible because it never became unclear that the one thing unionists had to be 'reconciled' to was a united Ireland. Hume equally successfully rephrased the question of a united Ireland by deploying different concepts that still meant the end of unionism as a political identity. Here, both Adams and Hume rehashed proposals that were once meant to lure unionists into Home Rule (such as Ulster's temporal exclusion) and a united Ireland (see the proposal of an Ulster parliament under the Éire Nua programme). Hume, of course, also paid the price for greening his party by making it superfluous as soon as people found it acceptable to vote for the real republican deal, Sinn Féin.

These conservative changes within Irish nationalism contrast with the radical breaks that led to the failure of Irish socialism. Irish socialism was unsuccessful because its internationalism, i.e. the necessity for reaching out to the working-class 'other', was contradictory to the anti-unionism that has always been part of Irish nationalism and republicanism: socialist republicanism was thus "fundamentally a branch of Catholic nationalism" (English 1994, 134). And: "The irredentism of the republican left […] reflected, and could only realistically be expected to appeal to, a Catholic nationalist constituency" (ibid., 134–35). This is the reason why Conollite-style politics remained the politics of illusion and why radical narrative reconstruction as embodied by the WP and the Fitt fringe of the SDLP failed. The relationship to unionism could only be re-arranged outside nationalist and republican narratives. The ideological cul-de-sac of the Official

movement and later the WP demonstrate the limits of left-wing politics under conditions that give a community the clear impression that their (national) identity is threatened.

Arguably, a huge factor which contributed to the Officials' problems was the perceived attack on the nationalist community by the RUC, British Army, and loyalists that contributed to the desire to 'hit back', thus reiterating community loyalties. Nonetheless, it points towards a larger, more complicated picture which diminishes the likelihood of narrative changes involving an alteration of the position of the 'other', especially when one's idea of self and ontological security is perceived to be endangered. 'Post-conflict' Northern Ireland makes this point quite forcefully: even as most violent confrontations have been brought to an end, everyday politics is still dominated by a standoff mentality that sees the conflict pursued by other means. This does not leave much more space for non-tribal politics than there was in the last century, when, as described, Connolly, the Official movement and other left-wing figures like Gerry Fitt sought to replace green politics with a progressive alliance linking orange and green working-class people.

Nationalism is powerful because it functions as a social pacemaker, creating patterns and belonging that orders the everyday. Socialist internationalism necessarily undermines this, reconfiguring the principles of prejudice that structure the social world. In a context of community division and bifurcated understandings of history – the very essence of social prejudice – internationalism, to make use once more of the Burkean metaphor, storms the stage and ends the play; ruptures in the prevailing social narrative follow. It was due to the political skill of the Adams and McGuinness leadership that the Provisional part of the republican movement never transgressed its self-imposed boundaries, thus remaining at the same time relevant and by and large one movement. No socialist intervention in Irish republicanism and nationalism can boast of a similar track record. Ó Broin (2009), himself a Sinn Féin TD, now argues that the time has come for republicans to "depart from Mellows'

tactical engagement with the social" and "in doing so develop a new ideological and strategic foundation upon which to advance the next phase of our struggle" (302). Apart from a vague reference to Gilmore's idea of the oneness of the national and the social, an essential Connollite ingredient, Ó Broin fails to give an adequate answer to the pressing issue of *how*. He painfully ignores the question of the position of political unionism, despite his admissions of the shortcomings of Connolly and later republicans. The revisionists' argument that nationalism and socialism are incompatible is merely countered with the ambiguous assertion that "[i]deological articulations are never fixed or closed, but, subject to the forces of history and the influences of human agency, are always open to revision" (ibid., 292).

This is, generally speaking, correct, as has been shown at the beginning of this thesis, but the human preference for social stability will only allow for so much change before the prevailing social narrative will either crumble or reassert itself. In the history of Irish republicanism and nationalism, this usually resulted in the appearance of traditionalist forces. Ó Broin's own predecessor organisation, the Provisional IRA, was the result of such a split, proving that narrative change is not a question of 'anything goes'. His own division of nationalism into two camps – one based on exclusivist German romanticism and the other of anti-imperialist character in the tradition of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution – resembles the previously-mentioned Kohnian distinction between a commendable Western nationalism and its morally degenerate Eastern equivalent. Ó Broin firmly locates Irish republicanism in the anti-imperialist camp, ignoring the fact that anti-unionism (and Anglophobia) have always been part of that very idea of anti-colonialism. This is the reason why the question of socialist change in Ireland has been the politics of illusion. Sinn Féin came out on top *because* it never changed its exclusivist position towards unionist identity. Those who did, or at least aspired to that ideal, were and still are stigmatised as deviants: the WP's "engagement with unionism", Ó Broin points out,

> became in the end, an adoption of some of the most regressive forms of unionist politics, to the extent that by the late 1980s there was little to distinguish the Workers Party [sic] from either northern unionist party on touchstone issues such as partition, policing, sectarianism, equality or Orange parades. (ibid., 172)

The same counts for political figures such as Gerry Fitt. Seeking unionist support, essentially, had made them non-republican and worse: unionist. In the parochial confinements of Northern Ireland, they indeed, in Ian Paisley's words, 'went over to the other side.'

Conclusion: Conflict resolution beyond identity politics

The conclusion will attempt to give an outline of an alternative: if we acknowledge that national narratives in conflict are unlikely to promote change, we have to be prepared to take conflict resolution outside the boundaries of the politics of identity. As much as Northern Irish politics has been dominated by the national question and the policies of hostile communities, approaches to dealing with the past and conflict resolution in general have equally located their policies of change within the established norms of mutually exclusive communal identities. This, I argue, is a mistake, as its chance of success is limited. If ontologically secure persons possess a limited interest in radical change that would bring them to the brink of anxiety, we need to investigate alternative approaches. I will propose empathetic conflict resolution as an option, as it tackles the root of conflict without posing a threat to national and ethnic belonging.

Where does this leave us? My goal in this thesis was to show where nationalism takes its emotional vigour from and what change in deeply divided societies, where ethnic nationalism is ever-present, is possible. On the previous pages I have argued two things: firstly, that the nationalist phenomenon can only be fully understood by taking an evolutionary history of humankind fully into account, an evolutionary history which has created social collectives that use their cultural capacities to imagine nations which vastly outstrip the tribal societies of the past. This means that humans are not perfect beings – we are each of us, by all means, prejudiced, because it is an essential part of the human self. Prejudice is part of the human psychological makeup and has and will always be used to cater to our need to belong by simplifying the world around us. What I described as entitativity, i.e. the treatment of individuals as an almost interchangeable part of an entity, and stereotyping are ingredients essential to the achievement of this sense of security which satisfies our need to belong that is universal and *must* be satisfied– we cannot live without the comforting thought that tomorrow will be the same as today. This is what gives the nation its emotional fuel and it is exacerbated by the promise of popular democracy: that the nation state, fervently guarded by the national symbols of the reliable ethnic past, provides a reliable ethnic future.

The second part of the thesis returned to Northern Ireland and the change which did and did *not* happen, focusing on Adams' movement and Irish socialism. This is indeed the path of

least resistance: the prophetic look into the future is always more difficult than the study of past events with the benefit of hindsight. But there is an important insight to be gained. The history of Irish socialism – and socialism in general – is a history of failure because it was too much too soon: an unequivocal crossing of ethnic and national boundaries which was not desired. On the other hand, the republican '*volte-farce*' from Armalite to Stormont became possible because it was both radical *and* conservative: for all its revisionism, the core of the republican narrative, which understands unionism as something to be defeated, is still alive.

My argument points towards the importance of a need to belong if we want to understand why nationalism, as one of the dominant social ideologies, persists. I would argue that national narratives (because they are inherent to the human tendency to order by excluding) are difficult to alter, even where they appear to be multifarious and mutable (a Scottish person can also be British, but they are definitely not French or German). A need to belong is prevalent and felt everywhere, although it might be felt less *acutely* where national identity has only weak links to political violence. However, in most cases nationalism is still part of a wider identity-construct that provides belonging. Where the question of state ownership is settled, the question of belonging will be equally muted. In Northern Ireland, the question has never been settled, contributing to a vicious circle, where prejudice becomes a self-fulling prophesy that hits rock bottom if we always expect the worst from the ethnic 'other'. While belonging through prejudice is prevalent in all nation and states, it is here that its resistance to change becomes most obvious. In the introduction, I claimed that the knowledge we gain from enquiring into theory has to be put to the test and must be a vehicle for furthering the understanding of how life in deeply divided societies can be ameliorated. This shall be objective of the concluding chapter, for an understanding of the emotional power that A. D. Smith allocates to ethnic nationalism can only be complete if

complemented by an idea of how to make things better. Accepting prejudice as a necessary building block of human existence should not be seen as a fatalistic commitment to the tragic vision of humankind – or, worse, a commitment to those who actively encourage prejudice and its 'half-brothers' racism and sectarianism. The human ability to fashion a social world that vastly outstrips our evolutionary origins should always be a reminder that things can be done differently, despite the limitations that our psychological makeup dictates. This does not necessitates an acceptance of the status quo of a divided society – but it does necessitate a consideration of this as an obstacle to peacebuilding. For the future of dealing with the past and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, two lessons can be drawn.

The first lesson is that if we acknowledge the human preponderance for prejudice and the creation of collective identities which are indifferent to outsiders, we need to keep in mind that these very conservative social structures are extremely risk-averse. Hence, ethno-national identities should not be the starting point for thinking about conflict resolution. Ethnic culture in *all* its manifestations sanctifies "sweeping generalisations based on spurious notions of primordiality, homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness" (M. Jackson 2002, 109) and, therefore, "always entails demarcation, denial, division, and exclusion, and, as such, visits the danger of inhumanity and intolerance upon us" (ibid., 117). Conflict resolution that sees itself as the mere mending of ethnic narratives and relations cannot lead towards a process where dehumanisation, stereotyping, and prejudice in general is reduced.

The reason for this is that ethnic situations are always characterised "by marked stratification, making it impossible for individuals, as individuals, to invest themselves of an unsatisfactory, underprivileged, or stigmatized group membership" (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 35). Social change, according to the Tajfel and Turner model, will only come as part of a change of status of the wider group. Frantz Fanon spoke of similar things: "For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between

the two protagonists" (Fanon 1967, 28). What must be clear is that social change thus understood is not conflict resolution, but a continuation of the politics of oppression where the oppressed are presented with the opportunity to reverse the present power relationships. Dealing with the past becomes the opportunity to tell the past from a certain (biased) point of view – a point of view that will be to the detriment of somebody else. In divided societies the politics of ethnic identity will not be a means for social change: calls for reconciliation will continue to fall on deaf ears as long as they come as part and parcel of the imagery of ethno-nationalism. Nonetheless, reconciliation in Northern Ireland has mostly been framed in ways that build upon the prevalent ethnic discourses and take them as a given; this, I argue, is a mistake.

There are mainly two strategies which can be distinguished. The first approach points the way forward towards a new form of togetherness between the warring parties. The main point here is that the parties to the conflict will have to learn how to forge some form of 'national unity' (Rigby 2012, 234) that "rekindles community and restores harmony where violent conflict has set people against each other" (Green 2009, 252). Simpson (2009, 39) depicts the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('mastering the past') as victim-led: victims of the conflict take centre stage, leading a bottom-up process of truth-recovering countering the effect of absolutist narratives promulgated by the political elites. Again, what has to be aspired to is a "negotiated form of historical consensus" (ibid., 77) to be achieved via a Habermasian model of communicative rationality where competing accounts of the past vie with each other and by doing so uncover the 'truth'. Simpson wants to create "new beginnings" (ibid., 82) and establish a "process of storytelling directed towards truth recovery and reconciliation" (ibid., 96) – that means new community experiences, and a necessary break in well-entrenched traditions.

At first sight this approach appears to be a way out of the entrenched communal stand-off,

but because it sees reconciliation through the ethnic prism its usefulness is limited. Simpson overestimates people's willingness to overcome their own communal identities by working towards a renegotiated post-conflict identity which obliterates their own understanding of the past. It ignores the fact that ethnic myths based on divergent readings of the past are not only the myths of those "who have sought to repress and stultify political debate to protect themselves from scrutiny" (ibid., 108). These myths provide belonging and ontological security and, therefore, are non-negotiable. The envisioning of a shared destiny implies that the past can indeed be 'solved' and that post-conflict societies can 'move on' into a "joint future" (Green 2009, 266). An amount of political goodwill is assumed which cannot be taken for granted in a divided society, because it involves a radical rethinking of national discourses.

The second form of reconciliation promotes a dealing-with-the-past process that leaves the respective narratives intact. Here, it is agreed to disagree – for the sake of promoting mutual understanding, two mutually exclusive narratives agree to respect the 'otherness' of the opponent (Gawerc 2006, 454). This would result in a "comprehensive process that can accommodate all stories, multiple narratives and views" (Rowan 2015, 174) and would thus avoid blaming one side alone by affirming that 'we have all done wrong'. "It is not possible", the Eames-Bradley report (CGP 2013) reads,

> to complete an act of forgiveness unless a wrong is acknowledged. In the case of the divided communities of Northern Ireland, this means that both sides must somehow be enabled to reach agreement that there was wrongdoing on both sides. This is not a matter of balancing amounts of wrongdoing but of acknowledging that wrong was done on both sides. Only then is mutual forgiveness possible. (25)

The same sentiment is reflected in the Haass/O'Sullivan report (Panel of Parties in the NI Executive 2013, 33) which proposes *inter alia* the following themes to be addressed: alleged collusion between governments and paramilitaries; alleged ethnic cleansing in border

regions and in interface neighbourhoods; the UK's alleged 'shoot to kill' policy with regards to IRA targets; the targeting of off-duty UDR and prison officers by the IRA; the degree to which, if at all, the Republic of Ireland constituted a 'safe haven' to republicans; the use of lethal force in public order situations; detention without trial; and mistreatment of detainees and prisoners.

Ultimately, the Haass/O'Sullivan report implicates all parties to the conflict, republicans, loyalists, and British and Irish governments alike. It would avoid finger-pointing and leave the respective narratives intact, as the revised part of the past is reinserted into the overall narrative – it would be very much akin to the Adams strategy of revising the narrative of republicanism by leaving its core message intact. For Dwyer (1999, 81), this is "reconciliation for realists": it does not urge the conflict parties to settle on one overall interpretation, but merely to "purify the argument, to narrow the range of permissible lies" (Ignatieff 1999, 174). However, narrative revision – as I argued before – can only do so much before cracks begin to show. "Reconciliation", Dwyer (1999, 92) again argues, may require that people give up fundamental self-conceptions or face some very unwelcome truths about themselves. Only by giving up the core of what we were can we become a new 'self', something that also applies to those narratives that define communities. If this does not happen the extent of true conflict transformation is limited, because peacebuilding will take place under the impression that the status quo must be maintained: one cannot become a 'new person' without shedding the burdens of the past – otherwise, the new 'self' will uncannily resemble the tainted person that once was.

Hearty (2014, 1048) equally calls for conflict resolution based on a "thin consensus" that acknowledges the suffering of one's own community while also looking at the past through the "alternative eyes" (ibid.) of the 'other'. He insists that the labels of victims and perpetrators must coexist rather than be mutually exclusive. Using the example of policing

in Northern Ireland, he asks the unionist community to accept the victimhood nationalists experienced at the hand of the security forces, while the suffering of RUC and UDR has to be equally taken into consideration. Hearty, however, fails to show how this attempt to "reach a lowest common denominator upon which any narrative striving to be shared must be built" (Hearty 2014, 1059) could circumvent the fact that the lowest common denominator between the two narratives is their mutual exclusiveness.

The same problem resurfaces in a 'dual liberation approach' which allows the ethnic 'other' to know that their narrative has been acknowledged. Given the resilience of prejudice within the frameworks of mutually exclusive narratives, it is unlikely that the negation of the 'other' would lead to an act of tolerance – the intolerance of the 'other' cannot simply be ignored. Each admittance of guilt would be perceived as a slippery slope towards blurring the black and white picture which ossifies the prevailing worldview – on the unionist side, this would imply that there was actually something wrong with the pre-1969 Stormont regime; on the republican side, that this grievance did not justify the politics of violence that followed. In unionist-speak, it would lead to a "moral ambivalence" (Little 2012, 90), blurring the line between established norms of right and wrong which neither the unionist narrative nor, as I would argue, the republican narrative could withstand. Reconciliation that takes the narratives of orange and green as a starting point seeks to marry what does not want to be married. Fighting fire with fire, it seeks to overcome prejudice by taking it for granted. Bearing in mind how wearisome the IRA's transformation from violence to the DUP's form of bellicose parliamentary politics has actually been, it seems to be unrealistic to expect such an inherently transformative potential within the discourses of ethnic nationalism.

The discourses of reconciliation hence remain within the domain of established ethnic identities, never seeking to break the vicious circle – for this reason, 'reconciliation' only reinforces the politics of 'us' against 'them' (Little 2012, 95). It is difficult to imagine how

the established ethnic discourses could contribute to social change and reconciliation. The diversity of cultures in Ireland, as F.S.L. Lyons (1979, 2) observed, has always been an agent of disunity. In a way, this is the Connollite problem reborn: the adulation of the ethno-national cannot be overcome if we do not think beyond the nation. Rumelili's (2015) observation that peace needs anxiety, if we understand anxiety as a creative moment, is correct. But this 'game changer' cannot be found within identity politics.

The lesson is of course substantiated by Northern Ireland's electorate that continues to vote *en masse* for political parties that benefit from ethnic segregation, again and again reaffirming Harry Midgley's gloomy assessment in 1933 that "The people of Ulster still drink at the rivers which have been poisoned at their source" (Walker 1985, 67). Middle-of-the-road nationalists in the SDLP, their unionist equivalents in the UUP as well as the Alliance and Green parties do exist as often-ignored alternatives to the politics of 'us' against 'them'. The Good Friday Agreement promised "partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships within Northern Ireland" (Northern Ireland Office 1998, para. 1.3). While power-sharing has proven its worth as conflict regulation as described by O'Duffy (2007), devolved power-sharing at Stormont with the DUP and Sinn Féin at the helm will keep the national question ultimately alive, meaning that 'partnership, equality, and respect' will lose out while the politics of ethnic antagonism continue. DUP/Sinn Féin power-sharing has become a second partition of Ireland, not only maintaining but entrenching nationalist lines.

While the republican core of Sinn Féin persists – its key message that unionism ultimately has to be defeated through the struggle for a united Ireland – Sinn Féin cannot have any interest in (true) reconciliation. The DUP is no different. In its 2014 European manifesto, the party acknowledged that there can be "no doubt" (DUP 2014, 38) that European peace funding has contributed to the political progress in Northern Ireland; it even welcomed "the

€240 million that has been agreed for a PEACE IV Programme in Northern Ireland and the border region of the Republic of Ireland between 2014 and 2020" (ibid.). No party interested in reconciliation could gleefully jeopardise the access peacebuilding organisations across Northern Ireland have to EU funding in exchange for political brinkmanship that is ultimately self-defeating, because it serves no purpose that could in any way contribute positively to Northern Ireland's existence. The DUP's blind faith in its own particular brand of British nationalism is still an expression of unyielding 'no surrender', whether such an attitude ultimately serves the goal of securing Northern Ireland's place in the union or not.[117] Realistically, we should not expect too much – or anything, for that matter – from either Sinn Féin or the DUP. Dealing successfully with the themes outlined in the Haass/O'Sullivan report would undermine those notions of the past that are central to the key parties of the conflict. Again, there is not much reason to hope that the push for peacebuilding should find its origins within established unionist and nationalist identities.

The second insight, therefore, has to be that as much as Irish socialism failed to overcome the politics of ethno-nationalism it also did not make things *worse*. On the contrary, it might even have saved lives in Ireland when its message of solidarity shone through the thicket of ethnic violence. Some, like Tommy McKearney (2011), whose League of Communist Republicans remained an obscure socialist experiment, bemoan a lack of political courage which contributed to the downfall of socialist policies amongst republicans. He laments that a socialist mass movement would have been feasible if Provisional Sinn Féin had spent the same amount of time and energy it took to convince republicans of the merits of parliamentary politics on convincing the republican grass roots of the merits of a socialist

[117] Even without the wrecking ball rhetoric of Ian Paisley the DUP remains "one of the most formidable enemies of the wider Unionist cause" (A. Jackson 1999, 409), as the ethnic narcissism that the party stands for has the potential to scare off the non-unionist support that the survival of Northern Ireland ultimately also depends on.

programme. As a result, a "structured left-wing party working to a serious and principled socialist agenda" would have had the opportunity "to reason with working-class northern Unionists in a manner that the increasingly nationalist Sinn Féin could never hope to do" (ibid., 170). This is unlikely to have happened without breaking Sinn Féin apart. However, he is correct to assert that a socialist programme would have at least stepped "out of the narrow world of '*Irish News* and Catholic Church republicanism'" (ibid.). On the one hand, socialism could not make things worse. Socialism is always class *struggle*, a dynamic that in other conflicts has provided the catalyst for increased ethnification (see T. Wilson 2010, 47–53). In Ulster this was never an issue, as the boundaries between the ethno-national communities were long established. As much as Irish socialism was equally quickly overtaken by national aspirations, it did not provide impetus for *more* nationalist commotion. Hence, socialist rhetoric might have even saved lives every time republican volunteers were admonished not to retaliate against loyalist offences. These are indeed "the lives *not* taken" and "the blood *not* spilt" (T. Wilson 2011, 282); because they embody the tragedies that never were, these acts of peace are more difficult to pin down.

Conflict resolution, it must be remembered, is not the sudden and forced overcoming of ethnic nationalism – which in divided societies in particular is neither possible nor wanted – but the silent empathetic re-humanisation of the ethnic 'other', the internationalist message that Irish socialism was often chasing. It would be advisable to remember those in Northern Ireland who stand in that very tradition, those who tirelessly sought to bridge the gap across the divide. A parallel could be struck to Bew's (1994) account of the home rule movement in Ireland before the calamity of Easter 1916 struck. His is a history of the subalterns, "the forgotten men of Ireland" (ibid., xviii) who were written out of the foundational history of the Irish Republic as well as political nationalism. Given the strength of the Home Rule movement under Parnell and Redmond, this was of course an extraordinary development. A

hundred years later Ireland celebrated the centenary of the Easter Rising, blissfully ignoring the minority position of Pearse, Connolly, and company. The history of Irish nationalism has, at least in public memory, firmly been established as the history of '800 years of resistance against British rule in Ireland': the complex cobweb of Irish history reduced to a history of Fenianism and the men and women of violence. Bew noted that "it is worth remembering how diverse the sympathies of the 'people of Ireland' have actually been" (ibid., 160) – something similar has to be done if the political arena and the discourse of peace and reconciliation is not to be ceded entirely to the politics of ethnicity, i.e. in particular the DUP and Sinn Féin.

People's experiences and identities should not be radically disconnected from their communal link – something that is impossible in the first place – but we should remember that even in those polarising stories of communal experience we can still find that which is deeply human. This is a transformative observation. The 'other' individual does not only matter because they are *like* ourselves, but because they *are* ourselves. Prejudice becomes difficult to maintain if the 'other' is not only seen as a re-humanised individual that shares attributes that we also find in ourselves and an in our in-group, but as human individuals in which the 'self' is mirrored. This is the position of Levinas: to love your neighbour becomes *being* oneself (R. A. Cohen 2006, xxvi) and "being 'for-the-other' takes precedence over, is better than, being for-itself (ibid.).

Here, the concept of empathy – "our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion" (Baron-Cohen 2012, 18) – is crucial: it is the erosion of empathy which translates prejudice from a relatively neutral concept into the out-group denigration that is the hallmark of ethnic nationalism (ibid., 7). If we could stop the "casualness with which we all tend to be comfortable with other people's suffering" (English 2016, 262), it would become clearer that

their suffering cannot be tolerated because it is, by extension, also a violation of our humanness. Taking the perspective of somebody else is therefore vital for the reduction of prejudices. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011, 108) stress the importance of the affective, emotional dimension of intergroup relations, and, in return, the role they play in reducing intergroup prejudice. By re-introducing empathy into the equation, we become more inclined to treat members of the out-group as individuals that stand in direct relation to ourselves. The restoration of "humans-in-relationship" (Lederach 1997, 26) does not focus on topical issues of identity and the past, but reintroduces the dignity of the 'other' that was lost when they became designated as the 'other': "It is in relationships of this character", Llewellyn (2014, 22) writes, "that our inherent human worth and potential can be recognized and respected". But walking in the shoes of somebody else can only be the first step – the second step, as I envisaged above, has to be the recognition that a lack of empathy towards the out-group essentially means disrespecting the 'self'. Empathy gains in strength if we not only take somebody's point of view, but if we imagine that *we are them* (Batson, Early, and Salavarani 1997, 757).

Empathy can be a very powerful experience as the phenomena of distal secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Gilbert 1998) and secondary traumatic stress disorder (Klarić et al. 2013) show. Both recreate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a significant other who shares an emotional bond with the primary victim. This is the result of "caring too much" (Gilbert 1998, 48), of empathising and seeking to emotionally connect to what the primary victim has gone through. Distal STS is the stress that results from uncertainty, because the well-being of the significant other in a potentially life-threatening situation cannot be confirmed. In an effort to understand, disturbing and traumatising images are conjured which see the significant other hurt. STS itself results from the desire to care compassionately for somebody who suffers from PTSD. In the example I mentioned, the

deep emotional impact of empathy has grave consequences, but at the same time it opens up the possibility of thinking about how the power of empathy can be harnessed for social change.

Again, the cornerstone of this approach should be the realisation that one's own humanity is inherently linked to the humanity of the 'other' – in the end, that means that emotional and physical suffering is also the suffering of the 'self'. We see this fulfilled in the meeting of two Palestinian and Israeli fathers who both lost their sons to the respective 'other'. They concluded that "We are the same: we have both lost our son. Your pain is my pain" (Baron-Cohen 2012, 193). The author David Harris-Gershon equally describes how being personally affected by the "inhumane brutality of Palestinian terror […] forced me to consider Palestinians' humanity" (Harris-Gershon 2013, 169). His wife was caught up in a Hamas terrorist attack; meeting the family of the perpetrator resulted in him questioning the propaganda image of an ethnic 'other' as a mechanical out-group with caricatured human characteristics:

> And what I saw was a normal people. A kind people. A broken people. I saw a people who feared military uniforms, feared casual bureaucratic encounters, feared a knock on the door telling them that a child had been taken to prison. I saw a people who feared helicopters and the sky in which they hovered. I saw a people who feared midnight raids and indefinite detentions. A people who feared armed, uniformed teenagers. A people tired of the fear. Tired of the suffering. (ibid., 303)

In this quote we find the realisation that his own suffering, which was the result of Palestinian terror, was also *their* suffering – neither Israelis *nor* Palestinians benefit from the status quo that sees the respective 'other' as a dehumanised incarnation of evil.

Storytelling has the capacity to give empathy the place it deserves within a wider framework of dealing with the past and the potential to bring together a variety of perspectives and emerging patterns such as gender, mental health, and rural perspectives that would otherwise

be invisible or lost to current society and future generations (Conference of Irish Historians in Britain 2016). Storytelling in the form of oral and video archives that can be used as a forum for victims and survivors to tell their story is a relatively uncontested measure supported by virtually all political parties in Northern Ireland (including the DUP, who flatly reject radical approaches buoyed by Sinn Féin, such as an international truth commission) (McEvoy 2013, 13–15). Despite the Boston College fiasco, storytelling has been perceived as "the least contentious approach to dealing with the past" (Dybris McQuaid 2016, 66) because of its apparent focus on private, personal suffering instead of narrative writing in the public sphere. The establishment of an oral history archive was outlined in the Stormont House Agreement and therefore has institutional support (British and Irish Governments 2014, paras. 22–24). What is left to be done is for the rather uncontentious parts of the existing agreements on dealing with the past to be implemented. But even in absence of the political will to do just this, civil society has already filled the gap to a certain extent. *Accounts of the Conflict* (INCORE 2014), for instance, is a digital archive of personal accounts of the 'Troubles' that were collected by community-based organisations as part of various storytelling projects. These stories can be viewed and accessed by anybody, and can, at least theoretically, cross the borders of existing communities and those that police them.

A plethora of community organisations in Northern Ireland are already engaged in storytelling projects, either on a single-identity or cross-community basis: *Borderlives* (Dybris McQuaid 2016, 75–76) used video clips to show the impact the 'Troubles' had on individuals from the border communities. WAVE Trauma Centre (2013) hosts an online audio storytelling project, collecting stories that were known to the family and friends of those affected, but rarely heard outside this intimate circle. The Dúchas Oral History Archive (Falls Community Council 2014; Hackett and Rolston 2009, 368–70) collects stories of conflict from West Belfast and beyond. The Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross

Foundation (RUGC Foundation, n.d.; Hamber and Kelly 2016, 33) equally runs an oral history archive preserving the voices of those who have served in the police force.[118] The Ardoyne Commemoration Project (ACP) was an effort to tell the stories of a community which has been given the label of a "terrorist community" (ACP 2002, 1). A traditional republican stronghold in North Belfast with widespread sympathies for the IRA(s), many of Ardoyne's dead fit the unionist category of "undeserving" and "non-innocent" (ibid., 3) victims. The book that came of it – *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* – sought to "set the record straight" (ibid.) and tell the story from the community's perspective and from the point of view of the friends and relatives of those killed. Many of these stories are, therefore, inherently biased because they show a certain version of the past. It would be easy to write these accounts off as another case where people do not want to tell the truth but merely *their* truth (Lawther 2014, 42). This was of course part of the motivation for this particular storytelling project. However even in those narratives that speak of and for a specific community we can find a humanity uncoupled from a certain ethnic or national identity – and this comes through especially in those accounts that recall the suffering which was done not only to those killed but to those close to them.

One of the stories included in the book is about a man killed by the British Army while on active service for the 'Ardoyne Defence' in 1972. His wife Doreen describes how her husband's death affected her:

> Afterward I became addicted to prescription drugs; I could not go through life without them. I didn't want to live; I just wanted to do myself in. I didn't consider my children or anyone else. […]. I ended up having two nervous breakdowns and I had to go into Purdysburn [hospital] for a month to come off the tablets. I was locked up for a fortnight. (ACP 2002, 131–32)

This story of personal loss leading to a disintegration of ontological being sits uncomfortably

[118] See also HTR (2016) for a list of current storytelling projects.

with the unionist contention that even the family members of republicans cannot be victims (Lawther 2014, 60), but it is here that there is potential space for the empathetic recognition that, in the words of the former leader of the PUP Dawn Purvis, "hurt and pain is the same for every individual" (ibid., 61) – that *their* hurt is unacceptable because of one's own status as an individual that does not want to be hurt. It would be necessary to provide a space to get to the bottom of these stories of hurt and loss as a fundamentally pernicious human injustice irrespective of communal affiliation:

> Read the story as a story, don't read it as 'fuck, they're all taigs in there or they're all republicans or they're all loyalists or they're all Brits'. Read it as a human being. Once you read it as a human then all the human emotions will come out. […]. And though you never agree with them politically there is some empathy there of the heart, and once that happens that's one of the barriers getting pulled down. But they have to hear it, they have to read it, and they have to read it in a way that's not – look sure they're only getting at us […]. (Lundy and McGovern 2005, 49)[119]

Storytelling is about "re-humanising the other. It is about the empathy that takes place – not about the right and wrong" (Bush, Logue, and Burns 2011, 77). Here lies the defiant potential of storytelling as a means of dealing with the past: by ignoring the 'macro perspective' (Hamber and Kelly 2016, 36) on the conflict – the 'macro perspective' that provides belonging and does not want to be changed – the divide between the private and the public is crossed in a subtle way that reimagines the 'other' as somebody as human as oneself. Empathy thus reaches the root of prejudice.

Empathetic storytelling, I argue, has transformative potential and fittingly stands in the tradition of Frank Wright (1988). Wright's approach, as T. Wilson (2011, 281) has shown, was one of obstreperous realism, of acknowledging the depth of ethnic division but, at the same time, repudiating "the worship of 'decisiveness' and 'effectiveness'" (F. Wright 1988, xvi). Wright indeed realised that it takes "very few people to kill enough people to frighten

[119] Italics removed.

a very large number" (ibid., 11). Or: it takes only a few to reaffirm established boundaries of prejudice and to make a large number of people retreat to the safe ground of ethnic (be)longing. It is only necessary for enough people to understand this system of community deterrence in order to sustain the politics of prejudice. Prejudice is easy to sustain because it works as a bulwark against other social influences that seek to complicate the picture. Fear is easy to arouse, because it can easily be mitigated if only we would retire into our shells of clearly established, easily distinguishable ethnic identities. Hope on the other hand is the opposite of being risk-averse; it means crossing boundaries and countering prejudice to retrieve the human individuality in those individuals who have been lumped together into a faceless mess of 'otherness'.

As a political ideology socialism failed, amongst other reasons, because it intentionally sought to cross the gulf of prejudice and to re-establish the link between the protagonists across the divide. Socialism was one way of ignoring that in intergroup situations "individuals will not act *as* individuals, on the basis of their individual characteristics or inter-personal relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups" (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 35). Although its political agenda fizzled out in the end, this does not mean that its impact was nought. Wright had nothing but praise for those "refusing to see malignancy of motive wherever it might conceivably be, and in little or large ways taking risks to express that faith" (F. Wright 1988, 234). It should be kept in mind that these acts of defiance *did* take place, even if they did not appear in the public discourse dominated by ethnic strife. "Throughout the conflict", Shirlow (2017) invokes,

> we had evidence on a near daily basis of people proving that the sectarian divide was artificial. But we rarely or ever recognise that. We have silenced the narrative around those who, during the days of violence, aimed to maintain relationships across the sectarian divide.

Throughout the years of violence people did cross the divide and the building of bridges never ceased. “People I know”, Shirlow continues,

> who lost loved ones received many letters from across the divide. I have read them and common phrases are; ‘this was not in my name’, ‘I too lost a son but am from the other side. I know your pain’, ‘this was senseless and unfair’. One letter, sent to a woman in Ardoyne, whose son was killed, began ‘I am a Protestant from the Shankill. I am proud of that and my Protestant faith but I never wanted anything to happen to your son or anyone’s son […]’. (ibid.)

Even during the most atrocious slaughter at Kingsmill, the epitome of sectarian degeneration, do we find the impetus not to give in to our cognitive urges that divide ‘us’ and ‘them’. “There is no doubt about the moral calibre of the men who were set upon at Kingsmill”, Susan McKay writes:

> The late Richard Hughes, the only Catholic on the bus that night, never forgot that when the gunmen demanded that the Catholics step forward, the Chapman brothers, Reggie and Walter, on either side of him, each placed a hand on his arm to stop him from doing so. There had been a spate of loyalist murders in the previous days, leaving three of the Reavey family and three of the O’Dowds dead. Alan Black [one of the survivors] said that the men would have suspected this was another such attack. (*The Irish Times* 09 January, 2018)

Such acts of unconditional empathy stand out as *true* conflict resolution, because they embody a refusal to be swept along by ethno-national categories of belonging. They leave the political arena of hidden agendas that lurk behind efforts at ‘reconciliation’ which are another way of promoting an ethno-national agenda aimed at hurting the ‘other’ community. On the previous pages I aimed to show that ontological security is key for an understanding of the appeal of ethnic nationalism, because humans are beings of habit that need to belong. Hence, in Northern Ireland a universal approach to dealing with the past by renegotiating those social truths that stand at the core of nationalist and unionist narratives cannot be achieved (yet). But, at the same time, were the internationalist voices that took their left-wing politics beyond the petty worship of the national really just “ineffectual dissidents” (English 2002, 215)? I would argue that true conflict resolution harbours a transformative

potential as it co-opts the empathetic and humane discarded by dominant ethno-national discourses. In order to amplify its influence, it will be necessary to find ways to bolster those who are ready to grab the Alternative Ulster. Shirlow, again, reminds us to subvert dominant perceptions of how we think of the 'other'. Speaking of those letters that spoke of benevolence instead of resentment, he appeals to the people of Northern Ireland to

> [f]ind those letters and give them power. Put them on gable ends, in our documents and on social media. If sectarianism has power then giving power to these letters subverts that. Heaney's assertion that hope and history had to rhyme for peace ignored the fact that it rhymed in those letters. (Shirlow 2017)

Northern Ireland would be well-advised to follow Shirlow's example.

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