

Northern Ireland sectarianism and the Garvaghy Road parade disputes

Iiro Aleksii Rönkkö

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University of Oulu

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the wider issue of Northern Ireland sectarianism by discussing the disputed Orange Order parades in Drumcree, Portadown, especially the conflict centred around the Order's marching route in celebrating the 'Twelfth' of July, commemorating King William III's victory in the Battle of the Boyne. In particular, this study focuses on the dispute concerning the Orange parade's proposed return route from Drumcree Parish Church, through the predominantly Catholic neighbourhood of Garvaghy Road, especially at the height of the resultant 'Drumcree crises' in the mid-1990s. The conflict will be related to trends in the wider sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, with the concurrent Troubles playing an important role in the shaping of the Drumcree crises. In turn, it will be discussed how the crises themselves became one of the most prominent flashpoints of sectarian tension and violence near the end of the Troubles.

This master's thesis will attempt to provide a balanced view of the subject by utilising a wide variety of written sources, but special attention has been paid to the roles and ideology of Northern Ireland unionism and its various internal divisions, especially loyalism, via authors like Norman Porter (1996) and the various contributions of Dominic Bryan (1995, 1996, 2000), among others. Writers like Michel Savaric (1998) provide opportunities to compare and contrast key aspects of this theoretical base with nationalism and republicanism, while accounts by the Garvaghy Road residents (1999) found in *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* will serve to outline some part of the arguments and sentiment opposing the Twelfth parade's proposed route. The focus on unionism, the Orange Order, and loyalism, however, will necessarily serve as a criticism of the same, while also identifying many points of said criticism as inherent to Northern Ireland sectarianism itself. Another essential task will be to more definitively separate the strands of unionism from another, in order to avoid the pitfall of treating either side of the sectarian conflict as a monolithic, all-encompassing entity, rather than as a collection of communities with their own separate interests and values. In other words, the sources utilised in this study lead one to treat the 'two traditions' of the sectarian divide as inherently connected or convergent and, to a degree, co-dependent, while still respecting the essential fact of their separate identities, as well as the complexity of their internal ideological and political structures. As a result, the importance and difficulty of dialogue emerges as an integral question in determining the trajectory of the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, or proposing a meaningful 'solution' to the problem of sectarianism.

Tiivistelmä

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tarkoituksena on käsitellä Pohjois-Irlannin sektarianismia tutkimalla erityisesti Oranialaisveljeskunnan paraateja ympäröiviä konflikteja Portadownin kaupungissa, tarkemmin Drumcreen alueella. Tutkielma keskittyy varsinkin heinäkuun kahdennentoista, eli Boynen taistelun muistopäivän paraatien aiheuttamiin kiistoihin, joissa Oranialaisveljeskunta on pyrkinyt marssimaan takaisin Drumcreen kirkolta katolilaisvaltaisen Garvaghy Roadin läpi, asukkaiden vastustuksesta huolimatta. Huomion arvoisia ovat erityisesti 1990-luvun keskivaiheiden kiistat ja kriisit näihin paraateihin liittyen, sillä ne ajoittuvat Pohjois-Irlannin levottomuuksien viimeisiin ratkaisuhetkiin, puhumattakaan niiden suorista vaikutuksista kyseiseen laajempaan konfliktiin.

Tämä tutkielma hyödyntää suhteelliseen laajaa valikoimaa erilaisia kirjallisia lähteitä, akateemisista julkaisuista internet-uutisiin, tarkoituksena ollen muodostaa ensin tasapainoinen kuva joukosta sekä paraateihin että laajempaan konfliktiin liittyviä tärkeimpiä tekijöitä. Tämä teoreettinen pohja painottuu Pohjois-Irlannin unionismin, Oranialaisveljeskunnan, ja lojalismin näkökohtiin ja ongelmiin, ja yksi keskustelun tärkeistä päämääristä on erotella unionismin eri suuntauksia toisistaan, jolloin muodostuu myös hyödyllisempi kuva sektrianiamismin konfliktien perustavanlaatuisista tekijöistä. Yksi tällainen tekijä on niin Pohjois-Irlannin tilanteelle ominaisen, niin kutsutun 'kahden tradition' järjestelmän ja sen osapuolien ideologinen ja kulttuurinen vuorovaikutteisuus ja riippuvuussuhde. Toinen lähteiden analyysin peräänkuuluttama tekijä on Pohjois-Irlannin unionismin ja Irlantilaisen nationalismin sisäisten rakenteiden monisäikeisyys, niin kulttuurisesti kuin poliittisesti. Lyhykäisyydessään tästä monimutkaisesta asetelmasta seuraa tilanne, jossa huolellinen ja hyödyllinen analyysi edellyttää sekä yksittäisten ideologisten säikeiden kuin myös laajempien sektarianismin kokonaisuuksien suhteuttamista toisiinsa tavalla, jossa niiden välillä vallitsevaa konfliktin ongelmaa ja näihin konflikteihin perustavanlaatuisesti pohjautuvaa 'identiteettirakennelmaa' kyetään lähestymään rakentavasti.

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1 Introduction

The second chapter of *Political Rituals: Loyalist Parades in Portadown*, titled *Orange Parades and the Nature of Rituals* (Bryan, Fraser & Dunn, 1995) describes the general outline of the Drumcree parade disputes as follows: several Protestant organisations, chief among them the Orange Order, attempt to assert their “right to march” (para. 1), along with their marching bands and assorted supporters, through Catholic-majority areas as part of their celebration of the twelfth of July, in commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne, which the residents of said areas oppose largely on the grounds of their disruptiveness and a perception of sectarian, triumphalist undertones. As per the article, the celebration of the Twelfth—at its core—certainly has its origins as a triumph for the Protestant ascendancy, traditionally thought to have been secured by King William’s victory in the battle. The local Orange Lodge, on its official website, maintains that the marchers—or at least members the District itself—have always acted “with the utmost decorum as befitting a religious organisation parading to and from divine worship”, a statement somewhat at odds with the various academic sources discussed later in this study, as well as with the less impartial—but still quite relevant—accounts of the Garvaghy Road residents found in *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999). The main focus of this study will be on the Garvaghy Road parade disputes from the crisis of 1995—the so-called ‘Siege of Drumcree’—onwards.

The Belfast Telegraph—a fairly unbiased publication with historic unionist or Protestant leanings—describes the modern Orange parade as proceeding in a fairly similar and uneventful manner each consecutive year, stopping at a police checkpoint in a gesture laced with symbolism. In a 4th of July, 2021 article Lauren Harte does nonetheless remark upon the shadow cast over the event by the heightened tensions aroused by the row over the Northern Ireland Protocol, with some calls for angered unionists or loyalists to mark the atmosphere with increased support for the Portadown District of the Orange Order. According to the article, the Portadown District responded to such calls—which indeed did not result in any marked increase in unrest associated with the parade—with an apparently appeasing acknowledgement of the particular causes for indignation for some unionists, while also appealing for a display of dignity and calm. Indeed, from the account it appears that Covid-19 restrictions had more of an impact on the parade than the relative turbulence of the political field.

The same article also provides an account of a time when such was not the case. According to Harte (2021), the dispute over the Drumcree Orange parade route “made headlines around the world from 1995 to 2000”, with residents’ protests succeeding in diverting (or, really, stopping), the parade in 1995 and 1996. Harte refers to a “stand-off between the security forces and loyalists” as the immediate result, with a parade allowed through in 1997, followed by a “ban” every year since. To many, the age of violent clashes in association with the Drumcree parade dispute is a matter consigned to the history books, reflecting the readily apparent easing of sectarian tensions: the BBC, for example, refers to those born after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement as “the so-called peace generation” (Girvin, S. 2023, April 3), in acknowledgement of an apparent transformation. However, some of the news out of Northern Ireland continue to reflect the survival of sectarian tensions. For instance, the BBC, that very same month, reported on young people being “groomed” and “exploited” (McBride, M. 2023, April 11) by paramilitary groups, especially in underprivileged areas. Interestingly, for the focus of this study, the article in question further reports that petrol bombs had been thrown at police by such young people at an “illegal republican parade in Londonderry”, highlighting the fact that parades, and the unrest surrounding them, are not strictly a one-sided affair. This study, however, largely due to its focus on the Drumcree crises, will predominantly cover the various strands of unionism in connection to the parade disputes. And of course, in the field of Northern Ireland politics, recent (at the time of writing) developments paint an equally tangled picture, in large part thanks to the efforts of the Democratic Unionist Party. The BBC reports that the “power-sharing government collapsed last year as part of the DUP protest against post-Brexit trading rules” (Andrews, C. 2023, May 21), with recent election gains by Sinn Féin and a visit from US President Joe Biden further increasing pressure on the DUP, doubtless in conjunction with the efforts of the UK government to put the successor of the now-defunct Protocol, called the “Windsor Framework” (“Biden visit to ensure 'Brits didn't screw around'”. 2023, May 11), into practice.

In discussing the parade dispute over Garvaghy Road and Drumcree in Portadown, specifically, it will be useful to establish some of the context within which this particular dispute—or series of disputes—can be singled out as especially relevant to, or representative of, the wider issue of sectarian division and conflict. It is apparent that the related protests and other unrest have made a lasting impression within (and without) Northern Ireland, therefore playing a role in the underlying currents of thought and culture that shape the perception of Northern Ireland’s history. Put more eloquently in *God and the Gun*, Martin Dillon describes a “historical conditioning that resides within

the layers of consciousness that have produced a divided society of two tribes with their respective and blunted perceptions of righteousness”, going on to state that “In Northern Ireland, history and religion are more important than in any modern European country” (1997, p. 6). The importance of the parade disputes is, of course, further illustrated by the fact of their relative prominence in the historiography of both the South and the North of the island, and by the mentioned extensive news media coverage of the disputes, especially in the latter decades of the 20th century, no doubt further cementing their place in Dillon’s aforementioned “layers of consciousness”. Circuitously, this leads us to the political dimension of the parade disputes, which in turn has a great deal to do with the wider issue of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

As with so much of what concerns the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland, history goes hand in hand with geography and demographics; in essence, the issue is often that of territory. In *Bonfire Time In Belfast*, Anna Poloni suggests that, in connection to the burning of bonfires to mark the Twelfth, “participants lay claim to the urban landscape by burning bonfires in public spaces” (2021, p. 113). Authors such as Neil Jarman, in his article *A Shared Future for Parades and Flags in Interface Areas?* generally treat traditions like that of the Twelfth parades as similar, performative acts of claiming and marking territory (2007). In the case of Portadown, Drumcree, and Garvaghy Road, there are several factors contributing to the volatility of the parades issue, in connection to the overarching issue of territory or land. For example, the Centre for the Study of Conflict study, titled *Political Rituals: Loyalist Parades in Portadown*, in its third part, *Portadown and Its Orange Tradition* (Bryan, Fraser & Dunn, 1995) states that Portadown lies “close to where the Orange Order was founded” (para. 3), and that the town saw some of the very first Orange parades. Similarly, the article states that “Sectarian confrontation accompanying parades has a long history in Portadown” (para. 5), being the site of the No 1 Loyal Orange Lodge. A consequently heightened sense of tradition has inevitably played a role in highlighting the Garvaghy Road or Drumcree conflict as one of the central battlegrounds of the parade disputes. The earliest mention the article makes of a serious disturbance is of “riots on 23 July and 5 November 1873” (para. 6), as police moved to block the passage of Orangemen through an area known as “the Tunnel”, itself an area with significant sectarian tensions and part of the Obins Street neighbourhood, itself identified by the article as the older of the two areas in Portadown “perceived as [...] Roman Catholic” (para. 2), at least when it comes to areas in the immediate vicinity of the town centre. The Garvaghy Road Catholic-majority estates are identified as Ballyoran and Churchill Park, being both described by the same article as

“newer and larger” (para. 2). While the article explains that “through much of the twentieth century parades appear to have become less contested” (para. 7), it does list some violent incidents, as recorded by organisations from varying backgrounds. The chapter goes on to suggest that, for a time after the Second World War, the marches “at the very least [...] remained relatively uncontested” (para. 8).

To briefly illustrate the historical precedent for violence in connection to the disputed marches, and to perhaps gather a better understanding of the kinds of semi-historical narratives the disputes may continue to play a part in, it will prove useful to present some accounts of relevant incidents from The Times Digital Archive. For example, an issue from July 21, 1834 (“From Our Own Correspondent”, p. 1) notes that, in spite of a “positive law against walking in procession on the 12th of July”, several Orange marches were attempted in Northern Ireland. Arrests were made, with one mention of a violent clash with police. Notably, however, no marches or other unrest was reported in County Armagh, only that the police had removed flags from windows in connection with the celebration of the 12th. Certainly, this gives cause to suspect that the relevant authorities in Northern Ireland at the time were quite aware of the potential for conflict to arise, even concerning—from an outsider’s perspective—such seemingly innocuous observances. Bryan et al. (1995) certainly support such a conclusion in the second part of *Political Rituals*, titled *Orange Parades and the Nature of Rituals*, listing a variety of occasions historically marked by parades, and citing a common trend of violent disturbances in connection to all of them, especially disturbances of a sectarian nature. Other disturbances, it is assumed, are more related to the raucous atmosphere—and generous amounts of drink—enjoyed at such occasions by marchers and supporters alike, if the more colourful descriptions found in the sources are any indication. The *Times* excerpt is perhaps also indicative of the fact that, in the long term, the authorities in Northern Ireland have, as a rule, viewed marches such as the 12th of July’s as potentially disruptive, and have indeed sought ways to prevent or limit these processions, as well as the observation of related traditions, no doubt chiefly in the interest of mitigating the disruption caused by any resultant heightening of sectarian tensions. Indeed, Bryan et al. (1995) seem to confirm such a historical trend, remarking that “control of these events has often been a high priority of the State” (Chapter 2, para. 1), and that the authorities have thus often attempted to either change the route of the processions, or to prevent their passage altogether. Interestingly, the CAIN article states that it was the Orange Order which raised the profile of the Twelfth celebrations as something of a sectarian

triumph, to such a degree that similar, official celebrations of it began to lose favour. It is also clear that, when viewed alongside some of the sources discussed later, much of the blame for any disturbances in connection to the marches has been, nigh-traditionally, laid at the feet of the Order and Orangemen, at least when it comes to outside observers. Bryan et al. note that, historically, one of the most significant efforts to limit the disruption and sectarian tensions evoked by the parades involved the introduction of the Party Procession Acts, which either restricted or banned many such commemorations in the mid-to-late 1800s. They note that the Acts enjoyed some support from the upper echelons of the Orange institution—usually representatives of the landed gentry—but were in turn reviled by the rank and file. In these factors, there lies a parallel with the historical background for loyalism’s alienation from the political establishment and the conservative—yet sometimes relatively liberal—unionism of the political elite, which will also be discussed in more detail later. Here, a far more direct link between loyalism and the Order can also be established.

An early mention of clashes between Orangemen and the representatives of the state, located specifically in Portadown, comes from *The Times* of November 6th of 1873, whereby Orangemen intending to “march through the town, and especially through a distinctively Roman Catholic district” (“From Our Own Correspondent”, p. 10) were confronted by a deliberately strengthened police presence. Violence erupted, with the rioters eventually succeeding in their goal of marching through, after having forced the police back by throwing stones. While no shots were apparently fired, it is distinctly noted by *The Times*, in that same article, that the police went so far as to “charge the mob with fixed bayonets” in their attempts to disperse the marchers, and certainly this represents a case where accusations of collusion or excessive leniency from some quarters of the sectarian divide might be drowned out by accusations of treachery from others. Another hint at clashes comes from a specific mention of “the Portadown riot” (“Parliamentary Intelligence”, p. 6) from the issue of November 1st, 1884. At the very least, it is another indication that tensions in Portadown drew notice from outside the local context with some regularity, and from well before the latter half of the 20th century.

The relevance of these events to those which took place over a century later, with the importance of history—and the perception of history—in Northern Ireland in mind, is hopefully quite apparent. They must, for example, have a place in the narrative or ‘mythos’ of the later loyalist sense of betrayal, not only in connection to the marches, but also the Troubles themselves, as well as the

concurrent and consequent peace process in Northern Ireland. Among other factors, the importance of the Garvaghy Road disputes, of the 1980s and 1990s in particular, can probably be traced back to their timing, especially in the context of the Troubles. The effects of the rise of mass media may also bear mentioning here, especially in the context of news media and the popularisation and polarisation of politics, tempered with the understanding that the exploration of such themes lies mostly beyond the purview of this study.

Just as the historical symbolism of Portadown and its surroundings cannot be ignored as a factor in facilitating later disturbances, the establishment of a historical precedent for violent reaction to any perceived disruption of the Orange marching tradition in Portadown should also be taken into account, when discussing later parade disputes. As an example of the cultural-historical backdrop of the parade disputes, the Centre for the Study of Conflict article, referenced previously, states that “Stories of the massacre of Protestants in Portadown in 1641 are part of local culture and are remembered and commemorated” (Bryan, Fraser & Dunn, 1995, para. 3), and it is apparent that similar traditions have been—and are being—observed on both sides of the sectarian divide across Northern Ireland. In essence, the sources demonstrate that any of the parties involved in the more modern iterations of the Drumcree parade conflict can place it in a well-established narrative or historical continuum, rather than it being a sudden and inexplicable flare-up of sectarian tensions. Indeed, Michel Savaric (1998), in a CAIN contribution titled *Conflicting Symbols, Symbols of Conflict and Symbolical Conflict - The Drumcree crises*, notes a “strange symmetry” and “tradition” of violence associated with the Drumcree crises (para. 21, para. 20). Perhaps the failure of the Processions Acts—after unionist challenges—can be situated in a similar scheme of repetitions and reversals that Savaric identifies, when contrasted with the eventual success of preventing the parade’s passage through Garvaghy Road, and more generally the establishment of the Parades Commission. As alluded to earlier, another crucial piece of the puzzle can be uncovered by considering the prevailing political climate. Of particular interest in this regard are those occasions when the parade disputes—Garvaghy Road in particular—are closely associated with ‘interventions’ by figures such as Ian Paisley, not to mention their relevance to the divisions present within unionism itself, or the ongoing peace process and the formation of a principle of power-sharing in the governance of Northern Ireland.

As for the overall structure of this study, chapter two will first attempt to differentiate between the various strands of unionism, paying special attention to the placement of the Orange Order within this framework, as well as to its relationship with the various different ideologies that the sources identify under the umbrella term of 'unionism'. Of specific interest, in this respect, is their treatment of loyalism, both as a facet of unionism, but also as a particularly distinct—or perhaps even shunned—part thereof. Chapter three will proceed by identifying and discussing further points of interest and 'barriers to progress', as described by research surrounding sectarianism and the Drumcree crises, especially in so far as the latter also appear applicable to the wider phenomenon of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. In turn, chapter four will focus on matters more specific to the aforementioned crises, based on the findings of the preceding chapters, including the presentation of a rough timeline in order to discuss key events in sufficient detail. In effect, an attempt will be made to describe how and why the Drumcree crises represent both a focal point for the tail end of the Troubles, and a turning point for many concerned parties, the Orange Order being a prime example. Finally, the concluding chapter will further relate the findings of previous chapters—with special attention paid to some proposed and actualised solutions for the Drumcree parade disputes—to the issue of sectarianism itself, and attempt to either form or indicate tentative predictions for the possible paths or trends that sectarianism in Northern Ireland might adhere to in the future.

2 Unionism, a house divided

The role of unionism, and all its constituent subsets, appears prominently in most discussions of the Drumcree parade disputes. For a fruitful analysis of this involvement, however, it is necessary to construe and classify some of the various strands within unionism, particularly to avoid treating unionism as a monolithic—often sinister—presence in the disputes, rather than as a diverse grouping of frequently conflicting ideologies. Such a trend in the historiographical treatment of Ulster unionism was, for example, identified by Diarmaid Ferriter in *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (2004, p. 22). In this chapter, Norman Porter's (1996) treatment of the fractious nature of unionism will be combined with sources from a wide variety of backgrounds, in the hope of providing an interesting and balanced view of the subject. The definitive separation of loyalism from adjacent strands of unionism seems to pose a particularly stiff challenge, especially when it appears that said strands often make attempts to muddy the water by distancing themselves from thoroughly 'lower-class' loyalism, and its associations with paramilitarism. Regardless, an attempt will be made to present what roughly corresponds to a fairly stable loyalist core identity, even as its relationship with the government or other institutions has shifted—often quite rapidly—over time. The involvement of the Orange Order will also take centre stage in this chapter, not only due to its prominence in the parades and associated crises, but also due to the intricate relationship it has with loyalism in this context.

Before continuing, however, it is best to consider an additional challenge inherent to discussing unionism. Dominic Bryan (1996), in the opening pages of *The Right to March*, states that the use of "Protestant", to describe a person or community, is essentially a matter of ethnicity and local 'belonging', without necessarily implying a religious attitude, whereas "Loyalist" and "Unionist" exclusively imply a political affiliation (p. 374). An overlap between the three descriptors, being alternately applied to members of the same community, is fairly common according to Bryan. As an aside, however, the author also references a "small proportion of Protestants who see themselves as 'Irish' in the sense of a politically united Ireland", as opposed to unionism, with which most people describing themselves as 'Protestant' identify with (p. 374). As for the complicated issue of defining loyalism, Bryan writes that the term is most often used to "designate individuals and groups willing to use physical force to maintain the union", while simultaneously being used by some to refer to

the whole of unionism. For the purposes of this master's thesis, the former, narrower definition will take precedent. Bryan treats the terminology associated with the Catholic communities in much the same way, with some notable differences and convergences, which will be discussed later.

2.1 Unionism and loyalism

In separating loyalism from unionism, it should first be repeated that not all of the sources used in this master's thesis seem to fully agree upon the specific identifying characteristics between the terms. In some cases, as mentioned above, the words are used almost interchangeably. The use of 'loyalism' predominates in connection to violence during parade disputes, however. Naturally, this is a result of the overlap and interplay between the two, made more confusing by the "contradictions and uncertainty of Ulster loyalism" (*A Jigsaw Puzzle for the Queen's Loyalist Rebels*, p. 6), as described by Ulster Defence Association spokesman John McMichael in a 1985 contribution to *Fortnight*. In the article, McMichael essentially claims that, while "Most Ulster Loyalists are also Unionists", they are generally characterised by a loyalty to "the wishes of the majority of Ulster people", rather than "the laws or dictates of Westminster" (p. 6), chiefly referring to the absolute rejection of "any suggestion of a united Ireland" (p. 7). The UDA spokesman further divides loyalists into two camps: "those who are part of the system and conservative in approach (Castle Protestants), and those who recognise no authority greater than the wishes of Ulster people (The Queen's Rebels)" (p. 6), the latter position essentially referring to a willingness to resist a "'sell-out' initiated by Westminster" (p. 7), possibly even by violent means. While the writer is obviously not an impartial informant, one is inclined to believe that McMichael's account, on this occasion, is representative as it pertains to the outlook of the ideological niche and organisation he represents.

The 1985 article seems to identify the 'conservative loyalist' position with the Unionist political establishment and the Orange Order in particular, while the "Queen's Rebels" represent "grassroots Loyalists" who, unlike the establishment, do not "owe their allegiance to law and order, the crown and the constitution" (p. 7). In essence, then, the most useful division between unionism and loyalism-within-unionism, for the purposes of this study, is probably to identify the former as prioritising (as the name suggests) the legal political union, while the latter places Northern Ireland's separateness above other considerations. Separating the strands entirely, especially when it comes to the subject of the parade disputes, is of course rather difficult. As a result, it may prove useful

to—more specifically—examine the involvement of the Orange Order in the parade disputes, especially as this relates to the relationship between the Order and loyalism in the same context.

2.2 The Orange Order and loyalism

In *The Men of No Popery: The Origins of the Orange Order*, Jim Smyth—writing in 1995—states that “The foundation of the Orange Order in September 1795 has not attracted the same level of scholarly attention” (p. 49) as, for example, the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion, and that “Irish popular loyalism, mobilised by the Orange Societies, never achieved the nation-wide support enjoyed by the British ‘church and king’ associations” (p.49). On this distinction, Smyth writes that while the Orange Order’s genesis mirrors, in general terms, those of other loyalist, anti-revolutionary societies which were active at the time elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it had roots which “lay deep in the Ulster country-side” (p. 49). Interestingly, the article describes how, from the outset, the Order had “a radical and subversive potential which troubled the men of property and the government” (p. 51). An example of this potential is, for example, provided by Bryan et al. (1995), when they refer to the somewhat effective resistance of the Party Processions Acts offered by “a small land-owner, William Johnston, in the late 1860s” (Chapter 2, para. 2). The article implies that Johnston’s consequent success in politics was in many ways a subversion of the gentry’s power, especially as he beat the candidate put forward by the Belfast Grand Lodge leadership. Certainly, Bryan et al. emphasise that Orangeism involves a highly complicated system of internal politics, and that the various—largely independent—organisations that make up the Order as a whole should therefore not be viewed as a single entity. This, of course, complicates things when attempting to make some generalisations based on some of the later accounts of the Order’s membership and its relationship with popular loyalism, especially when it comes to the parade disputes of the mid-90s and their immediate consequences. An example of the potentially extreme diversity of the field, especially in the early days of the Orange Order, comes from Smyth (1995), who mentions a “baffling phenomenon of Orange and Masonic lodges defecting to the United Irishmen and vice versa” (p. 52). For the purposes of this study, it is therefore worth noting that discussion specific to the most visible representative of the Order in the Drumcree crises, the Portadown Orange District Lodge No. 1, may not provide a wholly comprehensive analysis of the whole Orange institution at the relevant points in time. The same applies to individual members of the Order discussed herein, as well as the nature of other parades elsewhere in Northern Ireland. Finally, it should be noted that, per the

article, the Orange Order's direct influence in the official politics of Northern Ireland would gradually diminish (if not entirely disappear), especially after the beginning of the 1970s. Based on many of the factors discussed herein, it is safe to assume that the trend and rate of this change will have varied regionally.

Smyth (1995) goes on to write that, shortly after its conception, some members of the landed gentry began to regard the Order with "decided antagonism", largely because, even in its "militant loyalism and anti-revolutionary ideology" (p. 52), the Order nonetheless represented a challenge to the status quo from the lower classes. In fairly short order, Smyth writes, "the men of property effected a virtual take-over", as a way of "reasserting control over a volatile tenantry" and, despite a persistent "respectability problem", Orangemen were consequently co-opted for various purposes by the powers that be, including their use as a "counter-insurgency force" (p. 52). Smyth's reference to many such Orangemen also enrolling in the Yeomanry is a pattern perhaps repeated in how, according to Dillon (1997), the UDR would later, via an overlap in membership, serve as a training ground for loyalist paramilitary organisations (p. 29). The perceived threat from Catholics nonetheless ensured a steady stream of lower-class Protestant recruits for the Order, despite the gentry take-over. According to Bryan et al. (1995), these working class recruits, especially from Belfast, often blended the 'official' Orangeism of the gentry leadership with their own brand of "proletarian radicalism" (Chapter 2, para. 2), providing a strong indication of the types of divisions to be made elsewhere in unionism. Regarding the 'containment' of the Orangemen by the authorities, it is perhaps also worth noting the carefully managed arrangement that some later Orangemen utilised in their dealings with militant, grass-roots loyalism.

Dominic Bryan (2000), for example, posits that David Trimble's advancement to leader of the Ulster Unionist Party soon after events in Drumcree in 1995 was—while not necessarily a direct result of his public involvement in the parade dispute—nonetheless helped along by it (p. 1). In essence, the event appears to be an example of the sentiments of the aforementioned grass-roots loyalists being weaponised, or at least exploited, in the advancement of a political career that is ultimately more closely aligned with the establishment of the elite, rather than the 'troublemakers' of the grassroots. The last is probably best illustrated by Trimble's work almost directly after being elected as leader by the party, having built himself up as "the most hard-line of the Unionist candidates", only to enter into talks with the much-distrusted Sinn Féin (Dixon, 2004, p. 463). In other words, Trimble advanced

from a defiant figure celebrating the Drumcree 12th parade alongside Ian Paisley in what “was seen by many loyalists as the Protestant people fighting back” (Bryan, 2000, p. 3), to taking actions such as agreeing to support the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, in turn drawing the lasting criticism of what Paul Dixon (2004) describes as “anti-agreement unionists” (p. 463), a group which—in general outline—seems to align with the “Queen’s Rebels” of McMichael (1985), in essence representing a position within unionism with a much more genuine connection to what might be termed loyalism. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Trimble does not necessarily represent a streak of unionism diametrically opposed to the hardliners from the outset, even if the course of his career distanced him from an initial position of perceived adjacency.

2.3 The Orange Order and cultural unionism

Norman Porter (1996), in *Rethinking Unionism: An Alternative Vision for Northern Ireland*, separates the complexity of unionist ideology into cultural, liberal, and civic unionism. The first of these is broadly defined by Porter, himself a member of the Ulster Unionist Party, as deriving “from an ‘Ulster unionist’ way of life which is characterised by institutions and practices reflecting a Protestant-British ethos”, while also acknowledging a tendency among cultural unionists to perceive an ongoing threat to the aforementioned cornerstones, due to “the uncongenial circumstances in which unionism currently finds itself” (p. 72). *Rethinking Unionism* makes it apparent that this perceived threat concerns not only the cultural eroding or dissolution of explicitly Protestant or unionist traditions and institutions, but that of the Union itself. One might say, in other words, that cultural unionism proposes a line of conservatism, in so far as it consequently perceives the preservation of the social or cultural order of Northern Ireland—or parts thereof—as paramount to the survival of the Union. While Porter himself might not find such an assessment entirely fair in all cases, he does present and discuss the “anti-culturalist” (p. 75) arguments against cultural unionism—which he himself, indeed, is not a proponent of—at length. Chiefly, according to Porter, these rationalist arguments come from both liberal unionists and the nationalist camp. What is most relevant to the subject matter of this study, however, is how easily the model of cultural unionism can be applied to the case of the Orange Order and their allies in the mid-90s parade disputes. Their opponents on the unionist side similarly made inroads at de-emphasising the Protestant faith and associated traditions, especially as a way of bridging the sectarian gap and bringing the nationalist and republican side of the conflict to the negotiating table, while still retaining the essentials of a

unionist agenda. Additionally, Porter describes the cultural unionists as “essentially devolutionists” (p. 86), viewing the intervention of Westminster as something of a lesser evil, when weighed against the possibility of an increased involvement by Dublin—perhaps through the Catholic population of Northern Ireland—in the affairs of the NI government or its institutions. According to Porter, the cultural unionist continues to see the “British connection” of the Union “in predominantly Protestant terms” (p. 86), even if by this time such a connection was somewhat one-sided. To recall Bryan’s (1996) treatment of the term ‘Protestant’, it is essentially very doubtful that many people in the rest of the United Kingdom would have used such a term as a signifier of their own community or ethnicity. Essentially, the cultural unionist position is at this point characterised by an alienation from the increasingly ‘non-Protestant’ and ‘anti-sectarian’ Britain while striving to reinforce and protect what they see as the explicitly Protestant—or preferably ‘anti-papist’—nature and ‘Britishness’ of Northern Ireland.

This last distinction, in the case of the Order, has generally been made as a way of countering accusations of pro-sectarianism. According to Smyth (1995), in the Order’s view it was their “allegiance to a foreign prince” (p. 53) and tyrant that made the “Popery” of Catholics disagreeable and contrary to the liberty that, in their mind, Protestantism stood for, and not their faith in and of itself. Whether such a distinction can be accepted as anything other than vindication for the trifecta of criticisms levelled at cultural unionism is, of course, a matter for debate. As described by Porter (1996) the three main criticisms paint such arguments as either misguided rationalisation of sectarian thought, outright disingenuity, or self-deception. Such speculation must be tempered with the understanding that instances of apparent deceptiveness or unreliability may constitute an internal conflict of interests, rather than the purposeful conspiracy that some of the opponents of cultural unionism—nationalists of republicans in particular—seem to imply, as per Porter’s description. However, in the case of the early Orange Order, Smyth refers to the concurrent “wreckings” of Catholic homes as a prime example of the apparent “violent sectarianism of the Orangemen” (p. 53). At the very least, such discrepancies further illustrate the previously mentioned problem of maintaining respectability that has plagued the Orange institution from its inception, and they also perhaps shed some initial light on how and why such attempts at distancing have ultimately proved either unconvincing or unsuccessful. In any case, the basic principles of cultural unionism seem to align very closely with the position of the Orange Order at the height of the Drumcree parade disputes.

2.4 Liberal unionism

In Porter's dissection of unionism, liberal unionism purports to offer "a political vision without confessional bias" (1996, p. 127) and a departure from the 'irrationality' and sectarianism of the culturalist approach, by adhering instead to the concept and ideal of "a British political way of life" (p. 128). The primary targets of their criticism, according to Porter, are "cultural unionists, the British government, and Irish nationalists" (p. 128), with liberal unionism claiming to represent a strictly rational viewpoint as to the question and the benefits of the Union, divorced from the more loosely defined arguments of culturalists on both the unionist and nationalist side. The chief weakness in their claims, Porter argues, lies in their perceived ineffectuality at convincing either the British government or the non-unionists to accept their lines of reasoning, especially in the case of the latter. In effect, Porter claims that liberal unionism, despite its worthwhile aims, suffers from a certain irrational narrowness of view, only perpetuating a "constitutional standoff" (p. 129). One has to wonder whether Porter would see the current crisis of the Executive as proof of the validity of his assessment. With the benefit of hindsight, of course, there is equally a claim to be made that the liberal unionist stance made the road toward a relative peace in Northern Ireland quite a lot easier, as it seems to have ultimately required concessions that a purely cultural unionist position would scarcely allow. The resentment caused by such concessions still lingers, of course, as hinted at by some of the news articles covered in the introduction. The third chapter of this study will explore this point further, in the specific context of the Drumcree parade disputes, but suffice it to say that cultural unionism—with its fear of the subversion of the Protestant 'character' of Northern Ireland, for instance via the encroachment of pluralism—has clearly struggled to consign itself to the changes brought about by the shifting of demographics. The press release for the first phase of the Northern Ireland 2021 census, for example, states that people identifying themselves as 'Protestant' were no longer in the majority, having been somewhat narrowly overtaken by those identifying as 'Catholic' (NISRA, 2022). For a cultural unionist position, when using Porter's definition of it, such developments must appear somewhat threatening, especially when one takes into account the interconnectivity of history and culture, in this case a history whereby the direction of politics has tended to rarely favour the minority. It is from such a profusion of historical baggage that liberal unionism claims to rid itself of, while Porter essentially presents a fairly convincing argument that such a goal was never truly realised. Essentially, the author argues that liberal unionism latches onto very similar points in the historical narrative, while attempting to supplant

the culturalist argument with “a political sense of ‘Britishness’” (p. 131), as opposed to inadvertently highlighting the separateness of an Ulster Protestant identity from the citizenry of the rest of the United Kingdom. Therefore, liberal unionism’s relationship with Westminster, according to Porter, relies heavily on the supposition that, as citizens, it is the duty of the British government to ensure that the will of a majority-unionist population in Northern Ireland is done, and therefore to ensure the continuation of the Union.

The similarities—both in their respective interests, as well as their weaknesses—between cultural and liberal unionism are further expanded upon by Porter (1996), as he goes on to suggest that both harbour anxieties over a perceived dilution of Northern Ireland’s ‘Britishness’ in the wake of the agreements following paramilitary ceasefires. The main difference is, in practice, that the cultural unionist sees the threat in the erasure of ‘Protestant’ or unionist identity and culture, whereas to a liberal unionist the crux of the issue lies in the weakening of British sovereignty in Northern Ireland (p. 132). Both ideologies, according to Porter, often lapse into a siege mentality; at once feeling beset by both Westminster and the nationalists. While major differences between the two are a fact maintained by Porter, he does repeatedly suggest that they borrow much from each other, whenever convenient or necessary. In this way, it can be argued, it was possible for David Trimble to fluently move from the sphere of decidedly cultural unionism to a far more liberal stance on the issue of sectarianism, while maintaining the necessary support of his party. In some respects, it appears that the division between cultural and liberal unionism is often rather a sliding scale. The Orange Order—at the height of the Drumcree crises—seems to have attempted to occupy a similar scale, only with an arguably far lesser degree of success. Naturally, a certain institutional inertia will have played a part in this fairly unconvincing move, in addition to the significantly more intimate involvement of the Order at large in the parade disputes, when compared to one (soon-to-be former) hardliner. A further complication, however, is presented by the somewhat nebulous connection between the Order proper and its wide variety of supporters in the disputes.

2.5 Loyalism, and a sense of betrayal

In *God and the Gun*, Martin Dillon’s (1997) main thrust is aimed at the role of clergy and the churches in the sectarian conflict, but the book also contains a wealth of information on topics such as loyalism, the definition of which has, so far, proved difficult to narrow down satisfactorily. In the

broadest of terms, the word seems to get thrown around and applied to almost any strand of unionism thought to be inherently sectarian or otherwise disagreeable. Elsewhere, loyalism is—more specifically—a byword for Protestant paramilitarism, which in turn is a definition neither entirely unfair, nor entirely exhaustive. Cultural unionism, it seems, draws similarly from a deep well of historical or semi-legendary triumphs and disgraces, and it appears that the two terms—while indeed not interchangeable—occupy slightly different layers in the conversation. Loyalism is, for all the murkiness of its exact boundaries and definitions, an ideology which strongly overlaps with the hard line of cultural unionist thought but seems nonetheless to often have a troubled relationship with much of the institutional base that the latter ideology has been associated with.

Put briefly, the most prominent characteristics that previous chapters have assigned to loyalism include a hostile stance to any idea of unification with the rest of the island, in combination with a cultural unionist emphasis on defending—by all available means—what amounts to a unique ethnic Protestant identity for Northern Ireland, when compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. In other words, loyalism can be seen as unionism only so far as the Union prevents the encroachment of other, less desirable influences. It can be argued that, first and foremost, loyalism stands for ‘an Ulster apart’, in a way some of the sources describe as not too dissimilar to contemporary British nationalism, including their use of ethnic tensions and conspiracy theories to garner support among the working class. The most practical example of this kind of loyalism can be found in the rhetoric and continued activities of loyalist paramilitary groups, especially as they increasingly came into blows with the security forces.

Of the two political figures previously mentioned in connection to the Drumcree parade disputes, Ian Paisley is more strongly and definitely connected to the unionist grassroots and loyalism. The Dictionary of Irish Biography describes his religious views and ministry as a reflection of the tensions between middle-class Protestants and the working class (Maume, 2021) the latter having rapidly taken to a variety of smaller Protestant denominations, such as a diverse sprinkling of revivalist congregations. Paisley’s brand of populism was therefore reflected both in his faith and his politics, the two of course being heavily interrelated. Among other things, the article notes a contrast between his heavily sectarian political rhetoric, and an otherwise generous and congenial attitude. The article likewise notes his involvement with various loyalist paramilitary groups, accusations of which Paisley seems to have always vehemently denied. On several occasions, Paisley made fiery

threats of paramilitary action, later condemning such action as it seems to have suited his political agenda, in contrast to the more veiled threats made by some other prominent hardliner unionists. Certainly, by the time of the parade disputes, he was facing stiff competition from other loyalist demagogues, who presented themselves as secular and progressive alternatives to his explicitly religious, fire-and-brimstone approach to loyalism. A one-time ally of Paisley's, Loyalist Volunteer Force founder Billy Wright, would describe the partial divorce of loyalism and religion by referring to loyalists who, rather holding onto land than their faith—in continuing to fight—are more loyalist than Protestant (Dillon, 1997, p. 81). At the very least, the possibility of a wider trend of secularisation in the conflict is worth keeping in mind, whenever other developments are discussed.

Dillon's (1997) interviews of Wright and others reveal many further insights into loyalism, especially in the context of religion, but of particular interest to further analysis is the overarching sense of betrayal that loyalism seems to have adopted as one of its core motifs. According to Dillon's timeline of events, this feeling stems from a variety of sources, including the use of British troops to protect Catholic communities from sectarian violence, and a general increase in official response to paramilitary activities. While these issues will be explored in depth in a later chapter, it is useful to also point to the continuous disappointment of Paisley and his ilk over perceived "concessions" (p. 18) made to the republican side by the UK government as a basic catalyst for further unrest and dissatisfaction with the direction of Northern Ireland politics among loyalists. This, in turn, might result in the UK government stepping up its response, rather than seemingly backing down, although either option would essentially encourage paramilitary activities to protect loyalist interests (pp. 20-22). Dillon attributes the breakdown of a ceasefire in 1994 to this tug-of-war, for example, and it is easy to see how this in turn might boost paramilitary recruitment, as the perpetuation of violence breeds further discontent with the official handling of the conflict. When coupled with the widespread involvement of the various paramilitary groups in activities such as racketeering and extortion (p. 33), a negotiated peace becomes far less attractive to many of these groups.

Another treachery, in the loyalist view, came when loyalist terrorists were incarcerated in large numbers under circumstances and charges very similar to those of their sworn republican enemies, often serving time alongside IRA men (p. 40). Essentially, writes Dillon (1997), these prisoners did not really understand why they were there, having perhaps previously enjoyed or expected a far

different treatment from what they still considered to be “their State” (pp. 39-40, p. 28). According to Dillon’s interview, Kenny McClinton—connected with characters like Wright and the Shankill Butchers—was particularly disillusioned with his supposed leadership, having been sold out by his boss, to be later shocked—along with other imprisoned loyalists—by the demands of a high-ranking Orangeman for all terrorists, loyalists included, to face the death penalty (p.46). In essence, the loyalists felt betrayed not only by the British government and the government of Northern Ireland, but also by the institutions and political organisations they had thought their allies. Add to this the fact that coups against the loyalist political leadership were historically far from uncommon—should they stray too far from the accepted values of its core membership (p. 89)—it was perhaps no surprise that a schism formed between what Dillon identifies as the city authorities and the rural cells (p. 87). Wright, later in his interview, perhaps refers to this schism when he forecasts that loyalism will one day replace unionism altogether (p. 90), although the remark is probably just as connected to the competition between the unionist establishment politicians and a new wave of loyalist politicians from working class—or at least populist—backgrounds (p. 91). With all this in mind, it can therefore be comfortably asserted that the primary distinction to be made between the other strands of Ulster unionism and loyalism is one of class.

3 Sectarianism: further points of interest

Having discussed some of the many facets of unionism in some detail, there remains a wealth of other topics to be discussed in relation to the Drumcree crises. Naturally, the 'other side' of the sectarian divide must be addressed, however this will be done in part by way of comparing and contrasting relevant topics in nationalism and republicanism with those identified in connection to the many strands of unionism, as a way of narrowing the discussion down to those topics which are most pertinent to the main focus of this study. This is not to, for instance, deny the involvement of violence perpetrated by republican paramilitaries or sympathisers somewhere in the whole makeup of the crises; the sources, however, particularly emphasise the involvement of loyalist groups in various turns of events, and they must therefore take centre stage. In the discussion of the wider sectarian conflict, class and territory will provide the basic concepts around which this comparing and contrasting will take place, which should hopefully provide a concise but useful overview of the roots of the issue. The discussion will then move towards the relationship of the state with the sectarian conflict, centred around the perception of neutral inactivity on one hand, and accusations of either collusion or betrayal on the other. Distinctions are to be made between Stormont and Westminster when needed, but the strong indication given by the sources as to the extent between their co-operation will guide much of the language used in that discussion. Lastly, the above topics will be more firmly related to the Garvaghy Road parade disputes by considering some of the difficulties in establishing an effective dialogue, in this case between the residents and the marchers, also accounting for the seemingly vital role of official mediation.

Before moving on to discussing the issue of class, however, it may be worthwhile to briefly establish the rough tone of the conversation at the onset of the mid-to-late 1990s parade disputes, which has some persistent echoes to this day. Dixon (2004), for example, identifies "an influential strand within nationalism and republicanism" which argues that "unionism is a supremacist and sectarian ideology" (p. 464). The persistence of such an argument can probably be traced back to cultural unionism's insistence on the preservation of Protestant institutions and traditions as the dominant force, and to liberal unionism's insistence upon a deep integration with the rest of the United Kingdom, at the expense of the "two traditions" of Catholic and Protestant identity in Northern Ireland (Porter, 1996). In turn, the unionist opinion of their opponents often aligned with the old prejudices identified earlier by Smyth (1995), broadly interpreting their agenda as a plot to impose

“popish tyranny” (p. 51), or some other way to ‘get one over’ on the Protestant community. According to Porter (1996), a general suspicion towards the involvement of Catholics or nationalists in parliamentary politics was not exclusive to cultural unionists, with some prominent liberal unionists voicing concerns that, really, are hard not to interpret in terms of sectarian prejudice. The overall impression gleaned from Porter’s text is that liberal unionism—in its pure rationalist form—treats both the ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ identity groups as irrational and unsuitable, and holds that they must consequently be supplanted, not rehabilitated, by rational Britishness, an approach which would earn them the deep distrust of nationalists and other unionists, especially loyalists. A more culturalist unionism, in turn, effectively attempts to establish the superiority or suitability of a Northern Ireland Protestant identity, as a way of discounting key nationalist demands. These simplified viewpoints, naturally, do not represent the whole—or the worst—of the spectrums, but the preceding years of violence and failed ceasefires assured that they would not have been particularly rare to come across, either. In the local context, Bryan (1996) notes “six major riots and a catalogue of violent incidents” in connection to the disputed parades in 1985 and 1986, as part of a long tradition of unrest. To reiterate, the Catholic or nationalist communities along the traditional route strongly objected to the parades, the state viewed them as troublesome, and the Orange Order—along with its allies in the disputes—were determined to assert their “right to march”.

3.1 Sectarianism and class

Using the sources, we have previously narrowed down the most stable part of a loyalist identity to the issue of class, which is to say that loyalism can be defined as a populist, lower class or working class strand of unionism, as far as its main support base is concerned, in addition to factors such as its cultural unionist thought processes and ties to paramilitarism. Much like today (as per some of the news articles discussed in the introduction), underprivileged Protestant-majority areas are particularly fertile ground for its rhetoric to take root. This chapter will mainly compare it with a general outline of republicanism within nationalism, as described by the sources.

Dominic Bryan (1996) writes that, first and foremost, “The ‘Roman Catholic’ community defines itself in terms of its nationality, ‘Irish’, rather than its religious affiliation” (p. 374), but that in Northern Ireland the term ‘Catholic’ is most often used to refer to the community, unless ‘nationalist’ is used instead, both of which Bryan uses in referring to a political affiliation and desire

for unification with the rest of the island. 'Republican', as defined by Bryan, in turn specifically denotes support for "physical force nationalism" (p. 374), meaning unification through an armed conflict, if necessary. Much like the strands of unionism discussed before, the terms are sometimes used with significant degrees of overlap or interchangeability, depending on the source, but this study will discuss them largely according to Bryan's definitions. Roughly speaking, republicanism too is characterised by working class populism, and seems to overall depend on an ideology steeped in Porter's (1996) 'culturalism', at least in so far as it portrays itself as part of a long continuum of resistance against a foreign occupier. According to Dillon (1997), however, republicanism moved from a 'traditional', romanticised form of republicanism towards a more socialist agenda from the 1960s onwards (p. 6), while the old, French-inspired revolutionary theory was essentially based around the middle class and agrarianism. The implication seems to be that a more conservative, middle class form of nationalism has subsequently developed according to those principles, again in line with developments within unionism. Much like loyalism, republicanism is likewise associated with the worst of the Troubles. However, according to Ferriter (2004), a "preoccupation" with the conflict between republicanism and unionism has, in the long term, led to the neglect of a "social history of Ulster, the study of which reveals how the working classes of both communities shared many of the same burdens" (p. 22). Consequently, it will be necessary to discuss some of the reasons for the evident lack of class solidarity between the two groups, as these reasons should naturally form the main obstacle for reconciliation.

Jim Smyth (1995) argues that the "manipulation/false consciousness thesis", as a basis for understanding the early rivalries between republicanism and loyalism, is "patronising and too pat" (p. 53). According to Smyth, the involvement of the state and the gentry in encouraging the divide between the Orangemen and the United Irishmen does not overshadow the fact of "the self-generating capacity of popular loyalism" (p. 53), referring to the recurring theme of grassroots loyalism refusing to go wherever the supposed political leadership wishes, if the direction seems contrary to its perceived interests. Smyth's argument does, however, seemingly fail to distinguish the alternative 'containment thesis' from the essential characteristics of false consciousness, although the implication about the spontaneous nature of the 'birth and rebirth' of popular loyalism does clearly bear some merit. Certainly, the false consciousness thesis is a gross simplification of an evidently complex issue, but it is difficult to see the parts of loyalism that amount to base xenophobia as anything other than contrary to the objective interests of the working class. The issue

of sectarianism having two sides, however, it is also necessary to acknowledge similar issues with the ideology of republicanism, in so far as both exemplify sectarian thought to some extent. According to Ferriter (2004), republican ideology has “never been much contested or even debated by its proponents”, and has some glaring weaknesses when it comes to addressing issues such as the conflicting desires for centralisation and decentralisation of political power in a post-unification Ireland, which Ferriter identifies as one of the principal reasons for the failure of “the Irish revolution” (pp. 19-21). In effect, republicanism in the absence of sectarianism would likely still fail to satisfy the concerns of the Protestant community, and Ferriter writes that it instead uses justifications of “predestinate nationalism” to equate “armed republicanism with the will of the people” (p. 22), neglecting a constitutional and democratic approach to nationalism. It is therefore no surprise that the various republican paramilitary groups’ insistence upon describing their campaigns in terms of self-defence and as resistance of a British occupation (p. 22) failed to convince anyone on the unionist side. A further flaw shared by both ideologies has to do with a generalised flaw, identified by Ferriter, in both revisionist and ‘classic’ historiography of the North and South of the island; there exists a tendency to view history as “a morality tale of wrong and right” (p. 23), which in this case continuously reinforces the mythology of justified sectarianism.

Apart from issues of ideology and the finer points of class struggle, there is a good amount of evidence for more concrete forms of competition and conflicts of interests between the communities, some of which will be discussed in the next sub-chapter. First, though, it may be of interest to point out some parallels in the fact that both loyalism and republicanism, in their internal politics, experienced schisms over their attitudes towards socialism and the peace process. To be more precise, Dillon (1997) refers to a “left swing” (p. 72) within the UVF in 1974, resulting in dialogue with the socialist wing of republicanism, followed promptly by a coup and a swing right back to right-wing politics, as well as a resumption in hostilities. This appears to closely resemble the circumstances of the split between the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Official Irish Republican Army some years prior, as the latter faction pushed for co-operation with the National Liberation Front, a more explicitly socialist agenda, and an eventual peace negotiation and re-entry into official politics as the way towards unification. Perhaps, both cases represent the capacity of the ‘culturalist-sectarian’ approach to, if nothing else, construct a ‘false consciousness’ of its own, in the interest of self-perpetuation.

3.2 Sectarianism and land, or ‘territory’

Another central paradigm of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is encapsulated in the issue of land or, in a more abstract sense, a competition over territory, in several interlocking ways. In terms of class, the problem of solidarity—or lack thereof—can be partially traced back to these issues, in so far as they can be viewed as both symptom and cause in the wider question of sectarianism. One of the more practical and visible expressions of this relationship must be the ‘peace walls’ or “interface barriers”, along with the use of flags, murals, and parades to demarcate both the physical and cultural territory of the community (Jarman, 2007, p. 1). Based on Jarman’s description, the barriers themselves represent an interesting dilemma in terms of the ‘official’ management of sectarian tensions, and seem to tie into a wider trend of ‘limiting contact’, rather than mediation. According to Jarman, interface barriers can serve to limit the possibility of clashes between Catholic and Protestant communities, therefore providing a better sense of security, but in turn can lead to heightened tensions, perhaps through unwittingly highlighting a sense of separateness or ‘otherness’ between said communities. Of course, Jarman also states that such heightening of tensions has been readily used as a political tool, though it seems probable that, in the case of the physical interface barriers, the main motivator of policy makers has rather been the aforementioned limiting of contact.

In terms of the focus of this chapter, it can perhaps be said that physical markers of territory (and territoriality) limit opportunities for the building of a rapport between communities, while still serving an apparent purpose as a stop-gap in limiting the potential for inter-community violence arising from existing tensions. Crucially, they must also have a part in the establishment of a siege mentality, as a physical manifestation of the sectarian ‘psyche’. Jarman’s (2007) placement of flags and, particularly, parades in this context is exceedingly useful, as is the assertion that the 1994 ceasefires ushered in a new system of “two distinct, but interconnected realms of activity: political argument and debate; and street politics” (p. 1), in relation to the peace process. It can perhaps be argued that this division follows the lines of previously identified trends in class issues or political power, as the influence of street politics, in the form of the parade disputes, has been noted on the rise and fall of certain political figures, parties, or policies in general. Likewise, the division—and a more abstract concept of interface barriers—seems to exemplify certain aspects of the disconnect between the populist grassroots and the official politics of Northern Ireland. To wax philosophical,

political power has at times sought to not only isolate the 'two traditions' from each other, but to isolate itself from them, either selectively or wholeheartedly.

To expand the notion of land or territory further, or perhaps to discuss it in its intended meaning, it may be worth accounting for it in terms of 'resource access', and the subsequent implications for a conflict which seems, increasingly, to be of an intra-class nature in its sectarian dimension. Jim Smyth (1995), for example, writes that the theory of land competition "has now been superseded by more sophisticated theories" (p. 50) when it comes to examining the causes of late 1700s sectarian clashes between armed bands, chief among them the Protestant Peep O' Day Boys—the association of whom with the origins of the Orange Order is not readily accepted by all of the sources—and the Catholic Defenders. However, he goes on to say that, rather than discarding the issue of land altogether, it should be re-examined. According to Smyth, policy changes had not only brought Catholics and Protestants into competition over land ownership, but also meant that Protestants felt they were facing increased competition in the labour market (p. 51). The sectarian nature and history of the conflict meant that the violence that ensued was as much a result of actual increase in competition—the extent of which seems to be a matter of debate—as it was of the age-old sectarian reactionism over a perceived threat to the Ascendancy, and therefore the liberty of Protestants. This is, of course, a pattern repeated in later unionist indignation over restrictions imposed upon the "right to march", among others. It also serves to establish one of the more concrete ways in which working class Catholic and Protestant communities must seemingly compete with each other. Such a perception, of course, is only possible due to the sectarian divide, much in the same way that modern anti-immigration sentiment is usually framed in terms of the labour market.

Adjacent to the discussion above, Smyth (1995) also brings up the practice of arms raids and seizures in the conflict, which should probably be seen as a major factor in shaping the focus of later conflicts more definitely towards inter-community violence. It can be argued that, rather than the state—as later republican rhetoric would claim (Ferriter, 2004)—the 'other' community henceforth became the primary antagonist, if this was not already the case. Despite the penal laws—prohibiting Catholics from bearing firearms among a plethora of other restrictions—some had been admitted to Irish Volunteer companies or armed by local gentry for their own purposes (Smyth, 1995), thus not only acquiring firearms but also thus being "unilaterally, and illegally, admitted [...] to fuller

citizenship” (p. 51). In response, writes Smyth, “a spontaneous and unilateral attempt by lower-class Protestants to reaffirm Protestant ascendancy” (p. 51) ensued, in the form of politically motivated raids launched to disarm Catholics. This “re-enforcing of the penal laws” (p. 51) by Protestant armed bands was essentially a bid to guarantee their existing advantages in the competition for land ownership and wages, also becoming an immediate and visible focal point for the repression of Catholics. According to Smyth, the Defenders first formed in response to such sectarian attacks, becoming increasingly “proactive and politicised” (p. 51), adopting a similar, consistent strategy of arms raids. Smyth writes that these raids mostly targeted the landed gentry, and that they further symbolised “an assertion by lower-class Catholics to equal status under the law” (p. 51), no doubt in turn heightening Protestant sectarian anxieties; not only were their relative privileges being seemingly further threatened, but now there was surely a much more tangible threat to Protestant life and liberty, in the form of organised and armed bands of Catholics.

We therefore arrive at a situation whereby any threat to the entrenched sectarian stratification in Northern Ireland appears as a particular threat to the Protestant lower classes, perhaps a sense heightened by the enduring distrust loyalism in particular has for the intentions of the British government, and—sometimes to a lesser extent—the political elite of Northern Ireland. Thus, a sectarian vigilantism forms, primarily targeting Catholic communities likewise determined to—quite reasonably, it seems—hold on to any advancement in their lot. The state is then forced to intervene in some way, one of its primary duties being to curtail lawlessness and unrest, and more specifically to prevent the outrage of massacres or civil war. More often than not for Northern Ireland, it seems, the intervention then fails to address the concerns of one or both parties, the resultant dissatisfaction feeding further challenges to the legitimacy or efficacy of a non-violent solution to the respective grievances of the ‘two traditions’, likewise ensuring further sectarian clashes and alienation between already underprivileged communities. As such, competition for territory, or ‘resource access’, then becomes a further barrier for the peace process.

3.3 Sectarianism and the state

The state’s response to the parade disputes, and the Drumcree crises in particular, merits a more detailed explanation later, but it may prove useful to first provide some examples related to the contents of the previous sub-chapter. For instance, the Thursday, December 22, 1831 issue of *The*

Times refers to the surviving practice of arms confiscations targeting Catholics, in this case by “Orange Yeomen” (p. 3), implying that the widespread ‘infiltration’ of the Yeomanry by the Order, as noted earlier in this study, was a widely accepted fact. Notable, too, is that the account concerns Drumcree, Portadown, and involves the shooting dead of one of the Orangemen carrying out arms raids against Catholic households in the area. *The Times* appears sympathetic to the homeowner, rather than the Orangeman, and decries how “the Irish yeomen use the arms intrusted to them against the lives and property of those who differ from them in religion or politics” (p. 3). The paper further denounces the actions of the Yeomanry for stirring up unrest, calling for their disbandment, and notes that police have since been deployed to protect the Catholics of the area. For the ‘Orange Yeomen’, of course, such would serve to further validate their mistrust of the government and the official handling of things, and will likely have been construed by loyalists rather as a refusal to disarm the ‘Catholic menace’, and perhaps as the disbandment of yet another institution propping up the always beleaguered, proper social order.

A similar case of British public opinion—it is assumed—and the government ‘siding with’ the Catholic community, as opposed to giving loyalists free rein, is exemplified by the 1969 deployment of British troops to Northern Ireland with the stated purpose of protecting Catholic communities. In *The Times* issue of August 16, 1969, John Chartres states that the deployment was received well by the population, apart from those described as “utterly bigotted [sic]” (p. 10, “*Bogside accepts Army*”), mainly in reference to loyalist paramilitaries, although a neighbouring piece by Charles Douglas-Home notes that the “subterranean presence of the I.R.A.” (p. 10, “*Danger of attack by snipers*”) presents another potential cause for worry. Certainly, later republican rhetoric at least seems to have continued the trend—identified by, among others, Ferriter (2004)—of framing the intervention of British troops as a hostile invasion of Catholic areas. For an example of such rhetoric in connection to the events of 1969, see lyrics to republican or IRA songs like “*The Decommissioning Song*”, also known by some less polite names, of which no other reliable publishing information seems to be readily available. Douglas-Home notes the often indiscriminate or ineffectual responses of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as part of the reason for the deployment of British troops, and the CAIN timeline provided in Martin Melaugh’s (2021) *A Chronology of the Conflict – 1969* seems to support such an assessment of the RUC at the time. Among other things, it notes the failure of RUC officers to protect People’s Democracy marchers from attacks by loyalist mobs, and notes several killings by RUC officers, even involving “a heavy Browning machine-gun mounted on an armoured

car” firing at an apartment building. Certainly, such incidents would help boost the formation and recruitment of the Provisional IRA, as noted by Dillon (1997, p. 8), among others. Additionally, Dillon notes that the British intervention itself was similarly weaponised by militant republicans. Assumedly, one representative of the state may be easily equated with another by such tactics, at which point any missteps by the Army would be seen in the context of earlier or concurrent RUC blunders. The spectre of ‘Orange Yeomen’ might be resurrected in connection to the RUC in this context, too, especially as, according to Martin Dillon, there were indications that elements of the Northern Ireland security forces were intentionally targeting Catholics, alongside Protestant militants (p. 8). Interestingly, Dillon also alludes to the involvement of some parts of the government of the Republic of Ireland, and representatives of the Catholic Church, in the formation of vigilante groups at this time. In all, it is evident that the intervention of the state in the sectarian conflict has a cascading effect on all the other relevant factors and relationships that have been previously identified, some of which follow an almost traditional pattern, as proposed by sources like Savaric (1998). It should also be noted that the influence of ‘the state’ in truth cannot be lumped into a single entity, other than as a general representative of relationships with ‘official’ power, a purpose for which it seems well suited, especially due to the complicated network of interactions and parallels that the sources reveal in their treatment of Northern Ireland sectarianism.

To somewhat return to the theme of arms seizures, Dillon (1997) notes that, by the height of the Troubles, illegal arms shipments bound for both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups were being intercepted quite regularly. The latter case, however, is somewhat overshadowed by persistent allegations of collusion between the security forces and militant loyalists (p. 16), as well as by Dillon’s assertion that loyalist groups had been unofficially fed information by British military intelligence (p. 93). On the other hand, Dillon’s timeline also notes sporadic violence between the security forces and loyalists, as well as a variety of actions taken by the Army to curtail loyalist paramilitary activity, such as the successful ambush of an active UVF unit by the SAS mentioned in Dillon’s interview of Wright (p. 74). A prominent stage for clashes involving the RUC and the Army on one side, and loyalists on the other, is of course that provided by the parade disputes. At this point, however, it is worth pointing out a fairly common thread in many of the accounts by both republicans and loyalists: there seems to exist a very human tendency to focus on the various ways in which each community has been betrayed or come under attack by the state. In turn, the interventions or concessions made by the state to benefit either camp are generally glossed over in

their own accounts of events. In essence, the supposed ineffectuality of the state sometimes appears as a partially artificial, self-perpetuating notion integral to sectarianism itself, although inconsistencies in the government's response are also a well-proven fact by now. Based on the shorter time allotted in this study to specifically discussing nationalism, it is not entirely clear whether the strained relationship unionism or loyalism has with the rest of the United Kingdom also has a counterpart in the relationship between nationalism and the Republic of Ireland, although Ferriter's mention of a 'hands-off approach' by Dublin seems to at least suggest such. The consistent use of 'Free State' to describe the 'South of Ireland' in the Garvaghy residents' accounts (1999) of the Drumcree crises also seems to be meant, in part, as a jab towards an unsatisfactory settlement with the United Kingdom, resulting in partition rather than unification, and perhaps also more generally implies the incompleteness of Irish independence as a result. Especially to a hard line republican narrative, the causes and result of the Irish civil war would probably serve as a particular sticking point, in addition to Dublin's later efforts to combat paramilitary activities on their side of the border. Tentatively, a useful approach to discussing republicanism might therefore be found in viewing some of its core ethos as a mirroring of loyalism's separatist or 'devolutionist' streak. Generally speaking, it seems that republicanism and the Republic remain incompatible.

Apart from the specific issue of the Drumcree crises, examples of the latter include, in Dillon's (1997) chronology of the Troubles, the apparent delay in the banning of the UDA in 1992, after its paramilitary wing had been involved in sectarian attacks for years (p. 17), and the consequent allegations by a high-ranking member regarding the involvement of the security forces in its operations. Examples of the UK government caving in to loyalist pressure include loyalist strikes in opposition to power-sharing (p. 11), as well as the near-torpedoing of the 1994 ceasefires by the lacklustre, delayed government response, which Dillon attributes to concerns over alienating unionist voters. This case illustrates well the constant balancing act successive governments, in dealing with the Troubles, have had to perform in order to seem willing to compromise neither too much, nor too little. Notably, as well, Dillon refers to a very tangible threat of civil war with loyalists as part of the government's calculations regarding the Drumcree parade of 1997, as revealed by leaked documents (p. 22). The Labour government was, according to Dillon, afraid to confront the posturing loyalists, similarly to some of their historical counterparts. Despite all this, loyalist figures like Ian Paisley would continue to complain about government indecision and "neutrality" (p. 59) as a leading factor in the ongoing hostilities, the historical precedent and motivation for which has

hopefully been demonstrated several times now. It was, put bluntly, strictly in the interest of paramilitary groups on both sides to portray the state as both weak and oppressive, as the argument for terrorist activities as a political tool does not generally provide for a beneficent or effective solution via the official channels of parliamentary politics.

A key weakness inherent to even the most optimistic reading of Northern Ireland paramilitarism—one based on either the will of an oppressed people or the protection a ‘free’, democratic society from its enemies—is therefore made apparent, as paramilitarism proposes to essentially restructure society based on parameters dictated by an ultimately narrow section of the overall population. This is perhaps not to wholly discount the more immediate necessity for a community to protect itself, but the paramilitary sphere seems to have quickly begun to primarily serve its own immediate goals, rather than those of the communities it claims to protect, in effect becoming a stratum of its own. At the very least, the sources seem to agree on the prevalence of paramilitary violence aimed at the community itself, either as part of ‘intra-sectarian’ factional feuds, or as a form of control over the population and its resources. It appears that, overall, the hard-line loyalists felt they had more to lose in a peace settlement, or simply that the nationalists stood to gain more; according to Dillon’s description of events, the government’s difficulty in bringing the loyalists to the negotiating table was the main overall cause for delay in the latter years of the Troubles. A unionist reading of history, of course, might rather argue that the main bulk of proposed ‘concessions’ was to the benefit of nationalists, in effect representing the interests of a minority. However, the wider benefit of ending an unpopular conflict seems to have mostly won out in the end. The issue of ‘minority rule’, proposed by some of the more outwardly unionist sources, will be discussed in a later chapter, as the previously noted changes in the demographics of Northern Ireland cast an interesting light on some of their arguments.

3.4 Siege mentality and Garvaghy Road

Michel Savaric (1998) writes that, first and foremost, “the siege belongs to Loyalist ideology and the Orange narrative” (para. 22), but that in the Drumcree crises—the events of 1995 in particular—constitutes something of a reversal, whereby the Catholic residents in turn felt under siege. The residents’ own accounts in *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999) certainly reflect such anxieties, the introduction going to far as to refer to the protesting Orangemen and their supporters

as “a ring of sectarian hatred” and “Orange mobs” (p. xv). The map of the area provided by the book even bears some resemblance to a battle plan, as it prominently features the defences erected by the security forces around the community—as well as any potential gaps thereof—and the positions held by the besiegers. The unofficial name, ‘the Siege of Drumcree’ even made it to the wrappers of chocolate bars (McDonald, 2004), speaking volumes of the symbolic significance afforded to the first of the three major crises identified by Savaric. Before moving on to address the general timeline of these events in terms of the findings of these preceding chapters, a discussion of this ‘siege mentality’ will be prudent, as it seems to further expand upon the fundamental nature of the wider conflict. According to Savaric, part of the potency of the idea of the siege comes from the adaptable and repetitive nature of the sectarian mythology, as in this case the Orangemen were relying upon the notion of a siege in a more abstract sense, “laid against their values, culture, way of life and everything they called their ‘civil and religious liberties’” (para. 23), a motif identified several times before during earlier discussions of unionism and loyalism. A further convergence in ideology is apparent in Savaric’s assertion that the residents, similarly to Orangemen and loyalists, “took up the theme of betrayal” (para. 24) after the marchers were once again let through by the authorities. This sentiment is made less surprising when one considers the mostly welcoming—if still reserved—attitude of the Catholic community took towards the presence of the security forces’ cordon (p. xv), especially the Army, whom the residents seem to have held in slightly higher regard than the RUC, likely for the same reasons that they were called in to Northern Ireland in the first place. Certainly, the general sentiment appears to be that the Army could be at least relied upon to carry out their orders, which in this case seemed to be to keep the ‘mobs’ out, although there were some reservations as to how long such orders would stand. Such disappointments, resulting from the precarious balance the UK government was trying to maintain, no doubt form a significant part of the republican or nationalist narratives surrounding the wider conflict. And, naturally, it is thereafter easy to assign a degree of intentional malice to such disappointments, effectively utilising the age-old populist vocabulary of deception and conspiracy, a trick made far easier by the sheer weight of the conflicting historical narratives which Northern Ireland seems immersed in.

Arguably, Savaric’s (1998) “metaphor of the siege” (para. 22) can in this way be contrived to apply to the whole of a simplistic, trinary concept of the sectarian conflict; unionism, nationalism, and the state each occupying one corner. In such a system, the state is called upon to maintain order, and yet also to address the concerns of the two traditions, while also mediating their respective

grievances towards each other. The two traditions, in turn, are seemingly constrained or oppressed, not merely in the sense of contemporary competition and conflict, but also in terms of the biases and 'rituals' (as per Savaric) that manifest the overarching historical narrative. Such a system, while indeed too simplistic, is at least helpful in understanding the momentous difficulty involved in successfully navigating the whole towards reconciliation, rather than repetition. Such a notion of repetition, or 'ritual', forms one of Savaric's main arguments as to the nature of the conflict, exemplified in the Drumcree crises, in conjunction with the centrality of symbolism, the last in particular gaining ample support—either in the form of theory, or through rhetoric—from many of the sources discussed earlier. Porter's cultural unionism, for example, is to a large degree preoccupied with the symbolic value of culture and institutions, rather than necessarily in their 'rational' function, as per the criticisms of both nationalists and liberal unionists. Viewed through Savaric's main thesis, it is perhaps the preservation of the repetition and ritual underlying the conflict that most of all underpins the 'culturalist' approach, in turn serving to explain the inability of such approaches to fully come to terms with the existence of the other tradition; the notion of a Northern Ireland without an irreconcilable enemy—the opposing tradition, to be either conquered and contained, or else driven out—becomes an almost intolerable attack by itself.

Applying Savaric's (1998) thought even further, the physical interface barriers, put up by the state with the tacit approval of the community, must indeed be seen as simple physical repetitions of the symbolic siege, or vice versa. The more abstract markers of territory, parades among them, likewise express such a mentality, as much as they may in turn be sometimes seen to 'lay siege' themselves. Parades and murals declare the territory and identity of the community, as much as they sometimes also declare the exclusion or otherness of their neighbours. More tenuously, the problems inherent with the interface barriers can likewise find parallels in the barriers put up by the Army for the protection of Garvaghy Road, although it is difficult to not also see the necessity of the arrangement. According to Savaric, "violence in Northern Ireland is highly ritualised" and follows "very ancient rules" (para. 20), and the author argues that its society therefore "functions around conflict without ever becoming engulfed by it" (para. 21), with a rhythm and timing that almost amounts to 'taking turns'. In the case of the Drumcree crises, however, Savaric notes that tensions were reportedly reminiscent of 1969, calling to mind the threat of open civil war. Therefore, the over-cautiousness of the state may, in this case, also stem from an awareness of past failures, rather than just the immediate threat of loyalist revolt.

4 Why Garvaghy Road?

As said, the Drumcree parade disputes' historical and cultural significance can, at face value, be directly attributed to their timing at such a crucial point in the history of the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, as well as their direct effects on the course of the same. Generally speaking, the crises serve as the culmination for some of the last major challenges to the ceasefires, the Agreement, and a relative peace in Northern Ireland, with Michel Savaric (1998) noting that "Orange marches are the time - perhaps the only time - of dramatic confrontation between the two communities" (para. 22), as opposed to the more accustomed rhythms and repetitions of sectarian conflict in general. Even in the case of armed clashes between militants—sometimes also involving the state—Savaric seems to argue for the existence of a 'tit-for-tat', symbolic ritual of reactions and counters, which in turn allows for the daily life of both communities to proceed at something approaching normalcy, rather than provoking the community-wide adoption of a war footing. In the Drumcree crises, and the unrest surrounding them, Savaric notes a certain departure from these rules, perhaps as if the siege of symbols becomes a concrete siege of breached citadel walls and triumphal processions, while still maintaining the tenuous, "strange symmetry" (para. 21) that characterises the conflict. As was mentioned before, the crises likewise attracted the attention of media—both local and international—which in turn helped introduce the issue to a much wider audience. *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999), for instance, recounts how residents had to scramble to improvise accommodation and supplies for the increased influx of reporters and activists, who were hoping to cover—or take part in—events at the geographical and symbolic heart of the crises. It is likely that the residents were particularly happy to do so in order to, first of all, apply pressure to the government, but also to minimise any disruption or violence that might result were the parade to proceed, or the protesters to force their way through the security forces and into the neighbourhood. The harshness of public loyalist rhetoric regarding the residents, one referring to them as "monsters who should be locked in cages" (p. 23), will certainly have done nothing to allay the residents' fears for the worst, nor the rumours (p. 6) of loyalist convoys of vehicles bringing in drink and weapons for the Orangemen and their supporters. Dominic Bryan (2000) notes the bewilderment of many reporters and observers over the cause of the crises: "All this just to walk down one bit of road?" (p.6), illustrating the crucial role of the cultural and symbolic context in gaining a satisfactory understanding of the parade disputes.

While *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* does not present an impartial or complete description of the crises, the residents' accounts are arguably a valuable asset in determining the disposition of the ordinary community, somewhat removed from the overall politics of nationalism or republicanism. The accounts, for example, often make a pronounced effort to distance themselves both from Catholic paramilitarism and Sinn Féin, in so far as they frame their demands and hopes in terms of their specific community, first and foremost. One resident remarks that, unlike the usual portrayal, the Garvaghy Road community does not dance to the tune of nationalist politics. The overall argument of the book is, it seems, that the community is simply asserting a right to be consulted on whether a "sectarian and triumphalist" (p. 9) parade should pass through their neighbourhood, especially in the combined context of historical and contemporary sectarian violence such marches have long been associated with. According to Savaric (1998), the symbolic significance of such an assertion is none the less apparent, as a reversal of the historical "right of veto" (para. 25) Protestants are said to have held over the Catholic population, with regard to matters both constitutional and cultural. From these factors and others, Savaric derives a conclusion that the two traditions "share the same political vocabulary" and "partake from the same culture" (p. 25), but that this connection is most often expressed unhealthily in the ritualistic manner of sectarian conflict, as discussed before. The conclusions derived from the other sources, so far as they are relevant to the present discussion, seem to concur with Savaric's assessment. The attempts at 'distancing' from violent sectarianism—which both traditions periodically undertake—perhaps constitute a similar connection, since the crises not only drew militant loyalists—with or without the approval of the Orangemen—to join the besiegers, but are also associated with threats from republican paramilitaries, as well as with incidents of Savaric's 'traditional' violent backlash. Within the mythology of betrayal, of course, such distancing by the community itself may appear not as the loss of a popular mandate, but rather as a call to arms against traitors or defeatists. More definitely, they demonstrate that the desire for 'respectability', in addition to the furthering of an agenda, plays a key part in the intricate workings of the three-faceted model contrived earlier, a further indication of the partially shared cultural base that Savaric argues for. The following sub-chapters will proceed by providing a brief overview of the Drumcree parade disputes of the mid-90s, after which the crisis of 1998 will be discussed in slightly more detail, crystallised in the murder-by-arson of three Catholic boys. Afterwards, there will follow a discussion of the unilateral difficulty in establishing a dialogue, especially as it relates to achieving a lasting resolution for the Drumcree crises, the later years of which also warrant a short summary.

4.1 The Drumcree crises in the mid-1990s

To provide a balanced and, it is hoped, truthful summary of the Garvaghy Road parade disputes, the timeline herein will utilise the descriptions provided by Michel Savaric (1998) and Dominic Bryan (2000) respectively, with the goal of forming a general sequence of events for the Drumcree crises of 1995, 1996, and 1997, mostly focusing on describing key points of interest for the sake of conciseness. Other sources, like Martin Dillon's (1997) *God and the Gun*, will be utilised whenever they provide something of particular interest to the discussion at hand, but the main purpose of this chapter will be to further situate the recorded history of the disputes within the theoretical framework of the overall study.

According to Savaric (1998), "Northern Irish society acted out the conflict it nurtures" during the crises of 1995, 1996, and 1997, centred on the Orange Order parade "from the Episcopalian church of Drumcree, on the outskirts of Portadown, through the Catholic Garvaghy Road every Sunday before the 'Twelfth' of July" (para. 1). The 1995 crisis occurred about ten months after the Provisional IRA had declared their 1994 ceasefire, itself representing a major step for the peace process. As the residents of Garvaghy Road staged a demonstration to oppose the Orange march, Savaric writes, the Royal Ulster Constabulary ordered a re-routing of the parade on its return journey, resulting in the previously mentioned confrontation between police and Orangemen, joined by Trimble and Paisley. After tensions and loyalist rioting, writes Savaric, an agreement was reached: the residents would protest peacefully beside the road, and the Orangemen would march without a band, also promising to "not come again on the 12 July" (para. 2). According to Savaric, the first crisis was thus resolved, seemingly by a hopeful model of compromise. Bryan's (2000) more in-depth recounting of the 1995 Drumcree crisis notes a common thread to all the parade disputes, namely the difficulty of arranging the negotiations due to the necessity of relying on various intermediaries; the Orangemen and unionist politicians would not agree to direct communication with the Garvaghy residents. Especially on this count, it seems necessary to doubt the actual quality of the compromise itself, as it failed both to prevent further crises and to establish an unmediated line of communications between the residents and the Orangemen. Of course, this is a pattern repeated elsewhere, according to the sources, especially in the less-than-enthusiased, suspicious reception of the PIRA ceasefire in loyalist circles. Bryan also notes that previous years had already seen similar campaigns of protest by the Garvaghy residents, and that the compromise was itself

was preceded by intense clashes between loyalists and police, even resulting in attacks on “buildings on the edge of the estate” (p. 2) and the firing of rubber bullets, as Orangemen and their supporters made attempts at reaching the neighbourhood. According to Bryan, the tensions aroused by the parades and demonstrations were severe enough that the threat of “renewed armed conflict” (p. 3) hung over the Drumcree parade disputes, likely because they served to focus the attention of all concerned parties on the misgivings they had regarding the viability of the paramilitary ceasefires. On the 1995 parade itself, Bryan writes that the subsequent declaration of victory and triumphant celebrations by the Orangemen and Paisley’s loyalists served to anger both residents and the wider Catholic community. Probably, this further souring of relations, along with an apparent further confirmation of the supremacist or triumphalist nature of the parade, served to intensify the crisis of the next year. In a conflict so immersed in symbolism, characterised by symmetry and repetition, this was perhaps the most likely outcome. At the very least, the benefit of hindsight seems to cast the subsequent, more severe crises as almost inevitable, with the lack of proper dialogue precluding a more sustainable agreement between the Orangemen and the Garvaghy Road residents.

According to Michel Savaric (1998), the 1996 Drumcree crisis was made all the more serious due to the Provisional IRA’s ending of the ceasefire, precipitated by a perceived stall in the peace talks, which Savaric attributes to paramilitary reluctance to decommission. In essence, decommissioning would chiefly involve disarmament, a notion made difficult by the mutual distrust between loyalists and republicans, and perhaps recalling the arms raids of the past. In Martin Dillon’s (1997) view, the lack of progress in the talks was due to the UK government’s overcautious attitude which, from the IRA’s perspective, signalled an unwillingness to compromise further. Of course, Dillon does also write that the 1994 ceasefire had largely been brought about by government incentives offered to Sinn Féin and the IRA (p. 20). Savaric continues, stating that the UK government subsequently attempted to restart the talks by offering further incentives, on the condition of a new IRA ceasefire. “Undoubtedly”, writes Savaric, “those events galvanised the Protestant community in its refusal of any compromise” (para. 5), especially as an atmosphere of disappointment and distrust was further fomented by the apparent vindication of earlier fears, centred around a UK government-instigated ‘sell-out’ or an underlying nationalist plot. Savaric also notes the effect of the residents’ anger at “the triumphant ‘jig’ performed by Unionist leaders Paisley and Trimble the previous year” (para. 6), as well as the frequency of riots associated with Orange marches, as additional factors in heightening the tensions. According to Savaric, the Orangemen were told by the RUC that the

parade would not be allowed to march through Garvaghy Road, and the Orangemen again declared their intention to stand their ground until let through. At what Savaric describes as the "climax" (para. 6) of the marching season, the Orangemen were further emboldened by the 'victory' of the previous year, as Savaric seems to suggest that the Order and their supporters rather viewed the so-called compromise of 1995 as a ritualistic retort to the concessions the nationalists had seemingly been made previously. In the grand scheme of things, after all, a parade through Garvaghy Road still holds much of the same symbolic significance, even without the bands or some of the other paraphernalia. The loyalist backlash over the blocking of the Drumcree parade in 1996 resulted in extensive disruptions in many parts of Northern Ireland, as Orangemen and their supporters retaliated by blocking off many roads, and riots broke out in loyalist communities. As loyalist rhetoric and posturing became even more severe, Dillon (1997) writes that the government was reluctant to use the Army in quelling any full-blown attempt at a breakthrough (p. 55), as it seemed that the loyalists had already been whipped up to a fury by the RUC's enforcement of the law in blocking the parade (p. 57) and refusal to back down in spite of loyalist threats or attacks. As mentioned before, it seemed that any misstep on the government's part might lead to a full resumption in the armed conflict, not to mention the fears of such a conflict then becoming so disruptive as to constitute a civil war. And so, in something of a replay of the previous year, the decision was made to once again let the parade through. According to Savaric, however, there was no modicum of compromise this time; the news were abuzz with images of the RUC violently clearing out protesting Catholic residents and, it seems, enforcing the 'right to march'. In the context of the cultural narrative and the cyclical nature of Northern Ireland sectarianism, this was no doubt seen by many as a repeat of the less-than-impartial stance the RUC had seemed to take in preceding years and decades. Indeed, Savaric writes that, as a result, Catholic communities staged their largest demonstrations in more than a decade in Belfast and Derry, with widespread rioting in various parts of Northern Ireland.

Interestingly, Savaric (1998) also notes paramilitary violence in association with the 1996 crisis, first in the case of a suspected Loyalist Volunteer Force killing of a taxi driver. The LVF, regarding its relationship with the Ulster Volunteer Force's Belfast-based leadership, is described by Savaric in a way which resembles the loyalist paramilitary split between the city authorities and rural cells, as reported by Dillon (1997). In a striking example of the mirroring or repetition inherent to the sectarian conflict, Savaric further writes that the IRA would categorically deny any involvement in the subsequent bombing of a hotel—no doubt perpetrated in response to the outcome of the 1996

parade dispute—with signs pointing towards a similar rural splinter faction, the ‘Continuity Irish Republican Army’. Overall, these can be interpreted as examples of the further splintering of the paramilitary organisations over the issue of peace talks and decommissioning, and the volatile nature of their leadership structures in times of internal strife. It can be speculated here that these attacks constituted either a deliberate attempt to break off negotiations altogether, or to acquire a larger degree of leverage whenever talks resumed. The latter certainly appears as a distinct possibility in the paramilitary line of reasoning, since the government had, so far, seemed willing to either back down or make concessions whenever a resumption in the armed hostilities was threatened by either side. It is also notable that some sources—like the Belfast Telegraph article (Harte, 2001) and the Lodge’s web page (n.d.)—seem to gloss over the fact that the 1995 and 1996 parades were let through in the end, as revealed by, among others, the more thorough descriptions of events found in the academic sources. This leads one to speculate whether such omissions are intentional, especially in the context of the Order, as a way of further distancing the official line and institutions from the actions of ‘loyalists’. In particular, such omissions may serve as an attempt to separate the ‘Drumcree Twelfth’ parade from its associations with the turbulent sectarianism of the Drumcree crises, in which case such narratives—certainly when compared to the bare essentials of the historical record—seem like unsuccessful attempts at revisionism.

Regarding the 1997 crisis, Savaric (1998) writes that the parade dispute itself was, on the surface, far less dramatic, but that the year was characterised by an increase in paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland. Tensions remained high with demonstrations, an IRA bombing campaign, and unclaimed loyalist paramilitary attacks serving as the backdrop. The loyalist attacks heightened tensions in Catholic communities particularly because their unconfirmed, but strongly suspected, perpetrators were still allowed a seat at the negotiating table. Again, there was no dialogue or compromise to speak of, and the security forces again cleared Garvaghy Road in order to let the parade through the next day, with Savaric writing of the threat posed by the LVF as the official reason given. Violence in Catholic communities ensued, as yet another repetition of the now well-established tradition, and Savaric notes several IRA attacks on the security forces, which now found themselves once again enforcing the disputed right to march. The state, it seems, had hence fallen into a repetitive tradition of its own: a constant balancing act that was seemingly satisfying no-one in the long term, appearing ‘too neutral’ or ‘too weak’ in something of an alternating pattern. Changes in the field of official politics, far-reaching as Savaric notes them to be, seemed to remain

in the background, the focus in Northern Ireland remaining firmly on the marching season and the uptick in sectarian paramilitarism. Matters, however, came to a head when organised Catholic resistance in another dispute—culminating in republican paramilitary threats to kill any Orangemen that attempted to march through the Lower Ormeau Road in southern Belfast—resulted in a surprising decision by the Orangemen to back down. This, in turn, seems to have brought about a renewal in negotiations, and a subsequent IRA ceasefire. To Savaric, it seems, this ‘surprise’ reversal represents another example of the self-perpetuating, almost self-regulating, nature of the conflict. While far from offering a permanent a solution—or a guarantee for peace—the results of the marching season, combined with electoral results, would set the stage for the events of 1998, arguably the most pivotal year for the Drumcree crises.

4.2 The Drumcree crisis of 1998, and the Ballymoney arson

Fionnuala McKenna and Martin Melaugh (n.d.), in a CAIN contribution titled *Parades and Marches - Developments at Drumcree, 1995-2000*, provide another useful timeline for events at Drumcree, which will be used here as a basic reference for some of the years which many of the previously utilised sources either predate or neglect to provide a general overview for. The accounts of the Garvaghy residents found in *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999) will additionally contribute some much-needed, first-hand perspective to parts of the discussion, especially as the first part of the book focuses on the events of 1998. As will be demonstrated, the fact that violence and sectarian tensions surrounding the Garvaghy Road parade dispute survived, in one way or another, the aftermath of 1998 for some time—the latter survival being easily observable and explainable to this day—does not significantly alter the fact of the year’s importance as a turning point in the overall course of the disputes. The murder of three young Catholic boys in Ballymoney, County Antrim, in a sectarian petrol bombing of their home, certainly represents an emotional and powerful cultural centrepiece as part of the historical turning point, and will thus deserve its own discussion, encapsulating not only an ongoing change in public opinion, but also serving as a basis for further questions regarding the ‘respectability’ of the Orange Order and loyalism, as well as their respective interpretations of the Garvaghy Road parade disputes. The residents’ accounts will also help to slightly balance out the proportionally more extensive coverage of the Orange Order, cultural unionist, or Ulster loyalist side of the disputes in this study, with the understanding that the accounts are subject to similar biases, especially in terms of Savaric’s (1998) conception of the ritualistic and

symbolic element of Northern Ireland sectarianism. First and foremost, they represent a cultural—or perhaps culturalist—narrative of the parade disputes, rather than a historical record in the strictest of terms, arguably making the residents' accounts all the more interesting in terms of the findings of previous chapters. In part, such a discussion will more firmly associate earlier conceptions of 'shared culturalism' with Savaric's notion of a shared political vocabulary and culture.

According to McKenna and Melaugh (n.d.), 'Drumcree IV'—referring to the crisis of 1998—differed from previous years especially due to the establishment of the Parades Commission, which has legal responsibility in determining whether contested parades are to be banned altogether, forced to alter their route, or allowed to continue along their intended route. Once again, no compromise was reached between the residents and the Order, and so the Commission decreed that the parade would have to re-route so as to avoid Garvaghy Road. Subsequently, the Orange Order responded by announcing that it "would attempt to march its 'traditional' route and if its members were stopped they would stand their ground for as long as it might take" ("Events in Drumcree July 1998"). While the promise of yet another tense stand-off certainly does not appear noteworthy at first glance, it is probable that the oversight of an official governing body, capable of making legally binding decisions—and apparently not intimidated by the violence of previous years—introduced a certain degree of accountability or inertia to the prospect of allowing further marches through Garvaghy Road. As noted by McKenna and Melaugh, the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable of the RUC retained the power to make local decisions—overruling the Parades Commission on the basis of public safety and order, if needed—but they would arguably have to endure far greater public or institutional scrutiny in taking such a decision. McKenna and Melaugh write that the stand-off which ensued as the Orangemen were turned around at the security forces' barricade in July 1998 effectively continues to this day, and as such it must necessarily be seen as an established tradition or ritual of its own. It can be further argued that, in the way of Savaric's (1998) model, the existence of the dispute represents the core of the tradition; for the Order, it must represent a defiant holding action to protect their concept of Northern Ireland Protestant culture, in the face of increasingly overwhelming change. For the residents, and probably the wider nationalist community, the modern stand-off may serve to symbolise either a lingering threat, or the passing of the Protestant ascendancy, or perhaps a combination thereof. In both the 'physical' and symbolic territories, the stand-off represents a victory or 'evening of the score' for one tradition, while the other seeks an outlet for the need to respond, by maintaining some of the ritual trappings of

previous years, even in the absence of the physical clashes typical of the earlier Drumcree crises. The use of the ‘two traditions’ paradigm must be seen as a gross oversimplification here, as the traditions themselves are demonstrably fragmented to numerous, often overlapping cultural communities. Its use seems warranted, however, as each of these smaller communities seems to attach itself to one of the two larger traditions as an overarching point of connection—or separation—when identifying its relationship with its neighbours.

Both McKenna and Melaugh (n.d.) and *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999) describe the extensive deployment of men and fortifications in anticipation of the 1998 stand-off, even compared to previous years. Overall, it seems that the government had lost much of its hesitation and was, at the very least, making a show of force. However, even a meeting with the British Prime Minister failed to bring the Orange Order to a compromise, with the UK government affirming that the Parades Commission’s decisions would be enforced. In essence, it would have been a blow to the government’s perceived ability to handle the conflict had they done otherwise; the failure of the Commission at its most significant test would have served to further fuel disillusionment with the government on both sides of the sectarian conflict, possibly fuelling further unrest. Loyalist violence and roadblocks, and the Order’s threats to bring Northern Ireland to a grinding halt over the issue, failed to win the day. McKenna and Melaugh list numerous attacks on Catholics and the security forces, often attributed to the LVF and individual members of supposedly ceasefire-abiding loyalist paramilitary organisations. Petrol bombings of Catholic homes were a common type of attack, quite clearly illustrating the intensely sectarian nature of the loyalists’ resentment, although security forces were also targeted with some regularity. McKenna, Melaugh, and the Garvaghy residents’ accounts all note an almost-customary increase in the harshness of loyalist response as the weekend of the 12th drew closer; many Garvaghy residents seem to fear or anticipate that the government will cave in, despite all its posturing and promises. These fears, of course, largely stem from the perceived weakness of the government in previous crises, but also from a distrust towards the security forces, the RUC in particular. The resident accounts, for example, refer to the unequal treatment of vehicles bringing supplies either to the residents or the besiegers: vehicles on the residents’ side are inspected carefully, while the loyalist camp seems to receive a mixture of alcohol and weapons without much interference, in spite of occasional gunfire directed at the security forces (p. 6). The accounts also describe, among other grievances, RUC officers passively observing the passing of “illegal” (p. 8) parades elsewhere in town. Again, the main motivator for this distrust

lies in the historical and cultural relationship between Catholics and the RUC and its 'symbolic predecessors' in the greater historical narrative, which is then recalled whenever a repetition of the old perceptions occurs. In this case, it appears that the loyalist leanings of some RUC officers are expected as part of the ritual, whether or not such a belief is fully justified by the facts of the present.

In the early morning of the 12th of July, Richard, Mark, and Jason Quinn—aged 10, 9, and 8, respectively—were killed in one of the numerous loyalist fire-bombings of Catholic houses. Both McKenna's and Melaugh's (n.d.) overview and the Garvaghy residents' accounts (1999) note general outrage and horror as the immediate response to the tragedy. According to McKenna and Melaugh, the Order's response was to argue that the arson bears no connection to the Drumcree crises, a stance which the Orange Order continues to hold. The overview continues, stating that calls from unionist politicians to call off the protest failed to sway the Portadown Lodge, who determined to continue the stand-off, despite the considerable drop in attendance at the protest noted in *Garvaghy: A Community Under Siege* (1999). The residents' accounts also expand upon the Order's strategy immediately following the murders, namely a hastily assembled conspiracy theory (p. 27) and attempts at shifting the blame for the violence towards the Royal Ulster Constabulary (p. 28). The latter strategy, in particular, seems to be another example of Savaric's (1998) shared political vocabulary, perhaps representing a general trend in making a scapegoat of the RUC whenever the injustices of sectarianism threaten ideological integrity. Many among those resigning from the Order or simply calling for the protesters to go home would receive death threats, including clergymen. Overall, it seems that the decrease in support for the Order's cause, along with resignations within the Order (Garvaghy residents, 1999, p. 30), as a direct result of the murders-by-arson, served to establish the future trajectory of the Orange Order. Furthermore, while both sources note the persistence of violence after the tragedy, it seems to have also established a downward trend in the frequency and severity of sectarian violence in connection to the Garvaghy Road parade disputes. It should also be noted that McKenna and Melaugh's overview confirms the presence of various weapons, including a machinegun, in the remains of the cleared camp of protesters. The above facts add to those discussed before in making the Orange Order's attempts at distancing itself from the violence of the Drumcree crises unconvincing; in terms of respectability, the 1998 crisis must have dealt a severe blow to the Order's image. The tragedy and its handling must have also struck a further wedge between the Orange Order and the grassroots of loyalism, as the former found itself damned by association with the latter, while also disappointing the hard line

of loyalism by refusing to go along with the excesses of paramilitarism in favour of their respectability. In particular, this respectability must be seen in terms of the political establishment and the Protestant public opinion, both of which were damaged by the outrage caused by the Quinn murders. In terms of the political establishment, the Order's respectability seems to equate to their usefulness, and thus has a direct bearing on the degree to which the Order is able to maintain and leverage official political power.

4.3 Beyond Drumcree 1998, and the difficulty of dialogue

By all accounts, the 1999 and 2000 marching seasons were far less eventful in Portadown, if still marked by demonstrations and occasional violence. According to McKenna and Melaugh (n.d.), no agreement was reached between Garvaghy residents and the Order, but the Parades Commissions decisions to disallow Orange parades through Garvaghy Road were upheld. The Orange Order's involvement in any unrest seems to have decreased dramatically, with the stand-off at the police barricade quickly becoming mostly symbolic, rather than a physical confrontation between protesters and security forces. Of the 2001 stand-off, Rosie Cowan and Owen Bowcott (2001, July 9), writing for *The Guardian*, state that underlying tensions had not resulted in any significant clashes, the parade and protests being both rather subdued—including with regard to paramilitary presence—also noting the move in Orange rhetoric towards peaceful protest and dignity. Perhaps, it can be seen as an 'overcorrection' of the failures of 1998; another outrage in connection to the Orange Order might spell further disaster. The article quotes many interviews or statements regarding the declining support of the Orange Order, with the overall consensus being that the ban would continue to be enforced and that the residents were consequently not in the market for a compromise, having reached a far more advantageous solution via the intervention of the Parades Commission.

In a 2007, March 26 article by Peter Walker and Owen Bowcott, *The Guardian* notes the hopeful outcome of talks where DUP's Ian Paisley and Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams sat at the same table, an incredible symbolic gesture when compared to the forecast of a 1995, November 17 article by Jack O'Sullivan for *Independent*, which highlights the near impossibility of direct talks between the two. The main sticking point, especially for Paisley, seems to be Sinn Féin's association with the IRA. Something of a mirror image can be found in the Orange Order's and unionist politicians' attitudes

towards the Garvaghy residents, as McKenna and Melaugh (n.d.) note that the Order would continue to refuse direct talks with resident groups due to individual ties to republican paramilitarism. According to Bryan (2000), talks were therefore mediated, as far as they ever got, by police or other organisations, and seem to have not progressed towards a mutually acceptable solution before or after Drumcree 1998. Again, the crises and the Troubles seem to mirror each other to a significant degree; the parade disputes, of course, being really an extension or microcosm of the latter. Another difficulty inherent to bringing the relevant parties to the same negotiating table seems to lie in their defensive or 'tit-for-tat' attitudes, as described earlier. Savaric (1998), for example, states that the Orange Order seems to have justified its initial stance by its previous 'victories' in the earlier crises; it perceived no reason to negotiate under circumstances where the proper cultural order of Northern Ireland was being successfully defended. Additionally, their opponents associated with terrorists, at which point talks would constitute a risk for their respectability in a political climate which was growing jaded with a lagging peace process. In view of the cyclical nature of the sectarian conflict, it is therefore no surprise that the residents seem to be responding in kind, the situation being somewhat reversed.

In a *News Letter* article by Adam Kula (2022, July 7), the Portadown LOL No 1 is quoted as accepting the fact of their historical refusal to engage in direct dialogue with the Garvaghy residents, however simultaneously expressing frustration over the residents' categorical refusal to negotiate in the current context, enabled by the Commission's enforcement of the ban. The residents' counterargument, citing past trauma, might reasonably extend to the Orange Order's association with the Quinn murders of 1998, but in essential details it borrows much from the same vocabulary that the Order did, when it pointed out the paramilitary affiliations of certain residents as a basis for their refusal to talk. Jarman (2007) writes positively of the removal of interface barriers, and their symbolic implications have been discussed earlier in this study. It perhaps bears arguing that, in the modern Garvaghy Road parade dispute, the function of the 'peace wall' is performed by the Parades Commission's ban, in conjunction with a 'culturalist' outlook on the dispute; regardless of whether talks would lead to any suitable compromise, they would essentially be more likely to de-escalate, rather than put on hold, the underlying cultural conflict. That said, it seems obvious that the overall issue of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is now characterised by far less tension, which in turn presents at least the possibility of an eventual 're-activation' of the parade disputes, should the sectarian conflict itself thaw out sufficiently. In general terms, the argument for the residents'

right to consent or to not consent in further engaging in the dispute, now waged almost completely on the symbolic level, remains compelling. The possibility of fruitful talks, however—in the absence of the significant threat of widespread sectarian violence that characterised earlier parade disputes—seems not too remote to consider, either. One has to question whether the ban represents the best possible solution to the dispute, or whether the situation will devolve into another crisis at some distant point in the future. There exists a likelihood that overall sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland may continue to wane, which in turn might facilitate some form of closure to the dispute. If the repetitive nature of the conflict is taken to an extreme as the basis for future predictions, one would be inclined to treat the current status of the conflict as just another calm period, preceding another spate of crises. Full reconciliation, or the simple withdrawal of the Orange Order, seem contingent upon solutions to the wider issue of sectarianism.

5 Conclusion

To recount, early chapters of this study identified several useful characteristics and definitions with regard to unionism and loyalism, especially in terms of Porter's (1996) treatment of cultural and liberal unionism. It can be argued that liberal unionism's willingness to 'erase' the two traditions, in lieu of reconciling them, speaks of an elitist streak which is, in turn, hard to reconcile with the 'cultural populism' of loyalism and republicanism. Therefore, to apply Porter's text further, the problem is perhaps reminiscent of the incomprehension of Northern Ireland sectarianism by which the UK government's responses may have been tainted with, both during the Drumcree crises and in the wider sectarian conflict. Both, at the very least, often fail to engage the 'culturalists' in an ultimately useful manner, instead reinforcing and participating in a deeply traditional and ritualised conflict, as per Savaric's (1998) writings. In part, the failures of the state's measures can also be traced back to a lack of nuance, although practicable politics and decision-making may preclude the infinite detail demanded by the full complexity of the issue. To overly simplify, official political power has generally failed to resolve aspects of the sectarian conflict, by attempting to intervene in ways which the 'two traditions' identities interpret as occupation or erasure, rather than as acknowledgement of the sense of 'separateness' which they both share.

In discussing the issue of territory and siege mentality, as part of the two traditions' core concepts, it may be useful to bring up Ferriter's (2004) assertion of "denial" as a "mechanism which protected people against the necessity to confront change and permitted a politics of cultural defense" (p. 9). In this sense, the siege mentality attributed to loyalism appears as a denial of not only change in the cultural, political, and material circumstances of Northern Ireland, but also as a denial of reconciliation itself, which in turn results in echoes and reversals in the nationalist or republican communities. According to Bryan (2000), the parades "therefore, perhaps more than any other aspect of politics in Ireland, appear to symbolise stasis" (p. 7), in effect referring to a cultural and political stasis, the veneration of which loyalism and some other strands of unionism largely base their identity on. Also interestingly, the Orange Order's place in the complex system of sectarian conflict seems to have evolved from a grassroots populist movement to an occasional instrument of the landed gentry's power, with Bryan arguing that "the utility of Orangeism to those class interests was reduced" (p. 9) whenever it began to cause civil disturbances severe enough to require outside policing, such as in the case of the 'Orange Yeomen' and, evidently, the height of the

Drumcree crises. In this way, somewhat in contrast to loyalism, the Orange Order occupies a strange niche of both anti-institutional and institutional power.

The question of majority rule in Northern Ireland, generally understood to apply specifically to the main ethnic or sectarian division of the population into 'Catholics' and 'Protestants', obviously warrants a far more thorough discussion than what can reasonably be provided herein, but it should none the less be mentioned. For example, Graham Gudgin (1999), in a CAIN contribution titled *Discrimination in Housing and Employment under the Stormont Administration*, claims that "almost uniquely in the western world, Northern Ireland Protestants are not trusted to form a government in circumstances in which they gain a clear majority of votes in democratic elections" (para. 1), a sentiment which may appear as either supremacist or democratic, depending on the circumstances. Certainly, the 'Protestant veto' alluded to earlier does not constitute a model of democracy, at least in term of meaningful representation versus marginalisation. Such sentiments are also cast in a new and interesting light by the current paralysis of Stormont and the related changes in the demographics of Northern Ireland. In essence, calls for majority rule from certain quarters have been replaced by calls for consent.

In the context of the parade disputes, Savaric (1998) writes that the triumphalist and sectarian nature of Orange parades symbolised—and therefore, in part, enforced—the "economic or coercive power" (para. 30) of the Protestant elites over the Catholic community, with the involvement of the Protestant working class being largely based on an illusion of status, perhaps in a return to our early encounter with 'false consciousness'. While one of Savaric's final remarks—regarding the inevitability of conflict between the two traditions due to their dependence on the conflict itself as part of their identities—is seemingly quite grim, there are clearly some indications that the conflict, as much of it as is needed, will be waged on the level of symbolic culture, rather than with arms. This is true, at least, if the example of the Garvaghy Road parade disputes are any indication of larger developments. The uncertainty of any individual method of conflict resolution, however, must be taken into account when attempting to construct even tentative predictions. For example, it can be argued that the Parades Commission has been a success so far, while similar measures ultimately ended in failure. Certainly, sectarian paramilitarism itself has survived in some form, as noted by Alderdice, McBurney, and McWilliams (2016) in *The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland*, again courtesy of CAIN. The report states that

paramilitary groups—or groups and individuals posing as such—are now involved in various aspects of organised crime in Northern Ireland, and continue recruiting in underprivileged areas, as mentioned in the introduction of this study. Most notably, the report found that violence was usually contained within and targeted at the community itself, rather than generally following sectarian divisions. In general, the number of sectarian attacks has been steadily decreasing, violent incidents instead centring on the control of local communities via the threat, or application, of violence.

In summary, the report (Alderdice et al., 2016) states that the main paramilitary organisations remain committed to the ceasefires, although it also notes a somewhat heightened threat from dissident groups or individuals. The most serious incidents, it seems, are becoming hard to distinguish from ‘ordinary’ criminal activities, but the findings of this master’s thesis would seem to imply that these groups still utilise and rely on the previously established cultural tradition of sectarian paramilitarism. The cultural and symbolic aspects of such organisations and their existence, these aspects being so central to the wider conflict, should nonetheless not be discounted when forecasting the future of Northern Ireland sectarianism. These organisations, perhaps mere remnants of the paramilitary past of the conflict, may regardless have a profound effect on the cultural and historical narratives that emerge, therefore having a hand in shaping whichever form or outlet the sectarian conflict assumes in the future. The Garvaghy Road parade disputes offered such an outlet, as much as they also focused much of the underlying sectarian tensions on a single issue. Possibly, and sources like Savaric (1998) certainly seem to indicate so, this was in part due to the winding down of the visible—and therefore most profoundly symbolic—part of the conflict in other theatres, most notably the realm of paramilitarism. The Drumcree crises seem to represent a partially contrived, defensive response to protect a sectarian part of the ‘two traditions’ identity, which essentially subsists on the conflict and finds its absence an anathema. Rather than the creation or maintenance of barriers, it is the tackling of this problem that represents the best hope for a future without sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.

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