

# The Viability of Novel Identities in Response to Separatist Tensions: A Comparison of French Algeria and Northern Ireland



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## Introduction

We do not choose our nation. Rather, we are seemingly assorted by an unfathomable number of factors – historical, political, and temporal – and allocated our birthplace. The country upon whose land we are born is deemed ‘ours’, and the people who live there ‘our’ community. Today, one might reasonably question what a new-born baby receives first: worldly existence or nationality. The modern nation-state rigorously records human reproduction within its borders – live births, still births, fertility rates, the names granted by parents to their offspring – and thereby promulgates the notion that it would be unnatural for a baby to be born without a defined nationality, and hence a significant part of its identity predetermined.

However, once in adulthood, some of these babies may begin to reject the identity with which they have been forcibly imbued. They may reject it directly, for its failure to represent who they believe themselves to be. Equally, they may reject it indirectly, taking issue with how their identity group is (negatively) perceived by society, or even openly discriminated against. In societies where such rejection of identity gains sufficient traction, separatism follows closely on its heels.

Examples of separatism can be seen throughout the world and its history. Whether brakes can be applied to the process of separatism is the question from which emerges this essay’s utility. The production of novel identities, which absorb previously conflicting identities and their accompanying tensions, appear logically to be one’s best possible rampart against said tensions. In this paper the possibility of such production of identity will be discussed. This discussion will take place through the paradigm of two selected case studies – Northern Ireland and French Algeria – and will be comprised of three parts. In the first instance, literary figures of both polities will be analysed, excavating the influences of separatist thought on their work. Secondly, a political history of Northern Ireland will be set out before comparison of French Algeria and Northern Ireland is made. Thirdly and finally, I shall consider means of reconciling conflicts of identity, hence of creating the space in which novel identities may emerge. This paper will thereby attempt to contribute meaningfully to contemporary debate on the two specific polities considered, whilst being simultaneously applicable to other separatism-stricken polities.

## Literary Analysis

The French Algerian literary figure whose work will be analysed herein is Albert Camus. One of the *Francophonie*'s most renowned authors, Camus' singularity was found in his capacity to highlight the wonder of the real – Earth, nature, life itself – instead of the philosophical abstractions propagated by his metropolitan contemporaries, such as Jean-Paul Sartre. For the purposes of this essay, it is essential to delve into Camus' representation of geographical place and space. Through this endeavour a fundamental truth will be revealed: that all separatist conflict, albeit it contingent on a divergence of identity, is also inherently anchored in the conflict over a *designated* place.

The underpinnings of the designated place have obvious application to separatism; such places are not abstractions, but empirical and observable entities which the two sides of a separatist dispute both deem sufficiently desirable to justify conflict. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), for example, never led a campaign for the seizure of Cumbria, nor the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) for Normandy. Camus throughout his *oeuvre* richly demonstrates the pertinence of the designated place. In the scene of *L'Étranger* in which Meursault kills the Arab, Camus situates the latter beside the water source, and under the shade of a rock, whilst Meursault suffers in the fervent heat of the sun. Camus makes the qualitative contrast of their positions evident to the reader. Agnès Spiquel equates the Arab's position to the "*lieu heureux*" [happy place], and explicates its profound symbolic importance: not only is the 'happy place' the ultimate objective of all colonial rivalry, but this particular happy place – an idyllic spot on a beach outside Algiers – represents the broader, *true*, happy place: the entirety of Algeria.<sup>1</sup> That the sun's unrelenting heat appears to be a factor in Meursault's murderous process is not insignificant; in so far as Meursault is in the 'unhappy place' under the sun, the decision – or indeed, instinct – to fire his weapon could be seen as mirroring the retribution exacted by separatists who believe themselves to be kept in an 'unhappy place' by way of threat, that threat in this case being the knife unsheathed by the Arab.

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<sup>1</sup> Agnès Spiquel, *Albert Camus : vivre le monde, dire le monde, habiter la terre*, online lecture recording at Nantes University, YouTube, 20 April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AV4UupeJdtg&t=2483s> [accessed 6 July 2022]

Analogously, in *La Peste*, we observe what is nowadays labelled a ‘lockdown’. The city of Oran’s doors close, interdicting departure and entry. Hence, we see the establishment again of a fixed, designated place. Camus writes of the doors’ closing :

C’est ainsi, par exemple, qu’un sentiment aussi individuel que celui de la séparation d’avec un être aimé devint soudain, dès les premières semaines, celui de tout un peuple, et, avec la peur, la souffrance principale de ce long temps d’exil.<sup>2</sup>

In this excerpt, Camus crystallises the profound pathological universalisation that can occur within a designated place. What begins as an individual qualm, this qualm being the feeling that one is not where one should be, not with whom one should be, that one is fundamentally in the wrong – unhappy – place, becomes the feeling of a collective. Such universalisation is a critical subprocess in the overarching separatist process.

If we turn our focus to certain Northern Irish literary figures – the poets Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon, and John Hewitt – we will see that they echo this idea, of the essence of the designated place, and inhabitants’ attachment to it. To establish this parallel would demonstrate that these authors, in different times and different places, observed the same fundamental phenomenon which connects Northern Ireland and French Algeria: a burning desire to possess and plant oneself irremovably in this designated place deemed worthy of conflict.

Consider Derek Mahon, a Belfast-born poet who became a prominent figure in the city’s poetic scene, to which his close ties with fellow poet Michael Longley are testament. Mahon certainly read the work of Albert Camus, having been taught by a French master who was a “big Sartre and Camus man. He found a very responsive audience in us boys and we were all existentialist for a few years”.<sup>3</sup> In his poem *The Last of the Fire Kings*, a poem about escaping the “barbarous cycle” of the fire kings – evoking arsonists, bombers, and gunmen – who refuse that the likes of Mahon escape the Northern Irish domain of fraternal violence, Mahon envisages:

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<sup>2</sup> “It is thereby, for example, that a feeling as individual as that of separation from with somebody we love suddenly became, from the first weeks, the feeling of an entire people, and, alongside fear, the main suffering of this long time of exile.” (My translation). Albert Camus, *La Peste* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947), p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Wroe, ‘Derek Mahon: ‘An Englishman in France is an expat, but an Irishman is an exile’’, *The Guardian*, published 22 July 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jul/22/featuresreviews.guardianreview11> [accessed 8 July 2022]

perfecting my cold dream  
 of a place out of time,  
 a palace of porcelain<sup>4</sup>

The concept of ‘a place out of time’ refers clearly to the designated place, which in this case is an idealised Northern Ireland. Indeed, by removing it from its temporal context – the Troubles’ fiery bloodshed – Mahon evokes the designated place in its purest sense. Benedict Anderson highlights that, whilst producing maps, imperial states detached their colonies from their geographic context, thereby rendering the mapped form a “pure sign, no longer compass to the world”.<sup>5</sup> Mahon does the same to Northern Ireland, albeit for less insidious reasons. In detaching Northern Ireland from its temporal context, it is, to reappropriate Anderson’s explanation, no longer compass to history. The designated place can be detached from its history of suffering, war, and strife so that it may be appreciated for what it is in itself.

To purify Northern Ireland in this way, however, risks neglecting the temporally anchored passions that lust for the designated place. One of Northern Ireland’s most renowned poets, the Roman Catholic Seamus Heaney, penned *The Other Side*, which documents these paradoxical passions. The title is an allusion both to neighbouring plots of land and to the region’s divided communities. The Biblical language attributed to the neighbouring Protestant landowner, “his fabulous, biblical dismissal,/ that tongue of chosen people [...] he prophesied above our scraggy acres”,<sup>6</sup> is indicative of the contemporary belief amongst Ulster Protestants that this designated place was providentially bestowed upon them, the elected people. This idea is still commonly expressed – if not believed – by some Protestants in the locution ‘We are the people’, typically associated with Protestant-Unionist flags and banners, football chants, and marching parades.

Paradoxically, whilst ‘We are the people’ seeks to suggest superiority within and dominance over the designated place, Protestant poet John Hewitt shows the defensive siege-mentality harboured by Protestants who fear displacement from the designated place through the machinations of separatism. In his bluntly-entitled poem *The Colony*, Hewitt perceives

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Mahon, *New Selected Poems*, ed. by Peter Fallon (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), p. 27

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 175

<sup>6</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), p. 59

that “we would be strangers in the Capitol;/ this is our country also, no-where else;/ and we shall not be outcast on the world”.<sup>7</sup> The use of the possessive ‘our’, and the totality of Hewitt’s ‘no-where else’ testify to the fact that often a designated place is a given people’s *only* place, from which they wish not to be uprooted, hence for which they will wholeheartedly oppose its separation, division or dissolution.

Literature is vital in the creation of novel identities and nations, supported by Benedict Anderson’s claim that “everywhere, in fact, as literacy increased, it became easier to arouse popular support, with the masses discovering a new glory in the print elevation of languages they had humbly spoken all along”.<sup>8</sup> This observation goes some way to explain the formation of national literary canons, which wrap around their readers a unifying cloak, bonding them by common stories with which they can widely identify. Excepting a handful of authors, a sufficiently substantial canon eluded French Algeria and evades Northern Ireland still.

#### The Beginnings and Politics of Northern Ireland

Of the latter I shall now set out a brief political history. The story of today’s Northern Ireland begins in the early eighteenth century. In 1690, King William of Orange defeated James II at the Battle of the Boyne; celebration of this outcome continues in the 11<sup>th</sup> of July bonfires of Northern Ireland’s Protestant community. These celebrations carry an ancestral weight, for after William’s victory, predominantly Protestant people of northern Britain began to emigrate to the island of Ireland. Britain’s power in Ireland was strengthened by The Acts of Union of 1800, which brought Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1921, after several rebellions and the Irish War of Independence, twenty-six counties of Ireland departed from the United Kingdom, becoming the Irish Free State. Six counties remained, for a reason highlighted in the literary analysis above: the Protestant settlers of past epochs had deemed Northern Ireland their designated place.

Evidence of this mentality can be found in Unionists’ militaristic response to the potential of *Home Rule*, a concept entailing Ireland’s self-government whilst remaining within the United Kingdom:

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<sup>7</sup> John Hewitt, *The Selected John Hewitt*, ed. by Alan Warner (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1981), p. 24

<sup>8</sup> (Where citation sources are used more than once, and ‘Ibid.’ is not applicable, the author’s full name shall be used to refer to the previously-cited work.) Benedict Anderson, p. 80

In the spring of 1914 Unionist leaders organised the smuggling in of 25,000 rifles and 3 million rounds of ammunition from Germany [...] used to arm an unofficial Protestant militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force [(UVF)].<sup>9</sup>

Such armaments – which would have been employed as readily against mainland British forces as against Irish forces – were not only an omen of the oncoming Troubles, in which the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) similarly smuggled weaponry and formed their own militia. They also indicated the prevalence of force in the governance of Northern Ireland, where “the political, legal and policing worlds were thus inextricably linked: one community governed, judged and policed the other”.<sup>10</sup>

A typical separation of powers therefore did not exist, and to accentuate this problem there were “no Catholics among the cabinet, the senior staff in the Stormont Commons, the top ranks of the RUC, the Civil Service Commission and other important public bodies”.<sup>11</sup> This, despite the fact that Roman Catholics comprised 33.46% of the Northern Irish population in 1926,<sup>12</sup> was made possible by the Unionist government’s abolition of proportional representation and imposition of gerrymandered constituency borders. Such manoeuvres ensured Unionist political control of regions such as Londonderry, notwithstanding the presence of a distinct Catholic majority, and guaranteed certain general elections to be Unionist victories even before voting took place.<sup>13</sup> Frank Wright labels this practice ‘territorialism’, which “was a way of turning democratic values upside down (if we have to have a majority, then we will make one wherever we can) but in turning them upside down they were deprived of any sacred quality”.<sup>14</sup>

Such contravention of democratic norms deprived Roman Catholics of social justice as defined by Young, who stated that the latter required “participation in public discussion and processes of democratic decision making”.<sup>15</sup> This overt discrimination – tantamount to a sportsperson refereeing unjustly and arbitrarily their own competition – offends the *thymos*, “that part of the soul that craves recognition of dignity”,<sup>16</sup> according to Francis Fukuyama.

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<sup>9</sup> David McKittrick, David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 3

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>12</sup> United Kingdom, Government of Northern Ireland, *Census of Population of Northern Ireland 1926* (Belfast: H.M. Stationery Office, 1929), <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/1926-census-general-report.pdf> [accessed 16th July 2022], p. 57

<sup>13</sup> David McKittrick and David McVea, pp. 8-9

<sup>14</sup> Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), p. 48

<sup>15</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 91

<sup>16</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment* (New York: Farrar, Strass and Giroux, 2018), p. xiii

Furthermore, “according to Hegel, human history was driven by a struggle for recognition”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, this dichotomy, in which Northern Irish Protestants – the privileged – dominated their Catholic counterparts – the discriminated – placed these two communities into a historical pattern that was merely repeating once more. Analysing the scenario through this paradigm, one could suggest that Irish nationalism’s demands for separatism, which intensified during the 1960s, were both historically and psychologically inevitable. Observe also that ample explanation of the divide does not require consideration of religious differences *per se*; although the religious labels of ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ certainly serve to demarcate the two communities, concrete theological disagreement – compared to factors like lineage and one’s future vision of the designated place, the six counties of Northern Ireland – seems to be of little importance beyond 1921.

### Comparison of French Algeria and Northern Ireland

Here begins the comparison of French Algeria and Northern Ireland. Patrick Anderson stated that “no situation is exactly like Northern Ireland, but the Algerian one is strikingly close, and bears no serious refutation”.<sup>18</sup> This observation is staunchly challenged by several facts. Demographics are one: whilst French Algeria’s population was approximately 10-12% European settler, Northern Ireland’s was approximately 58-62% Protestant-Unionist.<sup>19</sup> Linguistic capabilities contrasted significantly: evidence suggests that by the early-twentieth century, the population of pre-Independence Ireland, comprising all 32 Irish counties, had attained full literacy.<sup>20</sup> This was not the case in Algeria, where in 1954 only 13.7% of Muslims over the age of ten knew how to read and write; 55% of these literate Muslims knew how to read and write only in French, and 25% only in Arabic.<sup>21</sup> Hence, literacy did not equate to the capacity to communicate comprehensively with one’s compatriots.

Lastly, the role of religion in both conflicts differs, and has been popularly misunderstood. The Algerian conflict is perpetually chalked up to classic colonial rebellion, which may be true to an extent, but which fails to acknowledge that “the majority of ALN [*Armée de Libération Nationale*] combatants believed they were fighting a jihad”,<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. xv-xvi

<sup>18</sup>Patrick Anderson, *Britain’s Algeria, France’s Ireland: The War, the ‘Troubles’ and the Faltering Liberal Voice* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2016), p. 40

<sup>19</sup> Frank Wright, ‘Is Northern Ireland Britain’s Algeria?’, *Études Irlandaises*, no. 16-2 (1991), 119-131 (p. 119).

<sup>20</sup> Maighread Tobin, ‘Literacy and Society in Ireland 1900-1980’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Maynooth University, 2018), p. 16

<sup>21</sup> Guy Pervillé, *La Guerre d’Algérie* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), p. 40

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Anderson, p. 154

which is to say a religious struggle against infidels: European Catholics or European non-believers. In Northern Ireland, it cannot be said that the IRA was waging a homogeneous religious war: prominent individuals linked to the PIRA expressed that they did not want Protestants to leave the island of Ireland<sup>23</sup>; the Original Irish Republican Army (OIRA), the Marxist body from which the PIRA separated over the question of political violence, wished to find solidarity with Northern Ireland's working-class Protestants<sup>24</sup>; the Catholic Church even "denied the sacraments to republicans, distributed anti-IRA bulletins to parishioners, and urged its flock to give information to the authorities".<sup>25</sup>

This supports the theory that the IRA were motivated by the desire to remove British *state* presence from the designated place of Northern Ireland, rather than to remove Protestants therefrom. This desire was most likely reinforced by the presence to the south of a newfound nation-state that represented this ideal, the Republic of Ireland. The FLN-ALN in Algeria, however, for a plethora of reasons, cannot be said to have had the same blueprint for their designated place, "car il n'y avait jamais eu de nation algérienne unie".<sup>26</sup>

If one wants a 'united' country, welding together the citizenry is of prime importance. The comparison of Northern Ireland and French Algeria is noteworthy because it brings into view not only the incomputable challenges facing the production of citizenry-welding novel identities, but also the sublime complexity of human identity which manifests itself wherever beats a human heart.

### Reconciliation and the production of novel identities

Moving on, I will now discuss means of encouraging the reconciliation of conflicting identities, from which can emerge novel and unifying ones. The possibilities for reconciliation considered in this essay lean heavily on the work of the late eminent social psychologist Gordon W. Allport and that of his successors. The two possibilities discussed are divisible into two categories: positive action and negative action. Positive action describes active implementation, for example where a public scheme must be actively put in place and enacted by the relevant institutions. Negative action will describe, contrary to active implementation, the systemic prevention of nefarious social developments taking place.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 181

<sup>26</sup> "because there had never been a united Algerian nation", my translation. Guy Pervillé, p. 85

Ghettoisation affected both Northern Ireland and French Algeria. In *Le Premier homme*, Camus depicts its occurrence in the latter:

La rue Bab-Azoun débouchait pour finir dans une grande place où, à gauche et à droite, s'élevaient face à face le lycée et la caserne. Le lycée tournait le dos à la ville arabe, dont les rues escarpées et humides commençaient de grimper le long de la colline. La caserne tournait le dos à la mer. Au-delà du lycée, commençait le jardin Marengo; au-delà de la caserne, le quartier pauvre et à demi espagnol de Bab-el-Oued.<sup>27</sup>

The symbolic importance of the placement described is significant: the school – a symbol of enlightenment and social mobility – has its back turned to the “Arab town”. In the context of a multicultural French Algeria, such a blatant demarcation, “Arab”, implies the ghettoisation whereby a neighbourhood has become inhabited by exclusively one community. Thereafter Camus mentions the “poor and half-Spanish neighbourhood of Bab-el-Oued”, which lies just in front of the barracks. “Poor” indicates non-French, given the relative wealth *pieds-noirs* possessed compared to their native counterparts,<sup>28</sup> and “half-Spanish” ought not to be understood as a nod to diversity, but rather the designation of another foreign community, another non-French entity; Bab-el-Oued is not a neighbourhood of the French settler. This ghettoisation mirrors that depicted in Kevin Branagh’s film *Belfast* (2021), in which Catholic residents are forced, by bomb and threat, to move out of a street claimed by Protestants.

The first form of negative action that must be taken, is that such ghettoisation is prevented. In a case study, Allport cites a 1950 investigation which uncovered that white American respondents wished for the exclusion of Black Americans from their neighbourhood on the basis that they were “personally unclean, diseased, smell bad, are physically unpleasant to associate with” at a greater percentage the further away they lived from the Black community.<sup>29</sup> That this measurement is possible, ergo that such strict community borders exist, are indicative of a situation in which ghettos have been established, as they infamously were during the period of racial segregation in the United States. To resist the emergence of these undesirable subconscious biases, and to prevent the alienation of our neighbours, the

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<sup>27</sup> “The street of Bab-Azoun lead onto at its end a large public square where, to the left and to the right, stood across from one another the school and the barracks. The school turned its back to the Arab town, of which the steep and humid streets began to climb along the hill. The barracks turned their back to the sea. Beyond the school began the Marengo garden; beyond the barracks, the poor and half-Spanish neighbourhood of Bab-el-Oued.” My translation. Albert Camus, *Le premier homme* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005), p. 250

<sup>28</sup> Alain Ruscio, *Nostalgie : L'interminable histoire de l'OAS* (Paris : La Découverte, 2015), p. 31

<sup>29</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) p. 270

quasi-forced separation and segregation of communities, as engendered by ghettoisation, must be systematically prevented.

In contrast, a form of positive action which must be considered for implementation is that of Intergroup Contact. The latter's main tenets are found in this paragraph of Allport's:

Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional support (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.<sup>30</sup>

Intergroup contact has been divided into two forms: direct intergroup contact and indirect intergroup contact. Direct intergroup contact takes place in the immediate physical vicinity of its participants. One of the challenges in establishing direct intergroup contact is precisely bringing participants into such contact; creating this proximity is often challenging. Instead, modern society is better adapted to the implementation of indirect intergroup contact thanks to social media's omnipresence. Indirect intergroup contact takes numerous forms, typically entailing lesser immediacy and no simultaneous physical presence. One such form of indirect contact is Electronic- or E-contact, defined by White, Borinca, Vezzali et al. as follows:

E-contact allows ingroup and outgroup members to meet in a goal-orientated and cooperative online interaction, typically in a synchronous and text-based chat room [...] E-contact is a structured intervention that accommodates Allport's optimal contact conditions; for example, equal status is operationalized by carefully matching the participants and outgroup members on age, gender, and education level; cooperation and the common goal involve participants working together to find the solution to a shared problem; and authority support is operationalized by either a parent, a teacher or the chat moderator supporting participation during the intervention.<sup>31</sup>

This approach has been put into practice by White, Turner, et al. who found that, in the context of Northern Ireland, it had a markedly positive impact. They concluded that "[Their] study demonstrated that E-contact improved both Catholics' and Protestants' attitudes towards the other community, improved their expectations about interactions with the outgroup, and reduced their feelings of intergroup anxiety".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gordon W. Allport, p. 281

<sup>31</sup> Fiona A. White, Borinca I, Vezzali L, et al. Beyond direct contact: The theoretical and societal relevance of indirect contact for improving intergroup relations. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2021;77:132–153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12400>, p. 135

<sup>32</sup> Fiona A. White, Turner, R.N., Verrelli, S., Harvey, L.J. & Hanna, J.R. (2019) Improving intergroup relations between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland via E-Contact. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(2), 429– 438. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2515>, p. 437

## Conclusion

On this hopeful note, we arrive at our conclusion. Intercommunity relationships can evidentially be improved, and tensions sparked by identity dissipated. As this process progresses – as deleterious social phenomena such as ghettoisation are defended against, and productive developments such as sustained contact introduced – the space for the organic production of novel identities, through literature, the arts, societal institutions, and shared experiences, expands. In Northern Ireland, the expansion of this space can be inferred from the rise of political parties designated as ‘other’, as delineated below.

French Algeria – still a divisive political topic in France today, 60 years after its cessation<sup>33</sup> – was, in hindsight, doomed to fail. The deep disparities in its population, numerically and economically, made it so, during a worldly epoch in which nation-building theory was less advanced than it is today. The dispute over the designated place could not be settled by negotiation, co-existence, and the development of new national identities. Albert Camus’ travails testify to this fact; he ominously declared one of his final attempts to halt the Algerian crisis “the last warning that can be given by a writer who for the past 20 years has been dedicated to the Algerian cause, before he lapses once again into silence”.<sup>34</sup>

As emerged in the above comparison, the Northern Irish situation was and remains markedly different. Regarding the vote share of Northern Ireland’s 2022 local assembly election, unionist parties received just over 40%, nationalist parties just under 40%, and parties designated as ‘other’ 20%.<sup>35</sup> Politically, Northern Ireland’s constitutional future may be more uncertain than ever before. Simultaneously, the reconciliation of its two communities appears to be at its most attainable. A question of Heaney, as unanswerable as it may be, continues to cry out for our assiduous reflection: “Everywhere being nowhere,/ who can prove/ one place more than another?”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Audrey Tison, ‘Assemblée nationale : des députés dénoncent un "négationnisme historique" après les déclarations du député RN José Gonzalez sur l’Algérie française’, FranceInfo, published 29 June 2022, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/algerie/assemblee-nationale-des-deputes-denoncent-un-negationnisme-historique-apres-les-declarations-du-depute-rn-jose-gonzalez-sur-l-algerie-francaise\\_5226478.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/algerie/assemblee-nationale-des-deputes-denoncent-un-negationnisme-historique-apres-les-declarations-du-depute-rn-jose-gonzalez-sur-l-algerie-francaise_5226478.html) [accessed 19 July 2022]

<sup>34</sup> Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, ed. by Alice Kaplan, trans. By Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 184

<sup>35</sup> Luke Sproule, Harriet Agerholm, and Becky Dale, ‘NI election results 2022: The assembly poll in maps and charts’, BBC News, published 8 May 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-61363246> [accessed 19 July 2022]

<sup>36</sup> Seamus Heaney, p. 224

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