



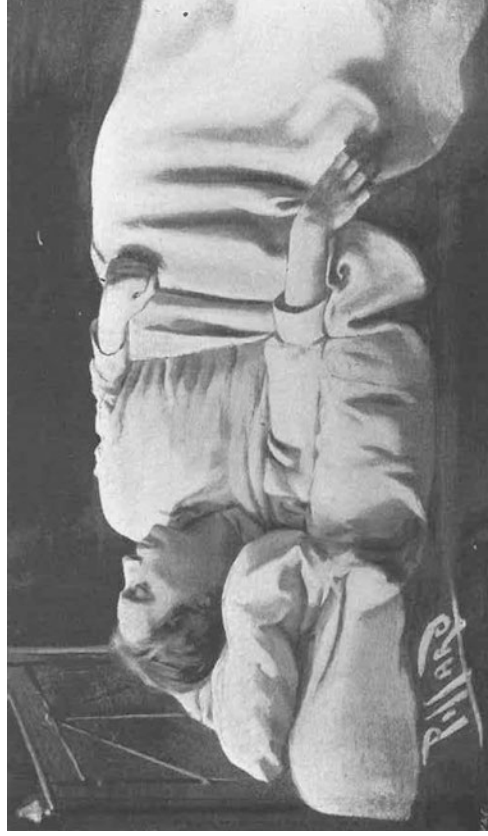
SECULAR MARTYRDOM IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

FROM PETERLOO TO THE PRESENT

*Edited by
Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn*



Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland



‘Done to Death: Elizabeth Ryan dead in Newcastle Workhouse’
[from Robert H. Sherard (1897), *The White Slaves of England* (London: James Bowden), illustrated by Harold Piffard (1867–1938)]

Quentin Outram · Keith Laybourn
Editors

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From Peterloo to the Present

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ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Allen Library (Trinity College Dublin)
BL	British Library
BLOU	Bodleian Library, Oxford University
BLUCC	Boole Library, University College Cork
BMHWS	Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement
CP	Communist Party
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECT	Electroconvulsive Therapy
<i>EEx</i>	<i>Evening Express</i> (Cardiff)
GBH	Grievous Bodily Harm
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters (Cheltenham)
GPO	General Post Office
GTP	Gwyn Thomas Papers
ILP	Independent Labour Party
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IPC	International Peace Congress
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IRR	Institute of Race Relations
LBC	Left Book Club
LCMD	Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (Washington DC)
MACBB	Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks (Dublin)
MCL	Manchester Central Library
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain

MP	Member of Parliament
NA	National Archives (Kew, London)
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NLW	National Library of Wales
NSS	National Shipbuilders' Security Ltd
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
<i>P&CE</i>	<i>Pontefract & Castleford Express</i>
PAHPL	Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament (London)
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PMC	Peterloo Memorial Campaign
PULDRBSC	Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
<i>RL</i>	<i>Rhondda Leader</i>
SF	Sinn Féin
SWMF	South Wales Miners' Federation
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TNA	The National Archives (Kew, London)
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDC	Urban District Council
UN	United Nations
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WRCC	West Riding County Council
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
YMA	Yorkshire Miners' Association

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‘A Divine Discontent with Wrong’: The People’s Martyrology

Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn

When Kenneth Morgan ended his account of the 1910 Tonypandy riots with the comment that one more episode had been added to the people’s martyrology of Peterloo, Tolpuddle and Featherstone, he was using concepts and language that would have been entirely familiar to the radicals, the trade unionists, the socialists and the reformers of those times.¹ All but a few had been brought up in Christian households, had read and heard passages from the Bible repeatedly, and were drenched in the imagery and narratives of the Old and New Testaments, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and the history of the Church. Their language was imbued with religious reference.²

The quotation is attributed to Keir Hardie by J. Vernon Radcliffe in ‘James Keir Hardie’, in Herbert Tracey (ed.) (1948), *The British Labour Party* (London: Caxton), pp. 177–86 at p. 185.

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This introduction excavates the meaning and use of ‘martyr’ and related terms in the thinking of British and Irish oppositionists. The first two sections review the theological roots of the term, the practices of the medieval Church and the impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation on the understanding of who and what a martyr was. The third section then changes tack and pursues a philological inquiry based on the use of ‘martyr’ and related terms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The final section turns to sociology, considering firstly the concept of a ‘civil religion’ before moving on to the practices and performances of martyrdom in the Christian Church and in secular oppositional movements. This and the following contributions make it clear that ‘the people’s martyrology’ is more than just a particularly apt phrase.

THEOLOGY

The term ‘martyr’ appears only three times in the English Bible and so textual biblical analysis offers only a narrow basis for understanding. Two occurrences are in Revelation: one at Revelation 2:13 where Christ, seen after the crucifixion in a vision by John, commends the Church at Pergamum because ‘thou ... hast not denied my faith, even in the days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you’ and the other at 17:6 which states ‘And I saw the woman [i.e. Babylon, Rome] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus’. The third is from Acts 22:20 where Paul relates his conversion on the road to Damascus and, speaking of his past life as Saul who was active in the persecution of Christians, confesses ‘And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him’. In each of these cases the one referred to as a martyr loses his life; Antipas and, implicitly, Stephen maintain their faith. Hence one might infer that a martyr is someone who dies rather than abjuring their faith, and this appears to be the usual meaning of ‘martyr’ in the Christian communities of the second century.³

However, the etymology of the word ‘martyr’ hints that things may not be quite so straightforward. The word comes from the Greek *μάρτυς*, *martus*, a witness, that is, one who avers, or can aver, what he himself or she herself has seen or heard or knows by any other means.⁴ This word is used frequently in the Greek New Testament. Its meaning is broader than the currently dominant meaning of ‘witness’ in English,

where it indicates 'one who is or was present and is able to testify from personal observation; one present as a spectator or auditor'; an eyewitness or an ear-witness.⁵ In the New Testament the witness is indeed sometimes one who gives evidence in a court of law concerning what he or she has seen or heard but is often one who asserts what he or she knows by other means, for instance as a matter of faith acquired through a religious conversion or as a result of a vision or a divine revelation. Hence, a witness may aver that Jesus is the Son of God, a matter not capable of determination through vision or hearing or any other of the corporal senses.⁶ Moreover, Christ Himself is seen to be a witness, that is, a witness to the existence of God the Father.

In the circumstances of the early Church, averring that Jesus was the Son of God or that the Lord was Christ or many of the other teachings of Christianity was dangerous. In about AD 35, as St Paul recalled, Stephen, chosen by the Apostles to care for the Greek Christian widows at Jerusalem and a powerful preacher, was denounced as a blasphemer and brought before the Jewish council where he was accused by 'false witnesses'. When asked if the accusations were true, Stephen responded by lecturing and haranguing the council, finally stating 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' At this the council dragged Stephen out of the city and began stoning him. They continued until he was dead.⁷ Similarly almost all the Apostles are said to have met their end as martyrs, that is, as people who died a violent death on account of their faith.⁸ In this they were seen to follow the example of Christ, and Christ came to be regarded as the first and the exemplary Christian martyr, certainly by the time of Eusebius (born *c.* AD 260–265, died AD 339 or 340), the earliest Church historian whose works still survive.⁹ Thus in the circumstances of the early Church it was easy to conflate the concept of a witness with the concept of one who had died, or risked death, because of his or her faith.

Controversy soon emerged. The forty-eight 'Martyrs of Lyons' were killed in AD 177 after a locally incited persecution in which torture was used without restraint; some were granted execution by decapitation because they were Roman citizens; others were exposed to wild animals in the arena; others died of their sufferings in prison. Not all the tortured died; nevertheless contemporary Christians began calling them martyrs whether they had died or not. Those that survived protested, saying 'we are lowly and humble confessors', and refused the title of 'witnesses' [martyrs] and hence a hierarchy of martyrdom was created.¹⁰ But it was

to remain contested, and the term ‘martyr’ might be applied to those who still lived but had suffered torture or imprisonment. St Cyprian applied the title to a number of official and lay Christians condemned not to death but to penal servitude in the gold and silver mines of New Carthage.¹¹ Martyrdom had thus come to be associated not merely with death but also with suffering, and not only suffering during dying but also during living. The veneration applied to martyrs, the highest ranking of the saints, came to suggest that the earthly life of the exemplary Christian was one of sacrifice; joy was reserved for the life to come and the only earthly delight came from its contemplation.

Further contradictions arose. St Cyprian (d. AD 258) denied that the title of ‘martyr’ should be given to Christians who had lost their lives for their faith but whose faith was judged heretical or schismatic.¹² The ‘Holy Innocents’, the boys under two years old whom Herod had slaughtered in an attempt to ensure the death of Jesus,¹³ were venerated as Christian martyrs from early times, despite the fact that they were Jewish, not Christian, and in no position to act as witnesses to the faith. Their treatment as martyrs was justified on the grounds that though they had not died *for* Christ, they had died *in his place*, a statement that defies all later Christian theology of martyrdom. So, too, were Christian boys supposedly murdered by Jews.¹⁴ The case reminds us that popular and official religious practices may diverge, and that the official may attempt to incorporate the popular despite the damage to theological consistency. The point is made more powerful by the conversion during the fifteenth century of earlier Church dramas of the Massacre to comedic enactments of gender conflict, with men represented by Herod’s soldiers and women by the Innocents’ mothers.¹⁵

There was another circumstance in which it came to be argued that the title of ‘martyr’ should be denied: when the martyr had actively sought death. St Gregory of Nazianzus (c. AD 325–389) appears to have been the first to enunciate the rule: ‘it is mere rashness to seek death, but it is cowardly to refuse it’; but it is St Augustine’s teachings which are usually remembered here. St Augustine’s teachings, elucidated in the course of his controversy with the Donatists in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, defined an authoritative, though by no means unanimous, notion of martyrdom for the post-persecution Church.¹⁶ ‘Possessing’ the martyrs was essential for both sides of the schism between the Donatists and the official Church; martyrs were a vital ideological resource, conferring legitimacy, identity, sources of spectacle, and occasions for feasting,

drinking and dancing and thus popularity.¹⁷ By the time of Augustine's consecration as Bishop of Hippo in AD 395 the Donatists had successfully laid claim to a genealogy of saints which, they argued, put them in direct succession to the Apostolic Church. Their celebration of their martyrs laid great emphasis on their bodily trials and tribulations, that is, their 'sacrifice' of themselves to and for God. Augustine, in contrast, returned to the New Testament concept of a martyr as one who bore witness, and for Augustine this was the whole of martyrdom.¹⁸ For Augustine, the doctrine of martyrdom as witness and only witness implied a number of consequences. Firstly, no form of voluntary martyrdom could be accepted including the martyrdom of Christian women who died rather than accept unwanted sexual intercourse outside or inside marriage. Murder was a sin and this included self-murder. Moreover, it contradicted the example of Christ who did not offer himself up to the authorities but persevered until he was seized in the Garden. In doing so Christ demonstrated the Christian virtue of patience, and patience therefore became a martyr's virtue, to be emulated by his or her followers.¹⁹ Besides patience, the fundamental virtue of the Christian martyr was 'caritas': 'charity', care or love; its opposite was pride.²⁰

Secondly, the sufferings of the martyrs could not be accepted as a defining quality of martyrdom; it was the cause that mattered, not the suffering. 'Let us love in them, not their sufferings, but the causes of their suffering. For if we loved only their sufferings, we are going to find many who suffered worse things in bad causes.' Suffering does not make a martyr. Jesus was crucified between two thieves. All three suffered in the same way but only Jesus' suffering had a just cause; the other two suffered because of their own wickedness.²¹ Thirdly, and following from the second point, a violent death was not necessary to achieve martyrdom. Any Christian who remained true to the faith could be considered a martyr.²²

The veneration of the martyrs began early. Relics of the martyrs, their bones or other body parts, were regarded as 'more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold', as it was put in a contemporary account of the martyrdom of St Polycarp in about AD 155;²³ and a celebration on the anniversary of the martyr's death was made 'both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps.'²⁴ Later, especially after the cessation of the Roman persecutions, the construction of elaborate and costly shrines proceeded apace

and the practice of undergoing a pilgrimage to them, as at Santiago de Compostela, the site of a shrine to the martyr St James the Greater, but more usually to a local shrine to a martyr recognised only locally, became a part of Christian life.

By the end of the Patristic era in the fifth century the doctrines concerning martyrdom had therefore acquired a complexity and ambiguity which enabled some pliability. Those doctrines thus acquired a potential use in doctrinal, confessional and thence social and political conflicts. The conflict between Augustine and the Donatists was neither the first of these nor the last.²⁵ Eventually, in the West, in medieval times and especially under the rationalising and centralising reforms of Pope Gregory VII, official doctrine laid down that martyrdom had three elements: the signs (*signa*) of sainthood, in medieval times miracles; the punishment or sufferings (*poena*); and the cause (*causa*).²⁶ It was a formulation that allowed differing degrees of emphasis on each element and therefore variations from the templates provided by Christ, the Apostles, St Stephen and St Polycarp.²⁷ In areas where Protestantism came to hold sway, the request of the miraculous ceased. Janani Luwum, Archbishop of the Church of Uganda from 1974 until his death in 1977, opposed Idi Amin and was shot dead on his orders. He suffered for his cause and was formally recognised as a martyr by the Church of England in 1998. He performed no miracles.

HISTORY

Not only were the doctrines of martyrdom capable of some flexibility, but so were the hagiographies and the terms of veneration of individual saints and martyrs. The medieval cult of the virgin martyr perhaps shows most dramatically how the pattern of emphasis on a martyr's virtues could change.²⁸ There were many virgin martyrs: SS Agatha, Agnes, Catherine of Alexandria, Cecilia, Lucy, Margaret of Antioch and Ursula are the best known. Virgin martyrs were of course usually female (although there are examples of male virgin martyrs, such as St Edmund and St George); they were not always adults. The cult of St Agnes illustrates well the process by which the emphasis changed. Little is known of the historical Agnes beyond the fact that she was very young, perhaps twelve or thirteen, that she refused to marry, that when a persecution broke out she left home and offered herself for martyrdom and was executed by being stabbed in the throat about AD 304. A few decades

later St Ambrose dwelt first on her virginity, then on her youth, then on her fearlessness and interpreted her refusal to marry as the consequence of a spiritual marriage to Christ.²⁹ By the time of Caxton's *Golden Legend* (1483) the emphasis has shifted almost entirely to her marriage to Christ, her consequent refusal to take any earthly husband and the miracles attendant on her final conflicts with the local authorities; of her youth little is said, of her courage nothing. Nothing in St Ambrose's account is denied but some things are ignored and others mentioned only briefly.³⁰

The characteristics of the martyr's cult depended on the extent of the Church's control over the martyr's image.³¹ The Church was able to transform the most unlikely deaths into martyrdoms but so, too, were lay believers; the consequence was that clerical and lay cults could diverge significantly. St Edmund, king of the East Angles in the ninth century, met his death in, or shortly after, a battle with the invading Danes; the most straightforward way of turning this death into a martyrdom would have been by representing this conflict as one between Christians and heathens and by celebrating Edmund's martial virtues. The earliest hagiography by Abbo of Fleury (c. 945–1004) does indeed depict the conflict in this way but Edmund's suffering is given the form of an *imatio Christi* in which his virtues are seen to be those of Christ in his passion: meekness, passivity, acceptance of his fate. Edmund is seized, 'tried' by the chief of the Danes, scourged and bound to a tree. He is then shot through with arrows until he looks 'like a hedgehog' (a popular rather than an ecclesiastical simile); Edmund repeatedly calls out to Christ. But then come elements which turn the hagiography into a popular story, one which could delight children and fascinate adults. Edmund is decapitated and his head discarded in woodland. The people search for it without success. Then a wolf intercedes and guides searchers to Edmund's head by miraculously shouting 'Here! Here! Here!'³²

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, murdered by Henry II's knights in AD 1170, was almost immediately venerated as a saint by lay members of the Church, first locally and then more widely. The cult appears to have been driven by the shock at his murder and the very large number of miracles attributed to his intervention in the few years after his death. Although the Church acted quickly and canonised Becket in 1173, it followed rather than led the popular cult. That he was termed a martyr seems due largely to the manner of his death; at no point was any attempt made to force Thomas to abjure his faith. That he was not

only a saint but a martyr was argued on the ground that his life had been a 'living sacrifice' and that he had died in the service of the Church. It was an argument that was contested from within the Church on the basis that his arrogance and impetuosity had, on the contrary, put the Church in danger. Nevertheless, Becket's calmness and steadfastness under his assault by Henry's knights was likened to Christ in his passion and formed the centrepiece of his treatment as a martyr by the Church hierarchy.³³

In the case of St George, however, the Church seems largely to have failed in its attempt to control the legend and its interpretation. Nothing at all is known with certainty of St George, despite him being the patron saint of England, although it is probable that he lived in the late third or early fourth century and was martyred at Diospolis, later Georgiopolis, later still Lydda and now Lod, in Israel, which was the centre of his veneration from the earliest times.³⁴ In the form in which it was first known in England, a form probably brought back from the Middle East by crusaders, St George was venerated as a warrior saint capable of bringing victory to his adherents. Then his image is transformed in the *Golden Legend* by the story of St George and the Dragon.³⁵ The dragon may have been meant to represent paganism or idolatry but the chivalric elements of the story—the helpless king's daughter rescued by the Christian knight without fear and without flaw—are likely to have been more obvious and dominated his legend from late medieval times onward. St George became one of the most popular of English saints and martyrs.³⁶

The religious conflicts precipitated by the Reformation brought a new salience to martyrdom. After centuries in which martyrdom had become rare and unusual, there came periods in which the threat of martyrdom became ever-present and the numbers of new martyrs rose to the hundreds in only a few years. Some 280 people were publicly burned between 1553 and 1558 in the Marian persecution and a similar number were martyred under Elizabeth and her successors until 1681. The last to be martyred in England were some twenty Jesuit priests and others caught up in the hysteria of the 'Popish Plot' and executed in 1679, and Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh, hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn on 1 July 1681.³⁷ In Scotland, the last martyrdoms were during the 'Killing Time', ending in 1688.

The effect of these martyrdoms was firstly to exacerbate and prolong the confessional conflict.³⁸ The martyrdoms were publicised and memorialised in numerous ephemeral publications but also in more enduring

works. Of these, John Foxe's 1563 *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes*, commonly known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, became pre-eminent. It presented the deaths of the Marian martyrs in detail that was often gruesome and which functioned not only to increase the Protestant readers' sympathy for their plight and admiration for their courage and steadfastness, but also to underpin and encourage their contempt, disdain and hatred for the 'Romishe Prelates' who had pursued the persecution. Its impact was increased by its illustrations, typically of the martyr's execution.

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was an enormous book which would have been far too expensive to be purchased by any but the very wealthy.³⁹ Although this could have drastically limited its impact, measures were taken to disseminate the text as widely as possible. The Convocation of the Church placed chained copies of the 1570 second edition, more anti-Papal than the first, in English cathedrals, and parish churches were urged to acquire it by the Privy Council.⁴⁰ It went through two more editions in Foxe's lifetime, in 1576 and 1583, five more unabridged editions by 1684 and numerous further editions thereafter.⁴¹ The British Library holds eighty-three nineteenth-century editions, including revisions, selections, abridgements and extracts, some of which were by publishers who specialised in producing cheap literature for the masses: Thomas Tegg (1840), Milner and Co. (c. 1850), W. Scott (1885), the Religious Tract Society (c. 1877) and W. Nicholson & Sons (c. 1900).

Foxe's *Book* provoked numerous attempted rebuttals and self-consciously Catholic competitors. Nicholas Harpsfield (1519–1575), who played an active role in the Marian persecutions as Archdeacon of Canterbury, was one of the first. The last of his *Six Dialogues* accused Foxe of memorialising 'pseudo-martyrs', people who could not be true martyrs because they were rebels, criminals, insane, possessed by the devil, without learning but most importantly because they were, each and every one of them, heretics.⁴² As dissent multiplied in the seventeenth century, so did the competition between martyrologies. Eventually, only the Family of Love, the *Familia Caritatis*, an obscure, quietist sect that seems to have been most numerous between 1550 and 1650, failed to produce a literature of persecution.⁴³

The second effect was to re-establish Christ on the Cross as the pre-dominant image of martyrdom and restore the exemplar of the Christian dying for his faith at the hands of a persecuting state. Finally, the Reformation martyrdoms engraved a confessional division in attitudes to

martyrdom. For Protestants, the impact of the Reformation was twofold and contradictory. On the one hand, as a matter of doctrine, Protestants sought to restrain and control the role of the martyrs of the Church; in particular, practices of veneration which smacked of idolatry provoked disgust and contempt among Protestants. The twenty-second of the thirty-nine articles of faith in the Church of England, first issued in 1563, stated that

The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration as well of Images, as of Reliques, and also Invocation of Saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God.⁴⁴

On the other hand, as a matter of confessional conflict and culture, the Protestant martyrs played a significant role, a role solidified and made permanent by John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* which became the first exhibit in the case against Catholicism. For Catholics, there was no such ambiguity: the veneration of the martyrs of the Church was all of a piece with the veneration of the Virgin Mary, of the Apostles, the fathers and the saints, the archangels and the angels, of relics and the construction of shrines.

The memory of the Marian persecutions and their Elizabethan and later counterparts was one of horror for the leaders of the Whig Enlightenment. Gibbon's treatment of the Roman persecutions of the early Christians is notable for his disapproval of them not so much because the Christians were Christians and the Romans heathens, but because religious intolerance was poor policy.⁴⁵ Notable, too, is the point of view which he tacitly adopts: it is that of the governing classes, not of the persecuted Christians. To gentlemen and ladies brought up on Gibbon, the doctrine that a wise ruler of England, Ireland or the Empire did not create martyrs became a truth too obvious to bear repetition or emphasis. Such may be the explanation of the number of modern martyrs who have been killed in error, by accident or by subordinates who have 'gone too far', or who for one reason or another have been distant from the centre of command. For examples treated here, see the chapters on Peterloo, Featherstone, the Easter Rising and, more ambiguously, David Oluwale. Other possible examples of 'mistaken martyrdoms' include the Amritsar massacre, now known as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, of 1919 and the shootings at Sharpeville in 1960.⁴⁶ Of the

examples treated here, only the martyrdoms of Bobby Sands and, more ambiguously, of Jarrow can be presented as deliberately brought about by politicians in full control of events. Instead, a firm and clear-headed resistance to the creation of martyrs has often been detectable in establishment responses to oppositional movements, not least in Tonyandy as discussed here. It is noteworthy that the young Winston Churchill, Home Secretary during the Tonyandy disturbances, had been an enthusiastic reader of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.⁴⁷ In modern times, the most well-known example of this attitude of the state to martyrdom is perhaps that given by Walt Rostow in 1967. He bluntly told his president, Lyndon Johnson, that the decision of General Ovando, the chief of the Bolivian Armed Forces, to have the captured Che Guevara shot was 'stupid'.⁴⁸

PHILOLOGY

In his *English Synonymes* of 1816, George Crabb sought to distinguish words close in meaning by examining not only their etymology but also their use. For the word 'martyr' he might have chosen to examine 'hero', 'saint', 'suffering innocents' and, as an antonym, the 'Judas'. This is what we shall do in this section, and we shall attempt to elucidate the meanings of these terms as they were understood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the British Isles.

Of the secular saints, the most well known were social reformers. The Clapham Sect, that is, William Wilberforce, Thomas Babington, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Hannah More and others, lampooned as 'Saints' by their contemporary opponents, were later labelled as such in usage that may have been metaphorical but was neither hostile nor humorous. As early as 1837 William Acworth's funeral sermon for Babington cast him as one of those

whose characters are so resplendent in holiness, who in their tempers and lives so visibly reflect the image of Christ, who enjoy such decisive proofs of the Divine favour, [that] ... they are denominated by St. Paul, 'saints in light'.⁴⁹

Wilberforce was the best known and most revered of the Sect and produced the 'type' of the Christian, Protestant, evangelical, reformist, uncanonised saint. His early biographers hinted at his saintliness. Travers

Buxton, author of the standard popular biography of the Edwardian period, wrote that 'the uniform high tone of his life and conduct seems to place him on a level beyond the cold and carping criticism of ordinary mortals'; that his bodily presence was weak, '[l]ike the great Apostle'; that as early as 1808 it was being said that his name was 'already sanctified and immortalized in the memories of all good men'; and that his 'real greatness' was his 'unselfish consecration of all his powers to the highest use'.⁵⁰

The distinctions between heroism, secular sainthood and secular martyrdom were ill-defined. 'Heroic' was an adjective applied to a wide variety of lives in nineteenth-century Britain, though the term was applied most naturally, without qualification or the conscious use of metaphor, to successful soldiers and sailors who had shown exceptional physical courage in a worthy cause.⁵¹ Thus Nelson was a hero *tout court*, but David Livingstone was 'a hero of discovery', Sir Humphry Davy was a 'hero of the laboratory' and George Stephenson a 'hero of the workshop'.⁵² It was a term normally used seriously and with reverence which paradoxically enabled it to be used satirically: when the term was applied to a racehorse owner in 1806, the racing world was being mocked.⁵³ Modern uses of 'hero' have suffered a devaluation; now a jockey or even a horse may be referred to as a 'hero of the turf' without conscious hyperbole, irony or satire.⁵⁴ Metaphorical and hyperbolic uses of 'martyr' have been less common, though the phrase 'a martyr to' is long-established: that Lord Chatham had been a martyr to his gout was noted only a few years after his death.⁵⁵

The cause in which the hero fought or struggled might be patriotic or imperial (Thomas Cochrane, Nelson, Wellington and General Gordon); or the spread of Christian civilisation (Livingstone, Alexander Mackay of Uganda, John Gibson Paton and Robert Moffat).⁵⁶ Radicals might reject these causes and their exemplars, but rather than rejecting heroism as a useful concept of political discourse they substituted heroes and causes of their own. Chartists sometimes looked back to Jack Cade from the distant past but usually to the heroes of the generation then recently departed: Robert Burns (d. 1796), Tom Paine (d. 1809), William Cobbett (d. 1835) and Orator Hunt (d. 1835). Mainly, however, though amply aided by the British state, they made their own heroes: John Frost (b. 1784), Feargus O'Connor (b. 1794), William Lovett (b. 1800) and Bronterre O'Brien (b. 1805).⁵⁷ In the 1840s, radical trade unionists working in the country's coal mines saw themselves as fighting

against Tyranny and for Liberty, as well as for higher wages. Their heroic exemplars included William Wallace, John Hampden, William Tell and George Washington, rebels to a man.⁵⁸ As Nelson and Wellington had fought the tyrant Napoleon, so these heroes had fought tyranny at home.

The prime sense of a hero in the nineteenth century was a person imbued with the martial virtues deployed in a noble cause. His life was active and quite possibly filled with violence; he had none of the passivity or meekness of the saint. Unlike a martyr, it was his life that took attention; his death could be peaceful, prosaic and obscure and need not follow the glorious and tragic pattern of the deaths of Nelson and Gordon: Livingstone died at 60 of malaria and dysentery, cared for by his attendants; Orator Hunt died at 61 from a stroke; Wellington died at 83, sitting at home in his chair. However, there was an undeniable fluidity in the use of 'hero', 'saint' and 'martyr'. Christian martyrs were sometimes also called heroes. Some secular saints were called secular 'martyrs' by some, 'saints' by others; some referred to their subjects as heroes *and* martyrs. Elizabeth Rundle Charles, for example, an Anglican writer, wrote of David Livingstone and General Gordon as well as Bishop Patteson as martyrs.⁵⁹ The reason appears to have been her wish to emphasise the death as well as the life. In her introduction to her accounts of these three, she recalls the shock of the announcement of Gordon's death and that this recalled to her the 'heroic lives and deaths' of Livingstone and Patteson. She avers that for each of them death was 'but the last of countless acts of sacrifice'. It would seem that heroes were usually men or women of notable courage, demonstrated in life as well as death, but that where sacrifice and death became central to the theme a writer or a speaker wished to emphasise, a 'saint' or a 'hero' might become a 'martyr'.

By 1920 the pantheon of oppositionist heroes, saints and martyrs was well peopled: Henry George, Tom Mann, John Burns, Annie Besant, Keir Hardie, Fred Jowett, Robert Blatchford, Jim Larkin, James Connolly, Will Thorne, Ben Tillett, the Pankhursts, Margaret Bondfield, Robert Smillie and Ramsay MacDonald. The last, though, brings us to another of the most powerful of the biblical metaphors in the people's history: that of the traitor, of Judas.⁶⁰ MacDonald, Prime Minister in the Labour government which won office in 1929, failed to weather the financial crisis of 1931 and entered the general election that year as the leader of a predominantly Conservative National Coalition. The Labour Party split and sank from the governing party to a rump of 52

Members of Parliament (MPs). Ramsay MacDonald was offered the Prime Minister's post in the National government and took it. Herbert Smith of the Yorkshire Miners said gruffly that 'there always was a Judas in every movement' and that MacDonald had 'forgotten where he came from', a comment that gained force from the fact that Smith was an orphan partly brought up in the workhouse and that MacDonald's father, a ploughman, deserted his mother soon after MacDonald was born.⁶¹ Well before this MacDonald had come to be regarded as a Judas by A. J. Cook, James Maxton and others on the left of the party, although his everyday nickname of 'MacChadband' had been bestowed on him 'because he preached so much'.⁶²

MacDonald was not alone. In April 1931, Oswald Mosley had found himself confronted by an angry crowd outside Ashton-under-Lyne's Town Hall after the results of the first by-election at which his New Party had presented a candidate were announced. Labour were less than 2000 votes behind the Conservative candidate; the New Party had gathered nearly 5000 votes; in the estimate of the crowd, this had ensured the Conservative win. 'Traitor!' shouted someone in the crowd; 'Judas!'⁶³ The coal lock-out following the General Strike of 1926 provides further examples. A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation, told Lancashire miners that 'Every man who had gone back [to work] was a blackleg and a Judas'.⁶⁴ In turn, Philip Snowden, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1924 Labour government, accused Cook of smashing the Federation to pieces after its collapse at the end of the lock-out and suggested 'he should imitate the example of Judas Iscariot's last actions on earth', in other words kill himself.⁶⁵ Earlier still, J. H. Thomas, leader of the railwaymen of the Triple Alliance who had, at the last minute, refused to support their allies, the miners, in the lock-out of 1921, was depicted in a cartoon of the Last Supper in the character of Judas Iscariot. He sued for libel.⁶⁶

It was in this period that satirical uses of biblical and religious forms and imagery first arose. In 1920 *The Socialist*, the paper of the Socialist Labour Party, issued this prayer for William Brace, President of the South Wales Miners' Federation until 1915 and MP for Abertillery since 1918, who had just obtained the paid post of Labour Adviser to the Ministry of Mines:

Blessed are those who arise from the lowly ranks unto high places. Two thousand five hundred pounds per year shall be the just tribute given unto them.

Judas of old sold his Master, but our Brace has only sold his class. Blessed be HIS NAME. He shall walk on carpets of velvet hue, and servants shall attend him. His name shall be written on the scrolls of the great.⁶⁷

This venom was new; before the First World War those on the left had usually treated Christ with respect. Was he not the first Socialist?⁶⁸

The figure of the Judas and the centrality of betrayal reminds us that saints and martyrs are members of and representatives of a community. It is a community of which membership, once entered into, is self-defining and is expected to be lifelong. The community is a moral one: we are the good; they, our enemies, are the bad. Saints, heroes and martyrs embody that identity; the Judas rejects and denies it.⁶⁹ The traitor is the obverse of the martyr: the martyr suffers rather than deny the faith; the traitor benefits from the denial. A traitor like Judas is not simply a deserter: a single deserter, by leaving the army, does not lose the battle, a ship is not sunk by the rat which leaves it. Judas's betrayal led directly to the crucifixion and the corporal destruction of Christ. Medieval and later theologians who pointed out that only through Judas's betrayal could the crucifixion occur and humanity's redemption take place failed to mollify popular understandings of Judas's avarice, hypocrisy, wickedness and dangerousness.

Saints might be meek and mild but they were not innocents in the sense of people without a knowledge of evil, pain and suffering, though they were of course without sin. Victims of oppression have often been represented as innocents either actually (young children) or, by an extension which derives from chivalric teachings, young women. The elision from the meaning 'without knowledge' to 'without sin' and therefore one undeserving of unkindness or cruelty has been easy and appears to have frequently survived the insistence of Protestant doctrinaires on original sin.⁷⁰ It has been buttressed by the Christian practice of postponing a child's first confession until a relatively late age and thereby exempting the younger child from a requirement to perform penance, and by legal practices defining a minimum age of criminal responsibility or enjoining lighter punishment for juvenile perpetrators.⁷¹ Conceptions of innocence have thus supported an exceptional level of outrage at the deaths of

women and children, and indeed Bartlett has suggested that it was ‘the flow of innocent blood’ rather than the cause, as argued by St Augustine, that ‘was the most fruitful seed of martyr cult’ in the pre-Reformation period.⁷² In the modern era prominent examples include the outrage in Britain over the massacres of Greeks by Ottoman Turks during the Greek War of Independence; of Bulgarians by Ottoman troops in 1876; the bombing of Guernica in 1937; and, globally, by the famines in Biafra and Ethiopia in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; and the burning by napalm by South Vietnamese armed forces of nine-year-old Phan Thi Kim Phúc in 1972.

The central event in British outrage over the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) was the massacre at Scio, now Chios, in 1822. Edward Blaquiere, a British naval officer, radical and philhellene, wrote of ‘infants torn from their mothers’ breasts and flung into the sea, or dashed against the rocks’. The 1824 painting by Delacroix of *The Massacre at Chios* which caused a sensation on its first exhibition shows thirteen Greek men, women and children about to be slaughtered or enslaved.⁷³ Reporters, aware of what would move their audience, took care to specify the age and gender of the victims of the Bulgarian atrocities:

Skeletons of men with the clothing and flesh still hanging to and rotting together; skulls of women, with the hair dragged in the dust, bones of children and of infants everywhere.⁷⁴

Picasso’s *Guernica* features a woman grieving over a child dead in her arms.⁷⁵ Blunt called attention to similarities between the painting and the *Massacre of the Innocents* by Matteo di Giovanni of Siena (b. 1435, d. 1495), and to paintings of the same title by Guido Reni (1611) and Poussin (1625–1629).⁷⁶ In the 1970s, when *Guernica* hung in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, it became the site and subject of protest against the Vietnam War. A tapestry copy was exhibited at the United Nations (UN) building in New York from 1985 until 2003 at which point it was covered, possibly after pressure was exerted by the George W. Bush administration, then in the midst of its preparations for the invasion of Iraq.⁷⁷ A cross-community mural copy by Danny Devenney in collaboration with Mark Ervine was placed on the International Wall on the Falls Road for the Belfast festival in 2007.⁷⁸ During the Biafran War images of starving children were frequently

published by news organisations and aid agencies.⁷⁹ They have been less well remembered than the photograph by Nick Út of the Associated Press of the naked and burned nine-year-old Kim Phúc fleeing from a napalm attack on her village in Vietnam, which was published globally and awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1973.⁸⁰

Not only have the horrors suffered by women and children during war been emphasised but also those endured in mine, factory and sexual slavery. The author of the 1898 *White Slaves of England*, about the dangerous trades, not prostitution, wrote in a text imbued with chivalric feeling:

Could not something be done in this year of grace, in which the British Empire is preparing to celebrate the long life and glorious reign of a Sovereign Lady—Queen and Woman—to honour womanhood by rescuing from such nameless misery and degradation the thousands of that Lady's subjects, the thousands of women and girls who are oppressed because—being women—they are weak?⁸¹

The frontispiece of *White Slaves*, depicting Elizabeth Ryan who died in the Newcastle workhouse of acute lead poisoning at the age of 19, has been reproduced as the frontispiece of this book. Ryan was referred to by one of Sherard's informants as a 'poor lamb'.⁸² Those attending the funeral of a later 'massacre of the innocents', the bombing of a school in Lewisham during the Second World War in which 39 children were killed, were told by the Bishop of Southwark that the children 'were in a sense martyrs'.⁸³ In contrast to the 'martyrs', however, 'innocents' did not choose to face their tormentors devoid of defences; they were, in fact, defenceless. They were plural, or representative as Kim Phúc became; their ordinariness stood in contrast to the saints and heroes whose lives were singular and exceptional.

In the *New York Times* the photograph of Kim Phúc was printed above an article headed 'The Fire This Time', an allusion to the title of James Baldwin's 1963 *The Fire Next Time*, itself a quotation from the spiritual 'Oh Mary don't you weep' which, with its themes of liberation, had become popular with the US Civil Rights Movement. Its rendering of biblical stories of the Exodus included the lines 'God gave Noah the Rainbow Sign, | No more water but fire next time'.⁸⁴ Baldwin's argument in *The Fire Next Time* that Christianity had become corrupted and had come to support rather than challenge American racism, together

with his own earlier rejection of religion, makes his use of biblical references ambivalent and possibly ironic. It thus brings the history of biblical metaphor and its use in social conflict to a new point of complexity.

SOCIOLOGY

In 1967 Robert N. Bellah called attention to what he called, following Rousseau, the 'civil religion' of contemporary America.⁸⁵ Bellah conceived of religion as a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals, and of civil religion as 'the public religious dimension of American life'. It was exemplified by John F. Kennedy's oath of office in which he swore to uphold the constitution 'before Almighty God' and by his inaugural address. The beliefs Bellah referred to included a belief in and reverence for the Constitution and the tenets enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, and a belief in a biblical religion which spoke of God but not of Christ and was thus broad enough to be embraced by Jew, Christian, Catholic and Protestant. The symbols included the US flag and the Great Seal with its bald eagle carrying the scroll with its motto 'E pluribus unum'. The rituals ranged from the inauguration of the President to the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and the salutation of the flag by children in the public school system. This 'civil religion' was therefore religious in form but its religious content was limited, not least by the constitutional prohibition of any established religion.

American civil religion had its saints (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson) and its martyrs. The latter were initially creations of the Civil War which brought themes 'of death, sacrifice, and rebirth' into the religion.⁸⁶ The greatest of them was and is Abraham Lincoln. He has been joined by John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Although one could designate each of these as a 'people's martyr', in the USA these are possessions of the nation rather than of any subordinate group, whether Yankees, Catholics or blacks. The full symbolic power of the state is thus brought to bear on the nation to ensure their memory, their commemoration and their celebration. To give only a few examples: the Lincoln Memorial is sited on the National Mall in Washington DC, opposite the Washington Monument; the grave of John F. Kennedy is in Arlington National Cemetery, 'the most hallowed monument of the civil religion',⁸⁷ not, as was originally planned, in the family plot in Massachusetts, and is marked by an eternal flame; Martin Luther King Jr Day, celebrating King's birthday, was designated a federal holiday in

1983. Where a people's martyr is adopted by the state, as were the martyrs of the Easter Rising, we can see similarly powerful cultural mobilisations; in comparison, even the most active attempt to memorialise a people's martyr in Britain, that concerning Emily Davison, appears unsuccessful. There is no Davison Monument; her grave is near the family home in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin, in Morpeth in Northumberland, far from the monumental centres of the nation; there is no 'Davison Day'; her image does not appear on banknotes or postage stamps.

Persecution is a threat to any organisation subjected to it. It attacks the members of the organisation rather than the organisation itself; its adherents rather than its financial assets, its buildings, its printing presses or its radio stations. It may remove leaders, and it may demoralise followers. It presses the adherents, possibly beyond endurance; it may sow dissension among them as they argue over how far they should carry their resistance.⁸⁸ But by changing the harassment, exile, imprisonment or death of its adherents from simple injuries and deaths into martyrdoms, the organisation can hope to survive the persecution and even benefit from it. 'The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church', wrote Tertullian (*c.* AD 155–*c.* AD 240), and that martyrdom brought new recruits to the cause has been widely accepted ever since.⁸⁹ Research in modern Latin America suggests that Tertullian's view is by no means untenable.⁹⁰ How is this conversion of death into martyrdom achieved? When will it be successful and when will it fail? The conventional answers within the historiography of Christianity have been that the transformation required 'a community of believers' and that it was performed by the institutions of the Church,⁹¹ although some sociologists have emphasised the role of 'reputational entrepreneurs' rather than institutional actors.⁹²

A sociological analysis of this process draws on a number of ideas from the sociology of ideologies, the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of the mass media, itself drawing on the ideas of pre-sociological writers on rhetoric.⁹³ Many of these ideas have now resurfaced in the sociology of self, identity and memory.⁹⁴ Marx made an analogy between the products of the mind and the products of the factory, stating: 'The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production.'⁹⁵ To change the mental representation of a death into a martyrdom and to ensure its memory required means: networks of communication; places to preach

and people to preach to; printing presses to produce newspapers, pamphlets and books; artists and craftspeople to produce images in paint, mosaic, stained glass and stone, and engraved on wood, copper and steel. Durkheim and Foucault in different ways emphasised the social creation of knowledge, especially the 'taken for granted' knowledge embedded in the categories of everyday conversation, discussion and discourse.⁹⁶ The makers of martyrs were immeasurably helped by the creation of the term 'martyr' itself; without this there would have been only rebels, traitors, the possessed, the maddened, suicides and criminals.

To ensure the dissemination of the idea that the death was a martyrdom, the message and its medium had to have certain rhetorical characteristics: performance, spectacle, an appeal to the emotions perhaps mediated by oral, musical or graphical accounts rather than the merely inscribed, written or printed; perhaps making use of the devices of dirge, ballad and song rather than those of prose alone. Such is the role, among the people's martyrs, of Jim Connell's hymn: 'The people's flag is deepest red, | It shrouded off our martyred dead',⁹⁷ still sung at the end of the annual conference of the British Labour Party and still the official anthem of the Labour Party of Ireland and the Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland.

The message had to be repeated indefinitely, usually by the institution of an anniversary, and set in memory by use of spectacle, ritual and ceremony.⁹⁸ The message, of course, had to be an attractive one and a useful one. It was said that the death of the martyr was noble, glorious, courageous and heroic; those who followed the cause could lay claim to those qualities themselves. Conversely, the persecuting community or organisation was endowed with qualities which engendered anger, hatred, disgust and revulsion among the believers: injustice, lawlessness, cruelty, brutality, sadism and, indeed, inhumanity. Adherents, by claiming the martyr as one of their own, announced an identity. This identity, at least at first, was defined in opposition to another: Christian against Roman; Christian against Jew; Protestant against Catholic; people against rulers; communist against capitalist. The valuation of martyrdom among the believers devalued the punishment meted out by the persecutors and thereby diminished the power of the martyring institution. An apparent defeat, the death of the martyr, was transformed into victory.

Such analyses also indicate the strategies available to the persecuting authorities: confiscation and sequestration of assets; prosecution of aiders and abettors; censorship; the destruction of texts, records and archives;

iconoclasm; controls over the use of language, for example the permitted language for sacred texts and liturgies; counter-propaganda; the denial of spectacle by the use of secret courts, prisons, execution sites and the secret disposal of the corpse; the denial of anniversary and memorial by the control of the calendar, public symbols and public space. An understanding of such strategies goes back to ancient times. In AD 347 Maximian and Isaac, 'soldiers of Christ', were tortured and killed at Carthage. Their bodies were thrown into the sea so that their followers would be deprived of their relics and would have no burial place where a shrine could be built and their deaths memorialised. In this the persecutors showed a clear understanding of the practice of martyrdom and conversely demonstrated a clear practice of persecution. It was mere misfortune that a 'miracle' caused the bodies to be washed up on the shore.⁹⁹

The role of spectacle, emphasised in modern sociological treatments, has long been understood. The dispute between St Augustine of Hippo and the Donatists in the fourth century turned on the role of the body, that is, on corporeal suffering, in martyrdom. As we have seen, St Augustine formulated the maxim that it was the cause, not the suffering, that made the martyr. In his own sermons on the Psalms given on martyrs' feast days there are none of 'those naked, raked, burned, flayed and crushed bodies so pruriently present in the pornographic *imaginaire* of earlier martyrologies'.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the role of bodily suffering in the making of a martyr is impossible to dismiss. The spectacle of the martyr's travails in prison, in fire or on the scaffold can become rooted in memory:

There is a tradition that the crowd at [John] Wall's execution [during the time of the 'Popish Plot'] wept, even the sheriff, and that some cried out, 'Is this the way to destroy popery? This is enough to make us all papists!'¹⁰¹

NOTES

1. Kenneth Morgan (1987), *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales, 1880-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 147.
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The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs, 1819 to the Present

Joseph Cozens

On 16 August 1819 an unarmed crowd, which had formed on St Peter's Fields in Manchester to discuss political reform and an extension of the franchise, was brutally dispersed by sabre-wielding mounted yeomanry, backed by regular troops, operating under the command of Manchester's magistracy. Twelve civilian fatalities resulted from the actions of the military, a figure which included the deaths of two special constables, an indication of both the indiscriminate ferocity of the assault and the chaos which ensued. A further 600 individuals were recorded as being seriously wounded, many of them women and children, the majority sustaining injury from the weapons of the cavalry and the hooves of their horses.¹ The research of Michael Bush has found three further 'disputable' fatalities, as well as two individuals shot during protests on the evening of the demonstration, bringing the death toll to seventeen.² In addition, the intended keynote speaker, Henry 'Orator' Hunt, was arrested and subsequently imprisoned, along with a number of radical leaders present on the hustings. The incident was quickly dubbed the 'Peterloo Massacre' in ironic reference to the British victory at Waterloo (1815).

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Many of those who bled on the field of Peterloo did so while protecting the flags and caps of liberty which they had laboured over and which they had carried with them, as symbols of democracy, on their long march from Manchester's satellite towns.³ The mottos inscribed on these flags included 'Liberty, Strength, Unity' and 'Equal Representation or Death'. As the yeomanry approached the hustings to arrest Hunt, the crowd was seen to 'link arms' and to 'form a solid body', in order to defend their leaders and to safeguard the many banners mounted upon the stage.⁴ Edmund Dawson lost his life defending a cap of liberty, made in his hometown of Saddleworth, while Mary Hays and two-year-old William Fildes were killed in the crush which resulted from the attempts of the cavalry to cut down and 'demolish' the flag-staves of the radicals.⁵ The narrative of the massacre is thus laden with the tropes of secular martyrdom identified by this volume. Cruel state persecution, suffering innocents and the heroism of the standard-bearers of liberty are all on offer.⁶ A strong case can be made that those individuals hurt and killed on St Peter's Fields should be considered 'political martyrs', and there is much to be said for Kenneth Owen Morgan's assessment of Peterloo as the foundation stone upon which a 'martyrology of the people' was subsequently built.⁷

One hundred years after the massacre, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) hosted a series of events to commemorate the centenary of Peterloo. In Manchester in 1919 the language of political martyrdom was forcefully articulated by the Quaker, conscientious objector and labour leader James Hindle Hudson. Hudson chaired a centenary event at the Free Trade Hall, a building positioned on the erstwhile site of the Peterloo hustings, and he penned an accompanying newspaper article entitled 'Peterloo: The Baptismal Hour of the Labour Movement and What We Owe to the Manchester Martyrs'. 'Out of the sacrifice of the Manchester martyrs', Hudson argued, 'was born the full possibility for the people to rule their rulers, and to sweep their oppressors away ... by the use of the power of the vote.'⁸ Hudson's reverence for the sacrifice at St Peter's Fields was echoed by speeches at a mass meeting in Platt Fields. Here the speakers, Ben Turner and Tom Mann, called on the crowd to 'Remember Peterloo', to remember the 'fights for freedom' of their forefathers and to continue their good work by establishing socialism.⁹ For the socialists of 1919, the blood of the Peterloo martyrs was the seed of the labour movement. Yet the ILP were not the first left-wing group to claim the memory of the Peterloo martyrs as their political 'heritage', and neither would they be the last.¹⁰

This chapter seeks to trace the language of political martyrdom connected with Peterloo from the aftermath of the massacre to the present day. It seeks to build upon the work of Terry Wyke, who has found that the memory of the Peterloo Massacre ‘waxed and waned’ over time.¹¹ It will be argued here that Peterloo was most forcefully recalled at moments of class conflict, particularly when contemporary debates about electoral reform, or the policing of protest, were in contention. It will be demonstrated that radicals at the time of Peterloo constructed both a martyrology and a demonology associated with the massacre. Strands of this powerful radical memory were adopted and perpetuated by British Chartist, Liberal and socialist traditions. However, the ‘canonisation’ of the Peterloo martyrs was never universally upheld. Conservatives have fiercely denied the suffering and downplayed the significance of the Peterloo Massacre. This tension has tainted and frustrated attempts at official civic commemoration in Manchester from the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. More recently, social historians, influenced by the work of Edward Thompson, have raised the profile of Peterloo once more. The allusion in this chapter’s title, to the ‘making’ of the Peterloo martyrs, is both an homage to Thompson’s important contribution to the history of the massacre, and a signifier that public recognition for the Peterloo demonstrators has yet to be fully realised. This is therefore an investigation into an ‘active’ and ongoing process.¹²

THE AFTERMATH OF PETERLOO

News of Peterloo spread quickly round the country due to the presence on the hustings of John Tyas, a reporter from *The Times*, whose lengthy and condemnatory account was published on 19 August.¹³ The initial reaction of the reformers was one of massive indignation against the Manchester authorities. However, their outrage was temporarily soothed by the overwhelming wave of moral support and public sympathy exhibited for the slain.¹⁴ Very quickly, public subscriptions were opened in Manchester to provide for the casualties of Peterloo.¹⁵ These charitable donations were collected and redistributed by the ‘Committee for the Relief of the Manchester Sufferers’, an organisation founded by reform-minded manufacturers outraged by the massacre. The Relief Committee took it upon themselves to investigate the true extent of the bloodshed at Peterloo and to circulate their findings in the press. Their identification of ‘more than six hundred’ casualties and at least eleven dead was

a shocking revelation which bound together reformers of all classes.¹⁶ The prominence of women and children on the casualty list was a further grievance, which was powerfully reinforced in contemporary caricatures, most notably those produced by the successful partnership of William Hone and George Cruikshank.¹⁷ Sympathetic newspaper reportage and popular caricatures combined with the activities of the Relief Committee in the Autumn of 1819 to produce an image of ‘suffering innocents’ in desperate need of assistance.

Compassion for the ‘Manchester sufferers’ was particularly pronounced in the North of the country. The commander of the Northern military district, John Byng, noted that ‘the business at Manchester’ had caused ‘a great sensation’ throughout his jurisdiction.¹⁸ Between August and November 1819 massive solidarity demonstrations were held across the breadth of the North (see Fig. 2.1). Two of the largest demonstrations took place on Hunslet Moor outside Leeds and on Newcastle Town Moor. At Leeds, 40,000 working people arrived at the Moor wearing black ribbons, while at Newcastle 25,000 marched in ‘divisions’ carrying white rods topped with black crepe.¹⁹ At many similar public demonstrations the symbols of public mourning were on display and charitable donations for the Manchester relief fund were collected. Yet there was also a deeper political message. One flag at Newcastle was dedicated ‘to the immortal memory of the reformers massacred at Manchester’, suggesting a political martyrology was already forming around Peterloo.²⁰ Furthermore, at both Newcastle and Leeds, flags called for ‘truth and justice’ for those ‘murdered’ in the massacre.²¹ The Northern solidarity meetings were therefore primarily intended to place pressure on the government to launch an inquiry into Peterloo and to bring prosecutions against the Manchester Bench, who were perceived to have overstepped the bounds of their authority.

However, ‘justice’ for the ‘Manchester sufferers’ was never to be realised. The government refused to bow to pressure in the Commons for a parliamentary inquiry and private prosecutions brought by radicals against individual members of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry were rejected by the judiciary at Warrington.²² Even the coroner’s inquest, summoned to inquire into the death of John Lees, who was widely known to have received fatal sabre wounds at Peterloo, was dissolved before reaching a verdict on whether his death was lawful.²³ As the winter of 1819 approached, radicals increasingly felt that the ‘doors of justice have been shut against us’.²⁴ This sensation was compounded



Fig. 2.1 The demonstration at Newcastle Town Moor in October 1819 was one of many solidarity meetings held in the aftermath of Peterloo. *Source* Archibald Dick (1819), *A View Of The Meeting Held On The Town Moor, Newcastle, 11 October 1819* (Newcastle: Archibald Dick)

by the passage of the notorious Six Acts in November 1819. The new legislation banned the carrying of flags and banners, restricted the right of public meeting and empowered the Home Office and local magistrates to stifle the circulation of cheap newspapers.²⁵ Many of the principal outlets of the post-war reform movement were thus sealed off by the Six Acts.

Incensed by the outrage of Peterloo, and frustrated by the government's intransigence, radical rhetoric was ramped up in the aftermath of the massacre. The veteran radical John Gale Jones wrote of Peterloo as an 'unavenged massacre of defenceless men', while the publisher and journalist Richard Carlile proclaimed himself ready to defy the new

legislation and face ‘*martyrdom*, in the cause of liberty’.²⁶ Indeed, after the passage of the Six Acts, several ultra-radical groups moved beyond words and towards insurrectionary plots. Malcolm Chase has shown that the Cato Street conspirators were animated by Peterloo.²⁷ Certainly, Arthur Thistlewood, John Thomas Brunt and James Ings all referred to Peterloo in their defence pleas. They argued the state had been guilty of treason against the people when it drew blood at Manchester. The Cato Street plot, to execute the Cabinet and capture the capital, was therefore partly intended as an act of retribution against a tyrannical government.²⁸

Furthermore, outrage at Peterloo galvanised other conspiratorial plots evident in Britain at this time. In April 1820, as the Cato Street conspirators awaited execution in Newgate Prison, radicals in West Yorkshire and Western Scotland were embarking upon a campaign of insurgency. Donnelly argues that the failed ‘Easter rising’ was coordinated on both sides of the Scottish border by radical weavers facing the shared fate of economic depression and mounting political persecution.²⁹ The radicals John Baird and Andrew Hardie, captured in arms on Bonnymuir, were executed as traitors. Assisted by the ambiguity of their political aims, the two men gradually became known as the ‘Scottish martyrs’, figure-heads for both radical reform and nationalist movements in Scotland.³⁰ The political motives of their counterparts in Yorkshire are even more obscure. We know that two separate armed descents upon Huddersfield were hastily aborted, and that mass arrests and the confiscation of weaponry followed.³¹ However, on Grange Moor, where soldiers carried off ‘a hundred arms’, a ‘green flag edged with black fringe’ was also found. The flag bore the motto ‘He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death’.³² The sorrowful visual symbolism and biblical reference were similar to those found on flags carried by radicals during the Northern solidarity marches of winter 1819.³³ Moreover, the quotation from Exodus strongly suggests that the slaughter at Peterloo had roused the Yorkshire radicals to seek out rough justice.

In the aftermath of Peterloo, the memory of the massacre plainly had the power to inspire revolutionary activity. However, it must be acknowledged that the men involved in Cato Street and the Easter rising were on the fringes of a much broader radical movement.³⁴ Much closer to its core was Henry Hunt. After a long delay, Hunt was convicted at York Assizes for ‘unlawful assembly’ in March 1820 along with his co-accused, Joseph Johnson, John Knight, Joseph Healey and Samuel Bamford.³⁵ Historians have tended to criticize Hunt for his vanity and

for his inclination to overemphasise his personal sufferings in the cause of liberty.³⁶ He certainly made great political capital from the violence of his arrest in Manchester, the long ‘eleven-day’ trial he endured at York and the terrible living conditions he encountered in Ilchester Gaol. Hunt publicised his escape from ‘military execution’ at Peterloo as a ‘miracle’, and he likened his prison, which was prone to flooding, to an ‘Old Hulk’.³⁷ Those friends who made the pilgrimage to visit ‘Saint Henry’ of ‘Ilchester Bastille’ were even awarded mock knighthoods by the orator.³⁸ In Hunt’s memoirs and prison writings, we can certainly detect humour, hyperbole and egotism in equal measure.

Nevertheless, Hunt played a central role in turning Peterloo into a people’s martyrology. The great radical orator was the first to explicitly apply a language of martyrdom to the memory of Peterloo.³⁹ In his open letters from Ilchester Gaol, Hunt encouraged his radical followers to honour the graves of the ‘murdered Martyrs of Reform’ and to point out St Peter’s Fields to their children, as ‘that *Golgotha* of the present system of terror and misrule’.⁴⁰ Moreover, it was with Hunt’s blessing that the Lancashire radicals established an annual commemoration of Peterloo on the ‘never-to-be-forgotten’ 16 August.⁴¹ In addition to popularising the Peterloo martyrs, Hunt was equally committed to campaigning for justice on their behalf. In 1821 his first petition to Parliament on the matter was presented, and a decade later, as an MP for Preston, Hunt made further unsuccessful attempts to obtain a parliamentary inquiry.⁴² ‘Saint Henry’ undoubtedly gained personally and politically from his association with Peterloo. However, Hunt was a firm advocate for parliamentary reform, for the principle of an inquiry into Peterloo, and he did much to shape the nineteenth-century memory of the massacre.

THE PETERLOO MARTYRS IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the generation after Peterloo, the Chartists nurtured an attachment to Henry Hunt and the Peterloo martyrs. The Chartist leader Feargus O’Connor idealised Hunt for his heroic connection with Peterloo and for his firm rejection of piecemeal political reform. Hunt had always scoffed at the notion of a ‘shopkeeper franchise’ and had firmly rejected the terms of the 1832 Reform Act.⁴³ At the same time, the violent dispersal of the Peterloo meeting was recalled by O’Connor as ‘the great scene of the century’, a key battle in the ongoing struggle for the working-class

vote.⁴⁴ As Paul Pickering has shown, many Mancunian survivors of the massacre went on to become active campaigners for the People's Charter. Peterloo 'veterans' James and Nancy Wheeler, for example, both bore the scars of the yeomanry's sabres, and both were energetic Chartists in Manchester. These individuals represented 'flesh and blood links' with the past who demonstrated the prominence of Peterloo within the genealogy of Chartism.⁴⁵ However, even those who had not been present at Peterloo could still be greatly influenced by the events of 16 August 1819. William Mickle, for example, converted to political radicalism while attending the Newcastle Town Moor solidarity meeting of November 1819. Mickle went on to be an active Chartist campaigner and his obituary made clear that his 'political character' had been forged in the 'white heat' of the post-Peterloo agitations.⁴⁶ The recent memory of Peterloo thus featured prominently within Northern Chartist psychology.

Certainly, much Chartist ceremonial in Lancashire was constructed around the memory of the Peterloo Massacre. Mass political meetings were held in Manchester on 16 August so that local Chartists could continue the tradition of observing the Peterloo anniversary. Although many of the radical flags carried in August 1819 were destroyed, or were confiscated under the terms of the Six Acts, those which did survive were cherished as 'sacred relics'. Chance survivals, such as the Middleton banner of 1819, would feature prominently in local Chartist rallies, while many new banners were stitched with slogans which reasserted the importance of Peterloo.⁴⁷ Similarly, in Ashton-under-Lyne, the Peterloo veterans John and Nancy Clayton hosted a radical dinner in honour of Peterloo on the anniversary of Hunt's birthday in 1838. Songs about Peterloo were sung, a 'splendid painting of the massacre' decorated the room and the names of the 'killed and wounded' were read aloud by Samuel Walker, the son of a Peterloo survivor.⁴⁸ In addition, the Manchester Chartists paid for and erected a monument to Hunt in the burial ground of James Scholefield's 'Roundhouse' chapel.⁴⁹ On Good Friday 1842, Feargus O'Connor ceremoniously laid an account of the Peterloo Massacre beneath its foundation stone and, a decade later, James Wheeler was buried in the 'Patriot's Vault' which lay under Hunt's obelisk.⁵⁰ As Roberts has suggested, Chartist ceremonial often foregrounded gentlemanly radical heroes such as Hunt.⁵¹ However, it is important to acknowledge that there was also room, in Lancashire at least, for commemorating the contribution of more plebeian radicals, such as Wheeler and the Peterloo martyrs.

The Chartists were eager to construct a radical martyrology in order to add weight to their own political struggles by placing them within a broader historical continuum.⁵² Contemporary political persecution ensured that new names were added to the growing list of ‘incarcerated Charter martyrs’, particularly in the fraught periods of 1839–1842 and 1848.⁵³ At these moments, the Chartists sought to dramatise and connect their collective suffering with that of the past. Imprisoned Chartist leaders such as O’Connor, Lovett, M’Douall and Collins were all regarded as ‘martyrs’ and their spiritual genealogy was often traced back to earlier radical heroes, such as Robert Emmett, John Hampden and Algernon Sidney. It was argued that there was a ‘cord that binds and links’ the Chartist heroes of the present ‘to the martyred many’ of the past.⁵⁴ The Peterloo martyrs were emphatically part of this pantheon. Particularly at moments when the rights of free speech and public assembly were threatened by government repression, as they were in both 1839 and 1848, the memory of Peterloo was invoked by Chartist writers.⁵⁵ In addition, Henry Hunt, the one-time political prisoner, provided the model on which Feargus O’Connor self-consciously based his own democratic identity as the ‘caged lion of freedom’.⁵⁶ Moreover, Hunt’s reification of the Peterloo victims as the ‘murdered martyrs of reform’ mirrored the contemporary Chartist perception that they themselves were a wrongfully persecuted political group. Unsurprisingly, O’Connor urged that the story of Peterloo should be handed down from ‘sire to son throughout history’.⁵⁷

In the mid-nineteenth century, as Roberts has demonstrated, many working-class radicals, including former Chartists, entered into a political coalition with middle-class supporters of the Liberal Party. Together these groupings worked for franchise reform while retaining their distinctive identities and political agendas.⁵⁸ This fragile alliance allowed mid-century Liberals to claim Peterloo as part of their political lineage. In the 1850s, for example, the radical-Liberal *Ashton Reporter* asserted that the people of Manchester were ‘sabred down’ in 1819 for holding ‘liberal views’.⁵⁹ Similarly, Liberal groups drew on the Peterloo martyrs to highlight the long tradition of reformism in Manchester. In June 1867 thirty ‘Peterloo survivors’ wearing Reform Union rosettes were placed in carriages at the head of a ‘United Reform procession’ in that city. The four carriages were adorned with banners which celebrated the veteran campaigners as the ‘heroes of Peterloo’ and ‘the Fathers of Reform’. The demonstration itself was intended as a celebration of the partial political

success of the Second Reform Act, and was organised by both the middle-class Reform Union and the working-class Reform League.⁶⁰ The latter group insisted that the Second Reform Bill did not go far enough but was nevertheless a welcome step toward universal suffrage and the secret ballot.⁶¹ Similarly, in September 1884, when Peers in the House of Lords were attempting to block the passage of the Third Reform Bill, John Moores, a 'sturdy radical Reformer', organised the photographing of eleven elderly Peterloo veterans outside the Failsworth Liberal Club. The average age of the men and women was 81, and they were posed in front of flags from 1819, Chartist pikes and contemporary Liberal banners.⁶² The photograph reinforced the message of the reform demonstration held in Failsworth on the same day. Speakers at Ridgefield Ground declared that local working people had waited 'quite long enough for the possession of a vote'.⁶³ Thus the veterans and martyrs of Peterloo could be used to press home the radical-Liberal agenda of franchise reform.

Even moderate Liberals recognised Peterloo as a significant historical turning point. Archibald Prentice, the journalist and free-trader, argued that Peterloo opened the eyes of the middle classes to the plight of the poor and convinced them of the need for political change. For Prentice, Peterloo represented 'the breaking up of a great frost'.⁶⁴ Likewise, for the local historian W.E.A. Axon Peterloo 'united the Reformers of all classes' and 'may be regarded as the starting point of the modern Reform agitation'.⁶⁵ Much later in the century E.T. Craig, a cooperator who witnessed Peterloo in his youth, concluded that, 'from a moral point of view', the effect of Peterloo was transformative. The massacre 'revolutionised thought' in Manchester and shifted the political centre of gravity away from 'bigoted Toryism' towards 'Liberalism'.⁶⁶ However, within this teleology, moderate Liberals sought to distance themselves from the tactics of the post-war reform movement. The radicals of 1819, along with the Chartists, were said to belong to a bygone 'martyr age of Reform' which was important but separate from the gradual social and political improvements of the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

In line with this thinking, the Peterloo martyr most consistently celebrated by moderate Liberals was Samuel Bamford. In his autobiography, Bamford underscored his role as leader of the Middleton radicals in 1819 and emphasised his many sacrifices, including the year he spent imprisoned in Lincoln Castle. However, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* also excised all traces of Bamford's youthful revolutionary spirit in a fashion which chimed with mid-century Liberal ideals.⁶⁸ For example,

in his concluding chapter (dated 17 July 1842), Bamford rejected the confrontational tactic of Peterloo-style monster meetings adopted by the followers of O'Connor, and instead advocated gradual political change by 'peaceful means'.⁶⁹ Although Bamford often complained of neglect in his old age, at his death in 1872 the Liberals of Middleton ensured he was immortalised with a lavish funeral and a towering obelisk.⁷⁰ In funeral speeches and obituaries Bamford was praised as a 'steady advocate of peace' and a tireless reformer. Several Liberal commentators suggested that within Bamford's moderate radicalism were the seeds of Liberalism.⁷¹ Hence nineteenth-century Liberals, rather like Samuel Bamford, had a selective memory of the Peterloo Massacre. Moderate Liberals often chose to remember Bamford rather than Hunt, and they glossed over some of the more forthright and class-conscious claims made by English radicals at the time of Peterloo.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the few surviving Peterloo veterans, such as E.T. Craig, passed away.⁷² At the same time, an upsurge in independent labour politics was evident. Although the socialists were primarily focused upon contemporary international events, they also felt a pressing duty to preserve the memory of the Peterloo Massacre among British workers.⁷³ At the centenary of Peterloo, socialist writers and orators compared industrial and social conditions at the time of the massacre with the volatile post-war politics of 1919.⁷⁴ In both periods, workers were said to be suffering the effects of large-scale demobilisation, unemployment and war debt.⁷⁵ However, it was argued that the 'sacrifice' of the Peterloo 'martyrs' had endowed workers with the vote, and bound them to return ILP candidates, such as James Hindle Hudson:

Like spirits from the bloody ground of Peter Street, a people of a dead and gone past beckons [us] on, to make their hope a living reality.⁷⁶

By contrast, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) avoided the religious intonation of the language of political martyrdom. Nevertheless, Peterloo could still be used by communists to demonstrate the 'courage and powers of endurance of the British working class'. For the CPGB, the heroism of the worker, seen at Peterloo and more recently during the General Strike (1926), was a demonstration of the potential of organised labour to forcefully overthrow capitalism.⁷⁷ Thus, socialists and communists shared a sense that the seeds of capitalism's

demise were present at the Peterloo Massacre, and both sought to trace a connection between the early twentieth-century labour movement and the ‘massacred workers’ of 1819.⁷⁸

In addition, the narrative of Peterloo was appealing to socialist and communist groups as an encapsulation of the *nature* of the struggle between capital and labour. A CPGB tract from 1928 argued that Peterloo was ‘one of the most instructive episodes’ in British history.⁷⁹ Hence Peterloo often appeared in material intended for the edification of workers and their children. Hudson produced a narrative of Peterloo for the centenary which was financially backed by the ILP and trade union groups, but which was also supported by Socialist Sunday Schools. In both his pamphlet and a similar edition, produced by founder-member of the Bradford ILP Councillor Glyde, the ‘lesson’ which was to be learned from Peterloo was that ‘Capitalism is prepared to kill without mercy’.⁸⁰ So simple and forceful was this message that Peterloo was a recurring feature of the CPGB’s educational materials from the 1920s until at least 1969. Here again, the ‘ruthless character of the ruling class’ was the principal ‘lesson’ to be drawn from Peterloo.⁸¹ From these few examples, it is clear that, in tandem with the ‘martyrology’ surrounding Peterloo, an equally enduring ‘demonology’ was constructed by the left.

THE DEMONOLOGY OF PETERLOO

From its very inception, the radical martyrology constructed around Peterloo was intended to plague those responsible for the massacre with the memory of their misdeeds. Chief targets for attack were Deputy Constable Joseph Nadin, the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry and the Manchester Bench. Thomas Wooler argued that by commemorating the Peterloo anniversary, ‘the spectre of the dead will haunt ... [every] wretched being who has raised his sword against his fellow-man’. According to Wooler’s prediction, every member of the Yeomanry would see ‘the spectre of John Lees at his elbow, and shudder’.⁸² In the case of the commander of the yeomanry at Peterloo, Hugh Hornby Birley, Wooler was proved correct. Birley belonged to a wealthy Manchester cotton family. Yet despite his social status, and his exoneration from legal wrongdoing by a jury in 1822, Gatrell argues that Birley’s political career in the town was ‘hamstrung’ by his connection to Peterloo.⁸³ Likewise, in his business concerns Birley was a marked man. A straw effigy of Birley was burned in Manchester during the Reform Agitation of 1831 and in

1842, during the ‘plug riots’, his cotton mills were singled out for attack by striking workers.⁸⁴ Moreover, given that the men of Major Birley’s Manchester and Salford Yeomanry were known to have sharpened their swords in preparation for Peterloo, the entire corps was often portrayed as drunken and vindictive.⁸⁵

Joseph Nadin was similarly tainted by his association with the massacre. Nadin was forever remembered as a ‘second edition of Jonathan Wild’, a self-interested and corrupt officer, who had helped engineer the massacre out of personal spite.⁸⁶ Nadin was immortalised in the novel *The Manchester Man*, in which Mrs Linnaeus Banks pens him as an unscrupulous tyrant.⁸⁷ The reputations of the two clerical Justices of the Peace on the magistrates’ committee of 1819, Reverend W.R. Hay and Charles Ethelstone, fared equally poorly. Ethelstone had inaudibly read the Riot Act on the day of the Peterloo demonstration and was subsequently ridiculed in radical poetry and visual satire for his ineptitude,⁸⁸ while his brother magistrate, Reverend Hay, was condemned as a drunken placeman lacking in empathy for the poor weavers of Lancashire.⁸⁹ Hay’s social distance was further emphasised by his appointment in 1820 as vicar for Rochdale, one of the richest parishes in the country.⁹⁰ Eugenio Biagini argues that, because of their conspicuous role at Peterloo, the clerical magistracy was popularly associated with judicial severity, even in the milder climate of mid- and late Victorian society.⁹¹

Nevertheless, Hay and Ethelstone were relatively minor figures within the demonology of Peterloo when compared with William Hulton, chairman of the magistrates’ committee in 1819. Nineteenth-century Liberal historians have often accused Hulton and his brother magistrates of incompetence in their handling of the St Peter’s Fields demonstration.⁹² Yet both Richard Carlile and Henry Hunt went so far as to claim that Hulton acted on a ‘prearranged’ plan of ‘murder’. Moreover, premeditation on the part of the magistrates’ committee has been taken seriously by left-wing writers ever since.⁹³ The force of radical claims against Hulton were enhanced by his own stance of unbending righteousness. Hulton firmly believed his orders to the cavalry were proportionate and fully justified by the latent threat of revolution in Manchester.⁹⁴ In his correspondence with Lord Althorp, which circulated widely in the press, Hulton claimed that he had ‘saved’ Manchester in 1819 from the fate which befell Bristol during the ‘Reform riots’ of 1831.⁹⁵ It was this forthright attitude which reinvigorated the personal

attacks on Hulton in the radical press of the 1830s and encouraged Liberal historians to lay the blame for the massacre at the feet of the overzealous Manchester Bench.⁹⁶ In Lancashire at least, the name of 'parson Hulton' was reviled by the poor well into the nineteenth century. A decade after the death of Manchester's chief magistrate his grandson, W.W.B. Hulton, was heckled while on the hustings in Bolton with the cry of 'what about Peterloo?'⁹⁷

Indeed, party politics were intrinsic to the vitality of the Peterloo demonology. The Manchester Bench of 1819 was composed of High-Anglican Tory magistrates. Likewise, the government of the day was a Tory ministry. When the Prince Regent and his ministers sent a letter of thanks to the Manchester magistrates and military in late August 1819, despite the growing public outcry, they became accomplices to the deed and were demonised accordingly in radical satire. Works by Hone and Cruikshank portrayed the Regent as a carefree 'dandy' at the apex of 'Old Corruption', while Shelley's revolutionary poetry immortalised the Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Castlereagh, as the personification of 'Murder'.⁹⁸ Certainly, for Thomas Wooler, Peterloo represented a hellish 'plot of the administration'.⁹⁹ The Chartists also asserted that the massacre was deliberately engineered by the government, and this belief begins to explain why Chartist leaders were so apprehensive that their rallies might become the scene of a 'second Peterloo'.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Liberal commentators have severely indicted Home Secretary Sidmouth for his role in Peterloo. Henry Lorenzo Jephson, a member of the Liberal Progressive Party, argued that Sidmouth sought to provoke a disturbance and that a violent clash at Manchester was therefore 'inevitable'.¹⁰¹

Certainly, Liberals were keen to use Peterloo as a stick with which to beat their political rivals. For Liberal historians, Peterloo could have been avoided had it not been for the 'blind opposition' of the Tory Party to all calls for political change.¹⁰² Dicey, for example, looked back on the 'narrow mindedness' and 'reactionary' nature of politics under Castlereagh and argued that this was a period of Tory misgovernment.¹⁰³ As such, the memory of Peterloo could be used by Liberals at election time as a powerful political weapon. In 1868 a Liberal election pamphlet in opposition to the candidacy of Hugh Birley, the nephew of Captain Hugh Hornby Birley of the Manchester Yeomanry, referred to Peterloo as 'an everlasting monument to Tory tyranny and rule, as black

as it is bloody'.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, at a by-election in 1872 Liberal candidate Nathaniel Massey referred to the 'Manchester massacre' as an 'an illustration of the way in which the Tory Party had governed the country'. As part of an impassioned speech from the hustings, Massey claimed the 'blood of those ... English men and women fell like the blood of Abel to the earth and cried aloud to heaven for vengeance'.¹⁰⁵ Massey's electoral triumph over the Tory candidate, J.W. Walrond, suggests that Liberal politicians could make considerable political capital from Peterloo by claiming that the Tories bore responsibility and by warning voters that a Tory ministry meant an 'iron government'.¹⁰⁶

The link between the Tory Party and state violence was particularly pronounced in 1887. In that year, the Conservative government of Lord Salisbury was held responsible for both the Mitchelstown shootings in County Cork and the violent dispersal of protestors from Trafalgar Square. William Gladstone, while on the opposition benches of the Commons, denounced the 'Mitchelstown Massacre', in which three Irishmen were shot dead by police constables, as an outrage which had no modern parallel, except at Peterloo.¹⁰⁷ Liberal journalists sympathetic to Home Rule extended Gladstone's argument by branding Mitchelstown the 'Irish Peterloo' and by asserting that 'Toryism was unchanged' from the days of 1819.¹⁰⁸ This accusation was compounded by the 'Bloody Sunday' affair. On 13 November 1887 police used baton charges to disperse a Social Democratic Federation meeting at Trafalgar Square, and further police violence the following weekend resulted in the death of two Londoners, Alfred Linnell and John Dimmick.¹⁰⁹ The Socialists organised a vast public funeral for Linnell, who was claimed by the left as the first English 'political martyr since Peterloo'.¹¹⁰ William Morris composed a 'death march' in Linnell's honour, while the radical-liberal newspaper the *Pall Mall Gazette* published details of Linnell's 'brutal' treatment by police alongside E.T. Craig's recollections of the Peterloo Massacre.¹¹¹ For the Socialists, the 'Tory Government' bore responsibility for Peterloo and Bloody Sunday, and both events represented unwarranted attacks by the Executive upon the rights of public meeting and free speech.¹¹² The response to Mitchelstown and Bloody Sunday illustrates how the martyrology and demonology of Peterloo was made and remade at moments of heightened class tension when the question of public order was at the forefront of public debate.

CONTROVERSY AND COMMEMORATION

The nineteenth-century demonology associated with Peterloo did not go unchallenged. Conservative writers and politicians responded to Liberal and socialist interpretations with their own extremely consistent narrative. Firstly, nineteenth-century conservative histories argued for the illegality of the Manchester reform demonstration by highlighting the nocturnal drilling which preceded Peterloo, the throwing of stones alleged to have taken place on the day of the meeting and the outcome of court proceedings following the massacre.¹¹³ Secondly, conservative accounts play down the numbers killed and wounded. At the time of his retirement in 1831, for example, William Hulton claimed that only two individuals had died at Peterloo. According to Hulton's version of events, one woman dressed as the 'Goddess of Reason' was trampled to death in the crowd; the other [was] a special constable', mistakenly killed by the 15th Hussars.¹¹⁴ Subsequent conservative histories followed Hulton's lead and argued that 'two or three', or perhaps 'several', individuals lost their lives.¹¹⁵ Thirdly, on the basis of the low casualty rate and the perceived illegality of the Huntite meeting, nineteenth-century conservative histories contested the very notion of a 'massacre' and claimed the phrase was 'grossly misapplied'.¹¹⁶

This counter-narrative was forcefully maintained well into the twentieth century. In 1958 Donald Read, conscious of the conservative argument, was cautious of applying the language of 'massacre' to Peterloo and argued that the affair was 'never desired or precipitated by the Liverpool Ministry as a bloody repressive gesture for keeping down the lower orders'.¹¹⁷ Biographical studies of Tory politicians have followed a similar line of argument. Norman Gash, for example, writes that Peterloo was 'hardly a massacre' and was more of a 'blunder' on the part of the magistrates, who failed to follow Home Office policy, but who 'acted in good faith'.¹¹⁸ Liverpool, Sidmouth and Castlereagh have all been cleared of 'personal responsibility' for the events of 16 August by their respective biographers.¹¹⁹ Likewise, Robert Walmsley, a Mancunian antiquarian and descendant of magistrate William Hulton, wrote an extended defence of the Manchester magistracy and yeomanry in *Peterloo: The Case Re-Opened* (1969). For Walmsley, Peterloo was a tragic and unintended contest, but one in which the crowd were the first aggressors.

The discordant juxtaposition of the radical-liberal and conservative interpretations of 16 August 1819 frustrated the attempts of local Liberals to publicly commemorate the Peterloo martyrs. When Samuel Bamford died in 1872, for example, his Liberal friends in Middleton discussed building a memorial to him on the site of Peterloo, 'but this did not meet with much favour, as it was argued that such a proceeding would have the effect of keeping an old sore green'.¹²⁰ This tension may also explain why the epitaph on Bamford's obelisk in Middleton cemetery makes no mention of Peterloo.¹²¹ Further difficulties arose in 1877 when the artists Ford Madox Brown and Frederic Shields were commissioned to produce twelve frescoes for the interior of Manchester Town Hall. Both painters, attracted to the epic drama of Peterloo, were 'strongly in favour' of depicting the massacre in one of the murals.¹²² However, 'soreness' on the part of 'conservatives' over the Peterloo mural threatened to derail the larger civic project, and the artists were banned from including the subject in the interest of maintaining political consensus.¹²³ A decade later, even the Chartist monument to Henry Hunt in Ancoats cemetery had fallen into disrepair. The structure was dismantled and the stone sold off in 1888.¹²⁴ Several notable Liberals rallied to have a new monument erected near to the site of Peterloo, in time for the seventieth anniversary, but they could not raise the requisite £250.¹²⁵ The lukewarm support for reviving the Hunt monument in Manchester lends support to Biagini's claim that, after 1874, manhood suffrage was largely 'relegated to the margins of plebeian politics'.¹²⁶ However, the failure to bring public recognition to Peterloo in this period also speaks to the strength of conservative opposition in Manchester.

A considerable obstacle for Manchester's Liberals was their lack of electoral hegemony in the city. Hugh Birley was successfully returned as an MP in 1868 and was the first Conservative to be elected in Manchester since the Reform Act of 1832. The Conservatives retained at least one parliamentary seat in Manchester until the Liberal landslide of 1906, and they also polled respectably in municipal elections into the early decades of the twentieth century.¹²⁷ However, perhaps even more problematic than party politics is the element of class conflict inherent in the story of Peterloo. Powerful satirical prints from 1819 showed Manchester's shopkeeper yeomanry, under the cognisance of the magistracy and the government, slashing their sabres at poor weavers.¹²⁸

A recurrent interpretation of the Manchester massacre was as a community in a state of class war. The Chartists invoked this image, as did the CPGB, and subsequently Marxist historians. Despite the persuasiveness of this interpretation of the Peterloo Massacre, it is understandably a difficult memory for Manchester's governors, many of them drawn from the 'Liberal commercial community', to integrate into their civic identity.¹²⁹

The rise of the Labour Party to political dominance in Manchester from 1945 did little to diffuse local opposition to the commemoration of the massacre.¹³⁰ As late as 1972 the business owners of Peter Street unanimously opposed and successfully blocked Manchester City Council's attempts to rename their road 'Peterloo Street'. Objections were raised on the grounds that the street had originally taken its name from St Peter's Church, which was demolished in 1907. Other opponents, in line with revisionist historiography, questioned whether Peterloo really was a 'massacre' and hence whether commemoration was necessary.¹³¹ Defeated in their plans, Manchester's Labour councillors instead settled for placing a blue plaque on the exterior of the Free Trade Hall. However, this represented a further political compromise. The wording on the circular tablet described the mere 'dispersal of the crowd by the military', and made no mention of the fatalities which followed, nor did it expressly state that those assembled on St Peter's Fields were calling for parliamentary reform.¹³² This watered-down message was diluted further in 1997 with the conversion of the Free Trade Hall into the Raddison Edwardian Hotel. Still, inside the hotel today is an ugly and politically sterile oil painting of Peterloo, commissioned by Manchester City Council in 1951 as part of renovation work to repair wartime damage to the Free Trade Hall. Although the painting was a significant milestone in the commemoration of the massacre, the work by Arthur Sherwood Edwards failed to capture the dramatic violence of the massacre, and now hangs on a mezzanine floor, symbolically, out of public view.¹³³

Although a number of opportunities to memorialise the Peterloo martyrs were missed or thwarted in the mid- to late twentieth century, over the same period revisionist accounts of the Peterloo Massacre have come under considerable scrutiny. Edward Thompson's seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) represented the most significant intervention. For Thompson, Peterloo 'really was a massacre', in which the magistrates embarked on a prearranged plan to clear the St Peter's Field

meeting by force. Furthermore, Thompson argued that Home Secretary Sidmouth knew of, and assented to, the magistrate's intentions.¹³⁴ At the 150th anniversary in 1969, a year in which British troops were out on the streets of Belfast, there was a 'resurgence' of interest in Peterloo, with several sympathetic accounts published.¹³⁵ In the same year, Thompson wrote a destructive review of Robert Walmsley's monograph, which challenged his 'thin case' for stone-throwing and the presumed illegality of the meeting and argued that, despite Walmsley's revisionism, Peterloo remained a moment of unrestrained class aggression.¹³⁶ More recent investigations into the Home Office papers by Robert Poole have confirmed Thompson's interpretation. According to Poole, Peterloo was the 'political earthquake of its age' and, given the 'consistently vigorous advice on the use of force' issued by the Home Office to the Lancashire magistrates, the government must bear some responsibility for the massacre.¹³⁷

Furthermore, recent historiography has tackled the vexed old question of the numbers killed and wounded at Peterloo.¹³⁸ The publication of Michael Bush's list of Peterloo casualties, in combination with the emergence of online genealogical databases, raised interest in Peterloo at the turn of the twenty-first century among local and family historians in Manchester. A number of volunteers have contributed to Robert Poole's ongoing 'witness project', which has transcribed 350 eyewitness accounts of Peterloo.¹³⁹ Moreover, a group of historically informed political activists came together in 2007 to form the Peterloo Memorial Campaign (PMC). The first political action of this group drew national attention to the inadequacies of the 1972 blue plaque. Under pressure from the PMC, Manchester City Council has since revised the wording to reflect the numbers killed and wounded at Peterloo, and to emphasise that the demonstration was part of a movement for democratic reform. The PMC has revived the Chartist tradition of reading the names of the dead at annual Peterloo meetings. In recent years, 200 supporters have turned out to hear local left-wing celebrities, such as Maxine Peake and Paul Mason, perform this ritual.¹⁴⁰ The PMC's current aim is to ensure that a 'prominent', 'respectful' and 'explanatory' memorial to Peterloo is produced for the bicentenary in 2019.¹⁴¹

The current memorial campaign seeks to emphasise the sacrifice of the Peterloo martyrs in the cause of modern democracy. Suggested designs for a monument, hosted on the PMC website, focus on the brutality of the cavalry charge and the heroism of the demonstrators, while the names of the slain are featured at the centre of a 'Peterloo tapestry' which was

collectively produced for the 2016 anniversary meeting.¹⁴² Moreover, the need to commemorate the Peterloo martyrs now seems to be gaining greater consensus than ever before. The director Mike Leigh has announced his intention to shoot a feature film about Peterloo, several Labour MPs and Councillors have shown enthusiasm for a bicentenary monument and Manchester City Council have reportedly earmarked £1,000,000 for the project.¹⁴³ The artist Jeremy Deller, best known for his 2001 recreation of the Battle of Orgreave, has been approached to undertake the work. Although the undemocratic nature of the commissioning process remains a point of controversy, and while there is a serious risk, on the basis of Deller's transitory artwork, that no *permanent* monument will result, it does seem likely that an officially sanctioned and conspicuous public tribute to Peterloo will be unveiled in 2019.

As this chapter has demonstrated, those on the left have laboured hard to keep the memory of the Peterloo martyrs alive and have successfully preserved the Peterloo Massacre from the condescension of conservatives. On the basis of this evidence, the memory of Peterloo will undoubtedly survive for many years hence. If anything, the democratisation of primary sources and the publication of the names of the dead mean that the identities of the fallen will be as well known to the next generation of Mancunians as they were to the Chartists. In the present century Peterloo will continue to be invoked, as a powerful symbol, at times of popular protest and police brutality. On the other hand, those who feel uncomfortable with the narrative of class conflict will always seek to downplay the significance of Peterloo. The key question remains whether Manchester's governors will grant Peterloo a permanent place in the city's public history. Given the contemporary importance placed on 'brand identity' in the regeneration of Manchester City Centre, and given the missed opportunities of the past, there is ample room for scepticism in this regard.¹⁴⁴ However, as Paul Fitzgerald of the PMC has argued, providing an adequate public memorial to the Peterloo martyrs should be considered a test of modern British democracy.¹⁴⁵

NOTES

1. Michael Bush (2005), *The Casualties of Peterloo* (Lancaster: Carnegie), pp. 44–5.
2. The grand total of seventeen fatalities is often quoted by sympathetic historians seeking to maximise the significance of Peterloo. See Malcolm

- Chase (2013), *1820: Disorder and Stability in the United Kingdom* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 12–13; Robert Poole (2006), ‘The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England’, *Past & Present*, vol. 192, 112.
3. For the symbolism of the ‘cap of liberty’ see James Epstein (1989), ‘Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Past & Present*, vol. 122, 75–118.
 4. Anon. (1820), *The Trial of Henry Hunt, Esq, John Knight, Joseph Johnson, John Thacker Saxton, Samuel Bamford, Joseph Healey, James Moorhouse, Robert Jones, George Swift, Robert Wylde for an Alleged Conspiracy to Overturn the Government, at the York Lent Assizes* (London: T. Dolby), pp. 22, 39, 54, 64, 68, 77, 112–13.
 5. Bush, *Casualties*, p. 40; Alison Morgan (2012), ‘Starving Mothers and Murdered Children in Cultural Representations of Peterloo’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 23 (2012), 65; Samuel Bamford (1984 first published in 1844), *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 152–3. An inquest found Dawson had died from a sabre wound to the head. *Morning Chronicle*, 11 September 1819; *The Times*, 10 December 1819.
 6. See Introduction for a discussion of the component parts of ‘secular martyrdom’.
 7. Kenneth Owen Morgan (1981), *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales, 1880–1980* (Oxford: Clarendon), p. 147.
 8. *Labour Leader*, vol. 16, number 33, 14 August 1919, p. 1.
 9. *Ibid.*, vol. 16, number 34, 21 August 1919, p. 3.
 10. The phrase ‘heritage’ is used in Hudson’s article See fn. 8.
 11. Terry Wyke (2012), ‘Remembering the Manchester Massacre’, *Manchester Region History Review*, vol. 23, 131.
 12. E. P. Thompson (1991; first published in 1963), *The Making of the English Working Class*, 14th ed. (London: Penguin Books), ‘Preface to the 1963 Edition’, p. 8.
 13. Morgan, ‘Starving Mothers’, 66–7.
 14. Malcolm Chase (2007), *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 12–3; Thompson, *Making*, p. 754; Katrina Navickas (2016), *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 84.
 15. John Rylands Library, Manchester, ENG MS 1197/36, Henry Hunt—Anon., 26 August 1819.
 16. Bush, *Casualties*, pp. 8–9; *Times*, 3 September 1819, p. 2; Anon. (1820), *Report of the Metropolitan and Central Committee, Appointed for the Relief of the Manchester Sufferers* (London: William Hone), pp. 5, 7.

17. John Gardner (2011), *Poetry and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 33–64.
18. The National Archives (TNA), Kew, HO 42/193, ff. 407–8, Byng—Hobhouse, 31 August 1819.
19. John Belchem (1985), ‘Orator’ Hunt: *Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 127; Navickas, *Protest*, pp. 88–9; Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle, 1074/301, Papers of Alderman William Bramble, Archibald Dick (1819), *A View Of The Meeting Held On The Town Moor, Newcastle, 11 October 1819* (Newcastle: Archibald Dick).
20. *Newcastle Courant*, 16 October 1819.
21. *Ibid.*, *The Times*, 23 September 1819.
22. *Hansard*, (Commons), 23 November 1819, col. 96. Requests for warrants to prosecute Thomas Richardson and Trumpeter Meagher under the Murder Act were thrown out by John Arthur Borran. *Morning Chronicle*, 28 October 1819, p. 2.
23. Anon., *Report of the Metropolitan and Central Committee*, p. 67.
24. See the remarks of Charles Wolseley in *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 12 November 1819.
25. Chase, 1820, pp. 44–5.
26. *Republican*, 27 August 1819, p. 1; 28 June 1822, p. 138. Emphasis in the original.
27. Chase, 1820, p. 52.
28. George Theodore Wilkinson (1821), *An Authentic History of the Cato-Street Conspiracy; with the Trials at Large of the Conspirators, for High Treason and Murder* (London: Thomas), pp. 342, 344, 383.
29. F. K. Donnelly (1976), ‘The Scottish Rising of 1820: A Re-Interpretation’, *International Review of Scottish Studies*, vol. 6, 28, 34.
30. Baird claimed on the scaffold that he was a ‘martyr to cause of truth and justice’. G. Pentland (2008), ‘“Betrayed by Infamous Spies”? The Commemoration of Scotland’s ‘Radical War’ of 1820’, *Past & Present*, vol. 201, 146–8, 173.
31. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 17 April 1820, p. 2; Chase, 1820, p. 123.
32. *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1820, p. 3.
33. Another flag bearing the motto ‘Ye have condemned and slain the just, and he doth not resist you’ was recovered by the authorities near Barnsley, and was identical to one described at the Hunslet Moor meeting in September 1819. Compare *Morning Post*, 23 September 1819, p. 2 with *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1820, p. 3.
34. Chase, 1820, p. 209.
35. Anon., *Trial of Henry Hunt*, p. 308.

36. Philip Ziegler (1965), *Addington: A Life of Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth* (London: Collins), p. 371; H.W.V. Temperley (1907), 'Chapter XVIII: Great Britain, 1815-32', in A. W. Ward, G. W. Prothero and Stanley Leathes (eds), *The Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 577.
37. Henry Hunt (1820), *Memoirs of Henry Hunt Esq. Written by himself in his Majesty's Jail at Ilchester*, vol. 1 (London: T. Dolby), p. iv; Henry Hunt, *To The Radical Reformers, Male and Female of England, Ireland and Scotland*, 23 January 1821, p. 7; 10 February 1821, p. 14 and 5 May 1821, p. 14.
38. Hunt referred to these men ironically as 'Knights of the Order of the Cross of Ilchester'. Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers*, 21 October 1820, p. 15; J. Belchem, 'Orator' Hunt, p. 132; Thompson, *Making*, p. 683.
39. T.J. Wooler came close with his earlier allusion to Christ's crucifixion. See *Black Dwarf*, vol. 5 number 7, 16 August 1820, p. 233.
40. Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers*, 26 July 1821, pp. 5-7. 'Golgotha' (also Calvary) was the name given to the ground on which Christ was crucified.
41. Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers*, 25 July 1820, p. 5.
42. *Hansard* (Commons), 15 May 1821, cols. 719-40; 16 May 1821, cols. 845-6; *Hansard* (Commons), 10 February 1832, cols 196-9; 15 March 1832, cols. 251-35.
43. *Hansard* (Commons), 23 March 1832, col. 778.
44. *Guardian*, 20 August 1836 cited in Robert Walmsley (1969), *Peterloo: The Case Re-Opened* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 553.
45. Paul A. Pickering (1995), *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), pp. 34-5.
46. *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 10 February 1869, p. 2.
47. Pickering, *Chartism*, Appendix C, pp. 214-16, 160; Nicholas Mansfield (2004), 'Radical Banners as Sites of Memory: The National Banner Survey', in Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrell (eds.), *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorials and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate), p. 86.
48. Hunt's birthday was 6 November. *Northern Star*, 17 November 1838, p. 5.
49. For the significance of this chapel as a radical site see Navickas, *Protest*, pp. 192-3.
50. Pickering, *Chartism*, p. 208.
51. Matthew Roberts (2013), 'Chartism, Commemoration, and the Cult of the Radical Hero, c. 1770-c. 1840', *Labour History Review*, vol. 78, number 1, p. 32.
52. For a detailed discussion of the use of history within Chartism see Robert Hall (1999), 'Creating a People's History: Political Identity and

- History in Chartism, 1832–1848’, in Owen R. Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts (eds.), *The Chartist Legacy* (Rendlesham: Merlin), pp. 233–4.
53. *Northern Star*, 17 October 1840, p. 8.
 54. *Ibid.*, 23 November 1839, p. 2; 9 May 1840, p. 8; 26 September 1840, p. 7.
 55. James Epstein (1982), *The Lion of Freedom: Feargus O’Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832–1842* (London: Croom Helm), pp. 159, 164.
 56. Epstein (1982), *The Lion of Freedom*, p. 216; Dorothy Thompson (1971), *The Early Chartists* (London: Macmillan), p. 172; Peter Gurney (2014), ‘The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 86, number 3, 579.
 57. *Northern Star* (24 August 1844), p. 1.
 58. Matthew Roberts (2010), ‘Out of Chartism, into Liberalism? Popular Radicals and the Liberal Party in Mid-Victorian Britain’, *Journal of Liberal History*, vol. 67, 6–13.
 59. *Ashton Reporter*, 26 December 1857, cited in Hall, ‘Creating a People’s History’, p. 248.
 60. *Manchester Times*, 8 June 1867, p. 7; *Manchester Guardian*, 3 June 1867, p. 3; Eugenio F. Biagini (1992), *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 277.
 61. ‘Reform Conference in Manchester’, *Manchester Times*, 1 June 1867, p. 5.
 62. Sim Schofield (1905), *Short Stories about Failsworth Folk: Reprinted with Additions from the Oldham Chronicle and Manchester City News* (Blackpool: Union Printers), pp. 63–9.
 63. *Oldham Chronicle*, 4 October 1884, p. 7.
 64. Archibald Prentice (1851), *Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections of Manchester* (Manchester: Gilpin), pp. 166–70.
 65. William E. A. Axon (1886), *The Annals of Manchester: A Chronological Record, From the Earliest Time to the End of 1885* (Manchester: John Heywood), pp. viii, 156.
 66. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 December 1887, p. 11; 16 August 1889, p. 2.
 67. For use of the term see *Daily News*, 30 December 1886, p. 4; 4 October 1888, p. 4.
 68. For Bamford’s earlier revolutionary spirit see Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest*, pp. 13–14, 22–31.
 69. Bamford, *Passages*, p. 367.
 70. Wyke, ‘Remembering’, 117.
 71. ‘Bamford’s Radicalism’, *Manchester Times*, 20 April 1872.
 72. Craig died aged 90 in 1894. *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 22 December 1894, p. 3.

73. See for example Social Democrat, R.W. Rowe, 'To the Editor', *Leeds Mercury*, 10 September 1894, p. 2.
74. Adam R. Seipp (2009), *The Ordeal of Peace: Demobilisation and the Urban Experience in Britain and Germany, 1917–1921* (Farnham: Ashgate), pp. 153–63.
75. William Steward, 'Centenary Year of Peterloo', *Forward*, 15 February 1919, p. 1; *Manchester City News*, 23 August 1919, p. 2.
76. *Labour Leader*, vol. 16, number 33, 14 August 1919, p. 1.
77. CPGB (1928), *Peterloo: The Story of the Terrible Massacre of the Lancashire Workers at St Peter's Fields, Manchester, 16 August 1819 and the Lessons of Peterloo* (London: Dorrit Press), pp. 13–14.
78. 'Peterloo Celebrations: Capitalism then in its Birth-Throes: Now in its Death-Throes' *Labour Leader*, vol. 16, number 34, 21 August 1919, p. 3.
79. CPGB, *Peterloo*, p. 3.
80. J.H. Hudson (1919), *Peterloo: A History of the Massacre and the Conditions which Preceded it* (Manchester: National Labour Press); C.A. Glyde (1919), *The Centenary of British Workers: Peterloo* (Bradford: Glyde), p. 20.
81. CPGB (1969), *Peterloo* (Manchester: Progress Bookshop).
82. *Black Dwarf*, vol. 5, number 7, 16 August 1820, p. 235.
83. V. A. C. Gatrell (1982), 'Incorporation and the Pursuit of Liberal Hegemony in Manchester 1790–1839', in Derek Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester: Leicester University Press), pp. 25–32.
84. Walmsley, *Peterloo*, pp. 471–2; Gareth Stedman Jones (1982), 'The Language of Chartism', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830–60* (London: Macmillan), p. 46.
85. Axon described the yeomanry as 'hot-headed young men who were more or less intoxicated' in *Annals of Manchester*, p. 157; *Hansard* (Commons) 2 March 1831, col. 1209.
86. *Northern Star*, 24 August 1844, p. 1. For a similar assessment see T.H. Ford (1983), 'Peterloo: The Legal Background', *Durham University Journal*, vol. 74, 223–4.
87. Linnaeus Banks (1876), *The Manchester Man*, vol. 2 (London), pp. 47, 60.
88. Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest*, p. 57; British Museum Satires, 13260, J.L. Marks, *The Massacre of Peterloo! Or A Specimen of English Liberty* (London, 1819).
89. Hay was lampooned in the press as the 'Reverend Robert Rednose ... Justass [sic.] of the peace': Walmsley, *Peterloo*, p. 372–3; *Manchester Observer*, 2 and 9 June 1821.

90. *Examiner*, 10 March 1833 cited in Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest*, p. 29.
91. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 232.
92. James Taylor (1888), *The Age We Live In: A History of the Nineteenth Century, from the Peace of 1815 to the Present* (London: William MacKenzie), pp. 137–8; Samuel R. Gardiner (1892), *A Student's History of England: From the Earliest Times to 1885* (London: Longmans), p. 880.
93. *Sherwin's Weekly Political Register*, 18 August 1819; Henry Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt*, vol. 1, p. iv, vol. 3, p. 633; Banks writes 'All had been preconcerted [sic.], pre-arranged' *Manchester Man*, vol. 2, p. 31; CPGB (1969), *Peterloo*; Thompson, *Making*, p. 750 fn. 1.
94. Walmsley, *Peterloo*, pp. 553–4.
95. *Spectator*, 31 December 1831.
96. *Manchester Times*, 15 July 1837, p. 2; Anon. (1860), *The Peterloo Massacre!: Reform Meeting of 60,000 Persons, in 1819, Held on the Present Site of the Y.M.C.A., Free Trade Hall, and Theatre Royal, Peter Street, Manchester, etc.* (Manchester), pp. 5, 8.
97. *Bolton Chronicle*, 10 February 1883, p. 3.
98. William Hone (1821), *The Political House that Jack Built* (London: William Hone); Percy Bysshe Shelley (1832), *The Masque of Anarchy* (London: Edward Moxon).
99. *Black Dwarf*, vol. 3 number 46, 17 November 1819, pp. 746–7.
100. *Chartist Circular*, vol. 2, number 80 (1842), p. 1; see speech of Robert Lowery in *Northern Star*, 30 June 1838, p. 8 and of O'Connor in *Manchester Guardian*, 20 August 1836, p. 3.
101. Jephson (1968; first published in 1892), *The Platform: Its Rise and Progress*, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass), p. 478.
102. J. R. Green (1874), *A Short History of the English People* (London: Macmillan), pp. 812–13.
103. A. V. Dicey (1914; first published in 1905), *Lectures on the Relation Between Law and Public Opinion in England During the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan), pp. 123–4.
104. Anon. [1868], *The Tories, and Their Punishment of The People at The Peterloo Meeting: A Few Words Addressed To Working Men, The Electors Of Manchester and Elsewhere, As to their Duty* (Manchester), pp. 15–16.
105. *Western Times*, 5 November 1872, p. 3.
106. *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 22 April 1879, p. 6.
107. *Hansard* (Commons) 17 February 1888, cols. 757–8.
108. *Derbyshire Courier*, 20 September 1887, p. 3; *Sheffield Independent*, 14 September 1887, p. 4.
109. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 December 1887, p. 5.

110. *Northern Echo*, 7 December 1887, p. 3. Linnell was referred to as the 'martyr of Trafalgar-Square' in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 December 1887, p. 7.
111. William Morris (1887), *Alfred Linnell, Killed in Trafalgar Square November 20 1887: A Death Song* (London: Richard Lambert); *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 December 1887, pp. 8, 11.
112. See correspondence in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 December 1887, p. 2.
113. Yonge claimed the nocturnal drilling amounted to a 'system of intimidation' see C. D. Yonge (1868), *The Life and Administration of the Second Earl of Liverpool*, vol. 2 (Macmillan: London), p. 410. For throwing of stones see J. Ashton (1899; first published in 1890), *Social History of England under the Regency* (London: Chatto and Windus), pp. 341–2.
114. *Spectator*, 31 December 1831; Walmsley, *Peterloo*, p. 491.
115. Respectively Yonge, *Life and Administration of the Second Earl of Liverpool*, vol. 2, p. 407; Ashton, *Social History of England*, p. 342.
116. *Ibid.*, quotation from Gibbins (1897), *Industry in England: Historical Outlines* (London: Methuen), p. 337 fn. 1 cited in Wyke, 'Remembering', 118.
117. Donald Read (1958), *Peterloo: The 'Massacre' and its Background* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 207.
118. Norman Gash (1979), *Aristocracy and People: Britain 1815–1865* (London: Edward Arnold), pp. 95–6, 98; Norman Gash (1984), *Lord Liverpool: The Life and Political Career of Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool, 1770–1828* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson), pp. 143–4.
119. The quote is from John Bew (2011), *Castlereagh: Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London: Quercus), p. 463. See also Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, pp. 143–4; Ziegler, *Addington*, p. 374–5.
120. Martin Hewitt and Robert Poole (eds.) (2000), *The Diaries of Samuel Bamford* (Stroud: Sutton), p. xxxi; *Manchester Times*, 27 April 1872, p. 7.
121. See 'Samuel Bamford Memorial', <http://www.pmsa.org.uk/pmsa-data-base/4446/> [accessed 17 June 2016].
122. Wyke, 'Remembering', 117; Julian Treuherz (2011), *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer* (London: Philip Wilson), p. 50; Walmsley, *Peterloo*, p. 34.
123. Manchester Central Library (MCL), Autograph Letters Collection, Shields–Thompson, 7 March 1878. My thanks to Julian Treuherz for providing me with this reference.
124. *Manchester Times*, 19 July 1890, p. 7.
125. *Ibid.*, 20 October 1888, p. 2; Wyke, 'Remembering', 119; MCL, Broadside/F1889.2.A, Committee for Re-Erection of a Monument to Henry Hunt (1889).

126. In 1882 and 1883 TUC amendments for universal manhood suffrage were rejected by large majorities: see Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 306.
127. Tony Adams (2000), 'Labour Vanguard, Tory Bastion, Or the Triumph of New Liberalism? Manchester Politics 1900 to 1914 in Comparative Perspective', *Manchester Region History Review*, vol. 14, 206–8.
128. British Museum Satires, 13258, George Cruikshank (1819), *Massacre at St Peter's or 'Britons Strike Home'* (London: Thomas Tegg).
129. Gatrell, 'Incorporation and the Pursuit of Liberal Hegemony', p. 52.
130. Alan J. Kidd (2002), *Manchester*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 206–8.
131. *The Times*, 8 May 1972.
132. The original plaque can be viewed at Peterloo Memorial Campaign's website <http://www.peterloomassacre.org/blue-plaque.html>, [accessed 13 June 2016].
133. *Manchester Guardian*, 17 October 1951, p. 5; Wyke, 'Remembering', 123.
134. Thompson, *Making*, pp. 749, 750 fn. 1.
135. *Guardian*, 16 August 1969, p. 1; Joyce Marlow (1969), *The Peterloo Massacre* (Rapp and Whiting); William Henry Shercliffe (1969), *150 Years On: A Short Account of the Peterloo Massacre* (Manchester: City of Manchester Publicity Office).
136. [E.P. Thompson], 'Man Bites Yeoman', *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 December 1969, pp. 1413–16.
137. Robert Poole (2006), "'By the Law Or the Sword': Peterloo Revisited", *History*, vol. 91, number 302, 259, 271.
138. For the origins of this debate see George Macaulay Trevelyan (1922), 'Number of Casualties at Peterloo, 1819', *History*, vol. 7, 200–5.
139. Peterloo Witness Project, <http://peterloowitness1819.weebly.com/project.html> [accessed 3 January 2017].
140. Paul Fitzgerald (2012), 'Remembering Peterloo in the Twenty-First Century', *Manchester Region History Review*, vol. 23, 195–7; Martin Wainwright, 'Battle for the Memory of Peterloo', *Guardian*, 13 August 2007.
141. <http://www.peterloomassacre.org/campaign.html>, [accessed 13 June 2016].
142. *Ibid.*
143. Tony Lloyd MP and Councillors Jim Battle and Mike Amesbury have all shown support for the campaign since the 190th anniversary. *Manchester Evening News*, 16 August 2009; *Guardian*, 17 April 2015.
144. Kidd, *Manchester*, p. 235.
145. Fitzgerald, 'Remembering Peterloo', 195.

From ‘Dorchester Labourers’ to ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’: Celebrating Radicalism in the English Countryside

Clare Griffiths

In 1934, George Bernard Shaw made his own idiosyncratic contribution to the centenary commemoration of one of the most famous episodes in the history of British trade unionism. ‘I am afraid I cannot say anything in praise of the Dorchester martyrs,’ he wrote in his brief comments published in the plush volume produced by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to mark the occasion. ‘Martyrs are a nuisance in Labor (sic) movements. The business of a Labor man is not to suffer, but to make other people suffer until they make him reasonably comfortable. A Labor agitator who gets into the hands of the police is inexcusable.’ Shaw could find only one positive note in the story: ‘There is this, however, to be said for the Dorchester men. They got transported at the expense of their landlords and employers. As they could hardly, if they were reasonable men, have desired to live in Dorset as slaves [...] they were lucky to be pushed out of it.’¹

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Shaw was clearly being contrary, even flippant, in his assessment of a group of Labour's heroes. Far from being a 'nuisance' to the Labour movement, by the 1930s the Tolpuddle Martyrs had become prominent—and apparently useful—figures in the mythology of the British left, whilst the staging of the centenary commemoration of their trial and punishment in 1934 was designed to consolidate that status further. Shaw's offhand summary of their history, and his questioning of why the Labour movement might value having 'martyrs' at all, offers a rare deviation from an otherwise overwhelming mood of respect and admiration surrounding the story of Tolpuddle. Why did this story capture the imagination to become so important for the history of the Labour movement? Why did the men's experience come to be accepted as a case of 'martyrdom', and how did that affect the ways in which their history was understood?

THE MAKING OF THE MARTYRS

The story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs began in conditions of poverty and insecurity in early nineteenth-century rural Dorset. Wage levels in agriculture were low, and popular discontent had erupted into violence during the Swing rising in parts of southern England in 1830. Wages in Tolpuddle were lower even than the rates prevailing in other parts of the county, and a deputation of farm labourers, led by one of their number, a Methodist lay preacher named George Loveless, secured an agreement from the local employers for a modest raise in their weekly pay. Far from adhering to this agreement, wages on the Tolpuddle farms were subsequently cut, and the labourers appealed to the local magistrates without success. Against this background of seeming powerlessness to influence their employment conditions, in October 1833 Loveless started a Tolpuddle branch, or lodge, of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union.

Trade unionism itself was no longer illegal, following the repeal of the Combination Acts ten years earlier, but the Tolpuddle labourers' attempts at organisation were conducted in secrecy, with members inducted through a ritual involving the swearing of an oath. A spy in their ranks informed on them to the local landowner and magistrate James Frampton, who was eager to stamp out any attempts at combination in the neighbourhood. In February 1834, six of the labourers—George Loveless, his brother James Loveless, Thomas Standfield and his

son John Standfield, James Hammett and James Brine—were arrested at their homes and marched to face trial in Dorchester. In March 1834 they were found guilty under the Mutiny Act of administering an illegal oath, and were sentenced to seven years' transportation.

The judge at the Dorchester assizes commented specifically on how this punishment was intended to offer 'an example and warning'.² It did so in ways he had not anticipated. The Grand National Union led protests against the decision, William Cobbett presented a petition to Parliament and there were huge public meetings, culminating in a great demonstration in Copenhagen Fields in London. By the summer of 1835, the MP Thomas Wakley claimed that as many as 800,000 people had signed petitions for the men's release.³ Lord John Russell, the Whig Home Secretary, offered first a conditional pardon (which would have required the Lovelesses to remain in the colonies), and then a full pardon in March 1836. Five of the six men landed back in England in March 1838, with James Hammett returning the following year.

The identification of 'martyrs' has become almost inseparable from memories of this group of six agricultural workers in a small village in the south of England in the early nineteenth century who formed a trade union branch and were prosecuted, convicted and transported, scapegoated by the local judiciary. Nowhere is the word 'martyr' so consistently applied to the history of working people in Britain as in reference to these Six Men of Dorset. Indeed, it has long since ceased to be simply a politicised labelling, entering rather into the national history and popular reference. The resonance of the annual rally at Tolpuddle, expanded in recent years into a festival, continues to demonstrate a radical attachment to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, but the story is far from being owned exclusively by the political left. The Tolpuddle pub, formerly known as The Crown, was re-christened The Martyrs Inn in 1952. A brewery markets a Martyrs Ale, and visitors to Tolpuddle can see the Martyrs' Tree. In all these cases, the use of the term 'martyr' is accepted as unproblematic, and linked naturally to Tolpuddle. The fame attached to the episode has given the village of Tolpuddle a place on the tourist map of Britain, and ensured that the trials and tribulations of these early trade unionists have become one of the more well-known—if not always perfectly understood—episodes in early nineteenth-century British history. Frequently misidentified as the founders of trade unionism, the Tolpuddle Martyrs have nonetheless become part of a popular national narrative.

This was not always so. The Honorary Secretary of the committee formed at the time to support the men and publicise the case thought that the cry of ‘Dorchester’ should shame the Whig establishment—and never seems to have thought to suggest a cry of ‘Tolpuddle’.⁴ In the 1890s, the German historian Wilhelm Hasbach produced a history of the English agricultural labourer which made no reference to Tolpuddle, commenting instead on the case of the ‘Dorchester labourers’.⁵ Sidney and Beatrice Webb’s history of trade unionism, published in 1920, also used the term ‘Dorchester Labourers’, describing this as the ‘best-known episode of early Trade Union history’. The Webbs characterised the men as ‘unfortunate labourers’ and ‘simple-minded Methodists’, but not as the Tolpuddle Martyrs.⁶ For most of the century following the infamous trial, the village of Tolpuddle itself remained surprisingly obscure. In 1933, the Fabian Raymond Postgate—who was, amongst many things, a social historian—suggested that few people had heard of Tolpuddle as a place.⁷ The name of the village carried little of the charge it was later to acquire, and the few people who did make a pilgrimage to pay their respects where these early trade unionists had lived and worked were liable to express shock and disappointment at the neglect of the historical memory, and often of specific sites associated with the men’s story. The general secretary of the TUC, Walter Citrine, saw a need to pluck the village from obscurity and establish its proper place in the annals of the Labour movement, writing in 1935 that he wanted ‘to put Tolpuddle on the map in the real sense. It is now not on any of the road maps that I have seen.’⁸ Joyce Marlow points out that there was some dispute even about the proper name for the village, which had often been known as ‘Tolpiddle’ and was standardised partly through the TUC’s preference for a more ‘respectable’ designation.⁹

The association of the 1834 episode with the name of Tolpuddle, and the designation of those involved as ‘martyrs’, were largely a product of a rebranding by the TUC during its marking of the centenary of the trial—an effort in which Citrine himself had a key role.¹⁰ Even in the 1934 commemorations, there were still many references to the ‘Dorsetshire Labourers’ or the ‘Dorchester Labourers’, a naming that associated the persecuted trade unionists with the larger county town where they were tried, and remembered them for their status as labourers rather than acknowledging any martyrdom in their story. The *Dorset Year Book*, aimed at a non-party-political readership, named them as the ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ but also as ‘Six Village Hampdens’, alluding to

the reference in Thomas Gray's 'Elegy written in a country churchyard' (1751), and to the constitutional radical tradition of protest in the seventeenth century.¹¹ A TUC-sponsored play in the 1930s described them as 'Six Men of Dorset'; for a film made in the 1980s, they were simply 'Comrades'.¹²

The designation as 'martyrs' was therefore neither automatic nor necessarily obvious. Indeed, the use of the term here is curious. Beatrice and Sidney Webb qualified the case as one of 'judicial' martyrdom.¹³ This was a martyrdom where nobody died for the cause. The judicial punishments inflicted were certainly dramatic and severe: Andrew Conley, chairman of the TUC in 1934, described how 'they suffered and endured the worst of hardships and the most dreadful torture as pioneers in the struggle'.¹⁴ But their sufferings were not terminal. Within two years, the Martyrs had been pardoned, later returning from their antipodean banishment to rejoin their families and to make a living for themselves in Dorset, Essex and finally in Canada. Only one of them—James Hammett—chose to settle back in Tolpuddle, dying as an inmate of the workhouse, though not before being honoured by a new wave of farmworkers' trade unionism in the 1870s.¹⁵ For the other Martyrs, the episode set their lives onto a very different course. Financed by public donations, they emigrated to make a new start, farming and establishing their own businesses in Ontario. In Canada they appeared to put the experience of transportation behind them, making no reference to their English celebrity as heroes of trade unionism. When the agricultural trade union leader Joseph Arch visited Canada (including a trip to Ontario) in 1873 to investigate the prospects for emigration as a remedy for the poor labour conditions suffered by land workers in England, he seems to have made no effort to look up the Tolpuddle men in their new setting.¹⁶

Rather than martyrdom, the language of victimisation might seem more appropriate to this particular case, and indeed that was one of the ways in which the sufferings of the Tolpuddle Six were memorialised in the years following the trial.¹⁷ George Loveless's influential account of his own and his fellow Martyrs' experiences appeared under a title describing the men as 'Victims of Whiggery'.¹⁸ But while 'victims' might inspire sympathy, emphasising the vulnerability of these rural labourers to exploitation by their employers and the local political and judicial establishment, the notion of 'martyrs' offered inspiration, transforming

the pathos of the men's position into something more akin to strength and agency.

In all of this, it is also notable that the men became a collective: the labourers, the Martyrs. Only George Loveless, through his eloquence and authorship, established an independent public persona. The names of the other five were perpetuated in different ways, invoked as a litany at events and in inscriptions, and commemorated as addresses for the six retirement homes built by the TUC as 'memorial cottages' in Tolpuddle in 1934. James Hammett received his own personal memorialisations, purely on the grounds of being the only one of the Martyrs still living in Britain when the episode was being rediscovered as Labour history: the Agricultural Labourers' Union presented him with an engraved watch in 1875, honouring him as a pioneer of trade unionism amongst farm workers and, four decades after his death, he gained a new gravestone with lettering by Eric Gill, courtesy of the TUC's enthusiasm for marking the 1934 centennial. Amongst the sober and law-abiding Martyrs, Hammett stands out as the one in the group who had already served a sentence in prison before the trial in 1834, though he was also the subject of an injustice within the injustice: he had not in fact been present at the fateful meeting for which the Tolpuddle Six were convicted.¹⁹ Doubts continued to be voiced about whether he had even been a member of the union. In the film *Comrades*, Hammett (played by Keith Allen) is portrayed as wayward, ill-disciplined, different from his godly peers. Owing to his delayed return from New South Wales, Hammett is also the missing figure from the iconic line-up of 'The Returned "Convicts"' drawn for *Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety* in 1838—the definitive and much reproduced likenesses of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, only recently displaced by the Tolpuddle Museum's use of Clifford Harper's coloured line-drawing, the new depiction offering six far more homogeneous faces as a representation of the full set of all six Martyrs.²⁰

The naming of the 'Martyrs' offered a reshaping of the past and its meaning for the present, and is a reminder that we should not take the prominence of the Tolpuddle story for granted. Even in the 1946 edition of their capacious history of Britain, *The Common People*, the Fabian socialists G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate gave only the most cursory notice to what happened at Tolpuddle in 1834, and made no reference whatever to the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs', describing instead the sentencing of 'six farm labourers of the village of Tolpuddle in Dorsetshire' as a 'vindictive decision'. The story of the case was

swallowed up in Cole and Postgate's greater interest in following the fortunes of Robert Owen's Consolidated union, and from this account one would not even learn that the men were pardoned, whilst the mass protests and petitions for their release were characterised as 'wholly unsuccessful'.²¹ Amongst historians of labour and the left, Tolpuddle did not routinely attract the kind of attention one might expect to find, and there were often attempts to downplay its inherent importance by contextualising the events alongside the radicalism of the 1830s. The historian of agricultural trade unionism Reg Groves, writing in the 1940s, reflected on the mismatch between the historical episode and the celebrity it had acquired, commenting that 'There were others who suffered for trade union activity, before and after the Dorchester Trial, but few of them are remembered today'. Groves concluded that the story acquired a resonance because of the moment in time, meaning that the sufferings of the six men appeared as a 'microcosm' of the systemic social injustices of the period.²²

The elevation of Tolpuddle as an episode imbued with historical and political significance was largely the result of deliberate attempts during the twentieth century to establish it as a key event in the history of trade unionism. The marking of the centenary in 1934 was central to this reconfiguring of Tolpuddle. In the planning of the centenary commemorations and the branding of 1934 as a year in which the Tolpuddle Martyrs should take centre stage, the TUC made a major investment in remembering this particular episode in the history of trade unionism. Indeed, it became such an important project for the TUC's General Secretary Walter Citrine that to some critics he became 'Mr (Tolpuddle) Citrine'.²³ At that year's Congress, held in Weymouth, a venue chosen for its proximity to the commemorations in Dorchester and Tolpuddle, Citrine defended the TUC's commitment to marking the centenary—an enterprise which had occupied so much time and effort over the previous two years. 'There have been those who have imagined that we were getting out of focus, that we were getting out of perspective', he chided his audience, before going on to explain the role he believed Tolpuddle could play in the contemporary trade union movement:

We have to advertise trade unionism, and we cannot advertise trade unionism better than by bringing into bold relief the sacrifices made for that movement. We cannot live on our history, I admit [...] but what we have to try to do is to use heroic examples in order to impress upon the mind of

the present generation the necessity for the continuance of those sacrifices. That is the purpose of Tolpuddle, and that is why we have tried to do it thoroughly.²⁴

INTERPRETATION AND APPROPRIATION

As Citrine's comments suggest, the TUC's concern in providing an appropriate memorialisation for the Martyrs was not simply undertaken as an end unto itself. The highlighting of the Tolpuddle story seemed—to some trade unionists at least—to serve the needs of the Labour movement in the 1930s. The emphasis given to Tolpuddle in 1934 offered a commentary on the challenges facing workers in Britain at the time, and presented inspiring lessons to counter a perceived lack of active engagement by modern trade union members. The TUC leadership was keen to use Tolpuddle to draw direct lessons for the present day, and this warning from history could be applied with still greater urgency to developments elsewhere in Europe. Andrew Conley, the chairman of the TUC at the time of the Tolpuddle centenary, pointed to the episode's contemporary relevance: 'Organised Labour is called upon, in our own time, to defend the right to combine. In some countries the institutions of free citizenship have been shattered, and dictatorships have been erected upon the ruins.'²⁵

The assumption here was that Tolpuddle was fundamentally a trade union story—an episode with peculiar significance for the trade union movement and deserving of a place in popular memory because of the lessons it offered about the importance of organisation and the need to fight for the rights of unions. However, there were other ways of reading the history of Tolpuddle, and trade unionism never had an exclusive claim over the Martyrs and their story. Even as the TUC was claiming ownership of the episode and its commemoration, it was possible to promote interpretations which emphasised Tolpuddle's significance in legal history. An Australian High Court Judge, H.V. Evatt—who went on to become a leading advocate of human rights legislation, President of the United Nations Assembly and a leader of the Australian Labor Party—was inspired to write a study of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1937, characterising the episode as a case of 'injustice within the law'. The focus here was not so much on the actions of the six men themselves, as on what the legal establishment did to them. For Evatt, writing at a time when there was plenty of evidence from contemporary developments about the

impact of authoritarian regimes and the fragility of rights to due process, Tolpuddle demonstrated a recurrent theme of the need to stand up for the right to organise: 'Unless trade unionists throughout the world are always ready to sacrifice their personal interests, their safety, or even their lives for the amelioration of the lot of the poor, their elaborate organisation may perish overnight either in a holocaust of terror and force or in the slower process of legal repression.'²⁶ As Geoffrey Robertson summarises Evatt's discussion of the case, 'The Tolpuddle sentences were designed to destroy the trade union movement—so these men were 'martyrs' to that cause in the true sense of that word.'²⁷

Within the TUC's own official history of Tolpuddle, published in 1934, the legal narrative also occupied a prominent place, not least in the chapter contributed by Stafford Cripps entitled 'A travesty of justice', and prefaced by a photograph of Cripps in barrister's wig and gown, highlighting his legal training and practice, as much as his credentials as a Labour politician.²⁸ Cripps's analysis seems more complacent than Evatt's about the degree of legal protection enjoyed by trade unionism in the twentieth century, though he still concluded with a caution: 'were a crucial political issue to be raised now, as crucial as was the issue in the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834, the fear of the dominant class would find ways and means of arriving at a result as satisfactory to them as was the result of the Dorchester Trial to the landowners and farmers of England in 1834.'²⁹ Even as the centenary commemorations were emphasising the centrality of the Tolpuddle men to the history of British trade unionism, the presentation of the history relied heavily on building a case about the misuse of law by a hostile political establishment. For the Webbs, the episode exposed the rottenness of the Whig establishment and class power—an analysis which carried more charge than any actions taken by the Martyrs themselves.³⁰

Tolpuddle could be a story about law and justice. But for some people it was also about faith. The Martyrs' religious commitment was always an element in how some groups chose to remember them. Here, occasionally, references to martyrdom took on some of their more familiar religious connotations. Running parallel to the legend which celebrated the Martyrs as early trade unionists was a social memory identifying them as victims of historical prejudice against the nonconformist churches. George Loveless himself had suggested that one of his chief sins in the eyes of the Anglican establishment in Tolpuddle was to be a Dissenter.³¹ Connections between Methodism and trade unionism continued into the

twentieth century, not least within agricultural trade unionism itself. But Methodism could also imply a distinctive and rather separate identity for the Martyrs. ‘The crowds had different memories’, observed one contributor to the *Methodist Recorder* in reporting on the commemorations in Tolpuddle in 1934. ‘Some of us thought of five Methodists. Most, probably, remembered six pioneer Trade Unionists of the agricultural class.’³²

Methodist claims to the memory of the Tolpuddle Martyrs (and with explicit use of the term ‘martyrs’) were being made from the early years of the twentieth century. The Methodist Church was in fact the first organisation to create a permanent memorial to the Martyrs in the village itself, in the form of an arch at the entrance to the modern Wesleyan chapel. The arch was unveiled in 1912 by the Methodist Labour MP Arthur Henderson—whose own affiliations showed how the two identities continued to overlap, for some individuals at least. Labelled prominently ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ (in inverted commas), the arch carried an inscription praising these ‘faithful and brave men’ for their commitment to the cause of ‘Liberty, Justice and Righteousness’. For more than two decades this became the obvious focus for anyone wanting to pay their respects and evoke the Martyrs’ memory, irrespective of any particular religious allegiance. The Methodist chapel itself, built in 1862, after most of the Martyrs had left the village, became the traditional venue for an act of ecumenical worship on Tolpuddle Sunday, as a prelude to the annual rally.

By the early twenty-first century, however, the Methodist Church was promoting a parallel interpretation of the Martyrs’ history, which could view them primarily in a religious perspective rather than in the dominant story promoted by the trade unions. The Methodist Church published a historical guide to the Martyrs’ ‘Methodist roots’, and Tolpuddle occupied a page and a half in the Church’s guide to heritage sites across Britain with a Methodist connection.³³ There was a ‘Tolpuddle Christian Trail’ through the village, overlapping with the trail of tourist sites recommended by the TUC’s Martyrs’ museum, but emphasising the status of Thomas Standfield’s cottage, the Old Chapel, the New Chapel and even the Martyrs’ Tree as ‘Christian sites’. A leaflet published by Methodist Heritage, as an initiative under the auspices of the Methodist Church, identified the Martyrs’ motivations in terms of Christian values: ‘A longing for freedom’, ‘A will to follow God’s guidance’, ‘A commitment to peaceful protest and liberty’.³⁴ The chapel in

the village today characterises its mission as 'upholding the Christian witness of the Martyrs'.³⁵

Alongside these celebrations of the Martyrs' religious convictions and affiliation, a quasi-religious element was sometimes adopted in the Labour movement's own commemorations. Even the title of the TUC's landmark history of the Tolpuddle Martyrs seems to echo Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' (1563). *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle* paid tribute to the 'sacrificial act of the Dorsetshire Unionists', adjuring trade unionists to remember their 'service' and 'faith in the principles of human brotherhood', and 'keep alive the living spirit they breathed into our Movement'.³⁶ When the General Secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union addressed a gathering in Tolpuddle on the union's summer outing in 1936, he drew direct parallels between the function of martyrs within Christianity and their role in a secular context: 'The blood of martyrs had always been the seed of the Church, and in the same way it was the seed of all great social movements.'³⁷ Religious allusions often crept into accounts of Tolpuddle. In writing about *Six Men of Dorset*, the *Manchester Guardian* commented, 'Trade Unionism has now its Mystery Play'.³⁸ The historian Joyce Marlow describes a 'canonisation' of the Martyrs.³⁹ The memorial cottages built by the TUC in 1934 were described by visiting trade unionists as the 'Tolpuddle Shrine'.⁴⁰

Despite such blends of imagery and reference, trade unions in the early 1930s were suspicious of competing attempts to define the Martyrs' identity and significance, as if a primary association of Tolpuddle with trade union history had yet to be established. In March 1933, the President of the North Dorset Labour Party wrote to Walter Citrine suggesting some key principles which he thought should shape the centenary commemoration, first amongst which was to 'Keep this matter from being made into a religious question and get it under the control of the Labour Party or TUC'.⁴¹ Meanwhile, others were concerned about appropriations of Tolpuddle on behalf of any one cause or another. Marjorie Firth and Arthur Hopkinson's book on the Tolpuddle Martyrs, which appeared in the centenary year, went out of its way to claim the story as one which should be non-political. 'Already there are murmurings of a desire to exploit the crime against the Tolpuddle labourers for party purposes', they wrote disapprovingly. 'It would be a thousand pities if the centenary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs were exploited on behalf of some religious or political sectarianism.'⁴² Clearly fearing that this might

not exactly endear him to those organising the TUC's centenary extravaganza, Hopkinson wrote to Citrine in the hope that he would still be welcome at the commemoration events: 'The fact that we tried to keep party politics out of our own book—even though it has an introduction by a member of the [Conservative-dominated National] Government—does not, I hope, condemn us utterly.'⁴³

As the story of Tolpuddle was integrated into popular narratives of the national history, it was in fact the TUC's version which proved the more influential, rather than rival accounts emphasising religious non-conformity or principles of law and the working of the judicial system. Tolpuddle became a story about the history of trade unionism. Moreover the TUC's commitment to celebrating this historical episode imbued it with a greater centrality to labour history than was evident in the events themselves or their immediate legacy. The Tolpuddle Martyrs were not exactly plucked from the 'condescension of posterity' in 1934, but the decision by the leadership of the TUC to turn a spotlight on the experience of these six men, in a part of the country that remained deeply rural, represented a distinct choice about how the labour movement might draw on its history, and encouraged particular interpretations of the events. Although their work on the land was alien to the experience of most modern trade unionists in Britain, and their fateful experiment in trade unionism had no immediate continuities with the later organisations, the Martyrs were adopted as central figures in the genealogy of the labour movement. Their travails became the ultimate history lesson for trade unionists, carefully documented by the TUC, which was anxious to get its facts right. They stood out as pioneers, making their stand in an unlikely and obscure setting, but somehow embodying a timeless spirit of trade unionism with direct relevance to later generations. The inscription on James Hammett's gravestone in the churchyard at Tolpuddle, dating from 1934, encapsulates the men's elevation to this heroic status: 'Tolpuddle Martyr. Pioneer of Trades Unionism. Champion of Freedom.'

Historians have been less convinced by the TUC's efforts to establish the significance of the Tolpuddle story. Carl Griffin argues against the exceptionalism that he identifies as part of the Tolpuddle legend, asserting that 'the consciousness of unionism and the culture of combination undoubtedly did run deep in the rural communities of the west', making the actions of the six Martyrs less remarkable and unusual, and to be understood within an immediate context rather than ascribed to personal impetus and an independent awakening to the value of trade unionism.⁴⁴

Looking at the Martyrs within a historical context of radicalism, protest and active (often violent) challenges to the legal and political authorities, Roger Ball regards the TUC's narrative as a deliberately partial use of the past, emphasising the elements that suited its purposes. He argues that the story of Tolpuddle 'ticked all the boxes':

a 'victim centred narrative', formal (Methodist) organisation, non-violence and the outrageous use of a 'mutiny' law by a 'treacherous' Whig government to convict five 'innocent' rural labourers. All of these factors made the six Tolpuddle victims 'respectable' and 'valid', whereas the thousands of Swing 'rioters', destroyed property, were clearly 'guilty', were not part of a formal (religious) organisation and consequently 'invalid' and thus of no useful propaganda value to reformists.⁴⁵

This echoed points being made in the 1930s, when the communist journalist Allen Hutt argued not only that the Tolpuddle men were some of the least radical figures around in the 1830s, but that their story had appealed to the TUC precisely for that reason. This safe, conservative face to historical trade unionism, Hutt claimed, offered no useful lessons or inspiration for the present-day working classes and the challenges they were confronting.⁴⁶

The prominence of the Tolpuddle Martyrs within the culture of the Labour movement was thus rather more arbitrary than it might appear. G.E. Fussell, in his 1948 history of farm workers' politics, suggested that Tolpuddle had loomed too large even within the story of agricultural labourers' struggles, given that 'so many more men were treated even more severely as a result of the 1830 riots'.⁴⁷ The men's 'martyrdom' attracted condemnation at the time, and has elicited sympathy and anger from later generations. But theirs was far from a lone suffering, and their variety of radicalism was less radical than that of many others. Why, then, was this particular story chosen as the focus of so much attention, and imbued with such significance? It has certainly been a story which proved able to capture the public imagination, with elements which become almost fable-like in the telling: the simple, pre-industrial rural setting, a struggle against poverty and a cruel landed elite, a small community of friends and family, harsh punishment and patient endurance through adversity, the eventual vindication of those unjustly wronged, the triumph of peaceful protest. As Reg Groves put it, these were 'six men who have become symbols'.⁴⁸

There may have been an element of happy accident in Tolpuddle's promotion to become, arguably, the central foundation myth of trade unionism. The coinciding of the centenary of the trial with a point in the early 1930s when the TUC (along with other parts of the Labour movement) was keen to find a project to re-galvanise and inspire its membership, clearly worked in Tolpuddle's favour. Moreover the story had some loyal and enthusiastic advocates, whilst at a local level the celebration of Tolpuddle's heritage had never entirely gone away. As I argue in the final section of this essay, the role of place also proved significant in ensuring the continuing prominence of the Tolpuddle Martyrs within both a politicised and a more general national historical culture. The nature of the story's setting, and the efforts to promote this as a site of heritage, have played their own part in the evolution of the Martyrs' place in the historical memory.

PLACE AND HERITAGE

One of the notable elements in how the episode has been remembered and memorialised is that place itself has assumed an important role. 'Tolpuddle' became the shorthand for the story. *Six Men of Dorset* (1934) was billed as 'The Tolpuddle Play'. Historical fictions can allude to the episode simply by name-checking the village: *The Tolpuddle Boy* (2002), *The Tolpuddle Woman* (1994).⁴⁹ This may be a function in part of the fact that this martyrdom was a group experience: rather than focusing on the personality of a heroic individual, an obvious response was to highlight the men's background—including the place they came from. Much was made of their strength of character, their dignity in adversity and the mismatch between their unwarranted criminalisation and their high moral standing. The effect of this was almost to turn them into generic figures who were victims of their circumstances.

As a result, Tolpuddle (as a place) has come to be defined almost exclusively through its part in one historical event—and this small village has acquired remarkable fame as a result. None of this was predestined, even after the Martyrs' case became increasingly celebrated. During the whole of the nineteenth century, Tolpuddle was mentioned in the House of Commons only once, when Wakley raised the issue of the 'Dorchester Labourers' in 1835. References in parliamentary debates in the twentieth century began to take off from the 1930s, but only occurred in large numbers from the 1970s and 1980s, when comparisons between the

experience of contemporary trade union struggles and the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs were often proposed and disputed.⁵⁰

In the TUC's centenary commemorations of the Martyrs, Tolpuddle nearly lost out to Dorchester as the place linked most closely to the episode. Most of the TUC's focus for events in 1934 was on the town of Dorchester—a decision made partly on practical grounds, preferring a location better suited than Tolpuddle was to accommodate the huge crowds that were anticipated. Dorchester had better transport links and many more facilities and attractions. At this point Tolpuddle was frequently described as 'dull', with little to occupy visitors' interest: a place that needed to be brightened up and transformed by the TUC's interventions, notably through establishing the row of 'memorial' cottages for retired land workers, the design and amenities of which might create a focal point and beacon of modernity.⁵¹ The selection of Dorchester over Tolpuddle as the key focus of attention in 1934 was also justified on historical grounds: 'No more fitting place could have been chosen than the actual scene of the epic stand for liberty and the right of Trade Union organisation which had been made by the six village heroes.'⁵² In other words, the TUC was suggesting at this stage that visitors would be more interested in seeing the place where the trial took place, rather than the setting for the men's everyday working lives and the location where they had held their ill-fated union meetings.

Contrary to these expectations, the special events held in Dorchester attracted only disappointing numbers of visitors, while it was the parts of the commemoration that took place in the village itself that made a greater impact. As the *Daily Herald* reported, this rural setting played a major part in making the 1934 commemoration into an emotionally affecting experience: 'It was a moving, heart-gripping event—the green, gently swelling, Dorset hills, the village lifted out of its centuries of quiet, in the near distance the spreading branches of the Martyrs' Tree, and all around and about the great slowly moving crowd.'⁵³ Although the commemorations at Tolpuddle in 1934 were only intended as one element within the larger celebration of trade unionism focused on Dorchester, the TUC's interventions in the village had a lasting legacy. They created sites to visit and added to the village infrastructure, with a new seat (with its own thatched roof) and, most prominent of all, the row of memorial cottages. Along with the memorial arch outside the Methodist chapel, dating from 1912, and the newly commissioned headstone on Hammett's grave, these structures created a trail through the village of

things for visitors to look at, whilst also marking out Tolpuddle's special historical status. One potential site of memory in the village, however, remained strikingly neglected amidst the efforts to establish memorials: the Old Chapel, where the Methodists amongst the Martyrs had worshipped, and long predating the modern chapel and its memorial arch, was seriously derelict by the time of the 1934 commemorations.⁵⁴

It is clear that some trade unionists, in organised groups or as individuals, were already making pilgrimages to Tolpuddle in the early twentieth century.⁵⁵ The creation of these new memorial structures in the village played a large role in establishing Tolpuddle as a destination for visitors, sometimes characterised as 'the workers' Stratford-upon-Avon'.⁵⁶ Tolpuddle came to enjoy a special status as a place where one could experience the history of the labour movement, going back to its (supposed) origins: the so-called 'cradle of the trade union movement'.⁵⁷ Unlike a site such as the old cooperative store at Toad Lane in Rochdale, Tolpuddle could offer no direct links to key labour institutions.⁵⁸ But the contrast between this quiet rural setting and the urban industrial worlds with which most trade unionists were more familiar may account in part for its appeal. The nature of economic development in cities and manufacturing areas meant that it might seem more plausible to be able to encounter the working and living environment of the 1830s in a village like Tolpuddle than in those more industrial settings where working people in the early nineteenth century had been trying to assert their rights and fight for better conditions. Visiting rural Dorset in the twentieth century struck many trade unionists like a journey back in time, so the annual Tolpuddle commemorations and opportunities to visit the memorial sites around the village provided a conducive setting in which to contemplate the movement's origins and history. For some groups, such as the regular gatherings of agricultural trade unionists (whose attachment to Tolpuddle both predated the 1934 commemoration and also weathered those periods when Tolpuddle's national popularity waned), there was an identification with the place and the conditions in which the Martyrs had worked. But for most visitors it was the sense of separation and distinctiveness that helped to constitute Tolpuddle's appeal. Tolpuddle was on few people's doorstep and presented a dramatic contrast with the environments in which modern trade unionism found its strengths. Moreover, a trip to Tolpuddle combined political pilgrimage with more conventional leisure outings into the countryside.⁵⁹ The village which Postgate claimed few people had heard of in the early 1930s

became the closest thing the Labour movement had to a shrine and a place of pilgrimage. The leaflet advertising the 1957 Tolpuddle rally observed that 'Every Trade Unionist dreams of a visit to Tolpuddle some day'.⁶⁰

The memorial landscape evoking the story of Tolpuddle began to extend beyond the village itself. Where once there had been few physical memorials to the Martyrs, namings, inscriptions and representations began to appear at various locations from the 1940s onwards. The National Union of Agricultural Workers placed a plaque on the outside of the Old Shire Hall building in Dorchester, recording this as the place where the Martyrs were sentenced to transportation. Plymouth and District Trades Council erected a plaque at the docks in Plymouth in 1956, to commemorate the return of four of the men in 1838.⁶¹ In 1984 a mural was painted by David Bangs at Edward Square in Islington, depicting scenes from the demonstration at Copenhagen Fields and situated close to where those events took place.⁶² A commemorative plaque was erected in 1959 at the cemetery where George Loveless is buried in Ontario—claiming the episode as a 'turning point in labour laws and practices in the United Kingdom'—and a park in Canada was also named after the Martyrs. Tolpuddle is remembered in, amongst other things, the name of a street in London and a vineyard in Tasmania. Evocations of the episode could act as relatively uncontroversial markers of local heritage, but sometimes they functioned as more explicit references to a history that remained politically charged. Writing about the Dorset Estate council housing scheme in East London, which opened in 1957, Owen Hatherley describes it as 'so achingly Old Labour that its blocks are named after the Tolpuddle Martyrs'.⁶³

In recent years, the official commemorations have also moved beyond the framework established by the TUC during the 1934 centenary events. The Sunday rally has become part of a longer festival, prefaced by a Radical History School.⁶⁴ The museum in the memorial cottages was relaunched (in 2001), and the site has acquired a new sculpture of six stone seats (in 2000), showing the solitary figure of George Loveless, recovering in Dorchester prison while the other Martyrs were already en route to the penal colonies.⁶⁵ A 'Tolpuddle Pilgrimage' (described on its Facebook page as a 'victory walk') was launched in 2014 as a walking festival through Dorset linked to the main Tolpuddle festival, and fuelled by a specially brewed Freedom Hiker ale. It promoted local food projects and cooperatives and community initiatives on sustainable energy,

and the planting of trees grown from the Martyrs' Tree sycamore.⁶⁶ Tolpuddle's commemorative landscape continued to expand, including events at King's Cross, London in April 2009, sponsored by regional bodies of the TUC, to mark the 175th anniversary of the demonstration in Copenhagen Fields.

The place of the Tolpuddle Martyrs within Britain's national heritage has never been entirely defined by political affiliations, despite the TUC's crucial role in reasserting the Martyrs' significance in 1934 and its assumption of responsibility as custodian for key sites of remembrance in Tolpuddle. Indeed, there is something surprising about the way in which these 'martyrs', celebrated by the trade union movement for their sufferings in the interests of trade unionism, have been absorbed so comfortably into an overtly non-political national narrative. The TUC's own efforts at historical recovery and celebration in 1934 contributed significantly to ensuring national recognition of the Tolpuddle Martyrs as historical figures. *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle* succeeded in its aim of presenting a scholarly account of the episode, reprinting many of the key documents, and was brought back into print by the TUC in 1999, promoted (not unreasonably) as 'the most comprehensive account of the Tolpuddle Martyrs'.⁶⁷ Will Dyson's cartoon 'Tolpuddle 1934. Who was then the gentleman?' found new life in 1971 as the pub sign for the Martyrs Inn in the village.⁶⁸

During the twentieth century the Tolpuddle men's branding as 'martyrs' has largely ceased to attract attention and has been accepted as an unproblematic part of their historical identity, rather than an interpretation of their position within social and economic structures of power. Yet the efforts behind the centenary commemoration were not designed to add another group of heroes to the national pantheon, but to claim the Martyrs as an important chapter in the Labour movement's own national story. That appeal to remember the past in 1934 had a strategic purpose, as trade unionists were urged to emulate the 'spirit of the Tolpuddle Martyrs which triumphed over legal persecution and the abuse of power'.⁶⁹

The enthusiasm to evoke the Tolpuddle Martyrs in this way has waxed and waned in reflecting the contemporary state of the Labour movement. The relevance of the story of Tolpuddle rose to the fore again in the 1980s, as the 150th anniversary of the trial came round. That year's Tolpuddle rally became a show of solidarity for sacked workers from the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and a protest

against the Thatcher government's wider attack on trade unionism.⁷⁰ In Sheffield in July 1984, against a backdrop of the miners' strike, industrial action on the buses, renewed agitation about access to land on the Duke of Devonshire's estate in the Peak District, and confrontation between the city's Labour council and the Conservative government over rate-capping and the council's budget, the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs was staged as open-air community theatre. *Tolpuddle: The Martyrs Come to Sheffield* involved school children, the local amateur operatic society, a pensioners' group and many volunteers, acting out the story in the setting of an industrial museum at the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet. The publicity promised that 'the audience entering into a village atmosphere of stalls, music and dance, will find themselves in Tolpuddle witnessing the events of 1834. The grand finale is the triumphant return of the Martyrs from Australia across the Abbeydale mill-pond.'⁷¹

The marking of the 150th anniversary seemed to demonstrate the continuing power of the story to inspire and console. An emotional attachment to the Tolpuddle Martyrs as talismanic figures also extended beyond trade unionism itself, and became increasingly important to left-wing and internationalist groups. Given the existence of criticisms that an overemphasis on the Martyrs served to conceal more radical and less respectable faces of early nineteenth-century protest, this interest from the political left might seem unlikely. Indeed, the TUC's assumption of custody over the story of Tolpuddle had tended to make some sections of the left suspicious of the officially sanctioned celebrations of the Martyrs. But not all those on the far left looked askance at this episode in labour history: communists turned out for the Tolpuddle rallies, to the consternation of some more mainstream trade unionists.⁷² And by the end of the twentieth century, the annual gathering at Tolpuddle, transformed from rally to 'festival', had become the key event in the year for many of those on the political left. Whilst the presence of trade unionists, and indeed of the TUC, remained central to the occasion, there was a much more expansive notion of radicalism being celebrated on the sloping lawn in front of Tolpuddle's memorial cottages. One of the recurring themes in contributions to the book *My Tolpuddle* (2008) is the importance of the Tolpuddle rallies and festivals in recharging radical batteries.⁷³ 'Going to the festival is my annual injection', commented Tony Benn, a regular on the Tolpuddle platform in the early twenty-first century. 'Without it I don't think I could carry on.'⁷⁴ A strong internationalist flavour to these annual gatherings is evident in the presence

of delegations and visitors from labour movements outside Britain, and the use of the Tolpuddle stage to draw attention to the plight of trade unionists overseas. The Martyrs' appeal was never solely confined to a British audience: even in the 1990s, the audio information provided for visitors to the old courtroom in Dorchester ran to ten different languages, assuming that foreign tourists would have an interest in seeing the place where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were tried and convicted.

CONCLUSIONS

In the period since 1934, 'Tolpuddle' has graduated to become a familiar episode in British history. But even as the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs has been absorbed within an inclusive national narrative, its totemic significance for the Labour movement remains remarkable. It functions almost as a foundation myth, as though this episode marked the beginnings of a development leading to the trade unionism, left-wing attitudes and protest politics of today. In its historical context, Tolpuddle looks more like a sidetrack, revealing the limitations of working people's attempts at organisation, and the odds stacked against rural workers in particular in trying to fight for better conditions of employment and a better quality of life. The Martyrs were not by any means the first trade unionists, and are a poor fit for any identification as fathers of the modern Labour movement. Although their stance within the social structures of the village was undoubtedly courageous, and their dignified response to their prosecution and punishment commanded public admiration at the time and since, the real triumph in their story was not ultimately about their agency at all. Instead, the case reveals the power of radical politics and organised protest elsewhere in Britain, in demonstrating against the verdicts and forcing the government to concede pardons for the Tolpuddle men. Perhaps after all it is the mass demonstration at Copenhagen Fields, rather than the covert branch meetings in a small Dorset village, that should be cherished as inspiration for later radical campaigns and politics.

The crushing of the Tolpuddle trade unionists fits into a longer heritage of suffering, the experience of repression, and failed attempts at social and political change—a history which has figured large in shaping a Labour identity in Britain. As 'pioneers', the Tolpuddle Martyrs occupy a very different position, for example, from near-contemporary figures such as the Rochdale Pioneers, whose efforts to establish cooperative

principles and practice could be traced with direct continuities to the modern movement. Tolpuddle, on the other hand, provided only a symbolic genealogy. The six men themselves seem to have put their radical moment to one side in the 1840s, and most of them made a distinct break from their experiences by emigrating, making no effort to exert any leadership or develop the movement which was later to credit them as inspiration. As one trade unionist reflected recently, in discussing the role of the Tolpuddle festival, 'I can't help wondering, is this all we've got—the commemoration of what was, frankly, a defeat for labour organisation at that time?'⁷⁵

Tolpuddle's emotive power was that it could become a fable: an extreme version of the power relations between employer and employees, set in a location so unfamiliar to many later activists that it carried an almost romantic charge. Tolpuddle concentrated the cause of trade unionism and working-class rights to essential principles. It was both an historical episode, and an episode almost outside time. It celebrated a named group of 'pioneers', but also generalised them to archetypes: to become the ancestors of all trade unionists, whatever their trades, backgrounds or experience. It provided a foundation story about the drive to organise and the risks of doing so, but it placed as much emphasis on moral character, courage and dignity in adversity as on strategy or the power of combination. In this context it is notable that the links between the Tolpuddle branch and Robert Owen's Grand National have been so often underplayed in popular rehearsals of the story. Sometimes one might almost imagine that Loveless and his fellow workers had no connection whatsoever with the wider context of radical politics and early trade unions, making their ill-fated experiment within a vacuum.

In all of this, the use of the term 'martyrs' to describe the six Tolpuddle labourers has become utterly commonplace. But it remains, of course, an invention: one description amongst many, which was promoted from the 1930s onwards to become dominant and essentially unquestioned. The martyrdom of the six Tolpuddle labourers was adopted as a way of establishing their heroic status, and to reflect the needs of later generations of trade unionists. It is no coincidence that this reshaping of the Martyrs' story took place in the perilous political climate of Europe in the 1930s. 'To Trade Unionists of the present generation', wrote Walter Citrine in 1934, 'the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs comes both as an inspiration and a warning....'⁷⁶ The imagery of martyrdom evoked courage, sacrifice, commitment and the presence

of physical danger. It also implied obligations on the part of those for whom these sacrifices had been made. That notion of a debt of gratitude has remained important to the ways in which memories of the Tolpuddle Martyrs are evoked, and to the role they have played as a focus for the modern Labour movement. Handbills for the annual Tolpuddle rally carried a motto embodying that spirit of remembrance and obligation: 'We shall never forget what we owe them.'⁷⁷

NOTES

1. G. Bernard Shaw (1934), 'A Shavian Commentary on Martyrs', in Trades Union Congress (TUC), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934. The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years' Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress), p. ix.
2. Quoted Walter M. Citrine in TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. 25.
3. TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. 71.
4. Robert Hartwell, preface to George Loveless (1838), *The Victims of Whiggery. A Statement of the Persecutions Experienced by the Dorchester Labourers; with a Report of Their Trial; also a Description of Van Dieman's Land and Reflections upon the System of Transportation* (London: Central Dorchester Committee), p. 4.
5. W. Hasbach (1908), *A History of the English Agricultural Labourer*, translated by Ruth Kenyon (London: P. S. King & Son), p. 276. The book had originally appeared in German in 1894.
6. Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1894, 1920), *The History of Trade Unionism* (London: Longman, Green & Co. for the first edition and later edition published London: Longman, Green & Co.), pp. 138, 146 in the second edition.
7. Raymond Postgate, 'The Martyrs of Tolpuddle', *News Chronicle*, 23 November 1933.
8. Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Trades Union Congress archive, MSS 292/1.91/31, memo by Walter Citrine, 5 March 1935. In the spring of 1935 Citrine wrote to the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and other publishers of tourist maps, alerting them to the new memorials erected in the village and encouraging them to publicise the location to visitors: see correspondence at MSS 292/1.19/31.
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13. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, 'Introduction', TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. xiv.
14. Andrew Conley, foreword, TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. xii.
15. Reg Groves (1949), *Sharpen the Sickle: The History of the Farm Workers' Union* (London: Porcupine Press), pp. 22–3.
16. Joseph Arch (1966 edition, though originally published in 1898), *The Autobiography of Joseph Arch* (St. Albans: MacGibbon and Kee), pp. 76–81.
17. The phrase 'Tolpuddle Six' has sometimes been adopted in recent years; cf. the slogan 'Free the Tolpuddle Six' on the publicity leaflet for 2013 Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival (author's collection), echoing references to the 'Birmingham Six', whose convictions were quashed in 1991, their original trial having been deemed a miscarriage of justice.
18. Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*.
19. TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. 27; C. V. J. Griffiths (2004), 'Tolpuddle Martyrs (act. 1834–c.1845)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP).
20. Used as part of the iconography since 2005.
21. G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate (1946), *The Common People 1746–1946* (London: Methuen), p. 267. Whilst these protests were indeed unsuccessful initially, the account drops the story in 1834. It is interesting to note that Cole had contributed a chapter to the TUC's Tolpuddle centenary volume: 'A Study in Legal Repression, 1789–1934', *Book of the Martyrs*, pp. 199–213, in which he does refer to the men's 'martyrdom', p. 213.
22. Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, p. 22.
23. *Left Review*, I (1934), 30.
24. Walter Citrine (1934), closing speech, *Report of the Proceedings of the 66th Annual Trades Union Congress*, p. 411.
25. Andrew Conley, foreword, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. xii.

26. Herbert Vere Evatt (2009), *The Tolpuddle Martyrs: Injustice within the Law* (Sydney: Sydney University Press), p. 71. Cf. Stephen Usherwood (1968), 'The Tolpuddle Martyrs, 1834-7: A case of human rights', *History Today*, vol. 18, 14-21.
27. Geoffrey Robertson, introduction to Evatt, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs*, xi.
28. TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, pp. 120-8.
29. TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. 128.
30. Webb and Webb, in TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, pp. xiv-xv.
31. Loveless, *Victims of Whiggery*, p. 10.
32. T. Graham, 'Methodist Labourers Who Made History—The Celebrations', *Methodist Recorder*, 6 September 1934, 5.
33. Dorchester Circuit of the Southampton District of the Methodist Church (2007), *God is Our Guide. The Tolpuddle Martyrs and Their Methodist Roots, Methodist Heritage Handbook* (London: Dorchester Circuit of the Methodist Church); also *Information for Visitors to Historic Methodist Places in Britain*, 2nd edition (2012) (London: Methodist Publishing), pp. 61-2.
34. Methodist Heritage (c. 2013), *The Tolpuddle Martyrs. What Motivated Them?*, leaflet.
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37. Hansford, 'Six Village Hampdens', p. 23.
38. General Council of the TUC (1935), *The Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs Centenary Commemoration—Dorchester 1934* (London: TUC), p. 45.
39. Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs*, p. 269.
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43. Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Trades Union Congress archive, MSS 292/1.91/16, Arthur Hopkinson to Walter Citrine, 17 August 1934.
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45. Roger Ball (2014), 'Tolpuddle, Hutt and the Meerut Conspiracy', Bristol Radical History Group, July, <http://www.brh.org.uk/site/articles/tolpuddle-hutt-meerut-conspiracy/>. See also his pamphlet on the same

- theme: Roger Ball (2010), *Tolpuddle and Swing: The Flea and the elephant* (Bristol: Bristol Radical Pamphleteer Pamphlet).
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 54. Press release on funding for renovation of the Old Chapel in Tolpuddle, 24 October 2016: <http://tolpuddleoldchapeltrust.org/press-release-24th-october-2016/>.
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 56. E.g. reference in speech to the London Trades Council, 9 November 1933 (Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, TUC archive, MSS 292/1.91/17).
 57. Voice-over to 'Tolpuddle', British Pathé news-reel, 27 January 1938.
 58. John Walton (2015), 'Revisiting the Rochdale Pioneers', *Labour History Review*, vol. 80, no. 3, 215–48, particularly 218–19. The Co-operative Union reacquired the original building in 1925, and ran it as a museum of the Co-operative movement from 1931.
 59. Griffiths, 'Remembering Tolpuddle', 163.
 60. Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, TUC archive, MSS 292/1.91/58, leaflet for Tolpuddle rally, published by National Union of Agricultural Workers, 1957.
 61. Details at Blue Plaque Places website: <http://www.blueplaqueplaces.co.uk/tolpuddle-martyrs-james-loveless-james-brine-thomas-standfield-and-1-other-in-plymouth-6780>.
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 63. Owen Hatherley (2016), *The Ministry of Nostalgia* (London and New York: Verso), p. 167.

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69. Andrew Conley, foreword, TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. xii.
70. Lezard and Costley, *My Tolpuddle*, pp. 24, 112.
71. 'At the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet ... Tolpuddle ... the Martyrs Come to Sheffield', flier, n.d. [1984], inserted in programme for the event in collection at Local Studies Library, Sheffield City Library.
72. 'Communists Marched in Dorset Procession', *Dorset Daily Echo*, 18 July 1949.
73. Cf. Hilda Kean's comments on the role of the labour movement's festivals in 'renewing the political hope and emotional strength of the participants': Hilda Keen (2011), 'Tolpuddle, Burston and Levellers: The Making of Radical and National Heritages at English Labour Movement Festivals', in Laurajane Smith, Paul Shackel and Gary Campbell (eds), *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (London: Routledge), pp. 266–82, at p. 279. Billy Bragg talked explicitly of how Tolpuddle 'recharges [his] batteries' (Lezard and Costley, *My Tolpuddle*, p. 5).
74. Lezard and Costley, *My Tolpuddle*, p. 4.
75. Chris Rea, contribution to Lezard and Costley, *My Tolpuddle*, p. 23.
76. TUC, *Book of the Martyrs*, p. 100.
77. Printed handbill advertising the Tolpuddle Martyrs Rally, 19 July 1992, author's collection.

The Featherstone Massacre and Its Forgotten Martyrs

Quentin Outram

In September 1893 troops confronted crowds gathered at Ackton Hall Colliery in Featherstone during a prolonged and widespread lock-out to enforce cuts in wages. Eventually, late in the evening, the troops opened fire. They shot and wounded between twelve and eighteen people, two of them, James Duggan and James Gibbs, fatally.¹ This was the Featherstone Massacre. Here I explore how these events were interpreted in the immediate aftermath and later. I show how a class conflictual interpretation gradually came to hold sway in the 1930s and how it has largely persisted to the present. Finally, I show how the centenary commemoration of 1993 demonstrated the martyrdom of the Featherstone miners but also the parochialism of their ‘cult’.

THE SHOOTINGS

On 28 July 1893 coal miners in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire ceased work in a long-foreshadowed attempt to resist a cut in wage rates. The next day they were joined by miners

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in Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Eventually some 300,000 miners were involved in what was then the largest industrial dispute ever known in Britain.

The 1893 lock-out was not a tightly organised event. The coal owners' organisation did not enforce the lock-out on every coal owner and by no means did every coal owner post notices of reductions. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), after resolving to resist the wage reductions sought by the coal owners, left matters almost wholly in the hands of their district affiliates. In Yorkshire this was the Yorkshire Miners' Association (YMA) led by its General Secretary, the redoubtable Ben Pickard MP, at this time also serving as the President of the MFGB. The YMA, in turn, left it to individual branches to take the initiative. The result was that matters were settled locally. Uniformity was not achieved and, in some collieries, a remarkably relaxed view was taken of what a lock-out entailed.

After the first few days or weeks of carelessness the lack of money began to bite. Men saw that they were to be starved into submission 'whereupon a spirit of hostility at once rose up in their midst'.² August saw frequent incidents where violence was threatened or realised. The conflicts were such as past experience would have led one to expect: clashes between those locked out and those continuing to work. One of the first was in Dewsbury, a mill town south-west of Leeds. Crowds paraded the district on 31 July, hooting and attacking non-unionists. The next day, a crowd estimated at 4000 people in one report, at between 2000 and 3000 men and lads 'besides many women' in another, gathered round the pits to greet the working miners as they came off their shift and launched 'a furious attack with sticks and stones and pieces of coal'.³ At the Hoyland Silkstone Collieries near Barnsley, coke oven workers and some non-union labourers were threatened, sometimes at their houses, and in one case beaten, to make them cease work. The week concluded with an attack on a train working coal traffic to the mainline by 'a large gang of rough lads'.⁴ In the second week of August, men filling, that is, loading, coal were pelted with stones at Aldwarke Main Colliery near Rotherham.⁵ Such incidents continued for the rest of the month.⁶

Nevertheless, there was a clear escalation from Monday, 4 September. Developments in the wider arena of the lock-out brought a change in tactics among the rank and file in some of the more militant areas. The owners began to weaken, with some offering to restart work at the

old rates, and a drift back to work began, especially in Staffordshire. Dissatisfaction with the YMA's and the MFGB's permissive attitude to the lock-out mounted. Individual branches and lodges began to pass resolutions demanding that every man be brought out of the pits.⁷

It was this change in tactics which led to the escalation of early September. Disturbances, some minor, others more substantial, but all mounted with the aim of stopping working miners, colliery tradesmen and others from filling coal, or from working at all, took place at locations scattered all over Yorkshire. On Thursday, 7 September, crowds of miners gathered at Ackton Hall Colliery at Featherstone, near Pontefract, intent on stopping the rumoured working.⁸ Armed troops of the South Staffordshire Regiment confronted the crowds. At about 9.15 p.m. the magistrate, Bernard Hartley, ordered the troops to open fire.⁹ Captain Digby Barker in command instructed two soldiers to carry out the order. They did so. There was a momentary silence, then jeers and hooting broke out again and a cry was heard 'Go on, it's only blank'.¹⁰ The crowd neither turned to run nor made any move to go but, according to Hartley and others, resumed throwing stones and hooting.¹¹ A miner, Thomas Clark, standing beside another, James Duggan, asked him whether the soldiers had fired, and Duggan answered him, 'It's only blank; it won't hurt you'. Just as he spoke the soldiers, eight of them this time, fired again and Duggan dropped to the ground, saying 'I'm shot, Tom'. So also was James Gibbs.¹²

Gibbs survived until 12.40 that night; Duggan died shortly before 9.00 the next morning.¹³ James Arthur Duggan, born in 1867, was a coal miner, originally from Whitwood Mere, near Castleford, a few miles from Featherstone, the son of a bricklayer and his wife and the step-son of a coal miner. In his youth Duggan seems to have been somewhat impetuous, being prosecuted for breaking the windows of John Waller, a prominent local Tory, during the election excitements of 1885.¹⁴ In May 1893 he married Emma Stephenson (1872–1909), the daughter of a coal miner.¹⁵ James Gibbs, born in 1872, was also a coal miner, born in West Dean, near Coleford in the Forest of Dean. The birthplaces of James's siblings suggest the family moved to Normanton, Yorkshire between 1872 and 1875 and to Featherstone by 1878. Gibbs was described in 1893 as 'the chief support of a very poor family—his father only a sickly man, a brother a cripple, and of weak intellect' by the vicar of Featherstone, Frank Stebbing.¹⁶

The second shooting shocked the crowd. Although defiant before the shots rang out, daring the magistrate to read the Riot Act and the soldiers to shoot, it seems the crowd did not believe it would happen, or, if it did, that there would be no loss of life and no injury. The shock was possibly partly the result of the fact that reading the Riot Act had become a rare event and a shooting even more so. Before Featherstone, the last time the military had opened fire on civilians in England or Wales had been a rapidly forgotten incident in 1869; it was generally assumed that there had been no such event since the age of Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington.¹⁷ It was widely supposed that soldiers would fire over rioters' heads, at least at first, or fire blank cartridges, at least at first. The Chief Constable of the West Riding also initially assumed that the first two shots had been fired 'as a warning'.¹⁸ The Home Secretary himself eventually agreed that there was a 'widespread popular superstition' that soldiers attending a riot had 'the right or the habit of firing blank cartridges' and that there was also another superstition, that 'persons who go as sightseers,' as Duggan and Gibbs were admitted to have gone, 'stand in a different position from those engaged in the riots'.¹⁹

INTERPRETATION: INNOCENCE AND BLAME

That something dreadful had happened seemed universally accepted. Who or what, therefore, was to blame? The soldiers? The magistrate? The rioters? The social system, what Cobbett called 'The Thing'? And if the latter, was it the apparatus of law enforcement, an economic system that pitted worker against capitalist or a political system which denied many men and every woman any vote in parliamentary elections?

The lust for blame was fed by the innocence of the victims. 'James Gibbs was a peaceable man and took no part in any riotous proceedings', declared the jury at his inquest.²⁰ Nor was James Duggan anything other than a spectator. Ben Pickard talked of 'innocent persons ... who innocently went to see a fire' and 'men who innocently congregated to see what was going on'.²¹ At Duggan's funeral the minister implied that his death had occurred only because might had prevailed over right, a remark greeted by a 'deep and subdued murmur of approval'.²² In October the Bowen Committee of Inquiry into the disturbances read into the record a letter from the curate-in-charge of the church Gibbs attended in Normanton. It stated that Gibbs was a Sunday school

teacher; that '[h]e was certainly not a man who would have had the least desire to take part in any riotous act, and was on the scene of disturbance simply because he was attracted (as were others from this district) by the signs of a great fire'.²³ In November Emma Duggan, James Duggan's young widow, publicly thanked Mrs Hartley and Mrs Holiday, the wives of the magistrate and the colliery manager, for their help to her, suggesting that both were aware that, at the least, the innocent had been harmed with the guilty.²⁴ In January 1894, John Austin, the local MP, moved a resolution in the House of Commons calling for 'just and reasonable' compensation for the families of Duggan and Gibbs; he, too, described the men as 'innocent' and spoke of the 'wrong and injustice which had been done'.²⁵ One is reminded of Bartlett's suggestion that, at least before the Reformation, it was 'the flow of innocent blood', rather than the cause, that 'was the most fruitful seed of martyr cult' and of the innocents massacred by Herod, martyrs despite theology.²⁶

By the time Duggan's and Gibbs's gravestones were erected, the theme had become muted. Duggan's states that he died 'through a gun shot wound fired by the South Staffordshire Regiment at Lord Masham's Colliery'. Gibbs's reads:

[James Gibbs] who was shot through by the soldiers | who charged the
locked-out miners | at Lord Masham's Collieries, | Featherstone, on the
evening of the | 7th September 1893, | aged 22 years. |

*Gone, not from memory or from love, | But from a world of strife; | Swept
by a rifle ball from earth, | To live an endless life. |*

These are not martyrs' memorials. Instead, the inscriptions state or suggest that their killers were soldiers armed with rifles; that Lord Masham was implicated in their deaths; and Gibbs's that he and the other miners were innocent victims ('locked-out', not 'striking'). The stones do not suggest that either Duggan or Gibbs died for a cause. But the theme of their innocence was remembered, at least on the left. In 1899 Ben Pickard was called upon to explain why he had refused to vote for a parliamentary grant to Lord Kitchener. He explained that 'he remembered that there were officers in the army who ordered soldiers to shoot down certain poor, innocent men at Featherstone', and that the allegations of dishonourable conduct made against Kitchener's officers in the Soudan were therefore all too credible.²⁷ A March 1912 'Appeal to the Rank and

File of the British Army' which appeared under the title 'Don't Shoot' told its readers, 'There was no honour or glory in shooting down the miners of Featherstone'.²⁸ The better-known appeal published by Tom Mann in *The Syndicalist* also referred to the 'murder', not the 'killing', of those at Featherstone.²⁹

It was only Herbert Asquith, the Home Secretary in 1893, who found it necessary to spoil the chorus. Asquith had announced that despite the exculpatory conclusions of the Bowen Committee the government would pay compensation to the relatives of those killed and to the injured, apparently accepting that those shot had been present as 'sight-seers'. Nevertheless, he insisted that

according to the law of this country a man who deliberately and of knowledge takes his stand among the members of a riotous crowd and remains in that position after the Riot Act has been read ... such a man would be guilty of taking part in an unlawful assembly.³⁰

This contrasted badly even with the view of A. J. Holiday, the manager of the colliery at which the shootings had happened. A juror at Gibbs's inquest had asked him if he thought the crowd deserved to be fired at. Holiday had replied 'that he did not consider the military fired because people deserved it. The mob had been told to go away and they did not go.'³¹

BLAME AND INTERPRETATION: HOLIDAY

In the first few days after the shootings there seemed to be few doubts in Featherstone about who was to blame: it was Holiday, the man who, it was believed, had ordered troops to the scene. On the day of the shootings Holiday had left Featherstone to find the police, eventually arriving at Wakefield police station. There he saw the Chief Constable, joining in conference with Lord St Oswald, the owner of Nostell Colliery, who was on the same business. There were no police available; over 200 had been sent to Doncaster because of the St Leger race meeting. Hearing this, St Oswald asked for soldiers and Holiday did not demur, only asking for police as well.³² According to the local press:

An intense feeling of vengeance pervaded the crowds [in Featherstone] ... and there were not a few rumours afloat to the effect that the men meant

to have ‘blood for blood.’ Indeed, it was currently asserted that many revolvers had come into the possession of the strikers, and for a fixed purpose too; vengeance being sworn against the manager of the colliery (Mr Holiday), whose life was considered by the bulk of the people to be in serious jeopardy.³³

Holiday requested military protection for his home, Featherstone Hall, citing threats to sack it and burn it, and a party of police was sent there to guard it.³⁴ Holiday took the threats seriously enough to send his family to neighbours’ houses for their safety.³⁵

That Holiday was blamed for asking for police or military protection for Ackton Hall Colliery may now seem somewhat bizarre. It becomes easier to understand when we remember the then still relatively recent and always imperfect ‘state monopolisation’ of law enforcement, the widespread antagonism to the police among the working classes of the late nineteenth century and if we contrast the events at Featherstone with other incidents during this phase of the lock-out.³⁶ For example, on the Monday before the disturbances at Featherstone, crowds of men, some armed with sticks, reportedly numbering four or five thousand, marched up to Garforth Pit, about seven miles east of Leeds, where they were met by Robert Routledge, the colliery manager, a Mr Prater, the colliery agent, John Allison, the shaftwright and several deputies. Before any opportunity to negotiate arose, Routledge was hit on the side of the head with a stick and fell to the ground. Police Sergeant Robert Chalkley, a local police officer, then intervened, speaking to the man who appeared to be leading the crowd. Chalkley made no attempt to arrest the man who had assaulted Routledge. Instead, a deal was quickly reached: the men’s leader would seek to quieten the crowd if he were allowed to have an interview with the manager. Disregarding the assault on him, Routledge agreed and also rapidly agreed that all work at the colliery would cease. He agreed, also, as a gesture of good faith, that three or four men from the crowd could go down the pit to see that no miners were currently drawing coal. When they regained the surface they announced that they had found no work going on and the crowd moved off.³⁷ Similar incidents, where colliery managers negotiated with large crowds of miners with no more than one or a few local police officers in attendance and without seeking either arrests or further police or military protection, had occurred on the Tuesday at Waterloo Main Colliery, three or four miles south-east of Leeds, at Ryland’s Main Colliery near

Barnsley and at Mitchell Main Colliery near Wombwell, south-east of Barnsley.³⁸ Somewhat more violent encounters took place at Hoyland Silkstone and Rockingham collieries the same day, but again without the colliery managers seeking police or military assistance.³⁹ In contrast, when, on the Wednesday, at Wath Main Colliery, near Rotherham, miners found the manager with a force of fifteen police guarding a group of men loading coal onto railway waggons, a pitched battle broke out during which the colliery yard was wrecked and, later, burnt.⁴⁰

The pattern of these incidents suggests that miners expected to be able to negotiate directly with managers, ‘man to man’, and that the presence of substantial numbers of police was regarded as provocative. Certainly the presence of troops was seen in this light. When Holiday spoke to some of the crowd at Featherstone on the day of the disturbances and told them he could not withdraw the soldiers or the police, ‘One of them said, “There will be a very serious row then”’.⁴¹ While some of these expressions of antagonism may have been situational, arising from a calculation that the miners’ cause would be harmed by military intervention, the principled case was clearly put by Ben Tillet at the Dockers’ Congress ten days after the shootings:

[T]he most serious side of this question was the insult given to civilians by the suspension of all Democratic Government. The Magistrates possessed a power which had been theirs for nearly 300 years. They represented an absolute form of government. They could now snap their fingers at every civic authority, the Watch Committee, Mayor, Town Council, or even the County Council and the Government.⁴²

Not only was the magistracy an undemocratic institution, it was composed almost wholly of capitalists and employers of labour. The military was consequently an instrument of class rule.

Nevertheless, beyond these objections to Holiday’s demands for police and apparent demands for troops there may have been some personal factors behind the animosity toward him. Alfred John Holiday (1841–1905) was an unusually cosmopolitan figure for a colliery manager, and he was an outsider to Featherstone life. He was born in London, trained as a commercial clerk and by 1871 was employed by Samuel Cunliffe-Lister, later ennobled as Lord Masham, as a ‘cashier’, that is, a financial manager, at Manningham Mills in Bradford. He was appointed the ‘Agent’, that is, the manager, for the whole Ackton Hall

estate, including its colliery, on its purchase by Cunliffe-Lister in 1890. He was a member of the Christian Brethren. His mother, Climène Gerber, was French; his father, George Henry Holiday, described himself as a ‘teacher of languages’; his brother, Henry George Alexander Holiday, was a well-known artist, the painter of *Dante and Beatrice*, a follower of the Pre-Raphaelites and a man who held radical economic and social views.⁴³

Whether Holiday’s personal characteristics were material factors or not, it would seem at this point that if Duggan and Gibbs were to be martyrs, the cause for which they would be remembered would be that of civil liberty and freedom from oppression by the agents of the state, of ‘capitalists and the employers of labour’. But within days of the shootings, powerful efforts were being made to establish somewhat different interpretations of their deaths. Both R.B. Cunninghame Graham, the founding president of the Scottish Labour Party, and Keir Hardie, the Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, arrived in Featherstone shortly after the shootings.⁴⁴ Hardie had led the foundation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) only months before and a few miles away in Bradford. On the day of Duggan’s funeral every shop in Featherstone closed and the blinds of all the houses were drawn; Duggan’s body ‘practically “lay in state” in his parents’ house’.⁴⁵ Cunninghame Graham, ‘very cordially received’, led the procession and gave the address. He asked the mourners: ‘What was really going on amongst them?’ and answered ‘the great battle between the forces of capital and labour’. Further:

[I]t appeared that those who were placed in authority over them ... had come to the conclusion that the fetish property, which they had erected into the place of a god, had more sanctity than the human life of a free-born Englishman (cheers).⁴⁶

A few days after this Keir Hardie addressed an open-air meeting of 1500 or 2000 miners at Normanton, a few miles west of Featherstone, in a speech with a less abstract and more party-political message:

When he learnt that men of the class to which he was proud to belong had been shot down in cold blood at Featherstone he thought surely the members of Parliament who had been returned by Yorkshire miners would make the country ring with indignation at the foul outrage. He had waited

in vain. And why? Because the party to whom they belonged [the Liberals] were in power.⁴⁷

Featherstone and the surrounding colliery villages were, indeed, a bastion of Liberalism. The Osgoldcross constituency in which Featherstone lay returned the Liberal candidate Sir John Austin from 1886 almost until his death twenty years later. Thomas Willans Nussey, the MP for neighbouring Pontefract from 1893 until 1910, was also a Liberal, the son of a woollen manufacturer.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the district miners' trade union, Ben Pickard's YMA, was a citadel of Lib-Labism.⁴⁹ Despite the shootings, neither the ILP nor the Labour Party had much in the way of electoral success in Featherstone for many years. There were nineteen ILP councillors in the West Riding in 1900, but it was not until the spring of 1904 that one of Featherstone's pioneer socialists, J.J. Murphy, was finally elected to the Featherstone Urban District Council (UDC).⁵⁰ Only from 1919 did ILP and Labour Party members consistently outnumber coal owners and colliery managers on the UDC. If the electors of Featherstone blamed the Liberal Party for the shootings, they had a strange way of showing it.

BLAME AND INTERPRETATION: ASQUITH

The efforts to divert blame from Holiday towards the abstractions of property, capital and the Liberal Party were less successful than those which sought to deflect the blame on to the Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith. The vilification of Asquith went on not for a few months but for decades, and 'Featherstone' became a familiar note in anti-Asquithian rhetoric. The rhetoric was deployed not only in Featherstone and in other mining communities but nationally. Speakers on Labour platforms called him 'Asquith the murderer'.⁵¹ David Nicoll, an anarchist, told a meeting of 'working Jews' in Leeds that

The Tory Government broke the heads of London working men at Trafalgar-square, the Liberal Government shot down men at Featherstone. We had the murderer Matthews, and we had got the assassin Asquith to succeed him.⁵²

Nicoll's pamphlet of 1895 claimed that neither Holiday, nor Barker, the captain of the troops, nor Bernard Hartley, the magistrate who

ordered Barker to fire, were culpable, asserting that the ‘real murderer’ was ‘Asquith the Assassin’.⁵³ Another pamphlet of 1895 declared, as if it were a commonly acknowledged fact, that ‘the Miners of England have not forgotten the shooting down of their brethren at Featherstone by the late Liberal Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith’.⁵⁴ Working men in Asquith’s audiences greeted him with cries of ‘Featherstone!’ and ‘Murderer!’. It was said that Asquith had deliberately sought to ‘thin the ranks’ of the strikers at Featherstone and that he had shot down workmen ‘to please employers’.⁵⁵

Such taunts were used by those who opposed Asquith on other grounds. Asquith’s opposition to women’s suffrage, declared in 1892 and maintained until the middle of the First World War, made him an especial target for militant suffragists.⁵⁶ In 1897, Annie Young, a women’s suffragist of Battersea, London, shouted ‘Don’t listen to old Asquith, the Featherstone murderer’ at a meeting addressed by Asquith at Battersea Town Hall.⁵⁷ In 1906 suffragettes were prosecuted and imprisoned after a demonstration in front of Asquith’s house in which Jane Sparborough of Bow, in London, called out ‘What about Featherstone?’, the magistrate finding that the word ‘Featherstone’ could only have been used in ‘an extremely offensive sense’.⁵⁸ Similarly, those who supported Campbell-Bannerman and opposed Asquith during the rifts in the Liberal Party precipitated by the Boer War found ‘Featherstone’ a useful stone to throw. In 1902 a leaflet was scattered at a meeting of Campbell-Bannerman’s supporters warning of a conspiracy to replace Campbell-Bannerman with Lord Rosebery who, *inter alia*,

supported the South African war, condoned the concentration camps, has repudiated Home Rule for Ireland, and who is, therefore, supported by the Tory Press and the wealthy classes, by Asquith, the ‘hero’ of Featherstone.⁵⁹

Among the leaders of the left, ‘Featherstone’ became a shorthand for the use of military force by the state in the interests of capital and one of the main pieces of evidence used to show that the Liberals were hypocrites, declaring themselves to be friends of the people while ‘cutting their throats’, presenting themselves as defenders of civil liberties while the ‘Cossack’ actions of the ‘Tsar Liberals’ ‘Russianised’ England’s civil and military system.⁶⁰ Keir Hardie reminded a meeting of railwaymen during the national railway strike of 1911 that Asquith had been Home

Secretary at the time of the Featherstone disturbances and was now, as Prime Minister, ready to ‘let loose’ the troops ‘upon the people to shoot them if needs be’.⁶¹ Less than ten days later, troops opened fire on a crowd that had gathered at an incident in the railway strike in Llanelli in south Wales; two people were shot dead, the last persons ever shot dead on British soil by British troops.⁶² Harry Quelch, the editor of the Social Democratic Federation’s *Justice*, referred to ‘a man whose hands were red with the blood of the workers’—Asquith.⁶³ Such taunts continued until the end of Asquith’s political career.⁶⁴

A FORGOTTEN INTERPRETATION: FEATHERSTONE THE HARMONIOUS

This, then, was the most widely known and remembered interpretation of the Featherstone massacre: an incident in which Asquith had sent troops to shoot down workers. As we have seen, it had many variants. One was written in terms of class conflict and revealed the Liberal Party to be a party of capitalists acting against the workers, and the state to be no more than the willing ally of those capitalists. It might have presented Gibbs and Duggan as martyrs of the working class in the struggle for socialism. The second was written in terms of a pluralist liberal political discourse and argued for the ILP or the Labour Party as the better representative of working-class men and women at Westminster. It might have presented Gibbs and Duggan as martyrs in the struggle for democratic political representation. The third was an internal conflict between opposing wings of the Liberal Party: the deaths of the miners at Featherstone served to demonstrate the evils of the Liberal Imperialists. The fourth was the conflict between women’s suffragists and their antagonists, among whom was, until 1916, the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith.

The dominance of this anti-Asquithian tradition suffocated at least one other interpretation of events, based not on class and conflict but on manliness, respectability and a celebration of class cooperation and harmony. Such views emerged very early. While Ben Pickard told newspaper reporters that ‘lawlessness could not serve the purpose of a trades union’, he also said, bluntly, that ‘Colliery owners were to blame for everything’.⁶⁵ But other miners’ leaders openly and simply condemned those miners who had caused disturbances, whether at Featherstone or elsewhere. Ned Cowey, the YMA President, told a mass meeting of miners in Barnsley that

He hoped ... the men would show themselves, as they had always done, able and willing to fight out the battle without lawlessness or riotous conduct. ... Miners were not wild men of Africa or barbarians; they were a body of thinking men, endowed with reasoning powers, and were as respectable as any other class of men in Great Britain. (Cheers.)⁶⁶

A Mr Simpson said at a mass meeting of miners at Batley Carr near Dewsbury that 'if he thought the riots had been caused by miners he would be ashamed of them'.⁶⁷ Amos Beeton of Robin Hood, a colliery village between Wakefield and Leeds, said, 'The ruffianism that had been exhibited recently was not on the part of miners, but of outsiders'.⁶⁸ Beeton was, however, being fanciful in one respect at least. It is now known that the crowd, one of several, which arrived at Ackton Hall Colliery around 6.00 p.m. and set the colliery yard on fire, was led by a man called Amos White.⁶⁹ He was undeniably a miner, but he was also an 'outsider' to Featherstone, for he had lived in Streethouse, a village a couple of miles west of Featherstone, since 1872 or before.⁷⁰ Although two miles seems an immaterial distance, Featherstone witnesses spoke consistently of him and his crowd as 'outsiders'. One miner's wife told a reporter a few days after the disturbances:

'It was the folk from Normanton and Castleford and the rabble from Wakefield that ... did the mischief. In Featherstone they wanted no more to hurt the collieries than they wanted to be hurt themselves. Not far away', she added with strong feeling, 'was the widow of one of the most likely young men in the district who had gone out to see what was doing and got killed for his pains'.⁷¹

The jury at Gibbs's inquest, composed of local men, found that had the

whole district not been deprived of the Police ... there would have been no necessity to call in the military at all, as the Police would have been assisted by the Miners and other residents in the District in putting down a disturbance, originally created by outsiders or nonresidents in the locality'.⁷²

The view that it was not Featherstone folk who did the mischief is well supported. Holiday told a reporter from the London *Daily News* that 'as far as he and his friends had been able to learn, none of the colliers employed at the pit were to be seen among the rioters, nor even any of the inhabitants of Featherstone'.⁷³ He later stated to the Bowen

Committee that Amos White's crowd were strangers to him entirely.⁷⁴ Police Sergeant Joseph Sparrow, the village policeman, knew 'not one' of them.⁷⁵ William Jaques, the surface men's foreman, saw White's crowd arrive from the direction of Streethouse and Sharlston, another pit village towards Wakefield, and said he did not think there was a Featherstone man among them.⁷⁶ Richard Pease, a colliery joiner at Ackton Hall, said they were 'all strangers to me'.⁷⁷ Fred Senior, a 19-year-old coal miner in 1893, saw a group of men walking towards Featherstone from the Streethouse direction; one was his elder brother John. 'Some were carrying sticks, all had their pit boots on.' Said John: '[We're off] t' pit yard lad, there's scabs working coal and we're gonna stop it.'⁷⁸

Consistent with this view went an emphasis not on the militancy of Featherstone but on its unusually harmonious class relations. Two incidents out of many will have to suffice to demonstrate this. In March 1912, at the beginning of the national coal mining strike of that year, about a thousand miners in Featherstone held a meeting, chaired by Councillor J.J. Murphy of the ILP, to which they invited the head of the local police. The men were advised by one of their leaders, Edward Hough, also an active socialist, to stay indoors during the strike as much as possible. They unanimously passed a resolution discouraging disorder. They took the view that the disturbances of 1893 had been caused largely by outsiders and resolved that should similar circumstances arise, they would urge any unruly visitors to leave, 'and if persuasion failed they promised their assistance to the police and the mineowners'.⁷⁹

There is now absolutely no ill feeling between the men and the managers and owners. ... As members of the union the men must, of course, fight for what they consider their just claims, but there is no bad blood ...⁸⁰

The second incident concerns the General Strike in 1926. Rumours were set about by 'a paper printed in Derbyshire' which incorrectly alleged a serious riot in Featherstone 'in which 16 persons were said to have been killed'. A local tradesman responded, 'And Featherstone is probably the quietest place in Yorkshire today'.⁸¹ The football match between police and strikers in Plymouth during the General Strike is well known; in Featherstone a game of cricket was played between police and miners during the lock-out that followed the Strike; the proceeds were devoted to feeding the miners' children. The event was worthy of note, wrote the local paper, 'as typical of the feeling existing between the police and the colliery workers in Featherstone'.⁸²

The memory, if not quite the history, of Featherstone's class collaborationism has died. If Gibbs and Duggan were to become martyrs, this had to happen. Martyrs arise in circumstances of profound conflict. If there was no profound conflict, only an unfortunate incident best forgotten, or the consequences of a crime perpetrated by 'the folk from Normanton and Castleford and the rabble from Wakefield', there can be no martyrdom, only luckless lives brought to a premature close by the vicissitudes of the times.

THAT IS WHAT THE BOSSES DO TO THE WORKERS: 'THEY SHOOT THEM'

Gradually the personal and physical reminders of the shootings disappeared and only the granite stones in North Featherstone cemetery marking Duggan's and Gibbs's graves remained. Duggan's young widow, Emma, remarried in 1897 and moved away to Bradford. Sergeant Sparrow retired in 1899. Captain Barker died the same year. Holiday died in 1905; Hartley, the magistrate, in 1913; Asquith in 1928. In 1926 Ackton Hall Colliery was taken over by the South Kirkby, Featherstone and Hemsworth Colliery Company, and Roslyn Holiday, A.J. Holiday's son, ceased to be its manager. Roslyn Holiday died in 1935, and at that point the Holidays' presence in Featherstone came to an end.⁸³ The physical reminders were gradually erased from the local landscape. Featherstone Main Colliery closed in 1936 and the site now shows few hints that a colliery once stood there. Ackton Hall was one of the first collieries to close after the 1984–1985 strike; only a few surface buildings remain, surrounded by the sheds of the light industrial estate which now covers the area.⁸⁴ As time went by and people left town or succumbed to illness and old age, the memories and emotions evoked in Featherstone by the shootings of necessity became less and less personal, less and less attached to, or directed at, specific people. People's feelings about the shootings, insofar as they continued to exist, found more abstract and enduring objects, supporting a range of social and political interpretations and attitudes.

The last of the agitational pamphlets written about the disturbances was published in 1906. From that point until Robin Page Arnot produced the first modern account of the disturbances in 1949, the memories of the disturbances were kept alive by local oral tradition. 'My dear

father was with James Gibbs at the time of the shooting. ... [H]e used to often talk about the time he was shot', wrote one elderly lady in 1974.⁸⁵ Geoffrey Lofthouse (1925–2012), a Featherstone resident, a miner and, between 1978 and 1997, the local MP, learned about the shooting from his grandparents in the 1930s or 1940s.⁸⁶ Paul Senior of Featherstone recalls being taken by his father to a lecture on 'the Featherstone pit riots', probably at some point in the 1950s or 1960s.⁸⁷ The family was not the only 'vehicle' for memory. Lofthouse recalled his friend Tommy Watton, a branch secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), who 'would visit the grave [of Duggan and Gibbs] annually. The NUM Branch in Featherstone were never allowed to forget this incident.'⁸⁸

In 1949, Robin Page Arnot produced the first volume of his history of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the predecessor of the NUM.⁸⁹ Arnot was a foundation member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and, unsurprisingly, his histories take an approach founded on the assumption of class conflict. They are sagas, not of reform promoted by the enlightened but of struggle: epic and heroic struggles leading sometimes to defeat, as in 1926, but sometimes to victory, as in the nationalisation of the mines in 1947. His account of the Featherstone shootings is all of a piece with the broader fabric he weaves. The importance of Arnot's account in reflecting Featherstone's history back to Featherstone is indicated by a comment by Geoff Lofthouse: 'Page Arnot told the full story of the Featherstone Disturbance and the myth of what happened in our village in 1893 [i.e., what he had been told by his grandparents] gave way to knowledge of the reality of that great power struggle.'⁹⁰ Thus does the text come to supersede experience. Paul Senior absorbed a similar account. The lecture he attended provoked his father to tell the young Paul what his grandfather had said to him of the events of that day. It was an account that highlighted the successful prevention of scabs working and minced no words about the violence that this had involved and that Hartley had ordered the troops to fire without giving time for the crowd to disperse.⁹¹

In the 1990s a local writer stated, 'there was no doubt in my Granddad's mind and little doubt in mine, that the Featherstone Incident was about class war'.⁹² Lofthouse recalled being taken to see the graves of Duggan and Gibbs by his grandfather:

I can't remember exactly what he said but I do remember the sentiments. He highlighted the fact that this is what they do to men who dare to take action against the Establishment. They shoot them. ... What was instilled was the knowledge that there was an essential difference between the bosses and the workers, an unbridgeable gap.⁹³

Instead of concerning Holiday or Asquith, the sentiments concerned 'the Establishment', 'the bosses' and 'them'. Memories of the shootings became embedded in a view of the world in which a class war was waged, in which the classes were separated by an unbridgeable gap; one in which 'they' could not be trusted. A view of the world in which the classes could collaborate, not least in the preservation of order, was forgotten.

If the Featherstone mining intelligentsia became the lay custodians of the history of the Featherstone shootings, Arnot's account was the 'official' history and the Yorkshire Area of the NUM became its custodian. That this was so was not often apparent. There was no commemoration of the massacre on its 75th or any other anniversary before the centenary.⁹⁴ Then, in 1977, a dispute between the NUM's Yorkshire Area and Robert Neville, who had been appointed as the Yorkshire Miners' official historian, over the correct interpretation of the dispute spilled onto the pages of the *Yorkshire Evening Post*.⁹⁵ Arthur Scargill, at this time President of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM, objected strongly to Neville's use of the term 'mob' to describe the crowds at Featherstone and presented a view of the disturbances in which there was no riot until after the shootings; that 'pickets' were present at the colliery only to prevent the loading of coal by non-union 'blackleg' labour; and that the purpose of calling in the troops was not to keep order but to intimidate the miners.⁹⁶ Use of the word 'mob' became the sticking point; Neville refused to withdraw and was dismissed. Scargill stated his view that 'the NUM have every right to have its membership described in dignified terms'.⁹⁷ A 'mob' is, almost by definition, guilty of disturbance and intimidation if nothing more; members of a 'mob' are not innocent and cannot be saints and cannot be martyrs. While Scargill may have been concerned consciously to preserve the dignity of his members, his stance also had the effect of preserving the memory of Duggan and Gibbs as innocents. It also made plain that the Yorkshire Area of the NUM was the custodian of the memory of the massacre and would brook no heresy. The sense of possession was also indicated in comments made to

a sociologist visiting the Yorkshire coalfield at about the time of the centenary: when he mentioned Featherstone to anybody from the NUM, he was often told, “Yes, we lost two men there, you know”. They were the miners’ men, adopted by the NUM.⁹⁸

COMMEMORATION

By the 1990s, writings about Featherstone had accumulated, often prompted by contemporary conflicts in the industry. No substantial commemoration took place, however, until the centenary of the massacre in 1993. A monument was erected in Featherstone’s shopping precinct and unveiled shortly before the anniversary.⁹⁹ The inscription at its base reads:

This memorial records the centenary of an incident on September 7 1893 when, following a disturbance in Featherstone, the Riot Act was read and in the ensuing military action troops opened fire on the demonstrators, killing James Gibbs and James Arthur Duggan and wounding several others.

This was just another chapter in the struggle by miners for better pay and working conditions.

The memorial is careful to refer to the events as a ‘disturbance’, not a ‘riot’, thereby maintaining the innocence of those present including Duggan and Gibbs. It gives a clear statement of the cause for which Duggan and Gibbs died but it is nothing grand or glorious, not ‘an end to tyranny’, not ‘for justice’, but only ‘for better pay and working conditions’ for ‘miners’. The text as a whole, but especially the phrase ‘just another chapter’, renders the cause for which Duggan and Gibbs died prosaic, parochial and commonplace.

Two streets were renamed as James Duggan Avenue and James Gibbs Close, ‘guaranteeing that their names, and the event they were part of, will live on in the minds of Featherstone people’.¹⁰⁰ An exhibition, ‘Shot Through by the Soldiers’, was mounted. Ian Clayton wrote a play, ‘The Enemy Within: A Community Play: The Story of the Featherstone Shootings’.¹⁰¹ Clayton told one interviewer that the play ‘could be an allegory of the 1984 miners’ strike’,¹⁰² and its title is, of course, a reference to Margaret Thatcher’s description of British miners made during that strike, in July 1984.¹⁰³ Tony Lumb and Brian Lewis’s

book was published to commemorate the centenary.¹⁰⁴ It was also the occasion for many speeches and each offered an attempt to reinterpret the Featherstone disturbances for a new generation. In the run-up to the commemoration, on 29 July, Scargill spoke to a crowded hall in Featherstone, arguing, slowly and methodically, that ‘the action of the authorities and the troops amounted to a conspiracy to murder’ and making a detailed comparison between the events at Featherstone and the events at the Orgreave Coking Depot in 1984.¹⁰⁵ Although Scargill condemned Holiday and other ‘conspirators’, it is ‘the authorities’ who figure most prominently in his speeches, a term which could be transferred easily to Margaret Thatcher and John Major, their governments, the police and the courts.

The resonance between the events of 1893 and 1984–1985 was obvious to many, not only to Scargill. Councillor Steve Vickers, Featherstone Town Mayor, said, ‘the issues have been basically the same and the same state machinery has been brought to bear in order to crush the miners’ will’,¹⁰⁶ and that ‘these men [Duggan and Gibbs] died because they stood against injustice, similar to the fight against injustice in 1984 which we all shared in’.¹⁰⁷ But the events had a meaning which was malleable. For Councillor Graham Isherwood, Duggan and Gibbs ‘gave their lives for the fight for jobs in the community’,¹⁰⁸ a comment which perhaps gave a local reporter the impression that Duggan and Gibbs had been shot dead ‘in a battle over pit jobs’.¹⁰⁹ Similarly for Simon Bond the point of the centenary was to commemorate ‘those brave men and women who were prepared to defend the interests’ not of their class or their workmates, but ‘of their communities’.¹¹⁰

CONCLUSION: MARTYRS REMEMBERED AND FORGOTTEN

By 1968, the year the TUC commissioned the *Peterloo Overture*, the ‘Featherstone Massacre’, except in Featherstone itself and in other mining communities, had been quite forgotten. The memory of Featherstone became merely local and restricted to the coal mining sub-culture from about 1920, the last time Asquith was publicly blamed for the massacre. From that point onwards even the most assiduous reader of the national culture might never have heard the word ‘massacre’ linked to Featherstone.¹¹¹ If Duggan and Gibbs had been national martyrs before 1920, by the centenary of their deaths their ‘cult’ had become purely local and occupational.

But are Duggan and Gibbs secular martyrs? The answer must be a positive one despite the fact that, though sometimes remembered as standing against injustice, they did not purposefully accept death for a cause but were simply unlucky. Nevertheless they did die at the hands of a state which, if it was not persecuting miners directly, stood aside while coal owners sought to drive wages down by forcing hunger and starvation on their workers: 'For children it was cruel; it was bitter for the women, and galling to the men; but the masters ate and drank and kept themselves aloof', as one witness wrote.¹¹² These comments are not merely rhetorical. In late October a coroner's jury in Pontefract determined that the fatal illness suffered by 7-year-old Catherine Maud Price, the daughter of a locked-out miner, had been aggravated by want of nourishment.¹¹³ Duggan and Gibbs represented the community suffering, this cruelty, this bitterness and this gall.

The deaths of Duggan and Gibbs acquired meanings and those meanings were used in secular conflicts and controversies; in this respect, too, Duggan and Gibbs came to be martyrs, their deaths forming ideological resources. Those meanings changed as time passed. In the earliest days their deaths were immediately seen to have a significance which was out of the ordinary; this is why Duggan's body 'practically "lay in state"' at his parents' house. Duggan's and Gibbs's deaths were seen to demonstrate and symbolise the lengths to which Holiday would go to protect Lord Masham's colliery: the shedding of innocent blood. This was a 'lay' meaning: it emerged in Featherstone without any obvious source, either personal or institutional. It is reflected in the earliest newspaper reports from Featherstone; it is consistent with the inscriptions carved into Duggan's and Gibbs's gravestones. Attempts to provide a more abstract meaning by Cunningham Graham and Hardie failed. Instead, blame for the massacre became attached to Asquith. Although the blame was expressed personally, its rhetorical use was to pursue impersonal conflicts, either of class, gender or of party politics. The passage of time eventually cleared the way for a greater abstraction in the rhetoric, although it was expressed with no less vehemence: This is what the bosses do: 'they shoot you'. By this time the Yorkshire Area of the NUM and its Featherstone branch had become the custodian of the martyrs' history and reputation. In a direct re-enactment of the practices of Christian martyrdom, Tommy Watton, a NUM branch secretary, 'would visit the grave [of Duggan and Gibbs] annually'. Their martyrdom 'instilled knowledge' and it was knowledge, to some, of class war,

though to others, as the commemorations of 1993 showed, the knowledge it instilled was of ‘the struggle by miners for better pay and working conditions’, or of the 1984–1985 miners’ strike, or of ‘the fight for jobs’, or for miners’ communities.

Duggan and Gibbs were, as martyrs are, members of and representatives of their community. If a successful martyrdom requires a continuing community of believers, as much scholarship suggests, the future of Duggan’s and Gibbs’s martyrdom must be in doubt. With the closure of Ackton Hall Colliery in 1985, the nearby Prince of Wales Colliery in 2002 and Kellingley Colliery, a few miles east of Featherstone on the other side of Pontefract, the last deep coal mine in Yorkshire and in Britain, in 2016, the erasure of the community formed by Featherstone’s miners and those of the wider industry is in sight. Any sustainable community of believers will have to be an imagined community stretching beyond the borders of the town and its former industry. The prospects for creating such a community do not look good. In 2013 the local paper noted the 120th anniversary of the shootings and proclaimed the ‘Featherstone massacre will not be forgotten’. As evidence it reported that a ‘commemorative guided walk’ had been organised, not by the TUC, the Labour Party, the Town Council or a local group of former miners, but by ‘members of the West Yorkshire Socialist Historians’.¹¹⁴

NOTES

1. Estimates of the number wounded by the soldiers’ bullets range up to eighteen. The official report on the disturbances, the *Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into Circumstances Connected with the Disturbances at Featherstone on the 7th September 1893* [Chairman Lord Bowen], C.7234, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893–1894, xvii, 381, cited here as ‘Bowen, *Report*’, states that eleven to fourteen were hit (p. 9). Saxton names and details twelve killed and wounded, apparently found from filtering a contemporary newspaper account for obvious and not-so-obvious double counting: I. Saxton (1986), ‘The Ackton Hall Colliery “Riot”’, *The Featherstone Chronicle: An Historical Review*, vol. IV, September, 2–24 at p. 9; cf. ‘The Coal Riots’, *Pontefract and Castleford Express*, 9 September 1893; Lumb and Lewis give eighteen men hit: Tony Lumb and Brian Lewis (1993), *Featherstone and its 1893 Disturbance* (Featherstone: Briton), p. 38. Eventually nine injured men and the families of Duggan and Gibbs were given compensation by the government: Saxton, ‘The Ackton Hall Colliery “Riot”’, p. 24. It is

- thought that some of the wounded may have failed to come forward for compensation for fear of prosecution for their part in the disturbances.
2. Sam Wood (c. 1894), *The Battle of '93: A Descriptive Record of the Great Coal Strike* (Barnsley: Neale Bros.), p. 9. This is the only extant, connected account from a local and working-class hand.
 3. *Reynold's Newspaper* [London], 6 August 1893 (quotation; 4000); *Leeds Mercury*, 2 August 1893 (2000 or 3000).
 4. *Barnsley Chronicle*, 5 August 1893, referring to events on 28–31 July and 1–2 August, 1893; *Barnsley Chronicle*, 19 August 1893.
 5. *Barnsley Chronicle*, 12 August 1893.
 6. See, for example, *Pontefract & Castleford Express (P&CE)*, 19 and 26 August, and 2 September, 1893.
 7. *Barnsley Chronicle* (1893), *History of the Great Strike and Lock-out* (Barnsley: Alfred Whitham); *Barnsley Chronicle*, 9 September 1893. The importance of this change in tactics has been emphasised by Brian Lewis, letter to the editor, [Yorkshire] *Evening Post*, 23 April 1977, and Carolyn Baylies (1993), *The History of the Yorkshire Miners 1881-1918* (London: Routledge), pp. 107–12.
 8. Accounts of the disturbances and their background are given by R. P. Arnot (1949), *The Miners: A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain 1889-1910* (London: George Allen & Unwin), pp. 219–65; R. G. Neville (1974), 'The Yorkshire Miners 1881-1926' (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds), pp. 175–237; R. G. Neville (1976), 'The Yorkshire Miners and the 1893 Lockout: The Featherstone "Massacre"', *International Review of Social History*, vol. XXI, number 3, 337–57, which follows his thesis closely; Roger Geary (1985), *Policing Industrial Disputes, 1893 to 1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 6–24; and Baylies, *History of the Yorkshire Miners*, pp. 95–130. Two excellent accounts have been provided by local historians: Saxton, 'The Ackton Hall Colliery "Riot"', and Lumb and Lewis, *Featherstone*. The Bowen Committee *Report* is less useful than the evidence given to the Committee, which is available as the *Minutes of Evidence (with Appendices) Taken before the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Circumstances Connected with the Disturbances at Featherstone on 7th September 1893*, C.7234-I, Parliamentary Papers, 1893–1894, xvii, 399, cited here as 'Bowen, *Minutes*'.
 9. Barker, deposition to Treasury Solicitor, 24 September, in the National Archives (NA), Kew, London, TS18/1407, p. 76; undated deposition of Hartley to the Treasury Solicitor, in NA TS18/1407, p. 106; Bowen, *Report*, p. 7; Bowen, *Minutes*, Qq. 1267–1311 (Barker).
 10. *Yorkshire Post*, 11 September 1893.

11. Deposition of Hartley, 9 September 1893, West Riding County Council (WRCC) Solicitor's papers, Wakefield Record Office (RO), WRD1/37/2/1; supported by Barker (deposition to Treasury Solicitor, 24 September, in NA TS18/1407, p. 76), the reporter Walter Smithers (deposition to Treasury Solicitor, 28 September, in NA TS18/1407, p. 117; Bowen, *Minutes*, Q. 1735) and the reporter from the London *Daily News*, himself apparently relying on an interview with A. J. Holiday, the colliery manager, on 10 September: *Daily News* [London], 11 September 1893.
12. *Yorkshire Post*, 14 September 1893.
13. *P&CE*, 9 September 1893.
14. John Waller, deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, September 1893, in NA TS18/1407, p. 56.
15. Sources: census and vital registration records; copy deposition of Emma Duggan to the inquest on her husband, September 1893, in National Archives HO 144/253/A55059K (1-112), item 82; I am grateful to Tony Lumb for providing information about Emma Stephenson.
16. Sources: census and vital registration records; F. G. Stebbing, 'In acknowledgement' [letter to the editor], *Leeds Mercury*, 7 October 1893.
17. Select Committee on [the] Employment of [the] Military in Cases of Disturbances, *Report*, HC236, Parliamentary Papers, 16 July 1908, Q. 26; J. J. Terrett (1906), *The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, M. P., and the Featherstone Massacre* (London: Twentieth Century Press), p. 5.
18. Letter, Chief Constable, West Riding, Wakefield, 8 September, to Secretary of State, Home Department, NA, HO 144/253/A55059K (1-112), item 23.
19. H. H. Asquith, Home Secretary, replying to the debate on the Featherstone disturbances, *The Parliamentary Debates* (Hansard), 4th series, xx, 10 January 1894, col. 1311.
20. *Copy Inquisition Taken at Featherstone in the County of York on View of the Body of James Gibbs*, WRCC Solicitor's papers, Wakefield RO, WRD1/37/2/3. The jury's verdict was widely and fully published in the press, e.g. in the *Yorkshire Post*, 14 September 1893.
21. *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September 1893.
22. *P&CE*, 16 September 1893.
23. Letter, W. Dyer, Hopetown, Normanton, to H. H. S. Cunynghame [Secretary to the Bowen Committee], 14 October 1893 in Bowen, *Minutes*, p. 85.
24. *Pontefract Advertiser*, 30 September 1893; Emma Duggan, letter to the editor, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 22 November 1893, reprinted, *Pontefract Advertiser*, 25 November 1893. Mrs Hartley gave her £5; Mrs Holiday, £2.

25. *The Times*, 11 January 1894.
26. Robert Bartlett (2013), *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 185.
27. *Leeds Mercury*, 20 June 1899; *The Parliamentary Debates* (Hansard), 4th series, lxxii, 5 June 1899, cols 327–408.
28. *The Times*, 8 March 1912, referring to an appeal printed in the SDF's paper *Justice* over the name 'Tom Quelch'. Harry Quelch was the editor of *Justice*; Tom was his son.
29. Tom Mann (1923), *Tom Mann's Memoirs* (London: Labour Publishing Co. Ltd), chap. 20.
30. *The Times*, 11 January 1894.
31. *Yorkshire Post*, 13 September 1893.
32. Police Sergeant Sparrow, deposition, WRCC Solicitor's papers, Wakefield RO, WRD1/37/2/1; Holiday, deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, 25 September, in NA TS18/1407, pp. 28–30; Sparrow, deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, 28 September, in NA TS18/1407, p. 87; Captain Stuart Russell, Chief Constable, undated deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, in NA TS18/1407, pp. 126–27; Bowen, *Report*, pp. 2–3; *Minutes*, Qq. 159–200 (Gill), 375–84 (Russell), 469–503 (Holiday), 1071–82 (Sparrow), 2060a–78 (St Oswald); St Oswald, undated deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, in NA TS18/1407, pp. 12–13; William Smith Gill, Deputy Chief Constable, deposition to the Treasury Solicitor, 22 and 23 September, in NA TS18/1407, p. 66.
33. *P&CE*, 9 September 1893. There were no significant restrictions on the possession of firearms by civilians in the UK before the 1920 Firearms Act. Firearms were available for sale at ordinary ironmongers.
34. Bowen, *Minutes*, Q. 1530 (Police Inspector Prosser) and similarly Qq. 2639–42 (Richard Pease, a colliery joiner).
35. *Yorkshire Post*, 9 September 1893.
36. David C. Churchill (2014), 'Rethinking the State Monopolisation Thesis: The Historiography of Policing and Criminal Justice in Nineteenth-Century England', *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés/Crime, History and Societies*, vol. 18, number 1, 131–52; *idem* (2014), "I Am Just the Man for Upsetting You Bloody Bobbies": Popular Animosity towards the Police in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds', *Social History*, vol. 39, number 2, 248–66.
37. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 September 1893, 27 October 1893.
38. *Leeds Mercury*, 6 September 1893; *Barnsley Chronicle*, *History of the Great Strike*, pp. 18–19.
39. *Barnsley Chronicle*, *History of the Great Strike*, pp. 20–1; *Barnsley Chronicle*, 9 September 1893; 'The Riots at Elsecar and Rockingham:

- Proceedings before the Magistrates', cutting, from *Barnsley Chronicle*, 7 October 1893, in Anon., *Miners' Disputes* ([newspaper cuttings] 4 vols, no place, no date, Barnsley Archives and Local Studies), vol. III: 1893–1899.
40. Barnsley Chronicle, *History of the Great Strike*, pp. 25–6.
 41. Bowen, *Minutes*, Q. 1109.
 42. Ben Tillett at the fourth Annual Congress of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union at Bristol, Tuesday, 12 September 1893, reported in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 17 September 1893.
 43. Sources: vital registration and census records; pamphlets by Holiday at the Christian Brethren Archive, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester; Henry Holiday (1914), *Reminiscences of My Life* (London: Heinemann), pp. 3, 74–5; *P&CE*, 11 February 1905, 18 February 1905; *Pontefract and Castleford Advertiser*, 11 February 1905, 18 February 1905; gravestone, North Featherstone Cemetery. Henry Holiday (1883), *Dante and Beatrice*, oil on canvas, 142 × 203 cm; now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
 44. *The Times*, 12 September 1893.
 45. *P&CE*, 16 September 1893.
 46. *P&CE*, 16 September 1893.
 47. *P&CE*, 23 September 1893.
 48. For Austin (1824–1906), see *Who Was Who* and his obituary in *The Times*, 2 April 1906. For Nussey (1868–1947) see *The Times*, 13 November 1909 and 18 October 1947. On Osgoldcross at this time see Duncan Tanner (1990), *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 206, 221–2, 253 and more generally chaps 7 and 9.
 49. D. Rubinstein (1978), 'The Independent Labour Party and the Yorkshire Miners: The Barnsley By-election of 1897', *International Review of Social History*, vol. XXIII, 102–34; Andrew Taylor (1992), "'Trailed on the Tail of a Comet': The Yorkshire Miners and the ILP, 1885–1908", in David James, Tony Jowitt and Keith Laybourn (eds), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax: Ryburn), pp. 229–58.
 50. Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds (1984), *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890–1918* (London: Croom Helm), p. 30.
 51. Earl of Oxford and Asquith (1928), *Memories and Reflections 1852–1927*, 2 vols (London: Cassell), vol. I, pp. 129–31; John A. Spender and Cyril Asquith (1932), *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith*, 2 vols (London: Hutchinson), vol. I, pp. 83, 210; Herbert Asquith (1937), *Moments of Memory: Recollections and Impressions* (London: Hutchinson), p. 77.

52. *Leeds Mercury*, 20 January 1894. The references are to Henry Matthews, the Home Secretary in Salisbury's Conservative administration of 1886–92, and the Trafalgar Square riot of 'Bloody Sunday', 13 November 1887, in which three people died of injuries inflicted by police batons or soldiers' bayonets. For Nicoll and his milieu see John Quail (1978), *The Slow Burning Fuse: The Lost History of the British Anarchists* (London: Granada) and Hermia Oliver (1983), *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London* (London: Croom Helm).
53. D. J. Nicoll (c. 1895), *Bullets for Bread: The Featherstone Massacre* (Sheffield: the author), p. 15. There is a copy in Featherstone Public Library, Featherstone Riot and Massacre 1893 Box, unnumbered folder. I am very grateful for the hospitality and helpfulness shown to me by Dale Reynolds of Featherstone Public Library and Community Centre while researching this chapter.
54. John S. Stuart-Glennie (1895), *The Liberal Party: Its True Character: Betrayals of the Workers: And Deserved Extinguishment* (Guildford: Billing and Sons), p. 21.
55. Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, vol. I, p. 131; Asquith, *Moments of Memory*, p. 77. See also *The Times*, 17 December 1898, reporting further interruptions.
56. Roy Jenkins (1964), *Asquith* (London: Collins), pp. 57, 245–51; *The Times*, 15 August 1916.
57. *Manchester Guardian*, 10 May 1897.
58. *The Times*, 28 June 1906 and 5 July 1906; *Manchester Guardian*, 5 July 1906. See also the *Observer*, 17 June 1906 and the *Manchester Guardian*, 26 June 1906.
59. *The Times*, 14 January 1902.
60. See the speeches of Ben Tillett and others in Trafalgar Square as reported in *The Times*, 28 August 1911.
61. *The Times*, 21 August 1911.
62. *The Times*, 30 August 1911; Kenneth O. Morgan (1975), *Keir Hardie* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), p. 243; Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes*, p. 45; Deian Hopkin (1983), 'The Llanelli Riots, 1911', *Welsh History Review*, vol. XI, number 4, 488–515; John Edwards (1988), *Remembrance of a Riot: The Story of the Llanelli Railway Strike Riots of 1911* (Llanelli: Llanelli Borough Council).
63. *The Times*, 16 April 1912.
64. *The Times*, 28 January 1920.
65. *Yorkshire Post*, 12 September 1893.
66. *Leeds Mercury*, 20 September 1893.
67. *P&CE*, 16 September 1893.
68. *P&CE*, 16 September 1893.

69. 'Police v. Leonard Foster & Others: Rioting at Ackton Hall Colliery 7 September 1893', Police Office, Purston, 14 November 1893, document in the WRCC Solicitor's papers, Wakefield RO, WRD1/37/3/34. I have assumed that the Amos White identified here is the Amos White born in 1848, not his son, also Amos White, 19 or 20 years old in 1893.
70. Sources: census and vital registration records.
71. Unnamed Featherstone miner's wife, reported in *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1893. The widow she referred to was Emma Duggan; 'likely' here means 'promising'.
72. *Copy Inquisition taken at Featherstone in the County of York on view of the body of James Gibbs*, WRCC Solicitor's papers, Wakefield RO, WRD1/37/2/3.
73. *Daily News* [London], 11 September 1893.
74. Bowen, *Minutes*, Q. 565.
75. *Ibid.*, Q. 1121.
76. *Ibid.*, Qq. 2513–15, 2628.
77. *Ibid.*, Q. 2628.
78. Paul Senior (2007), *Weaving, Mining, Rioting: A History of West Yorkshire through the Eyes of the Senior Family*, online, available at <http://www.pontefractus.co.uk/genealogy/senior-family-history.htm> (accessed 8 February 2017). The account is refracted through the memories of Paul Senior, his father and his grandfather, Fred Senior (1874–1950). The implication of the pit boots is that the men were equipped to kick.
79. *P&CE*, 1 March 1912; *Yorkshire Post*, 2 March 1912; *The Times*, 15 March 1912; *P&CE*, 28 November 1952 (Hough's obituary).
80. *P&CE*, 1 March 1912.
81. *P&CE*, 14 May 1926.
82. *P&CE*, 4 June 1926.
83. *P&CE*, 20 December 1935.
84. Lumb and Lewis, *Featherstone*, pp. 78–80.
85. Letter, Mrs A. Brunt, Wrenthorpe, to the editor, *P&CE*, 5 March 1974, in Featherstone Public Library, Featherstone Disturbance 1893 Box, Folder 5. Mrs Brunt's father was William Tomlinson (1870–1954), one of those shot but not killed by the troops and awarded compensation by the government in 1894 (*Leeds Mercury*, 21 March 1894).
86. Geoff Lofthouse (1986), *A Very Miner MP* (Pontefract: Yorkshire Arts Circus), p. 13. Lofthouse was born in 1925; his maternal grandfather, John Joseph Fellowes, sometimes 'Fellows', died in 1946; his grandmother, Annie, in 1940.

87. Senior, *Weaving, Mining, Rioting*. The date of the lecture is unspecified by Paul Senior. Internal and genealogical evidence suggests it was in the 1950s or 1960s.
88. Geoffrey Lofthouse (1999), *From Coal Sack to Woolsack* (Pontefract: Pontefract Press), p. 45.
89. Arnot, *The Miners 1889-1910*.
90. Lofthouse, *Very Miner MP*, p. 31.
91. Senior, *Weaving, Mining, Rioting*.
92. Ian Clayton (1993), 'Prologue: What the Featherstone Disturbance Means to Me', in Lumb and Lewis, *Featherstone*, p. 7.
93. Geoffrey Lofthouse (1993), 'Prologue: What the Featherstone Disturbance Means to Me', in Lumb and Lewis, *Featherstone*, p. 5.
94. The events were recalled in the *P&CE*, 17 September 1943, 5 September 1968 and 12 September 1968. Only assiduous readers would have noticed these brief paragraphs.
95. [Yorkshire] *Evening Post*, 4, 5, 6 and 7 April 1977. Scargill's reply was given the following week: [Yorkshire] *Evening Post*, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 April 1977. These articles were republished as a pamphlet: Yorkshire Area NUM (1977), *Featherstone Massacre 1893: A Reply to Dr. Neville* (Barnsley: Yorkshire Area NUM).
96. [Yorkshire] *Evening Post*, 13 April 1977.
97. A. Scargill (1977), ['Letter to the Editors'], *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, vol. 35, Autumn, 22-3.
98. Royce Turner (2000), *Coal Was Our Life* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University Press), p. 44.
99. Design by Julia Barton and David Poskitt. Its unveiling was reported in the *Yorkshire Post*, 6 September 1993.
100. Anon. (c. 1993), *Featherstone Massacre Memorial Commemorative Brochure* (s.l. s.n.) copy in Featherstone Public Library, Featherstone Disturbance 1893 Box, Folder 5; 'The Featherstone Massacre', [web page] available at <http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/CultureAndLeisure/HistoricWakefield/FeatherstoneMassacre/default.htm> (accessed 28 October 2013).
101. Performed 6 September 1993 at Featherstone Community Centre, director: Stephen Langridge. The script is preserved in Featherstone Public Library, Featherstone Disturbance 1893 Box, Folder 6.
102. *P&CE*, 26 August 1993.
103. *The Times*, 20 July 1984.
104. Lumb and Lewis, *Featherstone*.
105. Scargill's speech, *The Featherstone Disturbance: A Challenge to the Official Version*, delivered at the Central Working Men's Club, Station Lane, Featherstone, 29 July 1993, as reported in the *P&CE*, 5 August 1993. Scargill made a similar speech at the side of the graves of Duggan

- and Gibbs during a wreath-laying ceremony on 4 September 1993. Extracts from video recordings of both speeches are in *The Featherstone Massacre of 1893*, A One to One Video Production, commissioned by Featherstone Town Council, produced by Judi Alston and Steve Richards, 24 minutes 51 seconds, November 1993 (copy available at Featherstone Public Library).
106. 'Speech by Councillor Steve Vickers, made in The Precinct, Featherstone', in Anon., *Featherstone Massacre Memorial Commemorative Brochure*.
 107. Councillor Vickers as reported by the *P&CE*, 9 September 1993; extracts from this speech are shown in *The Featherstone Massacre* (video) beginning at 19 minutes.
 108. *P&CE*, 9 September 1993.
 109. *Yorkshire Post*, 6 September 1993.
 110. Simon Bond, 'Economical with Shootings Truth', [letter], *P&CE*, 19 August 1993.
 111. A search of the *Times Digital Archive*, taken here as embodying the national culture, yields no use of the word 'Featherstone' in connection with the word 'massacre' between 1923, when George Lansbury made a passing reference to it in the House of Commons (reported on 14 April), and 1962, when Featherstone's new MP, Joe Harper, mentioned the 1893 'Great Lockout' in his maiden speech to the House of Commons on 11 April (reported the next day).
 112. Wood, *The Battle of '93*, p. 11.
 113. *Sheffield Independent*, 2 November 1893.
 114. *P&CE*, 28 August 2013.

Tonypandy 1910: The Foundations of Welsh Social Democracy

Daryl Leeworthy

On May Day 1939, thousands of South Walians gathered in Abertillery, Pontypool and Ystradgynlais, for the Pageant of South Wales. Written by Montagu Slater and directed by pageant master André van Gyseghem, both of whom were prominent in left-wing theatre circles in London, the pageant fused labour history, leftist politics and community activism, all with an eye on ‘edutainment’ value. Concerned that the left had become dour and inaccessible, pageants of this kind were intended to reduce political ideas and modes of action to their most basic level. Each performance ended with the following words, spoken by a recently returned volunteer in the International Brigades, whose fight against fascism was honest and true, whose struggle was recent and whose symbolic death would be honoured as the sacrifice of a martyr. He began:

I am one of the little band that went out from South Wales to fight in the International Brigades in Spain. I am going to ask you to rise, all of you, and swear with me this oath of victory.

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The audience then joined in:

In the name of Wales and its people, in the name of our high-wrought past, in the name of our traditions, in the name of all our battles in the fight for freedom, on this day 1st May 1939, we solemnly swear not to relax until freedom, and the prosperity that can only be brought by the power of the people bring back the sunshine to our land.¹

As the words echoed over the valley, the crowd took up the refrain of the *Internationale*, collectively affirming their ideals and sense of purpose. At least, that was the intention of Slater and van Gyseghem. However, rain, high winds and snow dampened the impact.²

Elsewhere, May Day was marked as it often was by rallies and speeches. Labour MPs such as James Griffiths and Aneurin Bevan, Labour councillors, and at Bridgend the communist leader Harry Pollitt, all took to platforms to address the looming struggle against fascism. In the Rhondda, however, the day was marked in a different way—by a procession. Headed by centenarian Sarah Hayes, miners marched to Llethyr Ddu cemetery on the hillside in Trealaw carrying a coffin symbolic not just of the sacrifices made by individuals underground, but of South Walian society as a whole: a region seemingly abandoned by an uninterested, even hostile government.³ The procession was later fictionalised by the novelist Gwyn Thomas for his series of Merthyr Sketches broadcast on the BBC in August 1976. The scene:

A room in a recreational centre of the unemployed in Merthyr. The time is late September. Two men come in carrying a mock coffin. In front of them a man bears a large placard which says—NOT DEAD, BUT GONE TO SLOUGH. A fourth man is setting out a table arranging old newspapers into a semblance of filed order.⁴

The often irreverent dialogue between Thomas's characters teased the tension, evident as much in the author's own world view as that of his native Rhondda, between Marxist theory, the practicalities of life in the coalfield in the 1930s and the failure of the contemporary media to understand (or evince any great desire to do so). The following is an indicative excerpt:

Winnie Jones: (pointing at the coffin) What the dickens is that?

Winston Hicks: It's for the demonstration. We got the idea from Darwin Ellis who runs the class on political affairs. This is called political –

Hector Gough: Shrewd boy that Darwin. Red himself. Very good on the inevitable demise of capitalism but vague about Merthyr and the Valleys in general.

[...]

Llew James: They give terrible tips about horses, too, the *Daily Mail*.

Winston Hicks: Just as cock-eyed about the facts of life.

(Llew plays *Abide With Me* on a gazooka.)

Winston Hicks: A town is like a fire. It can go out.

The image of the mock coffin, and its slogan, marched through the streets of the Rhondda towards Llethr Ddu—the black slope—clearly stuck with Gwyn Thomas, who was in his early twenties when he witnessed the original, and he made reference to it several times in his writing and broadcast work.⁵ It gained a particular urgency in the post-war decline of the coalfield, when the once radical valleys appeared to have abandoned their political promise, settling instead for bingo halls rather than libraries, television rather than lifelong learning, and apathy and disinterest rather than activism and rebellion.⁶ Or, as another old miner put it to the oral historian George Ewart Evans in 1956, ‘change is come over our little burg, and not for the better’.⁷ Where Slater had written pageants for audiences tuned out of radical left politics, Thomas wrote similarly pitched sketches for audiences tuned out of politics entirely.⁸ Both believed in the arts as a means of reawakening a collective spirit.

Thomas's politics had been honed in the 1930s in Oxford and Madrid, where he studied, and in the Rhondda where he fell (willingly) under the influence of Lewis Jones, the communist agitator, hunger march leader, county councillor and novelist, whom Thomas held as a lifelong hero. Born in Clydach Vale on 28 December 1897, six weeks after Aneurin Bevan was born in Tredegar, Lewis Jones was already working at the Cambrian Colliery by the time of the Tonypandy Riots in November 1910.⁹ His first-hand experience of the rioting, the wider industrial dispute within the Cambrian Combine, the personalities involved and the aftermath provided the foundation for his great

agitprop novels *Cwmardy* (1937) and *We Live* (1939).¹⁰ The former reworked Rhondda's history from the 1890s to the end of the First World War, providing a dramatic reconstruction of the Tonypandy Riots from a popular front perspective: organised workers are shown as the antagonists of unbridled capital, the forces of the state and working-class inaction. *We Live*, on the other hand, published posthumously, turned Lewis Jones into a martyr, dying a hero's death in Spain for the cause of socialism. Jones had properly died of exhaustion on 27 January 1939, the day after Barcelona capitulated to General Franco and the Spanish Civil War came to an end. He was, as Dai Smith notes, 'no martyr', but like the mock coffin his life was a symbol of that related characteristic: resistance.¹¹

The strong relationship between martyrdom and resistance, in the context of colonialism, authoritarian regimes, nationalism, religious change and capitalism, has attracted scholarly interest across a wide range of fields. Typical examples include the religious wars of early modern Europe, the rise and fall of dictatorships in the contemporary Middle East and the construction of postcolonial Africa.¹² Of particular note is Lisa Wedeen's research into the ambiguities of domination in Syria and Yemen showing that for all the official rhetoric of power employed by the government, most ordinary Syrians and Yemenis refuse to believe the often-exaggerated claims made to support policies and political action.¹³ This small-scale but widespread resistance, Wedeen argues, is about making minor interventions that enable individuals to navigate the authoritarian and disciplinary characteristics of the Syrian regime in such a way as to undermine them.¹⁴ The most tangible manifestation of this resistance is satire, always carefully framed so as to both conform and dissent simultaneously; much the same function for dark comedy and joke telling has been the focus of recent interest amongst scholars of the Soviet Union and its satellites.¹⁵ It is also evident in research into political discourse in the wider contemporary Arab world.¹⁶

Jokes and satire serve to illustrate the value of 'literary resistance' to power, and this is very much in evidence in the writings of Lewis Jones and Gwyn Thomas, particularly in their novels dealing with the Tonypandy Riots and the Merthyr Rising (respectively).¹⁷ We do not remember the Tonypandy Riots of November 1910 solely for their literary manifestations, of course. The confrontation at the Glamorgan Colliery, and the violent spilling out onto the streets of various directed frustrations, has been a focal point of memory and political division for

more than a century, and continues to prompt bitter contestation around what are easily established facts of military occupation (or military presence, if preferred).¹⁸ As L.J. Williams once put it, ‘there were—in a sense—many roads leading to Tonypandy’ and there have been just as many leading away from it.¹⁹ What the Tonypandy Riots were about, as Dai Smith argues in his vital *Past and Present* article, was twofold: resistance and quasi-revolutionary change.²⁰ Resistance to the nature of Liberal politics as they had developed locally and nationally, resistance to the character of liberal capitalism with its attendant wage, rent and personal credit pressures, and resistance to the model of labour representation that placed an emphasis on respectable leadership and gains through pragmatic engagement with existing structures of state power. The quasi-revolutionary change was the advent of a firm commitment to socialism and the implementation of social democracy through local political change.²¹

It is necessary to frame the riots as a form of resistance because, in discrete terms, they did not produce a martyr. Only one individual died, Samuel Rays, a miner bludgeoned to death probably by a police truncheon (although this was never fully established by the coroner’s court). Rays’s death was not martyrdom but an unfortunate accident, the result of receiving a beating that went too far. In other circumstances he would have likely survived. This stands in sharp contrast to earlier phases of collective resistance in the South Wales Coalfield which did produce martyrs: at Merthyr Tydfil in 1831, for instance, when Richard Lewis—Dic Penderyn—was hanged for the murder of a soldier, which he did not commit; or at Newport in November 1839 when twenty-two people were killed by troops outside the town’s Westgate Hotel; or in Llanelli in 1911 when two men were shot dead by soldiers precipitating a riot.²² Dic Penderyn, in particular, continues to be heralded—as the plaque outside Merthyr Tydfil Library reads—as a ‘martyr of the Welsh working class’. There is no such plaque to Samuel Rays.

One man did, in the end, emerge from the riots and the wider Cambrian Combine Dispute as a community leader, and whose life and early death can be understood as a martyrdom: John Hopla.²³ A checkweigher and lodge chairman at the Glamorgan Colliery, Hopla died exhausted in 1914. He was just 32. His health had been permanently weakened by the hard labour to which he was sentenced at the Cardiff Assize in November 1911, although he served just six months of his year-long punishment following a commutation by the Home Secretary,

Winston Churchill.²⁴ Hopla's leadership, as well as his wider work as chair of the medical aid society and the Llwynypia Workmen's Institute committee, was commemorated in a marble plaque unveiled at the institute on 12 February 1916. The epitaph reads, 'thy work till death hath made thy life immortal'. In the orations, Hopla's life was presented as one of personal sacrifice, a sense of duty and honour. 'He was a man', remarked one of the speakers, 'who had sacrificed all for the sake of those whom he was working for'.²⁵ Without deliberately calling him a martyr, Hopla's friends and comrades clearly saw him in that way. Similar evocations were made at Hopla's funeral in May 1914 by D. Watts Morgan, miners' agent and future MP for Rhondda East.

In the working-class literature and pageantry of the 1930s and beyond, in the social memory of the coalfield and in the underlying foundations of its social democratic politics that Hopla helped to construct, the riots and Hopla's ultimate sacrifice became intertwined. Indeed, his funeral provided the model for those later processions featuring mock coffins, foreshadowing the martyrdom of Hopla's own society in the post-war years of the 1920s and 1930s. In the procession from Llwynypia to Trealaw, the sound of the funeral march from Handel's *Saul* could be heard. It was played by the Llwynypia Fife Band. It was no coincidence that the same music had been played at Lord Nelson's funeral a century earlier.²⁶ What follows is an attempt to extend and complement the analysis of the Tonypandy Riots as a moment of resistance and quasi-revolutionary change advanced by Dai Smith. It does so by tracing the martyrdom of John Hopla, both in the course of actual events and in their later fictional representation in the work of Lewis Jones. It is not my intention to reiterate what occurred in November 1910, as a sufficient amount has already been written about it, but rather to consider the relationship between the sacrifice of individuals for a cause and the broader sacrifice of the society in which they lived and which they worked to construct.

THE MARTYR: JOHN HOPLA

John Hopla was born in Pembroke in 1882. As a young man he migrated to the Rhondda, then in its Klondike phase, to find work in the mining industry. Away from the pit, and in keeping with the rest of his family, Hopla was active in the English Congregational Church on De Winton Street, Tonypandy, and was a prominent member of the church's

young people society and its social union.²⁷ Although he is now known for his trade union and community activism, and for his socialist beliefs, Hopla's religious faith remained a constant factor throughout his life.²⁸ He was particularly engaged by the Christian socialist movement and in 1907 invited the Rev. George Neighbour, who led the Brotherhood Church in Mountain Ash and was active with the ILP, to speak in Tonypany on the need to reconcile socialism with Christianity.²⁹ Hopla would also be present at meetings addressed by the Rev. R.J. Campbell, the Rev. Stitt Wilson and the Rev. Ben Wilson.³⁰ Had faith and Christian socialism been Hopla's only public engagement, a narrative of his life would be unnecessary, but a series of strikes in the years leading up to 1910 thrust John Hopla into positions of political prominence in Tonypany.

The turning point in Hopla's life was the 1908 strike in Llwynypia. As was so often the case in the coalfield, the dispute was about wages and the decline in wage levels following the absorption of the Glamorgan Colliery into the Cambrian Combine that year. As one newspaper noted, 'some of the workmen submit that the prices paid for their labour give them a certain amount of indifference as to whether they cut coal or not'. Arrayed against the workmen were managers who complained that wages were too high; the miners regarded that as a figment of the imagination.³¹ Four thousand struck at the end of the day shift on 23 November. The next day, a mass meeting, held under the presidency of Hopla, took place at Llwynypia. Tom Richards, the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) general secretary, and the local miners' agent, D. Watts Morgan, spoke and called on the men not to escalate the situation beyond its immediate cause. In a clear echo of events two years later, the workers at the Glamorgan Colliery warned their leaders that if they were not paid a living wage, they would call on comrades from other pits in the Combine to come out in solidarity with them.³² A dispute of a few thousand would quickly become one of tens of thousands and a potential touchpaper for coalfield-wide industrial action.

The established leadership of the miners, Richards, Watts Morgan and William Abraham MP, had evidently lost control of—or at least any kind of influence over—the Llwynypia lodge. Another mass meeting was held in Tonypany on 28 November, again with Hopla in the chair. The press, on this occasion, were excluded although they nevertheless reported 'a good deal of ill-feeling [was] displayed' and that

there were continuous outbursts of dissatisfaction, and Mabon and Mr D. Watts Morgan's conciliatory speeches were punctuated with cries of dissent. At times, indeed, the clamour assumed such proportions that it was with the utmost difficulty that the leaders were able to bring any restraint upon the men.³³

The only external representative lodge members were willing to listen to was the most radical: James Winstone, who had broken rank with the SWMF leadership in 1906, then still officially allied with the Liberal Party, and stood as an ILP candidate against Liberal opposition in Monmouth boroughs. In 1912 he would be the first socialist elected to an officership of the SWMF, winning the vice presidency. In a meeting at the Llwynypia swimming baths on 2 December, Winstone appealed for a return to work on financial grounds after the SWMF executive had resolved not to issue strike pay.³⁴ Although the conciliation process was accepted by the men at that meeting, it failed to bring an end to the stand-off, which was in danger of escalating further. At the nearby Naval Colliery in Penygraig, some of the miners argued in lodge meetings in favour of sympathy action, although it was resolved in the end to provide financial support instead. A sum of 2s per head a week was gifted to comrades in Llwynypia.³⁵ Soup kitchens opened in chapels and schools, with some of the money to sustain them provided by lodges in the Cambrian Combine, but when the coal company offered to provide food to schools to feed children, the Llwynypia lodge issued a notice warning that its members would withdraw their children from school if that happened.³⁶ The lines of industrial dispute were no longer confined to the pit. Eventually, the company backed down and the miners returned to work on 16 and 17 December.³⁷

The year 1908 marked the departure of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (and its constituent members) from the Liberal Party and its belated affiliation to the Labour Party. The SWMF had long agitated for this, with members voting consistently in favour.³⁸ It was a signal of looming political change, and one that called for a distinct shift in rhetoric and purpose. As one correspondent of the *Rhondda Leader* noted:

Your [the paper's] grave concern that whoever would be the future Labour candidate should be of the type of the sitting member—Labour tintured by Liberal Welsh Nationalism—leads me to ask whether this is a new party. What does it mean to the Llwynypia workmen now out on strike to know

that they have a Welsh Nationalist in Parliament? We have too long submitted to such sentiment, and it ill becomes anyone, considering the present position of our people in the twentieth century to put forward such a plea. [...] The orthodox parties have made these things [the bondage of capitalism and landlordism] of small concern; hence the uprisings of the Labour and Socialist movement as a protest against the wrongs endured so long.³⁹

Such clear-voiced dissent, shared widely, and targeted both at liberalism and nationalism, had consequences on several fronts, not merely in terms of parliamentary representation (evidenced in the increasing hostility to the moderation of existing Lib-Lab members such as William Abraham) but also within SWMF lodges and amongst workers' officials at the collieries. John Hopla and other ILPers were direct beneficiaries of this upsurge in radical behaviour. In March 1909, workers at the Glamorgan Colliery selected several new checkweighers to oversee the implementation of the wage settlement. Hopla's prominence during the 1908 strike saw him easily elected.⁴⁰ The following year, a few months before the outbreak of the Cambrian Combine dispute, Hopla was elected chairman of the Llwynypia lodge.

The twenty months or so between the settlement of the 1908 strike and the events that led to the Tonypandy Riots were marked by continued tension between the workforce at the Glamorgan Colliery and the general manager of the Cambrian Combine, Leonard Llewelyn. If in the spring of 1910 it seemed as though the Glamorgan Colliery could spark a wider dispute, in the event it was the Ely Colliery and its unworkable places that triggered wider industrial action.⁴¹ The dispute at the Ely Colliery broke out in August.⁴² At a meeting of the Llwynypia lodge in early September, Hopla warned that 'if Mr Llewelyn [...] was out for a fight, then the men would give him such a fight that that gentleman had never seen before'.⁴³ A few days later, Hopla insisted that his lodge was ready to join their comrades from the Ely Colliery if needed. 'If the management were going to stop 800 men because of 80', he remarked at a mass meeting, 'then the men themselves would bring about a stoppage of 8000 [...] the Llwynypia men would be with them in this battle'.⁴⁴ The Llwynypia lodge joined the Cambrian Combine dispute on 1 November 1910.⁴⁵

From that moment Hopla, together with lodge colleagues from the wider Cambrian Combine, notably Will John, Mark Harcombe,

Tom Smith and Noah Rees, guided the strike through the Joint Strike Committee. It was this group of men who travelled to London on 9 November to meet with George Askwith at the Board of Trade to try and bring resolution to the dispute, although as Mabon explained in a telegram to D. Watts Morgan ahead of the meeting it was 'purely for enquiries'. They put the miners' case but could do no more than that.⁴⁶ The day before, in the aftermath of the riots, the committee had met with the local stipendiary magistrate, Daniel Lleufer Thomas, both sides publicly agreeing to ensure that there would be no further violence or damage to property as the dispute carried on.⁴⁷ Behind the closed doors of the meeting, as a telegram to the Home Secretary explained, the committee had pointed to the persistence of blacklegs at the Glamorgan Colliery as a beacon for riotous behaviour. The police presence as a guard was not objectionable, but strike breakers were. Lleufer Thomas agreed to help mitigate the tension but recognised that Leonard Llewelyn presented a likely barrier in the way of progress. Llewelyn was insisting that complete withdrawal of the workforce would result in the destruction of the mine through flooding.

As the dispute dragged on into 1911, and with little prospect of conciliated resolution, the authorities tried new tactics to weaken the capacity (if not the resolve) of the Joint Strike Committee through arrests. John Hopla was one of the early victims. In February 1911, he was summonsed to appear before Pontypridd Police Court on a charge of intimidating colliery officials. The attempt backfired: although Hopla left the court £20 poorer, his status amongst the miners of Mid Rhondda waxed significantly. Two hundred and fifty miners had accompanied him to Pontypridd, proceeding down the valley from Tonypandy. Headed by the Llwynypia Fife and Drum Band and the town crier, the procession marched behind an effigy of a horse, a reference to the actions of Llewelyn in 'rescuing' the horses from underground the previous November and perhaps also a less than subtle nod to the habit of Lionel Lindsay, the county's chief constable, of riding around on horseback as if he were a cavalry officer, not a policeman. According to the press, the procession booed every group of policemen they encountered. They packed the public gallery at the court and marched the several miles up the valley on the return leg with Hopla as the hero of the hour.

A few months later, following a disastrous train crash near Pontypridd that claimed the lives of several members of the SWMF executive, Hopla and his comrades from the Joint Strike Committee, including Tom

Smith and Noah Rees, were elected to the SWMF executive committee, radicalising it almost immediately. Noah Ablett, then checkweigher at Maerdy, joined them, and Will John was elected financial secretary of the Rhondda No. 1 district of the SWMF at the same time.⁴⁸ It is possible that some of these men would have found their way into the front rank of the SWMF at some point, but the Cambrian Combine dispute and the changing nature of collective politics in the Rhondda had accelerated their rise. Their next step was to find a way to harness the new context, to encourage and develop the politics to which they had been dedicated for many years, and to make the most of their new platform. The first indication of this new fervent was a manifesto published in May 1911 and signed by Noah Rees, Will John, Tom Smith, Mark Harcombe and John Hopla. It makes for powerful reading:

A ballot vote decided that Mid Rhondda was to be the cockpit of the fight, and that having accepted the position with misgivings, the Combine workmen entered the fight, and were still not beaten. We have been deliberately and foully misrepresented by a large section of the public press. We have been bludgeoned by the police. One of our comrades lost his life in contending with the police. Two comrades, in the stress of the struggle through illness and privation, committed suicide. [...] We ask you to say, friends, that the time has arrived when the surrender policy of our apologetic leaders must stop. They have not realised what it means to us in suffering.⁴⁹

The language is clearly that of the *Miners' Next Step*, which was published the following year. It was clear, as had been the case in the aftermath of the 1908 dispute, which was certainly the prelude for what happened in 1910, that there was a breakdown within the SWMF. To some extent it mirrored the split between Labour and the Liberal Party, but in other ways it was its own master. Moderate, cautious and increasingly wealthy Members of Parliament, such as William Abraham, could no longer contain or guide the radical voices of the emerging generation of leaders—of which the men of the Cambrian Combine Joint Strike Committee were amongst the most talented. The key characteristics of Edwardian political leadership were being rapidly redefined: the distance between representatives and the represented, which had grown relatively broad since Abraham's election in 1885, necessarily shrank; and the rhetoric of politics employed by public speakers moved from labourism to something more akin to socialism with all its attendant influences.⁵⁰

The Cambrian Combine dispute reached its denouement in a final wave of violence in late July 1911. It was this renewal of hostilities that was ultimately responsible for Hopla's prison sentence, along with those of his brother Henry and Will John.⁵¹ Little more than a year after the Tonypany Riots, Hopla and John were sentenced to twelve months' hard labour; Henry Hopla received a nine-month sentence for unlawfully wounding a constable from the Worcester constabulary.⁵² Their imprisonment engendered a wave of shock and anger. At the Labour Party annual conference, held in early January 1912, a resolution was passed unanimously expressing regret and astonishment at the severity of the sentences.⁵³ Meeting after meeting passed resolutions calling for the sentences to be reduced.⁵⁴ In January, Hopla, John, Tom Smith and Noah Ablett appeared on the ballot to elect a subagent for the Rhondda No. 1 district—the position was eventually won by Will John, seemingly after Hopla had withdrawn from the contest.⁵⁵ Following months of agitation, including from the floor of the House of Commons by Keir Hardie and Mabon, the men's sentences were reduced and they were eventually released at the end of May. The miners of Mid Rhondda gathered—reportedly in their thousands—at the Athletic Ground in Tonypany to greet them.⁵⁶ They were, once again, heroes of the cause.

Hopla did not speak at that welcome home rally, and already presented a much weakened figure. His death, less than two years later, marked the final conclusion to an extremely active life. He had been elected checkweigher in his twenty-eighth year, was chairman of the Llwynypia lodge by the time he was thirty and was dead by the age of thirty two. In contrast to Will John, who lived until 1955 and served for thirty years as MP for Rhondda West, Hopla did not live long enough to become active in politics outside of his immediate area. This may, in part, explain why his life has tended to be overshadowed in the historical literature. The fragments of his speeches captured in the press tell us relatively little of his reputed oratorical skill, nor were his political associations with the ILP and the Christian socialist movement unusual in the first decade of the twentieth century. And yet, no other figure from that crucial period of transition can be described as a martyr: he was lionised by his own people and thrust into vital positions of leadership where he could present his ideas with greatest influence, but at the same time he was picked out by the authorities as a dangerous influence, imprisoned and left exhausted to die.

MAKING THE POLITICS OF DISSENT

Religious and political nonconformity contributed significantly to Hopla's rise to positions of leadership and provided the traditional characteristics of martyrdom. Yet martyrs are only truly effective if they have a cause to which sufficient numbers of people are affiliated and so can emerge as heroes and leaders. At this juncture, therefore, it is necessary to consider what exactly Hopla's cause was, how it was made and what its implications were as the cause moved from the margins to the centre of popular political and intellectual life. This invites comparison with other key figures. For Hopla was not, after all, the only prominent post-Lib-Lab leader to have a strong religious background that was later to some extent abandoned or moulded into Christian socialism: John Spargo, who was prominent in the Barry branch of the Social Democratic Federation before his emigration to the USA at the turn of the century, evinced a strong Methodist faith learned as a child in Cornwall; Noah Ablett had been a boy preacher in Baptist circles in Ynyshir; A.J. Cook, likewise, was a Baptist lay preacher in Somerset and in the Rhondda; S.O. Davies went so far as to attend university on a scholarship from the Baptist College; and Arthur Horner belonged to the more obscure Churches of Christ—an American sect imported to South Wales in the 1870s.⁵⁷

Typically, early religious faith was then abandoned as individuals chafed at the restrictive nature of the chapel or the church. In Paul Davies's words (which are entirely typical of this life narrative): 'Men like Noah Ablett and Noah Rees [...] forsook the chapel and strained on the leash of moderate leadership. Furthermore, they (and especially Ablett) had the intellect and imagination to dream of and plan for a new form of society.'⁵⁸ Yet the language employed in this description is inevitably millenarian and the certainty of belief in the transformative power of socialism may well, as Michael Casey and Peter Ackers contend, 'owe something to these early formative years'.⁵⁹ And this was typical of the wider community as well as individuals, as Stuart Macintyre notes: 'religious belief was strong and pervasive in those industrial working-class communities in which Marxism flourished between the wars'.⁶⁰ This is not to lay undue stress on acquired religious faith, particularly amongst those who later rejected it, however, as Robert Pope does in his study of the relationship between Labour and nonconformity, but to recover the evangelical fervent of this period of political and intellectual change.⁶¹

At its heart were social questions to which religion and materialist politics offered rival answers.

In certain respects, this labour evangelicalism (if we may call it that) mirrored what had taken place a century earlier in the realm of high politics and spread into the 'intellectual scaffolding' of the Victorian Age.⁶² To borrow Boyd Hilton's description of that phenomenon: 'evangelicals emphasized spiritual conflict, the active agency of the Devil, individual sinfulness in all its intensity and virulence, the possibility of redemption through and only through faith in Jesus Christ, and the certainty of future Judgement'.⁶³ They became intensely devotional, committed only to the religious cause, and an individual's life was sundered between coming into the faith and the darker times before that entry. How easy it is to rewrite this entire passage for a materialist faith, for the faith of socialism. Socialists emphasized class conflict, the active agency of capital [...] the possibility of redemption through and only through faith in socialism, and so on. 'Faith', writes Hilton tellingly, 'was all'.⁶⁴ This new model evangelicalism, based on materialist interpretations of economic, social and political relations, was allied with the breakdown in relations with the traditional model of labourism. As Macintyre writes, 'in the materialist light all sorts of previously sacrosanct institutions and aspects of British culture—church and chapel, monarchy, law and order—were revealed as accoutrements of the present class order'.⁶⁵ We must, of necessity, add trade union leadership.

What, then, of the intellectual scaffolding erected by this new wave of political evangelists?⁶⁶ Most often, at least by historians who are not themselves specialists in South Walian labour history, the Tonypandy Riots are mentioned in relation to the syndicalist writings of the Unofficial Reform Committee, notably the *Miners' Next Step*, published in Tonypandy in 1912, with the unrest providing the contextual fervour necessary for the pamphlet itself.⁶⁷ But whereas the *Miners' Next Step* is certainly indicative of the sharp intellectual and theoretical edge to the socialist movement in South Wales, it cannot offer an explanation for what was a much wider phenomenon of proletarian learning and commitment to rational thought. A key locus for intellectual life amongst the socialist radicals of Mid Rhondda was the Marxian Club in Blaenclydach, where debate and discussion over the course of a decade on a wide range of topics pointed squarely towards the reasoning displayed in the *Miners' Next Step*.⁶⁸ Much of it was informed by the club's subscription to the Chicago-based radical publisher Charles Kerr and Co., with publications

flowing across the Atlantic on a regular basis for members to read.⁶⁹ Members also benefited from regular lectures given by prominent socialists, often associated with the Social Democratic Federation, as the table overleaf illustrates. Like the members of the Marxian Club, these speakers would fan out across the British left after 1918.

The Marxian Club began its life at the National Democratic Club, opening its doors early in 1903. Key to its formation was Noah Rees, previously active in the National Democratic League, who thought of the league and then the club as the ideal platform from which to ‘rouse the working classes from the apathy that now possesses them, and to try to get the young miners of the Rhondda to take a real interest in politics’.⁷⁰ From the outset, it provided a strongly evangelical environment. It promoted education and lifelong learning—delegates were sent to higher education conferences at the university college in Cardiff and club members sponsored students to attend Ruskin College.⁷¹ The sharpening of intellect that took place in Ruskin added significantly to the quality and character of the debates held at the club, although from the beginning they were focused on overthrowing the existing political framework. One of the first debates held at the club, in March 1903, was on ‘The Miners’ Leaders and the Present Aspect of Affairs’ in which the leadership of the SWMF were criticised for having been ‘outclassed by the employers’ committee every time they meet’. The speaker complained that ‘the only policy they have originated is “leave everything to your leaders boys”’.⁷² It was the *Miners’ Next Step* in embryo.

It’s not clear from the historical record whether John Hopla ever attended events organised by the Marxian Club in Blaenclydach, although given the circles he moved in, and those of his friends and comrades who did attend, it seems plausible to suggest that he did. One of those who certainly was an active member of the club was Lewis Jones, who was mentored in politics from an early age by Noah Rees. The character of Ezra in his novel *Cwmardy* is based on Rees.⁷³ Another was W.H. Mainwaring, the future MP for Rhondda East, who took on Rees’s secretarial duties at the club when the latter was studying at Ruskin College, and William Ferris Hay, a painter and decorator who was later editor of the *Rhondda Socialist* newspaper. Hay, Rees and Mainwaring were all part of the group that penned the *Miners’ Next Step*. In other words, the intellectual outputs that followed the Cambrian Combine Dispute were not the result of that conflict but had already been in development for nearly a decade. The various strikes and

Table 5.1 Lectures delivered at the Marxian Club, Blaenclydach, 1908–1909

<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Date (1908–1909)</i>
Jack Jones	Social Democratic Federation	Socialism	11 October
Arthur Charles Bannington	Social Democratic Federation	Tariff reform and socialism	8 November
H.M. Hyndman	Social Democratic Federation	Social democracy and the future of Britain	22 November
J. Frederick Green	Social Democratic Federation	Socialism and the strike	6 December
Ernest Marklew	Social Democratic Federation	Pillars of society	19 December
Frank Edwards	Social Democratic Federation	Politics for the people	3 January
Henry F. Northcote	University College London	From Nebula to co-operative commonwealth	20 January
William M. Gee	Social Democratic Federation	Socialism and the class struggle	28 February
Harry Quelch	Editor of <i>Justice</i> Social Democratic Federation	Three years of liberal government	14 March
Dan Irving	Social Democratic Federation	The progress of man	28 March
Mrs Bridges-Adams	Social Democratic Federation	Oxford University and the working-class movement	24 July

internal elections propelled those involved in that fervour into positions of greater influence, moving from the relative margins to the centre of political activity in the Rhondda. Without such a transition, Marxian Club debates and lectures (Table 5.1) would have remained restricted to those attending them and its influence limited.

WE LIVE?

The political system constructed in the Rhondda in the aftermath of the Tonypany Riots was of sufficient vitality and strength to survive the extreme economic shocks of the interwar years. So transformed was

Rhondda's politics, in particular, that the primary opposition to Labour on the district council by the 1930s was provided by the Communist Party; this was to be the case across much of the coalfield, and in many wards Labour held every seat. Labour MPs were not even challenged at general elections—a remarkable political dynamic given what happened economically and socially to South Wales in the 1920s and 1930s. It was little different to the 'urbicide' of Jarrow identified by Matt Perry in Chap. 8 in this volume, albeit on a regional scale—the willing sacrifice of numerous towns and hundreds of thousands of people to serve the wider aims of capital. If, discretely, the course of the Tonypandy Riots and the wider industrial dispute bear close relation to what happened in Featherstone two decades earlier, as described by Quentin Outram in Chap. 4, not least the bloody confrontation between miners and state power, it must be said that the political, social and intellectual consequences of Tonypandy were distinctive. It is to those distinctions that we turn by way of conclusion.

At the outset of the present chapter, I pointed to the construction of a 'literary resistance' towards the end of the 1930s which presented both the heroic solidarity of the working class and a satirical deconstruction of its post-war descent into apathy and uninterest. Lewis Jones used Tonypandy as an illustration of solidarity in *Cwmardy* and was then given a fictional martyrdom by his partner Mavis Llewellyn at the denouement of his posthumous novel *We Live*. Gwyn Thomas, on the other hand, relayed the actual martyrdom of Dic Penderyn (renamed in the novel John Simon) in his *All Things Betray Thee*; however, the execution and any focus on a singular figure is necessarily kept off the page. For both of them the vitality of politics was collective, not individual; the community felt the impact of state power and the community, together, resisted. Martyrdom, by its very nature suggestive of an individual, was not part of their literary vocabulary. Yet in practice, as this chapter has sought to illustrate, the period did manifest a martyr—John Hopla—whose faith in socialism mirrored his religious faith and whose political leadership was indicative of the new direction of the coalfield.

That direction was essentially social democratic in nature and guided by the Labour Party. Its achievements were listed not in the electoral contests won nor the pitched industrial battles taken part in, but in the institutions and services provided—the parks and libraries, gymnasiums



Fig. 5.1 Llwynypia Workmen's Institute showing the John Hopla plaque. (Courtesy of David Maddox, Pontypridd.)

and playgrounds, healthcare clinics and nurseries that were all to be the result of Labour's coming to power in the Rhondda and elsewhere. It was, indicatively, Hopla's service as President of the Llwynypia Workmen's Institute and the workmen's medical scheme, two of the key institutions of South Walian social democracy, quite as much as his role as a trade unionist, that was recognised on his memorial (Figs. 5.1, 5.2). This blend of intellectual rigour and practical implementation is what was distinctive about the South Wales Coalfield after 1910. Ross McKibbin has argued that the implementation of social democracy was 'held up' in England in the interwar years and that the post-war compact introduced by the Attlee Government was a belated catching-up process.⁷⁴ That chronology does not hold for South Wales, which had been a functioning social democracy (insofar as local political mechanisms could provide one) since the 1920s. The foundations of that social democracy were laid by men and women such as John Hopla, who sacrificed their own lives to bring about the better future in which they believed.



Fig. 5.2 The John Hopla memorial plaque at the Llwynypia Workmen's Institute (Courtesy of David Maddox, Pontypridd.)

NOTES

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2. *Western Mail*, 2 May 1939.
3. *South Wales Gazette*, 5 May 1939.

4. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth (hereafter NLW), Gwyn Thomas Papers (hereafter GTP), D26: Merthyr Sketches—‘The Cottage of Context’.
5. For instance, GTP, E42: ‘A Thought for the Rhondda’.
6. Gwyn Thomas (1979), *The Subsidence Factor* (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press).
7. NLW, George Ewart Evans Papers, 461: Letter from John Edward Morgan (Ynysybwl) to George Ewart Evans, 13 September 1956.
8. GTP, N2: Notebook: Cardigan County School, 1942, 14. Thomas’s left-ist politics and their relationship with his writing are considered in my (2016), ‘The World Cannot Hear You: Gwyn Thomas (1913–1981), Communism and the Cold War’, *Welsh History Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 335–62. See also David Smith (1985), ‘The Early Gwyn Thomas’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 71–89.
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17. Gwyn Thomas (1949), *All Things Betray Thee* (London: Michael Joseph).

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23. The fullest treatment of John Hopla's life is Dai Smith (2014), *The World John Hopla Turned Around* (Treorchy: Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council).
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25. *Rhondda Leader* (hereafter *RL*), 19 February 1916.
26. *Merthyr Pioneer*, 2 May 1914.
27. *RL*, 4 July 1903, 4 February 1904, 1 October 1904. The published obituary of Thomas Hopla, John's father, notes he was a 'faithful member' of the chapel. *RL*, 9 May 1914. So too was Hopla's brother, William. *RL*, 31 August 1901, 4 January 1902, 8 March 1902, 1 October 1904.
28. *RL*, 9 March 1907.
29. *RL*, 14 September 1907.
30. *RL*, 19 December 1908, 16 January 1909, 13 November 1909.
31. *Evening Express* (Cardiff, hereafter *EEx*), 25 November 1908.
32. *EEx*, 26 November 1908.
33. *EEx*, 30 November 1908.
34. *EEx* 1 December, 2 December, 3 December 1908; *RL*, 5 December 1908. Although in the aftermath of the strike, the Federation did provide the equivalent of three weeks' strike pay to those involved. *Cardiff Times*, 19 December 1908.
35. *EEx*, 8 December 1908.
36. *EEx*, 9 December 1908; *RL*, 12 December 1908.
37. *RL*, 19 December 1908.
38. *Cardiff Times*, 6 October 1906. The South Wales figures were 41,843 in favour, 31,527 against. Scotland and Yorkshire were similarly in favour. *EEx*, 19 May 1908.
39. *RL*, 19 December 1908.
40. *RL*, 27 March 1909.
41. For the dispute at the Glamorgan Colliery over wage rates in the spring see, for instance, *RL*, 2 April 1910.

42. A narrative of these events can be found in Smith, 'Tonypany'. See also Gwyn Evans and David Maddox (2010), *The Tonypany Riots, 1910–1911* (Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press).
43. *EEx*, 5 September 1910.
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56. *RL*, 1 June 1912.
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65. Macintyre, *Proletarian Science*, p. 126.
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68. Although the club was also a social space, with a billiards team and a male voice choir. *EEx*, 10 January 1910; *RL*, 24 July 1909, 26 March 1910.
69. I am extremely grateful to Cath Feely for sharing with me her research in the Kerr and Company archives in Chicago. This shows that the Marxian Club in Blaenclydach bought shares in the company in June 1909.
70. *RL*, 15 December 1900, 5 January 1901.
71. *RL*, 20 October 1906; *Aberdare Leader*, 20 July 1907.
72. *Aberdare Leader*, 7 March 1903.
73. Smith, *Lewis Jones*, p. 13.
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Emily Davison: Dying for the Vote

Carolyn P. Collette

Emily Wilding Davison died on 8 June 1913, of injuries she sustained when she moved onto the racetrack at Epsom Downs on 4 June.¹ Amid the public outcry of mingled shock, grief and anger, the voice of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (hereafter NUWSS) was clear and resolute. The 13 June 1913 edition of their weekly paper *Common Cause* contained an editorial titled ‘Responsibility’ which apportioned blame for the incident to various groups—those who opposed woman suffrage, those who favoured it but did nothing, those who obstructed it. While the editorial affirms that the Women’s Social and Political Union (hereafter WSPU) would not have approved the decision Davison made on 4 June, the writer repeats a charge against the WSPU that recurs in the pages of *Common Cause* as a criticism of militant strategy, the use of deliberately inflammatory language about sacrifice and martyrdom. On the one hand, the editorialist writes, there is ‘true heroism’, manifested by ‘men and women willing to face death in the course of their work—doing the work they had in hand and taking the risk, as Mrs. Josephine Butler did, or as any soldier does’. On the other hand, there is

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the spirit which goes out to seek death, which demands martyrdom, not as a risk to be faced in the course of one's work, but as an end in itself—this spirit does not deserve so fair a name, and it is one which has been deliberately fostered by the militant leaders. We appeal to them once more to hold their hands, and consider what terrible issues their leadership has already brought to some of those who follow them.²

Emily Davison rejected constitutional patience, aligned herself with the militant tactics of the WSPU, and vigorously advocated and worked for both the vote and the economic advancement of women, sister causes she regarded as requiring complete devotion and sacrifice. In the pages that follow I argue that the editor of *Common Cause* was correct in identifying the constant drumbeat of sacrifice and martyrdom apparent in WSPU rhetoric as an influence on her behaviour. But I also argue that Emily Davison's martyrdom transpired over the course of years, that she documented it in the record of her life as a militant suffragette, and that it comprised brave actions such as her endurance of prison and extreme pain for the cause of woman suffrage. Her writing also shows that she, like other militant suffragists, was strongly influenced by the sacral, mystic dimension of militant thinking articulated by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editor of *Votes for Women*, the weekly journal of the WSPU, and by the pervasive and polymorphous medievalism of late Victorian and Edwardian England adapted to service of The Cause.

Emily Davison was quite clear that martyrdom was a matter of continual sacrifice and of steadfast witness. While these may ultimately lead to death, in and of themselves, she argued, they constitute martyrdom.³ In an essay titled 'The Price of Liberty', published in the pages of *The Suffragette* on the first anniversary of her death (5 June 1914), she lays out all the ways that women are martyred by social and political institutions to which they have little access and over which they have no control. She invokes Christ, 'The Master', who shows the way of sacrifice and self-abnegation she and others like her choose to follow as they battle a hostile world:

In the New Testament, the Master reminded His followers that when the merchant had found the pearl of Great Price, he sold all that he had in order to buy it [Matthew 13:45–6]. That is a parable of Militancy! It is that which the women-warriors are doing to-day. Some are truer warriors

than others, but the perfect Amazon is she who will sacrifice all even unto this last to win the Pearl of Freedom for her sex. Some of the beauteous pearls that women sell to obtain this Freedom which is so little appreciated by those who are born free, are the pearls of Friendship, Good Report, Love, and even Life itself, each in itself a priceless boon.

[...]

But a more soul-rendering sacrifice [...] is demanded of the Militant [...]. She that loveth mother or father, sister or brother, husband or child, dearer than me cannot be my disciple, saith the terrible voice of Freedom [...]. 'Cannot this cup of anguish be spared me?' cries the Militant aloud in agony [...] 'nevertheless I will pay [...]'.⁴

She ennobles women's sacrifice by paraphrasing Matthew 10:37, and aligning it with 'the tragedy of Calvary', the supreme example of laying down one's life for one's friends, and 'for generations yet unborn'. She also refers to the ultimate sacrifice of life as a kind of freedom, a release from suffering, terming it 'Nirvana'. 'The Price of Liberty', written during the year between her release from a six-month prison sentence in Holloway and her death, attests that although she is remembered for her militancy, Emily Davison's personal political philosophy was rooted in the belief that her cause was God's cause.

CHANNELLING MEDIEVALISM

Soon after her death it was widely reported through WSPU channels that Emily Davison's dying words were 'Fight on and God will give the victory'—not actually her words, for she died without regaining consciousness after being carried from the Epsom track, but rather a version of the words of Joan of Arc at Poitiers, 'the soldiers will fight and God will give the victory'. Joan of Arc appeared frequently at militant women's suffrage events, represented by Elsie Howey, dressed in armour and mounted on a white horse.⁵ The medieval woman's militancy, her visionary spirituality and her death fighting for her country in the cause she believed God had entrusted to her, reflected elemental principles central to the militant suffrage movement: that women could and would fight for justice, because God's plan for humanity engaged them in a cause eminently worth suffering and dying for. Commitment to these

principles called Joan of Arc from the Middle Ages into the twentieth century, melding her story with current events.

From 1909 to 1911 the pages of *Votes for Women* were full of stories, reviews and essays about women saints and martyrs, about visionary women and the strong women of English history, all linking the present struggle with past achievements. This connection was emphasised by symbolic, eye-catching graphics on the front pages of many issues, where medieval iconography adapted to contemporary purposes featured a woman knight attempting to win a castle or to rescue captive womanhood from a dungeon.

Even the non-militant constitutionalist suffragists, the NUWSS, embraced and adapted medieval patterns. In 1913, a year in which all reasonable hope of passing a woman suffrage bill had died, they proposed a national women's pilgrimage from every corner of Britain to London, culminating in a massive service in St Paul's Cathedral to rededicate themselves to their cause.

These references and images reflect the pervasive medievalism that blossomed in Victorian culture and flourished until the First World War. This was the time of what Mark Girouard has termed a 'Return to Camelot', a recollection of medieval forms of art, architecture and, in some cases, social organisation, as envisioned in William Morris's socialist medievalism and Young England's radical Toryism.⁶ What is remarkable about the militant suffrage adaptation of medieval topics is the almost complete absence of the trope of contrast, a hallmark of most nineteenth-century English medievalism, employed as a means of highlighting contemporary shortcomings—esthetic, spiritual and economic. Such a trope preserves and emphasises the sense of distance associated with past time. Suffrage medievalism, in contrast, is a way of collapsing time, of reorienting its unidirectional linearity, of saying that the current moment is imbricated in history, suffused with the past no matter how isolated or progressive it seems.

In her unpublished essay 'A Militant on May Day', written almost exactly a month before she died, Davison celebrates the international socialist holiday of May Day, 1913 within a specifically medievalist context. She joins a crowd on Oxford Street following the Red Flag, moving forward to the strains of the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale*, finally reaching Hyde Park where she identifies modern equivalents of Maid Marian, Friar Tuck and Robin Hood in an audience listening to socialists inveighing against capitalism, preaching the 'Gospel of Socialism'. While

the setting is quintessentially English, the crowd appears to be a united, international community

of all races, and all creeds. Jew and Gentile, Free thinkers and Churchmen, young, old, male and female, English, Russian, French, German, all 'nations, peoples and languages' seemed to be gathered in the Park in extraordinary unison, all in accord [...] and there came a sound of a mighty rustling wind. What was that sound, what was that common sentiment that Holy Ghost that overshadowed them all and made them drunken, though not with wine, which opened their mouths so that they were given extraordinary marvelous gifts and those in the crowd heard them speak in the language in which they were born? It was the Holy Spirit of Liberty, expressing the fights of the individual and the common yet glorious humanity of all the clerisy [...] which touched with a glowing coal from off the altar of Evolution the lips of the speakers.

[...]

The Gospel of the People is at hand it is even hard at the doors. The People is rousing at last. From every platform I heard sympathy expressed for Suffragettes [...].⁷

Davison concludes by noting the Park was ringed by carriages of the wealthy, the class she associates with warmongering, whose cry of 'God Save the King' was essentially a militarist cry, soon to be replaced by 'God Save the People', a cry that would usher in an era of

Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality when wars shall cease. When each man and woman shall labour and receive the fruit of their labours, [...] when England and her sister-nations too shall be 'merry'.⁸

'I came away from this May Day Demonstration', she writes, 'with a glimpse of the vision of the future' and concludes by citing Revelations 21:5: "Behold, I make all things new!"⁹

RECOVERING MILITANCY

Awareness of history was central to the militant suffrage movement. For many suffragettes the achievement of woman suffrage was the last major reform in a process of social and political liberalisation that began with the Magna Carta, was spurred on by the Reform Bills of the nineteenth

century and now awaited the enfranchisement of women to reach its apogee. Women's fight for the vote was understood as part of a long tradition of women's militancy occluded by official 'history' but yet believed to be recoverable. The process of recalling women's past into the present did more than support the suffrage cause, it also revealed the continuity of many patterns of individual and collective behaviour that constitute women's history. Rightly and fully recorded, history could provide a continuum to show that suffragettes were the spiritual daughters of earlier generations of strong women. In the absence of a full historical record, one that included women as well as men, suffragettes reconstituted women's missing past in essays, reviews and news stories in *Votes for Women*. They focused on three central topics: valorising militant women of the Middle Ages, adapting the visionary culture of medieval spirituality and sacralising suffering for the franchise. These themes became tactical and strategic weapons in the fight.

The struggle for the vote was never just about the vote, rather it was about the power unlocked by the franchise to better British lives. The vote conferred full citizenship on the half of the population denied that status. It meant that women might have a say in the burgeoning legislation aimed at households, working women and children at the turn of the twentieth century. This aspiration was met by popular and parliamentary male rebuttal centred in gender stereotypes. Among the specious arguments advanced against woman suffrage was that women were not qualified to be fully enfranchised citizens because they could not fight for Britain. In response to this objection, beginning in 1909 the WSPU began to publish a series of feature essays, book reviews and columns on the militant women of British and European history. In one sense the ground for this endeavour had been prepared by the virtually ubiquitous compendia of the lives of ancient and/or great women that were published in the second half of the nineteenth century in both England and the United States. But the WSPU was after more than biographies of famous women—they were out to prove that women of earlier times were more martial, held in higher regard and were more politically and socially active than modern women were allowed to be. This search resulted in booklets such as Margaret Wynne Nevinston's *The Ancient Suffragettes*,¹⁰ stories of the strength of biblical and classical women, and Cicely Hamilton's *A Pageant of Great Women*,¹¹ a popular play in which medieval and early modern women were presented in a format similar to that of Christine de Pizan's *The City of Ladies*. In Hamilton's apology,

personifications of justice and prejudice advance their arguments while a series of famous women are called forth and praised for their deeds. Weekly essays titled 'Warrior Women' recounted the history of Amazons, ancient British and Germanic heroines and crusading women who, 'Animated by the double enthusiasm of religion and valour [...] often performed the most romantic exploits' and 'died with their weapons in their hands'.¹² Week after week the essay series celebrated historical figures such as the Empress Maud (Matilda), daughter of Henry I, who fought her cousin Stephen of Blois for the English throne; Eleanor of Aquitaine; and Margaret of Anjou. These women of English history possessed what Christine de Pizan described as the hearts of men in a culture that allowed them to move from women's sphere into men's when circumstances required them to act forcefully.¹³

The history of women, seemingly so glorious in its medieval phase, was offered as a template and a continuum. The wealthy, powerful and militant Matilda of Tuscany, a twelfth-century heroine (1046–1115) whose life was a continual battle with popes and kings to keep control of her lands, was described as having given everything in her fight for what she believed to be right. *Votes for Women* praised her martial determination and held it up as a model for militants: 'This is the spirit which we find reawakened in the women of the WSPU today.'¹⁴ The same spirit in the seventeenth century inspired Anne Marie Louise d'Orleans, Duchesse de Montpensier, to defy the king and preserve the city of Orleans against his forces. Her courage and success, with only a handful of soldiers, against an enemy who held the city and greeted her challenge with a box of bonbons, was proof for the writer that 'in the Middle Ages as to-day indomitable courage in a right cause will always win its way'.¹⁵ The narrative of her success appeared in a story under the title 'A Medieval Suffragette', suggesting that the term 'medieval' when applied to a woman connoted not a period, but strength and the will to use force.

As part of the reconstruction of the continuum of women's active involvement in 'history', from 1909 to 1911 Emily Davison contributed a series of essays to *Votes for Women* celebrating more recent British and American heroines who worked against formidable odds for social justice, freedom and education. She introduced the heroism, independence and dedication of Florence Nightingale¹⁶; she wrote of the compassion and Quaker determination of Elizabeth Fry in her work for prison reform¹⁷; of Hannah More's determination to establish Sunday schools

as sites of education for poor children¹⁸, and of the abolitionist struggles of American women—Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Susan B. Anthony and Harriet Beecher Stowe.¹⁹ In ‘The Maid of Saragossa’, she told the story of Agostina of Saragossa, the woman who helped win the battle of Saragossa by taking her dead lover’s place in the line of battle.²⁰ In the last of this series she wrote of Josephine Butler’s contemporary campaign to educate society to understand that sexually transmitted diseases are passed by both men and women, not just women. ‘Josephine Butler: Pioneer of Social Purity’ was published on 25 August 1911 in *Votes for Women*.²¹

But above all it was Joan of Arc who featured most prominently in *Votes for Women* as an avatar for suffragettes. She was beatified by the Roman Catholic Church in April of 1909 and a wealth of stories about her life and deeds appeared around that date. A book review titled ‘The Matchless Maid’ in *Votes for Women*, by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, described Joan of Arc as a proto-suffragette, stressing her mental qualities—her courage and her obedient dedication to her cause.²² She was

sane and strong and self-controlled, knowing her own mind absolutely, with an inflexible will, a sure aim, and single and direct nature. [...] [A] spirit of obedience to the Divine Will [...] inspired her amazing courage and made her the worker of miracles. [...] That she was a woman crowns her sex with the glory of womanhood. That she was an instrument of salvation in the hands of the most High opens to us, if we will give our life, our body and soul to obedience to the Divine Voice, a vista of possible achievement.

A review of a play about Joan of Arc, titled ‘The Voices’, in the same issue uses the recent beatification of Joan of Arc to structure a narrative of ultimate triumph over institutionalised male intransigence. It compares the medieval Joan, ‘despised, feared and murdered as a witch’ by the same Church that now exalts her, to the suffragettes’ relationship to the ‘men in high places who are as blind to the truth of the Vision, as deaf to the Voices [...] small-minded men who cannot understand the mighty course of events unfolding’. The reviewer concludes, ‘the day of visions and celestial voices is not yet past, and there are women in England at this moment who are ready, as Joan was, to pay the extreme penalty for the faith that is in them. Joan of Arc would have saved France. Women today would save not one country but humanity.’²³

ENVISIONING THE SACRED

Strengthened by reconstruction of a vigorous martial heritage, many of the women who became militant suffragettes developed a concomitant militant faith to encourage and sustain them in the punishments that inevitably followed militant action.²⁴ This faith was supported by and shared through narratives of enlightening visionary experience. Like medieval religious women before them, and like Davison in her conviction of the sacrality of the socialist celebration she witnessed on May Day 1913, the authors testified to a personal, independent, spiritual knowledge of God. Those who find no place in institutionalised hierarchies find freedom and authority in the interstices of power structures, and women's experience in the Christian Church has been no exception. Both for medieval women such as Margery Kempe and Marguerite Porete and for twentieth-century suffragettes, earthly authority could be resisted, even displaced, by a visionary claim to higher authority. When the government began forcibly feeding imprisoned suffragettes in the autumn of 1909, Emmeline Pankhurst proclaimed the dawn of a new era of spiritual awakening in an essay published in *Votes for Women* titled 'The Fiery Cross'.²⁵ Defying the power of the government, she prophesied that the suffering and the faith of imprisoned women would become a radical Advent message and a Pentecostal fire that would

breathe into the ear of many a sleeper the one word 'Awake', and she will arise to slumber no more. It will descend with the gift of tongues upon many who have been hitherto dumb, and they will go forth to preach the news of deliverance. [...] For the spirit which is in woman to-day cannot be quenched; it is stronger than all earthly potentates and powers; it is stronger than all tyranny, cruelty and oppression; it is stronger even than death itself.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, the visionary editor of *Votes for Women*, used the paper to affirm that the suffrage struggle was engaged upon both a physical and a spiritual plane and that those who opposed the great forces moving the country forward must inevitably fail. In her autobiography, *My Part in a Changing World*,²⁶ she describes the eclectic influences shaping her visions: Christianity, specifically Methodism, was the foundation, augmented by Hindu mysticism and a belief in the immanent sacrality of all creation. She was a woman who knew her Bible,

as well as a follower of Walt Whitman and Whitman's disciple, Edward Carpenter. The early twentieth century was a time of mystical reawakening in the West, which led on the one hand to interest in the occult and on the other to a revival of interest in the mystical tradition within the Christian Church.²⁷ This combination of influences contributed to her unique visionary mode which erased time and geography: 'When we pass into the spiritual plane, we are conscious [...] of a deep-flowing, swift current which carries us and all things upon its breast and sweeps us forward. And we realize that the very men who seem to act against us are working out, as we are, albeit in strange ways, the decree of time and fate. They are straws, as we are, upon the wave of destiny.'²⁸

A sense of riding the currents of time and fate helps structure Lady Constance Lytton's visionary conversion narrative about her visit in October 1909 with the first suffragette to endure forcible feeding. In a passage full of references to religious images and to layered moments of time present, past and future, she links her own moment to the timeless 'wave of destiny' that brought forward the women's suffrage movement. She recalls how the young suffragette's 'ethereal' countenance and smile in turn recalled the visual memory of an earlier visit to Fra Angelico's frescoes in Florence. This recovered memory and the image of the young woman inspired her to search for and buy a 'little sixpenny edition of his pictures': 'There it was', she writes, 'the thing I had seen lately, the look of spiritual strength shining through physical weakness. [...] I had looked at these pictures in my younger days, and their great beauty had given me joy, but I had felt annoyed with the man for painting beings so inhuman, women that were ethereal but so little real. [...] Now I [...] longed for them, having seen the thing portrayed in life.'²⁹ Moving in itself, the passage is also designed to inspire others, as it concludes with an epiphany: she left the room where she had met the young woman in a 'maze of feelings' and with a certainty that 'an angel had been in my presence, and I, who agreed with all she did, had left her and many others to go through this alone'. She determined to take 'the very next opportunity of making my protest with a stone'.³⁰

Recounting her own subsequent imprisonment and forcible feeding in Liverpool's Walton Gaol during January of 1910, Lady Constance wrote of yet another vision she had. She saw the setting sun shining through a prison window, creating the image of the three crosses of Calvary in the midst of a crowd of contemporary figures. The description communicates her faith that the suffrage movement was aligned with God's will.

Like an image for the Hours of the Cross in a book of hours, the crucified Christ appears in front of a crowd, this one composed of her own contemporaries:

It looked different from any of the pictures I had seen. The cross of Christ, the cross of the repentant thief, and the cross of the sinner who had not repented—that cross looked blacker than the others, and behind it was an immense crowd. The light from the other two crosses seemed to shine on this one, and the Christ was crucified that He might undo all the harm that was done. I saw amongst the crowd the poor little doctor and the Governor [prison officials], and all that helped to torture these women in prison, but they were nothing compared to the men in the cabinet who wielded their force over them. There were the upholders of vice and the men who support the thousand injustices to women, some knowingly, and some unconscious of the harm and cruelty entailed. Then the room grew dark and I fell asleep.³¹

Mary Richardson, notorious as the woman who slashed Velasquez's *Rokeby Venus* in 1914, recounted yet a third visionary experience, this one about charity. She writes of an experience she had in the prison chapel at Holloway. Inspired by an image of the Virgin, she was transfixed by all that the idea of the Virgin represented:

On that spring Sunday morning the sun slanted in through the windows and gilded everything within the chapel. The face of a statue of the Virgin that had been newly placed there seemed suffused with the light. I could not keep my eyes from her sweet smiling countenance. Its message, it seemed to me, came to us remotely, from far off. Despite the sunshine, our company seemed grey and austere. A dozen wardresses, perched up in box-like contraptions set on stilts at intervals up and down the centre aisle, held long rods in their hands. With these they would rap the shoulder of a wriggler or anyone who giggled. Always and always it was 'the rod'. How different the message I seemed to see in the Virgin's smile.³²

For women such as Mary Richardson who campaigned for the full humanity of women, the Virgin Mary recalled the feminine principle in religion increasingly recognised in what has been termed the late nineteenth-century 'age of Mary'.³³ In 1854 the Catholic Church declared the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and from the 1850s the English Catholic Church sanctioned a renewed commitment to Marian

devotion that struck a responsive chord with members of the Oxford Movement. The God in whose image humanity was created began to assume features and characteristics not 'noticed' since the Middle Ages—God was feminised and once more became both Mother and Father. In Richardson's vision the smiling Virgin and the girls' singing are intertwined in a message of grace and mercy that stands in contrast to the 'justice' imposed by the government of Britain.³⁴

Imprisoned for six months in 1912, Emily Davison used some of the time of her incarceration to rethink and to write about the tenets of Christian faith and the position accorded to the Virgin. Although her essay culminates in a vision, it begins with a reflection on doctrinal history, specifically the doctrines that lay behind the medieval feast of Candlemas that celebrates the occasion when the infant Jesus was presented by his mother in the Temple. In the Reformation, Candlemas disappeared from the service book, but its secondary name, 'Purification of St Mary the Virgin', was retained and the feast day became associated with the removal of the 'stain' of childbirth in a specific service designed for women who had recently given birth, 'the Churching of Women'. Davison argues forcefully against the degradation of all mothers who are assumed to need ritual purification after giving birth, and she implies that in associating childbirth with impurity contemporary Christianity has turned its back on the miracle of the Virgin birth which is central to Christine doctrine: 'Motherhood is still associated with the Hebraic idea of Purification and the necessity to remove a stigma, a defilement. And as motherhood is the common lot of women, the status of women is still proportionately contemptible.'³⁵ There is a new Christian dispensation, she asserts, and she shares her vision of a revelation: 'that [...] men and women hand in hand, not bond, but free, both necessary, both of equal value, both the ultimate sources of life and power' are the foundation of the family and of the state.³⁶

Visionary suffragettes—both those who saw visions and those who imagined alternative ways of living—realised that they had to work within a political system to create the good society, just as medieval mystics had. A review of a biography of St Catherine of Siena in the 28 July 1911 issue of *Votes for Women* titled 'Catherine of Siena, Mystic and Politician' praises Catherine as a mystic of 'a highly contemplative order', and also as a 'woman with an essentially practical and sensible nature [...] and deep sympathy for the sufferings of humanity'. The late feminist philosopher and theologian Grace Jantzen argued for just this

point, for understanding medieval mystics, particularly women visionaries, as speaking in and to the wider world of which they were a part.³⁷ She argues that a paradigm of mystical experience as intensely private, subjective and inexpressible has dominated twentieth-century thinking about mystics and mystical writings. Such a notion, she claims, bears little resemblance to what actually preoccupied medieval mystics, whom she describes as focused on ‘discernment of the mystical meaning of Scripture, ministry to the needs of the destitute, the lepers and the ignorant, and development of rich new genres and modes of language to sing of the love of God’.³⁸ And if we think back to the mystics and visionaries likely most familiar to many of us—Julian of Norwich, in particular—we see Jantzen’s point. Julian is quite emphatic that her visions are not for her alone, but for the wider world, which they were sent to benefit. Her entire text is suffused with a concern that the message of love she was given be passed on to others, because the visions she was granted were given for a wider purpose than her own understanding. Similarly, Emily Davison’s active pen and her penchant for words as well as deeds served to keep her thinking and her suffering before the public. Militant suffragists might have been willing to sacrifice and suffer, but they also realised that there is no point in suffering for others if the suffering is not known. Remembrance, narrative and publication were not ways of gaining glory, but of communicating as widely as possible a sacred message, a vision of a new world order.

MARTYRS FOR THE CAUSE

For years, in issue after issue of *Votes for Women*, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence advocated the sacral element of the militant struggle through a rhetoric of martyrdom and triumphant suffering. Pethick-Lawrence’s autobiography is particularly germane to this essay, as she traces her commitment to a spiritual life that eventually culminated in her militant activism.³⁹ Before she became affiliated with the WSPU she, like other militants, had sought ways of transforming faith and vision into action. This search led her to seek a life of faith and service in a female religious community. In the early 1890s, at the age of 23, she joined one of the lay sisterhoods that flourished in London in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These orders are comparatively unknown in connection to the militant suffrage movement. Such sisterhoods brought together devout women who wished to worship God and to work in the world.

Pethick-Lawrence joined Katherine House, home to the Methodist lay order the Sisters of the People. There she pledged herself to a life of charitable work. The founders of Katherine House sought women who 'would lay aside ideas of pride and social distinction, and who would realize that all men and women were their brothers and sisters, that we belong to one common human family [...] and that wherever we find misery, loneliness, oppression or sin, there we must go with love [...] and also with the strength and indignation of true womanhood.'⁴⁰ The sisters of the order were encouraged to get to know the people they worked among, to engage them in substantive conversation about their lives, and also the political questions that specially affected them and their children.⁴¹ When she wished to get closer to the people she was helping, to move out of Katherine House and live among the poor, she was forbidden by the directors of the order. She eventually she left the order in 1895. In 1905–1906 she joined the Women's Social and Political Union and focused her energies on a political cause she believed was a divine mission. When the government responded to women's hunger strikes with forcible feeding, Pethick-Lawrence composed a series of powerful editorials that became the source of ideas and a shared socio-lect for the militant movement. In her editorial of 7 January 1910, she invokes the same passage Emily Davison cites in 'The Price of Liberty', Revelations 21:5, 'And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new', as well as 2 Corinthians 5:17, 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new'. As Emily Davison did in her essay 'The Price of Liberty', she aligns the suffrage cause with Christ's mission on earth, writing, 'Through you shall be wrought a great deliverance of the human race'.⁴²

Unhappily, she had many occasions to write of how her sister members of the WSPU suffered for their beliefs, even as she urged them on as warriors in the mode of Joan of Arc:

And now the clock boomed out the hour of midnight. The old year was dead. A new year had begun. [...] 'Behold, I make all things new.' Whose voice was speaking through the silence of the night? It was the voice of the Miracle Worker; it was the voice that speaks to the earth, and, lo, where all seemed darkness and despair hope and faith shine with glorious light.

And again I saw a vision of faces in prison—faces marred with cruel usage and wan with hunger and weakness.

[...]

I saw those brave women, Miss Martin and Miss Hall, hustled into prison [...]. I saw the prison officers enter Miss Martin's cell and fling her on the ground with her face to the stone floor. I saw the horror of what is called the 'frog-march' inflicted upon this girl of gentle breeding and of chivalrous heart. I saw her, with limbs wrenched and bruised, gasping and half-fainting being dragged [...] to the doctor's room. I saw the gag thrust into her mouth, with the mocking words—to which no reply could be given—'Does that hurt?' I heard the taunts that passed from mouth to mouth as the prison officers sneered at the cause for the sake of which this lady had fallen a prisoner into their hands. I saw the loathsome treatment of the struggling girl as food was forced into her through the stomach-tube. Then I shuddered at the further barbarity that began to be enacted. In an agony of physical and mental distress, this tortured girl was seized again, her arms forced behind her back; she was handcuffed and pushed and hustled back to her cell, flung upon the floor, and left there till the next operation. [...] Could the body of these women, could the mind and spirit, hold out against the prolonged and terrible torture?

'Behold, I make all things new.' Whence came that voice? Then I realized and understood it came from the solitary prison cell. It was the song in the heart of these two women to which I was listening. It was their message which the new year had brought to me.

[...]

Hope has come, and help has come into the world for women. The bitter flood of woman's helpless despair shall be swept back, and life shall be reclaimed, and woman shall hold out the hands of love and strength to woman, and together we will beat down the powers of tyranny and evil under our feet. 'Behold, I make all things new.' [...] That is the meaning of the women's movement. That is the meaning of women's martyrdom to-day. That is the meaning of the great fight for freedom which women are making in the political world.⁴³

The language and tropes of the weekly publication of the WSPU advanced a notion of dedication to the cause which justified the axiom

that religion was not a part of the militant suffrage cause, rather the cause itself was a religion, that suffering such as Pethick-Lawrence describes and that scores of women endured is a kind of grace, a fruitful martyrdom of living resistance of spirit even as the body is subdued. In its service one should be prepared, as was Emily Davison, to give up everything that makes life comfortable and valuable for a woman—friends, family, reputation, privacy and even, if necessary, life itself. The notion of living service to the cause as a kind of martyrdom drew on both senses of the word—of the martyr as a witness to the faith, and of the martyr willing to suffer, even to die for her faith. In 1909–1910 militant hunger strikers were praised in *Votes for Women* in a weekly section titled ‘A Calendar of Saints’ as women who joined the ‘The Church Militant’, ‘valiant champions [...] who met without flinching the shock of persecution, who sustained through direst distress their denial of the powers of darkness to quench the Light of the world shining in their souls’.⁴⁴ ‘History repeats itself’, new champions fight in a renewed battle of light against darkness, ‘And it is human flesh and blood that is called upon, as in past days, to bear the strain of that great conflict. The powers and principalities of the world have dominion over the body, and by breaking the body they seek to conquer the soul and to force it to deny the light. [...] Just as in the days of persecution for the Christian faith.’⁴⁵

The price women paid for acting on their convictions was the horror of prison, hunger striking and forcible feeding. From the time they were first arrested in the stone-throwing phase of militancy, militant suffragettes by common agreement adopted a policy of submission to the law and non-compliance with prison rules. It did not take the Asquith government long to figure out their punitive measures were being circumvented. They hit on the idea of forcibly feeding hunger strikers, one of the most brutal and invasive tortures they might have selected. Under the guise of protecting life, they ordered the forcible feeding of women usually twice a day, accomplished by pouring food down the throat of a woman whose nasal passages were blocked, or by tube through the nose into the stomach, or by a tube directly into the stomach. To do this required at least four attendants to hold a woman’s head and limbs, and at least one ‘doctor’ and matron to oversee the operation. The process, involving steel gags and unsanitary equipment, seems to have been designed to humiliate and degrade the women who suffered it. Each session of forcible feeding seems to have lasted about twenty to thirty

minutes. By her own count Emily Davison was forcibly fed forty-nine times.

The WSPU put the suffering endured by imprisoned militants to good use, describing it vividly in the pages of *Votes for Women* both as an inspiration to readers and as a way to attack the government. Stories of forcible feeding echo key structural elements of medieval virgin martyr narratives, which would have been widely available to readers in the early twentieth century. If not ubiquitous, they were certainly familiar. Alban Butler's twelve-volume *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Principal Saints* (1756–1759) was republished in 1866 and was followed shortly thereafter by Sabine Baring-Gould's sixteen-volume *The Lives of the Saints* and his 1900 *Virgin Saints and Martyrs*.⁴⁶ Agnes Dunbar's two-volume *A Dictionary of Saintly Women* appeared in 1904–1905.⁴⁷ Caxton's translation of the *Golden Legend* into late Middle English was published in an affordable multi-volume pocket-sized edition by Dent in 1900.⁴⁸ Many of the highly educated women who joined the WSPU would have known of such publications.

Medieval stories of female martyrs almost always involve issues of autonomy and torture of various parts of the female body in a conventional narrative structure featuring steadfast faith during imprisonment, torture and suffering, followed by a glorious death. In these stories the torture is often inflicted by a governor or powerful agent of the government who is frequently a spurned suitor. Like the imprisoned suffragettes, neither criminal nor free, the women in virgin martyr stories are often in liminal positions, separated or cast off from their families, left to make their own way in the world—St Margaret was disowned by her father for becoming a Christian, of necessity adopting the life of a shepherdess, and St Cecilia was married against her will.

Virgin martyrs encounter evil in many forms. St Margaret of Antioch found the devil in her very prison cell; according to the legend he swallowed her, but the cross she carried in her hand so irritated his throat that he was forced to disgorge her. Margaret defeated the devil only to be killed by the Roman official Olybrius. Yet hers was one of the voices that spoke to Joan of Arc. St Cecilia converted her husband on their wedding night and subsequently her brother-in-law, as well as the Romans who put them to death, before she faced the prefect Almachius, debating with him about his false gods and her true God. Almachius ordered her killed, but she triumphed in the end when her home, the site

of her martyrdom, became a church. In the pages of *Votes for Women*, Israel Zangwill told the story of the martyred St Giulia of Carthage (also known as St Giulia of Corsica), tying virgin martyrs directly to the suffrage campaign: 'Today our St. Giulias, in revolt against a social order founded on prostitution and sex-inequality, demand political rights as leverage for a nobler society, and, despite the advice of kindly Rulers, they are as ready as in the seventh century to be martyred for their faith, though they have replaced the passivity of St. Giulia by measures of aggression.'⁴⁹

Even after the Reformation the suffering of saints, a term that in the Anglican Church denoted true believers, was a source for edifying narratives designed to provide inspiration to those who follow. For just such a purpose the story of Emily Davison's Margaret-like struggles in Strangeways Gaol was presented in the 'Calendar of Saints' section of *Votes for Women* as a modern martyrdom, a triumph of 'spirit over physical force' to edify and inspire others:

The narrow prison cell, with its stone floor, wherein for several days and nights a woman has suffered close confinement! Picture the woman in terrible loneliness, separated from the sight and sound of the outside world, handed over to the mercy of tormentors, who subsequently gave signal proof of their utter ruthlessness; her body wasted with the 'hunger strike'; bruised with the cruel and brutal procedure of forcible feeding! Reduced to this terrible plight, there is no thought in that woman's mind of abandoning the agonizing single-handed combat. The spirit still cries denial to the power of brute force, still offers strenuous resistance to the destroyers of the body. The door is barricaded as a protest against violation of her person. The woman presses her body against its iron panels. Presently her tormentors come, and, finding access blocked, think to accomplish submission by threats of further violence! Fools! They might have learnt the uselessness of threats by this time if they were not too stupid, too blinded in their materialism, to understand anything whatever of the spirit that is in this movement! The windows of the cell are broken; the hose-pipe is directed upon the unmoved woman; moments go by—five, ten, fifteen, the cell is flooded, the woman is gasping for breath, but is still unmoved. Then the cowards realize they are beaten. Three more days they bring all the forces at their command to bear upon this one woman given over to their mercy; at last, unable to face the consequences which threaten as a result of their brutality, they have nothing to do but to release her. So Emily Davison is set free.⁵⁰

The note of resurrection here is echoed in the description of how Mary Leigh endured ‘handcuffs, close confinement, the punishment and the padded cell for days and nights at a stretch, torture inconceivable, carried to the extreme verge of the victim’s physical collapse, all proved utterly useless. Fighting every inch of the ground, she burst open the prison gates and escaped last Saturday, winning a great victory for the human spirit.’⁵¹ Free from prison, she triumphs, but only for a while. Like Joan of Arc, Mary Leigh and her good friend Emily Davison continually re-engaged in a struggle they felt impelled to continue. Joan was supported by her voices, the suffragettes by the voices of their comrades, especially in the pages of *Votes for Women*.⁵²

When Emily Davison’s moment came, she was ready to surrender her life for her comrades, and for her convictions. She wrote the story of her six-month imprisonment in Holloway Gaol, a sentence for having set fire to several pillar boxes in central London in December 1911, a crime whose punishment she researched before she acted. Her first act of martyrdom thus was to accept the severe consequences of action. Her second act arose from a desire to forestall others’ suffering by killing herself. We know of her attempts to throw herself off a railing and later onto an iron staircase while serving her sentence in Holloway in the first months of 1912, because she wrote the narrative of what she attempted and what she endured. *The Suffragette* published a slightly fuller version of this account on 13 June 1913, linking the two failed suicide attempts in Holloway to the events at the 1913 Derby, thereby sealing Emily Davison’s reputation as a martyr for woman suffrage and the freedom of her sex.

Her own unpublished narrative focuses on the brutality with which she was treated, both before and after what she refers to simply as ‘that fall’. On Saturday, 22 June 1912, the horror of what she had endured in being forcibly fed, and her desire to spare others such pain, prompted her decision:

In my mind was the thought that some desperate protest must be made to put a stop to the hideous torture which was now being our lot. Therefore, as soon as I got out I climbed onto the railing and threw myself out on the wire-netting, a distance of between 20 and 30 feet. The idea in my mind was ‘one big tragedy may save many others’; but the netting prevented any severe injury.⁵³

The fall injured her, but not seriously. After she recovered a bit, while the Matron was visiting prisoners and the wardresses ‘relaxed their watch’, she decided

that my best means of carrying out my purpose was the iron staircase. When a good moment came, quite deliberately I walked upstairs and threw myself from the top, as I meant, on to the iron staircase. If I had been successful I should undoubtedly have been killed, as it was a clear drop of 30 to 40 feet. But I caught once more on the edge of the netting.⁵⁴

When a wardress ran toward her summoning help to restrain her, Davison ‘realized that there was only one chance left, and that was to hurl myself with the greatest force I could summon from the netting on to the staircase a drop of about 10 feet. I heard someone saying, “No Surrender!” and I threw myself forward on my head with all my might.’⁵⁵ She regained consciousness in a state of incredible pain, and was taken to the prison hospital where she requested her own physician to attend her; her request was denied. She asked that they not move or touch her, for the pain was so great, but they did. She begged that they not try to forcibly feed her. But within twenty-four hours they returned to do just that, and continued for four days forcibly to feed her twice a day. At last she was released on Friday, 28 June 1912; her attempts to kill herself had begun on the previous Saturday. Her account of her suicide attempts is direct, simple and unembellished; she simply says that her purpose was to stop others’ suffering.

IN RETROSPECT

In the century since her death, a great deal has been written about Emily Davison and a great deal of speculation has grown up around the events of the 1913 Derby. In this essay I have shifted the focus and argued that it matters that she understood martyrdom not as death but as faithful witness to a divinely sanctioned cause, a new social order of equality and mutual respect between men and women. I have also maintained that she was influenced in her choices by the powerful arguments of the WSPU and its view of women’s place in history. But it is also worth noting that while she and they deprecated the status of servility historically allotted to women and resolutely pursued equality, they apparently did not question the path nor the rhetoric of sacrifice, a path women have trodden

for centuries within Christian culture which has elevated such sacrifice as particularly and appropriately female.⁵⁶

Some might say, with justification, that she was romantic and idealistic as she combined militancy with endurance, resignation and self-denial. Her decisions meant that she suffered for years before her death in 1913, out of conviction and with complete understanding of the cost of her choices. One might also say that if it is ironic that militant suffragettes chose submission and suffering, it is even more ironic that all the suffering Emily Davison endured was displaced by the last hundred years' focus on her role in the events of 4 June 1913. We still do not know what happened that day. A Pathé film of the event shows her moving onto the track after two others have, at a place opposite the cameras, perhaps to enact a protest that would get public notice, an eventuality she lightly predicted to her friend Mary Leigh the night before. On that same night, 3 June 1913, she wrote a light-hearted and cheerful postcard to her mother.⁵⁷ Her personal effects, retrieved after the accident, included a return ticket to the race, as well as two WSPU banners attached to the inside of her coat, perhaps to be brandished in public as a stunt. We cannot know. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence wrote of the great tide of destiny that sweeps everyone before it. That tide has swept Emily Davison into a role she willingly accepted but may never have intended to perform on 4 June 1913, a role that has until recently hidden the larger story of her living martyrdom.

NOTES

1. Emily Davison's life is documented and discussed in three biographies that have appeared since her death. Gertrude Colmore's *The Life of Emily Davison: An Outline* (London: The Woman's Press, 1913), draws on primary sources to tell the story of a woman who was valiant, learned and selfless. John Sleight's *One-Way Ticket to Epsom: A Journalist's Enquiry into the Heroic Story of Emily Wilding Davison* (Bridge Studios, Morpeth, 1988) connects her social activism to the political and social activism of the coal mining district of Castle Morpeth in Northumberland. Liz Stanley and Ann Morley, writing in the context of second-wave feminism, argue that her actions were often motivated by fierce loyalties to her friends within the suffrage movement in *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison: A Biographical Detective Story*, published with Colmore's *Life* by the Women's Press (London, 1988). More recently a Morpeth genealogist, Maureen Howes, has published *A Suffragette's*

Family Album (Stroud: The History Press, 2013), calling attention to the close family ties that shaped and sustained Davison, and placing her life and deeds within a complex web of relatives and socially progressive thought in the north of England. Howes has worked closely with the Davison and Caisley descendants and archives in the Morpeth area.

The best guides to the complex political, social and spiritual forces at work in creating the militant suffrage movement are the autobiographies written by militant suffragettes. Chief among these are the complementary but independent recollections written by each of the Pankhursts: Emmeline Pankhurst (1914), *My Own Story* (London: Eveleigh Nash; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1971); Christabel Pankhurst (ed. Frederick Pethick-Lawrence) (1959), *Unshackled: The Story of How We Won the Vote* (London: Hutchinson); E. Sylvia Pankhurst (1931), *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (London: Longmans); and idem (1911), *The Suffragette: the History of the Women's Suffrage Movement 1905–1910* (Boston, MA: The Woman's Journal).

2. *Common Cause*, 13 June 1913.
3. On the topic of Davison's secular martyrdom see Gay. L. Gullickson (2008), 'Emily Wilding Davison: Secular Martyr?', *Social Research*, vol. 75, 461–84.
4. All quotations of and references to Emily Davison's writings, published and unpublished, are from her holograph texts edited by Carolyn P. Collette (2013), *In the Thick of the Fight: The Writing of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), this from pp. 128–30. Unpublished writings edited/transcribed from the Davison archive now in the Women's Library, London School of Economics (LSE), are identified with Women's Library file references.
5. See the entry for Elsie Howie in Elizabeth Crawford (1999), *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866–1928* (London: Routledge), pp. 295–7. In the spirit of Joan of Arc, members of the WSPU thought of themselves as warrior soldiers, Amazons, fighting for their country.
6. On medievalism in Davison's thinking see Carolyn P. Collette (2008), '“Faire Emelye”: Medievalism and the moral courage of Emily Wilding Davison', *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 42, 223–43.
7. Emily Davison, 'A Militant on May Day', 1 May 1913, holograph in Davison's hand, Women's Library, LSE, 7EWD/A/4/05; in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 123–7, quotation from pp. 125–6.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Women's Freedom League, London, 1911.
11. The Suffrage Shop, London, 1910.
12. *Votes for Women*, 3 March 1911.

13. Throughout the *Livre des Trois Vertus* (eds Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks) (Paris: Libr. H. Champion, 1989), Christine de Pizan explicates the assumption that when required to do so, in the absence of husband or lord, a woman could fill his position because she possessed the heart of a man. Her idea of gender seems to have been a spectrum on which women could function as men if required to do so.
14. *Votes for Women*, 31 December 1909.
15. *Votes for Women*, 22 July 1910.
16. *Votes for Women*, 20 May 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 83–5.
17. *Votes for Women*, 5 August 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 86–9.
18. *Votes for Women*, 9 September 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 90–5.
19. *Votes for Women*, 14 October 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 96–9.
20. *Votes for Women*, 4 November 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 100–103.
21. It is contained in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 104–8.
22. *Votes for Women*, 22 June 1910.
23. *Ibid.*
24. On this subject see Carolyn Christensen Nelson (2010), ‘The Uses of Religion in the Women’s Militant Suffrage Campaign in England’, *The Midwest Quarterly*, vol. 51, number 3, Spring, 227–42. Nelson points out the paradox that imprisonment provided women the chance to reflect spiritually and deeply about their cause and its Christian roots. For a medieval equivalent of this connection between spirituality and imprisonment see Anthony Bale (2016), ‘God’s Cell: Christ as Prisoner and Pilgrimage to the Prison of Christ’, *Speculum*, vol. 91, 1–35.
25. *Votes for Women*, 1 October 1909.
26. London: 1938.
27. I am grateful to Quentin Outram for pointing out that Dean Inge’s *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen) appeared in 1899 and was issued in a second edition in 1912, and a third edition in 1913, and that Evelyn Underhill’s *Mysticism* (London: Methuen), which appeared in 1911, was similarly popular, with a second edition in the year of publication and a third edition in 1912.
28. *Votes for Women*, 7 October 1910.
29. Lady Constance Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners: Experiences of a Suffragette*, a 1976 edition by EP Publishing, Ltd. of *Prisons and Prisoners, Some Personal Experiences by Constance Lytton and Jane Warton, Spinster* (London: William Heinemann, 1914), p. 202.

30. Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p. 203.
31. Ibid., p. 276.
32. Mary Richardson (1953), *Laugh a Defiance* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson), pp. 82–3.
33. This term, referring to the period 1830–1950, recurs in conjunction with the influence of the Oxford Movement on the larger society. See John Keble's 1827 book of poetry *The Christian Year* for poems celebrating the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. On the subject in Cardinal Newman's sermons see John R. Griffin (1989), 'Newman and the Mother of God', *Faith and Reason*, vol. 15, 91–109.
34. On the subject of the Virgin and Victorian feminism see Kimberly Van Esveld Adams (2001), *Our Lady of Victorian Feminism: the Madonna in the Work of Anna Jameson, Margaret Fuller, and George Eliot* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press).
35. Emily Davison, 'The Real Christianity', February 1912, holograph in Davison's hand, written in Holloway Prison; Women's Library, LSE, Davison archive, 7EWD/A/4/03; in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 118–21, quotation at p. 121.
36. Ibid.
37. See Grace M. Jantzen (1995), *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 147–56 and 168–84.
38. Grace M. Jantzen (1994), 'Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics', *Hypatia*, vol. 9, 186–206, at 192.
39. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1938), *My Part in a Changing World* (London: Victor Gollancz).
40. Ibid., p. 455.
41. Ibid., p. 456.
42. *Votes for Women*, 7 January 1910, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 80–2, quotation at p. 82.
43. Ibid., quotation at pp. 80–1.
44. *Votes for Women*, 5 November 1909. Such women were 'saints' not by virtue of miracles, but by steadfast devotion.
45. Ibid.
46. Alban Butler (1866), *Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Principal Saints* (Dublin: James Duffy); Sabine Baring-Gould (1872–1877), *The Lives of the Saints* (London: John Hodges); idem (1914), *The Lives of the Saints* (Edinburgh: John Grant); idem (1900), *Virgin Saints and Martyrs* (London: Hutchinson).
47. Agnes B. C. Dunbar (1904–1905), *A Dictionary of Sainly Women* (London: George Bell).
48. Jacobus de Voragine (ed. F. S. Ellis) (1900), *The Golden Legend, or Lives of the Saints As Englished by William Caxton* (London: Dent).

49. *Votes for Women*, 15 April 1910.
50. *Votes for Women*, 5 November 1909.
51. 'Calendar of Saints', *Votes for Women*, 5 November 1909.
52. For an informed overview of what suffragettes endured in prison see June Purvis (1995), 'The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain', *Women's History Review*, vol. 41, 103–33.
53. *The Suffragette*, 13 June 1913, in Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, pp. 154–8, quotation at pp. 155–6, LSE A/4/4/1.
54. *Ibid.*, quotation at p. 156.
55. *Ibid.* The phrase 'No Surrender!' was a watchword among WSPU militants. Emily Davison signed a 3 November 1909 letter to her close friend Mary Leigh 'NO SURRENDER!'. Davison to Leigh, 3 November 1909, Women's Library, LSE, 7EWD/A/3/01.
56. The non-militant NUWSS, who disapproved of this orientation, chose to play a man's game in a man's world, advocating for woman suffrage by following procedures that replicated the practices of government. Neither group was successful.
57. The postcard is in the possession of Maureen Howes, author of *Emily Wilding Davison: A Suffragette's Family Album* (Stroud: The History Press, 2013). It is from the archive of Caisley-Davison family private papers.

Making Irish Martyrs: The Impact and Legacy of the Execution of the Leaders of the Easter Rising, 1916

Mark McCarthy

The disproportionateness of power that resulted from the British conquest of Ireland proved to be a recipe for intermittent political violence, as exemplified by the outbreak of the 1798 Rebellion. Its suppression resulted in the abolition of the parliament which had sat in Dublin since 1692, following the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland under the Act of Union, 1800. Further rebellions against British rule were waged by Robert Emmet in 1803, the Young Irelanders in 1848 and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) or Fenians in 1867. As in 1798, these all ended in failure. The Irish experience of armed conflict, however, saw the emergence of a political rhetoric of separatism. According to William J. McCormack, this typically invoked ‘heroes’ who ‘were inheritors of French revolutionary ideas’. Among the names commemorated were: Theobald Wolfe Tone, who took his life whilst in captivity in 1798; Robert Emmet, who was executed after the rebellion in 1803; and the three Manchester Martyrs—William Philip

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Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien—who were executed for the killing of a policeman in 1867. By means of nurturing 'the mystique of banditry', nineteenth-century subversive organisations 'became "represented" by figures from the past, whose activities ... conformed to the notion of "dying for Ireland" or "giving their lives"'.¹

There were others, however, who sought to reimagine the future through constitutional means. One of these was John Redmond, who became the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in 1900. This party was on the verge of obtaining some degree of independence from Britain on 11 April 1912, when the Third Home Rule Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. It offered an Irish parliament with control over domestic affairs, which would remain inferior to Westminster. This prospect was strongly opposed by Sir Edward Carson, the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. On 28 September 1912, around 250,000 unionists pledged their opposition to Home Rule by signing the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant at Belfast City Hall. Tensions increased after Carson established the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), with James Craig, on 31 January 1913. In a sign that it would resist the introduction of Home Rule by force, the UVF imported 24,600 rifles through Larne, County Antrim between 24 and 25 April 1913.

In response, a decision was made to establish the Irish Volunteers, to defend Home Rule, at a meeting in Wynn's Hotel, Dublin on 11 November 1913. This mobilisation of nationalists in support of Home Rule, as Charles Townsend has noted, enabled republican activists from the IRB to 'move from the sidelines to the centre of events'. Although the majority of the rank-and-file membership of the Irish Volunteers were probably Home Rulers rather than separatists, the organisation's executive was dominated by the IRB who now 'had their hands on something like an army'. By July 1914, there were genuine fears of an 'imminent civil war' over the issue of Home Rule.² Consequently, after the Third Home Rule Bill was signed into law by King George V on 18 September, it was postponed for the duration of the First World War. The Irish Volunteers split after Redmond encouraged them to enlist in the British Army at a speech in Woodenbridge, County Wicklow on 20 September. The majority who followed him were renamed the National Volunteers. Around 12,300 of the 170,600 retained the Irish Volunteers title. Under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill, the Chief of Staff, these separatists refused to support the British war effort, seeing 'England's difficulty' as 'Ireland's opportunity'.

THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEOLOGY OF PATRICK PEARSE

The grievances of many of those who rebelled against British rule in Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising were cultural, as they rejected 'anglicisation' and sought 'a land in which Gaelic traditions would be fully honoured'. Additionally, they believed that Britain's imperial system 'denied expressive freedom to its colonial subjects'.³ One of the writers at the centre of Irish nationalist ideology was Patrick Pearse, who was a qualified barrister. In the lead-up to 1916, his rhetoric established a crucial link between 'Fenian insurrectionism' and a 'new, culturally defined sense of Irish national identity'.⁴ Many of his writings 'displayed a powerful Messianic strain', mixing religious testimony with prophecy about an impending Rising by depicting 'Ireland's struggle for redemption in terms of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary'.⁵ The radical newspaper *Irish Opinion* later characterised Pearse as 'a creature of infinite diversity'. It also noted that he spoke 'an acquired Gaelic with such mastery that the ... older native-speakers' could be heard rejoicing 'over the rich new combinations he would suddenly fling out in a speech as his passion caught fire from an idea'.⁶ From 1903 to 1909 Pearse served as editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the newspaper of the Irish language organisation the Gaelic League. In 1910, he opened St Enda's, an Irish language boarding school for boys, in the Hermitage in Rathfarnham, Dublin. The school's mission was to train 'useful citizens for a free Ireland', and to kindle in them 'something of the old spiritual and heroic enthusiasm of the Gael'.⁷ As a committed educationalist, Pearse once noted that he took great personal pride in 'the great work for Irish education' which the school was attempting.⁸ In the summer of 1909, work was completed on his lake-side cottage in Ros Muc, County Galway. It was constructed in the Irish vernacular style, with a thatched roof and three rooms, at a place known locally as An Aill Mhór.⁹ It was in this summer residence that Pearse 'was to ... write and plot, and to foresee his death'.¹⁰ In 1913, a branch of the military nationalist youth organisation *Na Fianna Éireann* was established at the residence by Pearse, Liam Mellows and Bulmer Hobson. Not long afterwards, Pearse was responsible for bringing about an Irish Volunteers' presence in Ros Muc, An Cheathrú Rua and Gorumna Island.¹¹

After being sworn into the IRB in February 1914, Pearse was appointed in the following year to its military council—a secret cluster dedicated to the task of plotting the Rising. To understand Pearse's

militaristic mindset, it is necessary to look at what inspired the politics of the man who later styled himself as ‘Commandant General of the Army of the Irish Republic’ and ‘President of the Provisional Government’.¹² For poet E. E. Speight, Pearse was the ‘shining one’.¹³ Seán MacGiollarnáth, who once edited *An Claidheamh Soluis*, felt that Pearse was a nationalist ‘in the fullest sense’. Anybody ‘who understands his character’, he argued, ‘will easily understand how he became leader of an insurrection’.¹⁴ Much of Pearse’s thinking, as Joost Augusteijn has noted, can ‘be understood in the context of his time’, as his ideas ‘were primarily a personal interpretation of currents in Irish and international thought’. His opinions about using physical force for political ends, for example, partly reflected Western society’s ‘growing militarisation’.¹⁵ Ideologically, Pearse’s goal of independence for Ireland was strongly rooted in the republican discourse of Wolfe Tone. One of Pearse’s heroes was *Cúchulainn*, the youthful warrior of Irish sagas. He also saw himself as belonging to a generation of Gaels who had been brought up in an era marked by a cultural renaissance in Irish culture, sport, theatre and literature.¹⁶ This link was evident from the oration that Pearse delivered at Glasnevin cemetery on 1 August 1915, at the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa—the veteran Fenian from Skibbereen in County Cork, who had died in exile in New York. At the crowded graveside, Pearse gave his endorsement of an Ireland ‘not free merely, but Gaelic as well; not Gaelic merely, but free as well’. ‘Ireland unfree’, he declared, ‘shall never be at peace’. Pearse also stated: ‘I hold it a Christian thing ... to hate evil, to hate untruth, to hate oppression; and, hating them, to strive to overthrow them.’ ‘Life springs from death’, he continued, ‘and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations’.¹⁷ The powerful and fiery oration, which represented ‘the zenith’ of Pearse’s ‘political speaking career’, proved to be ‘an immediate national sensation’.¹⁸ Six days after the oration, the *Irish Volunteer* newspaper reported that those gathered round O’Donovan Rossa’s grave had ‘pledged to Ireland their love and to English rule in Ireland their hate’.¹⁹ Michael Curran, who served at the time as secretary to the Archbishop of Dublin, William J. Walsh, later remarked that the funeral had represented ‘the date that publicly revealed that a new political era had begun’, one that served as ‘the prelude to ... 1916’.²⁰

Many of those who met Pearse in the run-up to the Rising were struck by the passion of his religious commitment. On one occasion, he visited Basin Lane Convent and met some of the nuns who

were stationed there. One of these was Sister Francesca (Thomas MacDonagh's sister, Mary), who later recalled: 'I had no idea about the Rising and I asked Pearse why he would not join a monastery.'²¹ But Pearse saw a more belligerent role for himself. His play, *The Singer*, proved particularly revealing about his beliefs. It featured a messianic hero, MacDara, who welcomed death and who also stirred up the people with rebellious songs. The notion of sacrifice, so that Ireland could be reborn, was a repetitive element of the leader's revolutionary manifesto. 'Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing', he once wrote, adding that it would necessitate 'the blood of the sons of Ireland to redeem Ireland'. In writing about Robert Emmet's death in 1803, Pearse played strongly upon the notion of martyrdom, noting that the patriot had delivered 'a sacrifice Christ-like in its perfection ... dying that his people might live, even as Christ died'.²²

THE EASTER RISING, 1916 AND THE EXECUTION OF ITS LEADERS

Although it was planned as a national event, the 1916 Rising was mainly confined to Dublin city centre—due to the failure of Irish nationalist Sir Roger Casement's mission to import 20,000 arms from Germany on Good Friday and because of the issuing of a countermanding order on Easter Sunday by Eoin MacNeill. Despite these setbacks, the General Post Office (GPO) on Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) and other prominent buildings in Dublin were seized on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, by rebels belonging to the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. Pearse read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the GPO, which declared the Irish Republic. After the shelling of the GPO, the rebels retreated to Moore Street and finally had to surrender on Saturday, 29 April. Overall, around 1600 Irish Volunteers led by Pearse and around 200 members of the Irish Citizen Army led by James Connolly were defeated by around 20,000 Crown forces armed with artillery. A total of 485 lives were lost in the Rising: 54% of the dead were civilians, 26% were from the British Army, 16% were rebels and 4% were policemen.²³ An estimated 368 Crown forces were wounded, while the combined numbers of rebels and civilians injured reached 2217.²⁴ After viewing the ruined city centre, an observer described Dublin as 'Ypres on the Liffey'.²⁵ Beyond Dublin, Risings also took place in Enniscorthy in County Wexford, Ashbourne in County Meath



Fig. 7.1 The Stonebreakers' Yard, Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin (Copyright of Mark McCarthy)

and east County Galway. Shots of resistance were also fired by the Kent brothers at Bawnard House in Castlelyons, County Cork.

After the Rising ended, Ireland was plunged into 'a febrile state'.²⁶ Fourteen prominent rebels, including all seven signatories of the Proclamation, were court-martialled and then executed by a British Army firing squad at Kilmainham Gaol's Stonebreakers' Yard (Fig. 7.1) between 3 and 12 May 1916. They included: Patrick Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh (3 May); Joseph Mary Plunkett, Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan and William Pearse (4 May); John MacBride (5 May); Éamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert, Seán Heuston and Michael Mallin (8 May); and Seán MacDiarmada and James Connolly (12 May). Blindfolds and white cards were used during the executions, with the latter 'pinned over the condemned men's hearts as aiming marks for the soldiers'. Some, including Thomas Clarke, opted not to

wear a blindfold. On the first morning, the same firing squad was used for all three executions. However, a different firing squad was used 'for each man shot' on all of the following mornings.²⁷ In reply to a question put to him as he was carried to his execution, a badly wounded James Connolly, who was propped up in a chair, said: 'I will say a prayer for all brave men who do their duty according to their lights'.²⁸ Afterwards, the bodies of the executed men were buried in Arbour Hill and covered over in quicklime. Two other nationalists suffered a similar fate. As punishment for his role in the shoot-out at Bawnard House, Thomas Kent was executed by a firing squad at Cork city's Victoria Barracks on 9 May, where his remains were buried. Casement, who had worked with the British Consular service up until 1913, was hung in London on 3 August 1916. This brought the total number of men executed to 16.

After the first 15 executions had taken place, there was a public backlash against the British government and its military forces. Outrage at Connolly's execution was expressed by the flying of a banner across Liberty Hall, declaring: 'James Connolly Murdered'. Not long after the executions, one observer lamented: 'it is pitiable to think of men of such splendid ability and genius being cut off in the fullness of their powers'.²⁹ Anti-British sentiment was exacerbated by persistent raids on people's homes, a plethora of interrogations, the arrest of more than 3100 suspects and the deportation of around 2500 of them to British prisons in May 1916. More than 1100 prisoners were released from Frongoch camp in Wales in August, while most of the rest were set free shortly before Christmas 1916. From the outset, the arrests were supported by General John Grenfell Maxwell, who commanded the British troops in Ireland and was responsible for ordering the executions. He advised the Attorney General that 'it would be most prejudicial to the safety of the Realm to allow those who were so recently engaged in open rebellion to be at large while the war lasts'.³⁰ However, in the battle for hearts and minds, the executions and the arrests caused a radical transformation in Irish public opinion. As Fearghal McGarry has noted, this moved 'the centre of gravity of Irish nationalism ... from hostility to the rebels, to sympathy for their fate, and ultimately to support for their objectives'.³¹

Whilst conceding in a speech delivered in the House of Commons, Westminster on 3 May 1916 that the Rising was a source of personal 'misery and ... heartbreak', John Redmond pleaded with the

government 'not to show undue hardship or severity to the great mass of those who are implicated', and asked for 'only such action as will leave the least bitterness in the minds of the Irish people'.³² Redmond, however, came up against stiff resistance from the media. After the first three executions, *The Times* of 4 May applauded the government for acting 'with a salutary swiftness; the prompter the punishment of the leaders, the lesser the need for dealing harshly with their dupes'.³³ Within government circles, there were also calls for firm action. In a letter sent to Maxwell on 5 May, Walter Long of the Local Government Board claimed that Ireland had been 'saved ... from an awful disaster'. He also thanked Maxwell by expressing 'gratitude for the splendid work you have done', adding that it was 'no exaggeration to say ... that your arrival marked a complete change in the scene'.³⁴ After the first few executions, some newspapers erred on the side of caution. In a leading article entitled 'The Irish Executions', which was published on 6 May, the *Daily News and Leader* expressed hope that 'we have now heard the last of the death penalties in these Dublin courts-martial, not merely on the ground of humanity ... but as a matter of policy. Anything resembling a reign of terror would be a grievous mistake.'³⁵

It was not long before key personnel in the British administration began to express unease with the executions. In a letter to Maxwell on 8 May, Lord Wimborne warned that the execution of 'comparatively unknown insurgents' had the potential to cause 'disastrous consequences'.³⁶ The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, was himself fearful of the 'grave danger of ... bitter resentment' arising from the executions, and wrote a memorandum for the purpose of seeking a 'reassuring statement ... without delay'.³⁷ Maxwell, however, seemed somewhat taken aback by the government's mounting anxiety. In a letter to his wife on 9 May, he observed that it was 'getting very cold feet' over the treatment of the leaders. He also expressed frustration at the pressure being put on him at 'every moment' to adopt a softer stance, by not awarding 'death sentences'. Undaunted, he defended the executions by arguing that 'some must suffer for their crimes'.³⁸ In a telegram to Asquith the next day, Maxwell argued that in view of the gravity of the Rising 'and its connection with German intrigue and propaganda, and in view of the great loss of life and destruction of property resulting therefrom', it was found 'imperative to inflict the most severe sentences on the known organisers of this detestable Rising and of those Commanders

who took an active part in the actual fighting which occurred'. He also expressed hope that the executions 'will be sufficient to act as a deterrent to intrigues and bring ... home to them [the rebels] that the murder of His Majesty's subjects and other acts calculated to imperil the safety of the realm will not be tolerated'.³⁹

Appeals for clemency were made by many concerned Irish citizens. On 9 May, a petition was signed by Cork's leading citizens and sent by telegram to the Prime Minister, the Lord Lieutenant and Redmond. Its signatories included the Lord Mayor of Cork, the Assistant Bishop of Cork and key members of the Cork City Executive of the United Irish League. It protested 'most strongly against any further shootings ... and against indiscriminate arrests', as they were 'having a most injurious effect on the feelings of the Irish people'. The petition also warned that the persistence of such policies 'may be extremely prejudicial to the peace and future harmony of Ireland, and seriously imperil the future friendly relations between Ireland and England'.⁴⁰ The following day, Earl Loreburn delivered a speech in the House of Lords about the disorder in Ireland. He expressed hope that 'the circumstances will incline the government towards clemency, for no sure foundation was ever laid in the blood of the scaffold'.⁴¹ On 12 May, a special correspondent wrote a far-sighted piece in the *Manchester Guardian*, sensing the long-term consequences of the executions:

It seems to be urgent that the British nation and Empire and the King should be able to realise, before we go too far, a situation in which things are being done within a space of days, even hours, may be determining a long sequence of history in a vitally right or a vitally wrong direction ... The things which the Generals, acting with the best intentions, may do within the next two or three days might very well precipitate the whole course of Irish history for a generation in a wrong direction, and might most dangerously influence the position of the Empire in the war.⁴²

On the same day, the *Cork Examiner* called upon the government to bring an immediate halt to the executions, by advising that 'a policy of clemency ... is also a policy of wisdom'. It expressed 'hope that out of the tragedy already enacted Ireland's aspirations will spring afresh and that a brighter future will help to obliterate a sad and bitter memory'.⁴³ Pronouncements of this nature did not fall on deaf ears, for the last of

the executions (with the exception of Casement) took place on that day. It was not long, however, before the consequences of the executions were realised. As Tim Robinson has noted, Ireland was soon to experience 'the resurrection of its martyred leaders'.⁴⁴

THE MAKING OF POLITICAL MARTYRS

In her study of religious persecution in sixteenth-century England, Sarah Covington has asserted that martyrdom 'is in the eye of the beholder' and likened an execution to 'a wave at its highest crest'. Upon receding, 'it would leave something else behind, as the life dissolved into the hagiography, the suffering into the redemption, and the human into the saint'.⁴⁵ Unlike Oliver Plunkett, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh who was executed in 1681 for his role in the Popish Plot (and later canonised in 1975), a very different type of martyrdom is discernible in the mythologisation of the executed leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising. As William J. McCormack has argued, the language of martyrology in modern Ireland 'was far more loosely used' in the course of 'its transference to the political, and especially nationalist-political, domain'. After the execution of the 1916 leaders, narratives of the Rising 'repeatedly employed a quasi-religious terminology in which the words "martyr" and "sacrifice" ... [were] frequently used'.⁴⁶ Two factors, as Roy Foster has shown, 'colluded in the making of martyrs' after the Rising. One was the punitive response from the authorities, which was characterised by 'militaristic obtuseness and heavy-handed coercion'. The other was the fortitude of the imprisoned leaders, who displayed 'a transfigured and defiant attitude' and 'a dignified and philosophical acceptance of their fate'.⁴⁷ One outcome was the radicalisation of nationalist attitudes and the manifestation of a sympathy for the rebels that had not been there previously.⁴⁸ Another was that the rebels attained a retrospective position as heroes of the people in the years that followed.⁴⁹

In considering the 'construction ... of the myths of 1916', Guy Beiner has drawn attention to how the concept of 'prememory' can be used to illuminate the anticipations and expectancies of those 'committed to predetermine how history will be remembered'.⁵⁰ The last letters of the executed leaders suggest that prememory, which could be alternatively described as an anticipatory form of memory, was on their minds as they awaited their fate. In a letter written to his mother from his cell

in Arbour Hill on 1 May 1916, Pearse was particularly concerned with how the events of Easter Week would be remembered for generations to come, maintaining that the 'deeds' carried out by the Irish Volunteers during the Rising had been 'the most splendid in Ireland's history'. With an eye to the future, he wrote: 'People will say hard things of us now, but we shall be remembered by posterity and blessed by unborn generations.'⁵¹ In his last message before his execution, Pearse also recalled how he, as a 10-year-old child, 'went down on my bare knees by my bedside one night and promised God that I should devote my life to an effort to free my country'.⁵² A sense of destiny was also on the mind of Seán MacDermott, who ended his last letter to his siblings as follows: 'I die that the Irish nation may live.'⁵³ Éamonn Ceannt was equally dramatic in a statement written the day before his execution: 'Ireland has shown she is a Nation ... And in years to come, Ireland will honour those who risked all for her honour at Easter in 1916.'⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Thomas MacDonagh noted in his last letter that he was 'ready to die, and thank God that I am ready to die in so holy a cause. My country will reward my deed readily ... God approves of our deed ... It is a great and glorious thing to die for Ireland.'⁵⁵ Despite the initial chorus of public disapproval of the death and destruction caused by the fighting in Dublin and elsewhere, the executed leaders' anticipatory vision of how their deeds would be remembered in years to come was not far off the mark. The statements they made at their trials and the matters they discussed in their last letters show that they clearly appreciated the power of martyrology. Such testimonials, as Roy Foster has observed,

reflect a genuine state of exaltation, but were also part of the revolutionary strategy, and would prove infinitely more potent weapons in the cause of separatist nationalism than Howth Mausers or Larkfield billy-can bombs. They tapped into the long tradition of speeches from the dock enshrining national martyrology, endorsed by Catholic traditions of holy dying and sacrificial blood.⁵⁶

To its dismay, the British government and its supporters quickly realised the counterproductive implications of the executions. On 13 May, for example, Lord Midleton expressed concern that the government had 'let loose forces of which they are not aware, and Ireland has gone back many years in loyalty in consequence'.⁵⁷ Lord Midleton's fears were

certainly justified, as a headline in New York's *The Gaelic American* on the same day read: 'Military Massacre in Dublin Under the Rule of an English Courtmartial'. The shooting dead of the rebel leaders by firing squad, it declared, had 'added to the glorious roll of Irish martyrs ... names which will be cherished for all time by the Irish race ... Irishmen the world over, aroused to bitter anger, will exact heavy retribution.'⁵⁸ Back in Ireland, the *Irish Independent* of 15 May struck a vigilant tone, warning that the ongoing 'reign of reprisals and the punishment by penal servitude of hundreds of youngsters who were only dupes' would lead to 'deplorable' results. It also predicted that 'a feeling of revulsion would set in, and sympathy would arise in favour of the prisoners who are now gone'.⁵⁹ A confidential memorandum drafted on the same day by Neville Chamberlain and then circulated to members of the Cabinet by Asquith worryingly reported 'that while public opinion generally throughout Ulster remains opposed to the rebellion, National sympathy is inclining towards the rebels, and particularly in favour of leniency towards the rank and file'. Chamberlain concluded by noting: 'in some counties ... a significant sign has appeared in a sudden unfriendliness or even hostility towards the police, while ... in many places arms have not been given up by disaffected persons, or ... those handed in have been old and practically useless'.⁶⁰ Government workers in Dublin were acutely aware of the potential implications for Irish politics. T. P. Gill of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, for example, sent the following memorandum to Asquith on 20 May: 'The aftermath of the rebellion, arousing old passions and suspicions, has made widespread the belief that faith is not being kept with Redmond over Home Rule.'⁶¹ Writing from Dublin's Shelbourne Hotel three days later, Cecil Harmsworth lent credence to the belief 'that popular sentiment has swung around' in the rebels' favour. 'Among the populace', he added, 'there seems to be a curious feeling of pride in the devastation created by a few determined rebels', a sentiment that was further heightened by reports that the casualties amongst the soldiers had exceeded those of the rebel forces.⁶²

Although he had grave reservations about the Rising, Cardinal Michael Logue, the Catholic Primate of All Ireland, was publicly critical of the draconian response that followed. In a speech to the Maynooth Union on 23 June, he criticised the authorities for carrying out arbitrary arrests and mass deportations, arguing that they 'should have let the

matter die out like a bad dream'.⁶³ By this stage, Maxwell seemed less sure of the merits of his actions. In a report to the Cabinet on 24 June, he was particularly pessimistic. 'The rebellion', he noted, 'has taken place and been suppressed ... The leaders have been removed ... From one cause or another a revulsion of feeling set in—one of sympathy for the rebels ... the executed leaders have become martyrs and the rank and file "patriots".' 'There is little sympathy', he lamented, 'for the civilians, police, or soldiers who were murdered or killed in the rebellion.'⁶⁴ A week and a half later, at the quarterly meeting of Dublin Corporation on 3 July, the Lord Mayor, Councillor James M. Gallagher, 'referred to the fact that hundreds of citizens, men, women, and boys, had been arrested upon suspicion in connection with the insurrection, and were confined in detention camps'. He argued that only prompt government action 'in restoring to their homes people against whom there was no serious evidence, could allay the public resentment which had thus been occasioned'.⁶⁵

Reaction to the Rising amongst the Irish community in the USA, as seen above, was instant. According to Jay Dolan, the response 'was similar to that in Ireland—shock and sadness at such a foolhardy attempt to overthrow the world's most powerful government', followed by a swift change in public attitudes following the executions.⁶⁶ After the executions, the Friends of Irish Freedom organised mass meetings in locations with high concentrations of Irish Americans, condemning the actions of the British authorities.⁶⁷ On 22 May, up to 5000 people gathered at two halls in Providence, Rhode Island for meetings held by the organisation's St Enda's Branch. Addresses were made to both meetings by Senator Albert B. West and former Congressman Joseph F. O'Connell, whose words were greeted with enthusiasm and cheers. According to the *Gaelic American*, the Chairman of the meeting held at the Opera House 'declared that as long as there is any pure Irish blood anywhere on earth, Ireland will never be satisfied with being a part of the British domain'.⁶⁸ Back in Ireland, the degree to which the 1916 leaders were being revered after their executions can be seen from an emotive poem written by M. J. McManus and printed in *Irish Opinion* on 1 July. The executed men, he wrote, had 'brought to this material age ... a meteor-flash of glory', while their passing had left 'a darkened land' and a 'haunting sense of desolation'.⁶⁹

THE QUASI-RELIGIOUS DIMENSION TO 1916: BLOOD SACRIFICE AND REDEMPTION

The aftermath of the Easter Rising, as Roy Foster has noted, saw a rapid fusion of ‘the language of mystical Catholicism ... with national purism in a new—or ancient—revolutionary rhetoric’. ‘The gesture of sacrificial insurrection’, he adds, ‘transformed reality, in line with the heady expectations of the coming generation so often apostrophized by Pearse.’⁷⁰ In the course of their transformation into political martyrs, a myth of blood sacrifice rapidly gained ground. According to Kieran Allen, this mythology presented 1916 ‘as an event led by almost saintly individuals’, thus providing Catholicism and patriotism ‘with a powerful set of icons’.⁷¹ Notwithstanding the significance of the military plan for the Rising in Dublin and the regions, it is certainly the case that politics was mixed with religion in both the words and actions of rebel leaders such as Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett. These men, as Paul Bew has noted, ‘were imbued with an overriding principle—that of sacrificial patriotism’.⁷² In the case of Patrick Pearse, David Thornley has argued that the ‘concept of the cleansing effect of bloodshed’ enabled him to develop ‘a vision of the overthrow of injustice by the sacrificial death of virtue’. His nationalism, he adds, ‘had a strongly religious, even Messianic quality’, while his loss of life ‘elevated him into the most sacred realms of national mythology’.⁷³

As the executions were taking place, the language used by *An Claidheamb Soluis* became increasingly religious in tone. On 10 May 1916, for example, it proclaimed that ‘God never deserts a people who hunger for their destiny and who are willing to work and wait’.⁷⁴ To contemporary observers such as T. P. O’Connor from London, it was clear that the Rising had ‘taken on a semi-religious aspect’. This phenomenon, he noted, was exacerbated in the weeks after the executions by the holding of overcrowded Masses in Dublin’s Catholic churches, which typically ended ‘in a political demonstration after the service’.⁷⁵ The importance accorded to religion was also evident from the poetry composed by sympathisers, who graphically encapsulated the memory of the executed leaders. Séamus O’Sullivan’s poem in honour of the executed Seán MacDiarmada, written in 1916, lamented that the British ‘have slain you ... never more the eyes will greet ... as your stick goes tapping down the heavenly pavement’.⁷⁶ Another poem written by O’Sullivan in that year spoke of a ‘lordier requiem’ for those who had

died in the Rising.⁷⁷ A religious tone was also evident in a poem written by Lionel Johnson, who asked the Mother of God, 'whom our fathers called the Queen of Ireland', to 'save Ireland'. Johnson also asked the Lord to grant Ireland 'a great war for the liberties of our people'.⁷⁸ Another poem, written by M. J. McManus and printed in *Irish Opinion* on 1 July, expresses a profound sadness about the fate of the Rising's leaders. The executed men, he wrote, had 'brought to this material age ... a meteor-flash of glory', while their passing had left 'a darkened land' and a 'haunting sense of desolation'.⁷⁹ Several ballads were also produced, with many of them containing the line 'Who fears to speak of Easter Week?' at the beginning.⁸⁰

The outpouring of grief, especially by Catholics, was worrying to those in authority. Writing to David Lloyd George on 3 June, John Dublin from the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin's palace warned that future stability in Ireland would partly depend 'upon the line taken by the Roman Catholic priesthood ... [who] represent, as things are, the strongest moral force in the south of Ireland'. Whilst noting that 'the tradition of the Roman Church in their countries is to support law and authority', he cautioned that there was 'abundant evidence that in too many cases the younger Roman Catholic priests favoured the mad revolt of Easter week'.⁸¹ Dublin's fears were shared by Maxwell, who displayed considerable apprehension about growing sedition when he wrote to Archbishop Walsh on 19 June. In his letter, he highlighted a 'delicate question' that needed to be addressed in order to prevent the possibility of further 'disorder and perhaps bloodshed'. 'There is a section of the people', he wrote, 'who are taking advantage of Requiem Masses said for the repose of the souls of those unfortunates who suffered death for the leading part they took in the late deplorable rebellion', by staging 'political demonstrations outside the churches and chapels in which these Masses are said'. 'Yesterday', he added, 'there was a procession of perhaps 2000 people marching along the quays and streets waving Sinn Féin flags, booing at officers ... and soldiers.' Rather courteously, he enquired whether 'the priests conducting these Masses might be asked to advise their congregations to disperse quietly after they have been said and take no part in such demonstrations'.⁸²

Although many Catholic priests and bishops were initially ambivalent about the Rising, Catholic sympathies were amplified in the summer of 1916 by accounts of how the executed leaders, with the exception of Tom Clarke, 'had prepared themselves for death by fervent and devout

reception of the sacraments'.⁸³ Reverend James Campbell, who witnessed Patrick Pearse's execution and comforted his mother afterwards, was particularly impressed with the idealism and piousness of the leader and his brother. Writing to his parents on 22 June, Campbell described Patrick and William Pearse as

saintly souls who worked for the Holy Cause—and such a Cause, that breeds such 'Immortal Souls' can never die ... She [Pearse's mother] ... spoke to me so simply of [the executions] ... 'I tried hard not to cry ... and said I give you both to our God, the God of Ireland and isn't it strange Father I then said a little prayer over him [William] to the Blessed Virgin offering up my two sons as she had offered her's' ... I loved Mrs. Pearse the moment I laid eyes on her ... We must not lose all hope—a cause that can produce such adherents and attract such souls is a holy noble one, it is a sacred thing to live and die for.⁸⁴

Stories also emerged of the devoutness of rank-and-file Volunteers during the course of Easter Week itself. When he met Pearse inside the GPO on Easter Monday, Monsignor Michael Curran enquired whether there was anything he could possibly do. 'No', said Pearse, 'but some of the boys would like to go to Confession and I would be delighted if you would send over word to the [Pro] Cathedral.'⁸⁵ The same scene was repeated in other buildings occupied by the rebels. Recalling the occupation of the Marrowbone Lane Distillery, Séamus Kenny remembered that 'some of the fellows began to cry when they heard shots, because they were a long time from Confession'.⁸⁶ Religion also proved a matter of profound importance to the Irish rebels imprisoned in Frongoch. A Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society was established at the camp and one of its representatives was Henry Dixon. On 12 July, he wrote to Archbishop Walsh to complain about stringent War Office rules, which had 'interposed against spiritual administrations'. These had led to 'the breaking of the habit of frequent Confession, and the reception of Holy Communion'. As a remedy, he sought the appointment of a full-time chaplain at the camp.⁸⁷

As public opinion about the Easter Rising changed, so too did the attitude of much of the ecclesiastical polity, which was eager 'to ensure that institutional Catholicism maintained its place in Irish society'.⁸⁸ The popular family magazine *The Catholic Bulletin and Book Review* devoted a long-running series of editorials and articles to the lives of those who

rebelled. Although strict censorship was in operation under the Defence of the Realm Act, the July issue kicked off proceedings with a sixteen-page article on 'Events of Easter Week'. This was the first in a series of monthly articles (lasting until March 1919) which were designed to display empathy with, and sympathy for, the rebel cause. Whilst overlooking 'the political and controversial features of the upheaval', the opening article made clear its desire to furnish commentary on 'the Catholic and social' facets of the lives and final moments of the men 'who died either in action or as a result of trial by court-martial'.⁸⁹ Censorship was avoided by resorting to an obituarial arrangement, containing photographs of the deceased, so as to acclaim their lives. By the year's end, over seventy men's lives had been celebrated.⁹⁰ The executed leaders were presented as saint-like figures and other-worldly beings. Vivid accounts were given by priests of their final hours. Extracts from their last letters were also included. In the July issue, the execution of the Irish Citizen Army's Michael Mallin was described as being 'as fascinating as a romance, and as grand as an epic'. It added that he 'prayed into the very rifles of those who shot him, and his last aspiration was "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"'.⁹¹ In addition to the executed leaders, the articles also included poignant accounts of priests in Dublin giving the last rites to rank-and-file Volunteers dying from their wounds. One of these was John Keely, who died in Jervis Street Hospital after being injured outside the GPO. The magazine's August issue noted that he left behind a widow 'who accepts her lot as the result and testimony of the noblest of sacrifices'.⁹²

THE HANGING OF SIR ROGER CASEMENT

After disembarking from a German U-boat and reaching Banna Strand in a collapsible dinghy on Good Friday 1916, Sir Roger Casement experienced something like an epiphany as he approached the sand dunes and listened to the sound of skylarks. As Roy Foster has noted, Casement was now on his own 'road to Calvary', embarking 'on a Christological journey to martyrdom, and into the canon of Irish nationalist sainthood'.⁹³ News of Casement's links with Germany, however, was greeted with derision by some of the local newspapers. The *Cork Weekly News*, for example, quipped that treason was 'a nasty charge to have to answer, and, a particularly odious one in the case of person who is a retired member of the British Consular Service'.⁹⁴ On the day that the first 15

executions were completed, the Cabinet began to ponder the impact that Casement's execution would have on public opinion in the USA (and on the chances of America entering the First World War). A Foreign Office memorandum, dated 13 May, advised that his death would 'rouse sympathy for the rebellion amongst the floating mass of Irish-American malcontents' and 'lend dignity to an absurd adventure which ought to have been smothered in ridicule'. Based on views obtained from 'various leading politicians at Washington', it was suggested that Irish Americans would 'be unable to understand his execution except as a piece of [British] vindictiveness'.⁹⁵

During Casement's time in captivity, the British government was inundated with appeals for clemency. Many of these came from leading Irish citizens, who were quick to draw attention to his track record on humanitarian issues in the Congo and the Amazon. Writing to Archbishop Walsh on 5 July, Agnes O'Farrelly and Maurice Moore asked for assistance to petition the authorities 'to show mercy' for Casement, as they believed 'that any further shedding of blood' would damage Anglo-Irish relations and exacerbate 'the irritation which unfortunately exists'.⁹⁶ On the same day, C. P. Scott wrote to Lloyd George, asking whether it was 'politically possible' to spare Casement's life, as clemency would 'be in the highest degree politically expedient'.⁹⁷ Pressure was also exerted on the government by the poet William Butler Yeats. Writing to the Home Secretary on 14 July, he warned that Casement's execution would have an 'evil' impact and that 'young people, on whom perhaps the intellectual life of Ireland depend, are less likely to be restrained by fear than excited by sympathy'. 'There is such a thing', he added, 'as the vertigo of self sacrifice'.⁹⁸ During his trial in London, Casement defended his actions and attributed them to 'loyalty for Ireland' and a 'ruthless sincerity that forced me to attempt ... to carry out in action what I said in words'.⁹⁹ After being convicted and sentenced to death by hanging on 30 July, many of his supporters again pleaded for leniency, citing his reputation for 'unflinching judgement in matters of tyranny over the oppressed'.¹⁰⁰ Despite these protestations, Casement was hanged in Pentonville Prison, London on 3 August. The night beforehand, he wrote from his cell that his dominating thought 'was to keep Ireland out of war. England has no claim on us, Law or Morality or Right.' Ireland, he continued, 'shall not sell her soul for any mess of Empire'.¹⁰¹ In reporting the execution, the *Catholic Bulletin and Book Review* noted

that whilst Casement had been treated ‘with every humanity and consideration’ by the prison authorities, ‘there was one jarring note, namely, the cheers from the crowd outside ... as a tolling bell announced that the execution had taken place’.¹⁰² As this was happening, however, members of the London branch of the Gaelic League knelt down outside the walls of the prison, ‘fervently reciting the Rosary for the repose of their hero’s soul’.¹⁰³

After the hanging, Casement’s body was interred in the prison grounds. According to Michael Laffan, ‘nationalist impressions of British vindictiveness seemed to be confirmed’ following the hanging.¹⁰⁴ News of the execution was received very badly in the USA. In a letter to art dealer John Quinn on 23 August, Edward Nolan, the Secretary of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, lamented the occurrence of ‘another British blunder’. He also stated that were it ‘not that her defeat would involve France and Belgium I would rejoice in the chastening of England by Germany for the next century or two’.¹⁰⁵ The controversy surrounding the hanging also became a febrile issue in the US presidential election campaign. On 29 September, for example, an exasperated Democratic supporter based in the Irish-American stronghold of Philadelphia wrote to Joseph Tumulty, the secretary to President Woodrow Wilson, telling him that the Republicans were making a campaign question ‘of the delay in sending the Senate Resolutions’ that could have saved Casement’s life, had they been presented to the British government in time. He also expressed his dissatisfaction ‘that the great bulk of Catholics and those of Irish descent’ had been ‘opposing the President’ due to the mishandling of the Casement affair.¹⁰⁶

‘A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS BORN’

In the first edition of *A History of the Irish Rebellion of 1916*, which was published in 1916, Warre B. Wells and N. Marlowe (a pseudonym) commented on how ‘a great volume of Irish opinion’ had been transformed ‘into a channel of emotional sympathy with the rebels and of strong hostility to the British connexion [*sic*]’. As the Easter Rising ‘receded more and more into memory’ with the passage of time, ‘day by day the tale of executions was told piecemeal’.¹⁰⁷ James Stephens described the emotion felt by many nationalists by penning the following lines in 1916:

And day by day they told that one was dead,
 And day by day the seasons mourned for you
 Until that count of woe was finished,
 And Spring remembered all was yet to do.¹⁰⁸

Expressions of sympathy were also evident in tangible forms of memorialisation. As Fearghal McGarry has noted, the leaders ‘were venerated in much the same way as traditional Catholic martyrs’, with sympathisers collecting ‘Mass cards, badges, flags, picture postcards, and other relics’.¹⁰⁹ The proliferation of souvenir objects was deeply troubling for the authorities. In a report to the Cabinet on 24 June 1916, Maxwell drew attention to the threat of further revolutionary violence:

The wearing of what is called the ... mourning badge, display of Irish flags, the sale of photographs of the late leaders, the booing of soldiers and police by people who openly show their sympathy with the organisation that was professedly separatist and revolutionary are all signs that the causes which led up to the rebellion are still existent, and the moment new leaders are found it will become dangerous.¹¹⁰

Similar concerns were aired a week later by District Inspector George Bedell Rutledge of the West Riding of County Galway, who reported on 1 July that the ‘situation may be described as critical and the temper of the people as sullen’. He also observed that many people in Galway town were wearing ‘mourning badges consisting of a green ribbon tied in the centre with black’.¹¹¹ The next day, Maxwell wrote to the Colonial Office, expressing doubt ‘that another armed outbreak is likely to recur for some considerable time’, given that ‘all the leaders [of Easter Week] have gone’. He was nonetheless eager to warn against complacency in the times that lay ahead. ‘If things are allowed to again drift and new leaders come forward’, he added, ‘more trouble is possible.’¹¹²

Maxwell was not alone in thinking about the legacy left by the departed. In his *fêted* poem ‘Easter 1916’, William Butler Yeats penned the memorable line: ‘All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.’¹¹³ The poem made him indelibly associated with the events of Easter Week. Yeats first started to compose it in the summer of 1916 at Maud Gonne’s summer retreat in Normandy, France and later finished it at Lady Augusta Gregory’s house at Coole Park, County Galway in September. Although he was away in Oakridge, Gloucestershire during

the Rising, he did visit Dublin in May 1916. Surveying the ruins of the city centre from a base in the Stephen's Green Club, he was shocked by what he heard and saw. According to Roy Foster, the poem's basic premise 'is the conflict between immovable, extremist ideas and the flux of life', along with an 'ambivalence about the necessity of violent sacrificial action'.¹¹⁴ However, whilst the experience of visiting Dublin was 'sobering' for Yeats, it did gradually plant 'the idea of irrevocable change' in his mind, which in turn became 'a subject for his own poetic commentary'.¹¹⁵ As early pamphlet versions of the poem were disseminated, many readers took a different view of it to Yeats and perceived it as an endorsement of the Rising. When it was finally published in the *New Statesman* (in October 1920), this alternative meaning was the one that gained ground.¹¹⁶ As John Wilson Foster has noted, 'Easter 1916' came to display 'a canonical image of the Rising', which acknowledged 'the rebels' self sacrifice' and dramatically portrayed 'the guilt many mockers began to feel as the executions followed their horrifying course'.¹¹⁷

There was certainly no ambiguity about the Rising in the inaugural issue of *The Phoenix*, which was published on 9 December 1916. This noted with zest that there had been a move towards 'a totally different political atmosphere' and that 'a new Ireland of strength of character and honesty of purpose' had arisen from 'the smouldering ashes of recent rebellion'.¹¹⁸ The resurrectionary potential of the executed leaders was palpable in the lead-up to the first anniversary of the Rising. Rather than waiting until the actual calendar anniversary (24 April), it was decided to commemorate the event on Easter Sunday, 8 April 1917—the church holiday marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ (a tradition that persisted in later years). In Dublin, a small group of women attached to the Irish Citizen Army arranged for multiple copies of the Proclamation to be reproduced by the printer Joseph Stanley. These reissued versions were then posted on public buildings across the city on Easter Sunday.¹¹⁹ A big crowd attended Glasnevin cemetery on the same day, placing wreaths on the graves of rebels killed in the Rising.¹²⁰ The atmosphere in Dublin became more tense on Easter Monday. The *Irish Times* reported that there was 'a good deal of excitement' after the hoisting of a Tricolour at half mast on the roof of the GPO shortly before 9.00 a.m. By 12 noon, the crowds on Sackville Street had swelled and another Tricolour was raised from the top of Nelson's Pillar. Throughout the day, many people turned up wearing 'black bands, surmounted with ribbons ... on their arms, while groups of girls, with paper flags and coloured

ribbons in their hair, paraded'. Republican colours were also displayed from some of the buildings that had been occupied by the rebels during the Rising, 'but in most instances the flags were quickly removed by the police'.¹²¹ In reporting upon the significance of the first anniversary, some of Ireland's radical newspapers employed the language of martyrology to invoke the memory of the sixteen executed leaders. *The Factionist* declared that the men's actions had not been futile and called upon readers to intensify the struggle for Irish independence:

The blood of our Martyrs has not been shed in vain. Every drop they spilled has produced men who now think as they did. They gave their lives for us. They could do no more. But we live and every one of us should swear to God by their memory that we shall redouble our efforts until we are in a position to write their epitaph in letters of gold, on the unsullied pages of the History of our country's struggle for freedom.¹²²

In a similar vein, *The Harp* expressed its delight that the first anniversary had enthused 'brave and unselfish men to the work of bringing the truth of a great and invincible cause to success'.¹²³

Throughout 1917, many of the freed prisoners joined Sinn Féin. The last of the prisoners returned to Dublin on 18 June. Among them was Éamon de Valera, who in the space of four months went 'from political nonentity to the ... unchallengeable leader of Ireland's revolutionary nationalists'.¹²⁴ In July, he won a by-election for the party in East Clare, defeating a Home Rule candidate. His victory owed much to his prominence in the Rising and his track record as leader of the imprisoned rebels at Dartmoor, Maidstone and Lewes.¹²⁵ In the following month, John Dillon invidiously observed that Sinn Féin 'has been going through the country like a prairie fire'.¹²⁶ The party's rapid ascent was also noted in British press censorship reports. One of these worryingly referred to 'defiant speeches' that had been given by de Valera and Countess Markievicz, who each had made 'wild appeals to the principle of physical force'.¹²⁷ Tensions were further heightened following the arrest of Thomas Ashe for giving a seditious speech in County Longford. Following imprisonment in Mountjoy Prison, Ashe went on a hunger strike and died from lung impairment at Dublin's Mater Hospital on 25 September. It was at this time, as Ian Kenneally has noted, that the republicans became 'the masters of the propaganda of martyrdom', as exemplified when Michael Collins delivered an oration on 30 September

at Ashe's graveside in Glasnevin cemetery. Around 3000 men in uniform attended, along with a crowd numbering in the tens of thousands.¹²⁸

At Sinn Féin's Ard Fheis the following month, de Valera replaced Arthur Griffith as leader and President of the party. Throughout 1917 and 1918, rumours that conscription would be introduced into Ireland led to a public outcry and further swung the pendulum in favour of Sinn Féin. In the General Election of December 1918 it won 70% of Irish seats and pledged not to attend the British Parliament in London, but rather to establish a parliament in a sovereign independent Irish republic. Most of those elected in Ireland pursued a policy of abstention from Westminster and met in Dublin on 21 January 1919, where they formed themselves into the first Dáil Éireann.¹²⁹ This formally reaffirmed the 1916 Proclamation and ratified a Declaration of Independence, in which the matters of 'English rule ... by military occupation against the declared will of the people' and Irish resistance 'in arms against foreign usurpation' emerged as central themes.¹³⁰ On the same day, the War of Independence (or Anglo-Irish War) commenced with the shooting dead of policemen in Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary. This guerrilla war, which lasted from 21 January 1919 until 11 July 1921, was fought by the flying columns of the Irish Republican Army (or Old IRA) against the British Army, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the Black and Tans. A turning point in the conflict, which was characterised by reprisals and counter-reprisals, was the death of the republican Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. Seemingly determined to make up for Cork's failure to rebel in 1916, he died on the seventy-fourth day of his hunger strike in Brixton Prison on 25 October 1920. A week later, on 1 November, IRA Volunteer Kevin Barry was executed—the first Irish republican to die in such a way since 1916. Their deaths, as Diarmuid Ferriter has argued, 'became permanent reminders of Britain's ... own contribution to manufacturing martyrs who entered the pantheon of Irish republican heroes'. MacSwiney's case received global attention and his words would later 'provide succour for others involved in resisting British imperialism', including the Indian nationalists Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh.¹³¹ As the conflict reached a stalemate, a truce came into effect and subsequent negotiations resulted in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921. This led to the legal enactment of the 26-county Irish Free State in December 1922, which became a self-governing dominion in the Commonwealth, with the king remaining as head of state. The Civil War, which lasted from 27 June 1922 until

24 May 1923, was fought between the Free State forces and anti-Treaty republicans. It resulted in the defeat of the latter.

THE MEMORIALISATION OF 1916 AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After the Civil War, the legacy of the 1916 Easter Rising became highly contested, with political quarrels over the partitioning of the island of Ireland making their mark on the commemorative process. Instead of 'being a question of solemn remembrance', Diarmuid Ferriter has noted that the early commemorations 'provided an opportunity to seek to create political capital out of the contested republican legacy and to emphasise the divisions that existed within the Irish body politic'. This sometimes led to 'a growing resentment about commemoration', with the result that 'remembrance of 1916 encouraged political confrontation' and its legacy proved 'divisive', most especially in the 'rows that commemorating ... caused'.¹³² The first official commemoration of the Rising by the Irish Free State was held in Dublin at Easter in 1924, by a government led by the nationalist party, Cumann na nGaedheal (later Fine Gael). Anti-Treaty republicans were blacklisted from attending this ceremony. As life returned to normal, the GPO was finally reopened to the public in 1929—the same year as the 50th anniversary of Pearse's birth. In 1932, Fianna Fáil came to power, with Éamon de Valera as President of the Executive Council. In 1935, he gained some tactical ground on a resurgent IRA by unveiling a bronze statue of *Cúchulainn* inside the GPO for the Rising's 19th anniversary. A new Constitution came into effect on 29 December 1937, under which the Free State changed its name to Éire/Ireland. After the Second World War broke out in 1939, Éire/Ireland adopted a policy of military neutrality. The threat of invasion, however, prompted de Valera, who was now Taoiseach (or Prime Minister), to stage a parade of 25,000 military personnel for the Rising's 25th anniversary in 1941. Éire/Ireland left the British Commonwealth and formally became a Republic on Easter Monday, 18 April 1949. Despite that, its establishment was destined to be overshadowed by the memory of the revolutionary era. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Rising was commemorated by the unveiling of Celtic crosses and statues of rebels in the provinces, the unveiling of a bust of Countess Markievicz in St Stephen's Green and the completion of a memorial at Arbour Hill. Restoration work was also done at Kilmainham Gaol. In 1965, the British government made a significant

diplomatic gesture by repatriating the mortal remains of Sir Roger Casement from London to Dublin.¹³³ The same year witnessed another iconic episode in Pearse's apotheosis, namely the unveiling of a colour mosaic of him transfixed in prayer in the Mortuary Chapel of Galway Cathedral.

To commemorate the Rising's Golden Jubilee, a military parade was held in Dublin on Easter Sunday, 10 April 1966. This was watched by around 200,000 spectators, including de Valera, who was now President of Ireland. This anniversary was also marked by the opening of the Garden of Remembrance at Parnell Square, the staging of 'Resurrection, the Easter Pageant' at Croke Park and the broadcast by RTÉ of the television drama 'Insurrection'. Memorabilia was also produced, including stamps and coins featuring the images of the seven signatories of the Proclamation. Martyrological language was frequently employed in political debates, with one member of the Opposition describing the GPO as a 'national shrine'.¹³⁴ Anglo-Irish relations were bolstered by the actions of the Imperial War Museum in London, which returned the tattered 'Irish Republic' flag that had flown over the GPO in 1916. It was subsequently exhibited at the National Museum of Ireland. The outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, however, impacted profoundly upon how the Easter Rising would be remembered. Within Irish government circles, there soon emerged 'a very low-key commemorative acknowledgement of 1916'.¹³⁵ In April 1971, the Republic commemorated the 55th anniversary of 1916 with a parade of around 1800 military personnel past the GPO. The tradition of holding military parades on Easter Sunday was abandoned from 1972 until 2005. Of particular concern to successive Irish governments was the appropriation of the 1916 mythology by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), a paramilitary organisation dedicated to ending the British presence in Northern Ireland through an armed struggle.

From the early 1970s onwards, revisionists became increasingly vocal in challenging 'the established view that Irish history was to be seen as an eight-hundred year oppression of a monocultural Irish nation by the British, ended only by revolutionary action leading to an independent Ireland'.¹³⁶ By expressing unease with bloodshed in the past and present, they made many people uncomfortable with glorifying the revolutionary era of 1916–1921. Profound changes in attitudes to modern political martyrdom also occurred. Conor Cruise O'Brien's book *States of Ireland*, which was published in 1972, cast a cold eye upon the

repercussions of the Golden Jubilee of the Rising, seeing it in rather pessimistic terms as a 'commemorative year ... in which ghosts were bound to walk, both North and South', not least because of the fact that the anniversary 'had to include the reminder that the object for which the men of 1916 sacrificed their lives—a free and united Ireland—had still not been achieved'. O'Brien also sought to draw attention to a perception amongst Ulster Protestants that the Dublin commemorations had 'seemed a celebration of treachery', 'a threat to "Ulster"' and a sure sign, if ever one was needed, 'that the leopard had not changed its spots'.¹³⁷ The year 1972 also marked the posthumous publication of a seminal article in *Studies* entitled 'The Canon of Irish History: A Challenge'. Written by the late Jesuit priest Father Francis Shaw, it contained a harsh appraisal of Pearse's use of violence for political ends and argued that his obsession with redemption through bloodshed at Easter was blasphemous.¹³⁸ Shaw, who was formerly the Professor of Early and Medieval Irish History at University College, Dublin, objected to the simplistic reduction of the story of Irish history to a 'virtuous and oppressed' Ireland pitted against 'the bloody Saxon'. He also challenged the 'canon of history' which had stamped 'the generation of 1916 as ... in need of redemption by the shedding of blood'.¹³⁹

Shaw's views contrasted profoundly with Louis Le Roux's biography of Pearse, *La Vie de Patrice Pearse*, which was first published in French in 1932 (and later translated into English by Desmond Ryan). It cast Pearse in a heroic light as a saint-like figure and even suggested that he would be canonised one day.¹⁴⁰ Another revisionist assessment of Pearse appeared in Ruth Dudley Edwards's iconoclastic biography *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, which was published in 1977. This aroused the ire of nationalists by presenting Pearse as an indecisive and tormented megalomaniac, who was vainly obsessed with the doctrine of blood sacrifice. In a preface to a later edition of this biography, Dudley Edwards recalled the adverse reactions that she had encountered when her work first appeared in print. Much hostility, she noted, had come from nationalists who felt that she had spoken ill of the dead. Whilst conceding that she had developed some degree of 'affection' for the rebel leader by the time she had completed the book, Dudley Edwards stood by her conclusion that Pearse's actions and rhetoric had generated 'a posthumous Pandora's Box of horrors' (including latter-day expressions of the physical force tradition). Such thinking, she added, had brought her into a conflict of ideas with 'those who were genuinely upset because they could not cope with a Pearse with human failings'.¹⁴¹

The H-Block Hunger Strikes of 1981, which sparked off heated debates about the virtues and vices of self-sacrifice for political objectives, further complicated deliberations about the legacy of 1916. To mark the 1916 Rising's 75th anniversary, the Irish government ran a very muted commemoration on Easter Sunday 1991.

Whilst the era of political violence in Northern Ireland served to deflate the status of 1916 in Irish cultural memory, attitudes changed following the cessation of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland and the subsequent signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Gradually, sentiments towards the Rising improved again. On Easter Sunday 2006, the Army parade was revived for the 90th anniversary. It was watched by an estimated 100,000–120,000 spectators.¹⁴² Boosted by the Peace Process, an invigorated post-revisionist historiography examined 1916 in a more rounded fashion. This can be seen, for example, in the publication of monographs containing nuanced explorations of the complexities behind Pearse's journey from cultural nationalism to insurrectionism.¹⁴³ Of great significance too was Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Ireland from 17 to 20 May 2011. It was the first by an English monarch in 100 years and sowed a new seed of friendship and reconciliation between Ireland and Britain. One of the highlights was her visit with Irish President Mary McAleese to the Garden of Remembrance on 17 May. After laying a wreath, the Queen bowed her head whilst observing a minute's silence at the garden, which is 'dedicated to those who gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom'.¹⁴⁴ In a speech at Dublin Castle the following night, the Queen acknowledged 'the complexity of our history' and emphasised 'the importance of forbearance and conciliation' and of 'being able to bow to the past but not being bound by it'.¹⁴⁵ Reflecting upon the visit, Nobel Prize laureate Seamus Heaney argued that 'the British–Irish bridge was in place as never before'.¹⁴⁶ In an RTÉ documentary, former President Mary Robinson said that it was 'compelling' to observe 'the way in which the Queen, at the Garden of Remembrance, which symbolises so much of the history between our countries', bowed in a manner 'that conveyed ... her own sense of healing'.¹⁴⁷ The building of 'bridges' continued in April 2014, when President Michael D. Higgins made the first state visit to the United Kingdom by an Irish Head of State. At a banquet at Windsor Castle, the Queen spoke about the upcoming centenary anniversaries of events such as the First World War and the 1916 Rising: 'My family and my government will stand alongside you, Mr President, and your ministers, throughout the anniversaries of the war and of the events that led

to the creation of the Irish Free State.’¹⁴⁸ Seven months afterwards, the government of Ireland officially launched the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, with the goal of working collectively ‘to remember, reconcile, imagine, present and celebrate our Republic in 2016’.¹⁴⁹

By March 2016, a programme of around 3000 events was in place nationally, supplemented by an estimated 1000 events internationally. This multifaceted and inclusive programme focused on three core themes: Remember, Reflect and Reimagine. It enthused local communities across the state, who responded with extraordinary levels of commemorative activity, cultural creativity and historical enquiry. Funding was given to a series of flagship capital projects, including the development of a new interpretative centre at the GPO. On Easter Sunday, 27 March 2016, the Easter Rising’s centenary was commemorated with a parade by 3722 Defence Forces personnel along a 4.5 kilometre route in Dublin (Fig. 7.2), watched by around 250,000 spectators.¹⁵⁰ In contrast to 1966, when martyrological language was frequently employed to acknowledge the resoluteness and sacrifices of the executed leaders, the scope of the Centenary Programme was broadened considerably, so as to remember all 485 men, women and children who had lost their lives in 1916. Notwithstanding the more open-minded and pluralistic character of the centenary, memories of the executed leaders were still accorded a high priority in the commemorations. Images of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation adorned much of the official signage and literature that was produced for the state’s 1916–2016 Centenary Programme. An Post, the national postal service, released a set of commemorative stamps, which also displayed images of the leaders. Although a more nuanced view of the lives and deaths of the leaders was palpable in much of the historiographical discourse generated during the course of 2016, it is worth noting that martyrological and heroic imagery was still evident on many of the T-Shirts and flags for sale in the souvenir stands operated by street vendors plying their trade in Dublin city centre. Book publishers also responded with gusto. The O’Brien Press, for example, released a series of biographies of each of the executed men, entitled ‘16 Lives’.

Altogether, this chapter has sought to demonstrate how a knowledge of the impact and legacy of the execution of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising can offer valuable insights into the complexities and experiences of modern political martyrdom in the British and Irish Isles. As the evidence presented suggests, negotiations of the relationship between



Fig. 7.2 The Irish Defence Forces marching along O'Connell Bridge, Dublin for the Easter Rising's 100th anniversary commemoration on 27 March 2016 (Copyright of Mark McCarthy)

the history and memory of martyrology can be complicated and diverse, resulting in myriad varieties of commemorative experiences over space and through time. Although one-dimensional representations of an Irish people's martyrology were in vogue in the conservative and quasi-theocratic Free State that emerged in the decades after 1922, conceptualisations of Irishness had less room for this way of thinking from the late twentieth century onwards. Following the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, commemorations of 1916 were toned down, revisionism made its mark on Irish historiography and mythological portrayals of the executed leaders as saint-like and other-worldly beings became unfashionable. Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 had further implications for memory-making, as did the decline in the socio-political power of the Catholic Church in the country from the 1990s onwards. In the multicultural and secularised society that

emerged, conceptualisations of heritage, culture and identity became less preoccupied with martyrological or Christological rhetoric. There was, however, a revival of interest in Ireland's revolutionary past in the years following the Good Friday Agreement of 1998—a major milestone in the Peace Process. By the time of the 90th anniversary in 2006, one government Minister confidently asserted that the country appeared more at ease with the historical significance of the Easter Rising, as opposed to viewing it as 'some form of liturgical sacrifice in nationalist ideology'.¹⁵¹ Although a certain amount of trepidation remained in official circles in the lead-up to 2016, the Irish government did not shy away from acknowledging the historical importance of 1916 in the story of Ireland. At the outset of the official booklet for the 1916–2016 Centenary Programme, it was proclaimed that the Easter Rising had given realisation to 'the dream of self-determination' becoming 'a reality', and had proven to be one of those 'moments in history when a seed is sown and the old order changes forever'.¹⁵²

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The Town that Was Murdered: Martyrs, Heroes and the Urbicide of Jarrow

Matt Perry

This chapter examines the discourse of Jarrow's martyrdom in the speeches and writings of Ellen Wilkinson, in particular *The Town That Was Murdered* (1939). This was one of the most popular and influential books produced in the Left Book Club series. Despite this, it has received much less scholarly attention than Wilkinson's novels. *The Town That Was Murdered* takes a historical approach that anticipates history from below and offers clues to Jarrow's remarkable place in the national collective memory. The provenance of Wilkinson's rhetoric of Jarrow's murder can be traced back to her polemics about the plight of the steel industry in Middlesbrough during her time there as the town's MP (1924–1931).¹ The trope was honed during the public meetings on the route of the Jarrow Crusade and reached its widest audience at the Crusade's Hyde Park rally. The metaphor of the dying or dead site of industry was not unique to Jarrow, nor was the equation between unemployment and death, appearing as it did in the campaigns of unemployed movements. However, Wilkinson's accusation of murder implied premeditation on the part of the government, the steel industry and banks.

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Such language also had a contemporary poignancy as Wilkinson's campaigning during these years made her contemplate the victims of aerial bombardment in martyred towns and cities in China and Spain. Jarrow's martyrdom needs to be situated in wider understandings of heroism and death. Usefully from the perspective of an exploration of martyrdom, Pierre Centlivres, Daniel Fabre and Françoise Zonabend elaborate the 'sacrificial model of heroism' with its very particular palette of qualities. They note the possibility of this being transposed from human subjects to places, thereby spatialising heroism. They draw on Stefan Czarnowski's classic sociological account of St Patrick's martyrdom. Writing at the time of the formation of the Irish Republic, Czarnowski observed that the power of the myth of Patrick was commensurate with that of the social group with which he was identified.²

Wilkinson's study connects to a wider scholarly field via three routes. Firstly, psychology has also imagined unemployment as a form of social death. In 1932 the famous ethnographic study of Marienthal, in Austria, proposed a five-stage model, from anger to apathy, of unemployment in an industrial community that was devastated by the closure of a textile factory.³ Other studies took the staged approach further, adopting Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's model of encountering death to understand the psychology of unemployment.⁴ Winegardner, Simonetti and Nykodym proposed that the unemployed, like victims of terminal disease or the bereaved, go through the stages of denial–anger–negotiation–depression–acceptance.⁵ Describing unemployment as a form of trauma, Cottle also deployed Kübler-Ross's model in relation to unemployed psychology.⁶

Secondly, deindustrialisation since the 1970s has elicited references to death, mourning and existential loss redolent of Ellen Wilkinson's discourse. What David Harvey called the 'wrenching and relentless reorganisation and relocation of production throughout the world' has emplaced victim or martyr status within a context of the geography of capital accumulation.⁷ Evoking Wilkinson's rhetoric at the time of the closure of the Consett steelworks, David Watkins, Labour MP, with the steel town in his constituency, described Consett as the 'Jarrow the 1980s'.⁸ The *Consett Guardian* headlined the news of the closure of the steelworks 'The Murder of a Town'. In 1981, local activists mounted the Consett Crusade to protest against the town's plight. Popular culture especially in the 1980s is replete with such allusions. Ska band The Specials' lament to their Coventry home 'Ghost Town' shot to number one in the charts in the midst of the inner-city riots of 1981.⁹ Andrew Perchard has observed

the connections between the Scottish music scene and the effects of deindustrialisation, which is again suffused with the imagery of death.¹⁰ On the other side of the Atlantic, Bruce Springsteen mourned the closure of the steels mills in 'Youngstown'.¹¹ The language used to frame workplace closures connoted death. Youngstown had its Black Wednesday (17 September 1977) when the Campbell works closed, just as Lima, Ohio had its Black Tuesday (15 October 1996) when British Petroleum decided to shut down its refinery.¹² These themes have filtered into the scholarship of deindustrialisation. Thus, Jeffrey Lustig observed that industrial investment signalled 'birth certificates and death sentences for entire communities'.¹³ Bill Bamberger and Cathy Davidson subtitled their study of the closure of the White Furniture Company in Mebane as the 'life and death of a factory'.¹⁴ These tropes often arrived in the literature via oral testimony and photography. Judith Modell's study of Homestead in the US rust belt is symptomatic. One interviewee reflected: 'Without the mill, I live no life.'¹⁵ Conversely, illustrating filmic and testimonial challenges to the idea of the death of the working class, Jackie Clarke elicited from one combative former Molineux worker from Normandy, France: 'We don't die so easily.'¹⁶ Equally, Clarke noted the language of bereavement among her interviewees, one noting how 'the business didn't die', it was 'killed off'.¹⁷ If oral history introduces the participants' analogy between closures and death, scholars often deploy photography alongside testimony to compliment the oral with the visual. While oral historians such as Michael Frisch simply document the images of their participants in humanistic or street-photography style, others combine these with images of industrial devastation, drawing on a wider photographic tradition of the sites of industrial dereliction: the ruins. The latter powerfully evoke a troubling existential and civilisational loss suggesting mourning for an industrial golden age.¹⁸ Usefully, High and Lewis's oral history of deindustrialisation has conceptualised the subjective response to local plant shutdowns in single-industry towns as the development of a place-bound identity, a form of place attachment or place consciousness. The way that High and Lewis anchor subjectivity to place has an affinity with Wilkinson's transformation of Jarrow into a martyred town.¹⁹

Thirdly, the idea of the 'death' of a town or city has recently courted scholarly interest with the emerging literature in history, political science and geography of 'urbanicide' or 'urbicide'. This concept has a multiplicity of meanings. For instance, radical architects in Vancouver described the post-war redevelopment of their city as urbanicide when a central business

zone replaced working-class neighbourhoods.²⁰ This concept has on occasion also served those studying the local effects of deindustrialisation.²¹ Medievalists have used the term urbanicide in relation to the destruction of cities as royal or papal punishment.²² Opening a more intense phase of academic discourse, Marshall Berman coined the term urbicide in 1996.²³ Since then, political scientists and human geographers have deployed it as ‘the deliberate destruction of the built environment by belligerent armies and paramilitary groups’, often constituting the strategic flipside of genocide. Urbicide has a cultural dimension as well. Thus, Shaw’s study of Sarajevo during the Bosnian war of 1993–1995 highlighted the obliteration of the city’s multicultural heritage and identity as a goal of an exclusivist ethnic Serb nationalism.²⁴ In a similar vein, Marina Blagojvic observed:

Destruction of cities, urbanicide, is not only the murder of the dominant city idea of multiculturalism and a return to rural exclusiveness. Murder of cities is the murder of memory, annulment of proofs about the past.²⁵

Moreover, licensing a reconceptualisation of imperialist power, Stephen Graham has stressed that urbicide is part of a ‘new military urbanism’, a growing militarisation and securitisation of the cityscape relying on new military and intelligence technologies. The new military urbanism has been increasingly seen in recent conflicts in places such as Gaza, Fallujah and Baghdad.²⁶ These are new forms of the West’s projection of power in a postcolonial age.²⁷ This stress on the novelty of urbicide separates it from an older literature of which Ellen Wilkinson’s writing is an example. A historicisation of urbicide thus tests the temptation to view this phenomenon as part of new times.

The martyred town was not of Wilkinson’s coinage alone. This appears to have taken two forms in the 1930s: the towns devastated by the economic crisis and those destroyed by aerial bombardment. If we want to understand the genealogy of her trope of the murdered town, then there are multiple sources. One of these was her own writings and speeches. Her assessment of the crisis in Lancashire’s cotton industry written for *The Workers’ Weekly* in 1923 bore many features that would later reappear in *The Town That Was Murdered*: industrial and regional decline, the global context of capitalist competition, the trap of worker shareholding, the financial conspirators, the perversity of rationalisation conducted by an employers’ organisation (the Cotton Central Board), the roller coaster of industrial fortune and the ‘hunger

and misery behind the neat lace curtains and aspidistra plants'.²⁸ The roots of Wilkinson's discourse of urbicide lie in part with her talent for vivid metaphor honed as an accomplished public speaker. For instance, she spoke of an iron curtain (between India and Britain) well before Churchill's Fulbright speech.²⁹ She learned the power of metaphoric visualisation through the education of the street meeting on behalf of the ILP and the Suffrage movement. Her orientation on trade union struggles and social movements meant that she periodically spoke on the same subject on several occasions in a short period of time. This pattern of public speaking lent itself to testing her phraseology on audiences and refining a speech to maximum effect. Her oratorical imagination nourished her journalism and writing. Anticipating the themes of *The Town That Was Murdered*, Wilkinson regularly campaigned against unemployment and malnutrition in Middlesbrough. After a public meeting at Middlesbrough Town Hall on 28 October 1928, Wilkinson encountered opposition from both political opponents and the town's Medical Officer of Health Dr Charles Dingle over her claims about the malnourished children in the area. During the controversy in the local press during autumn 1928, Dingle accused Wilkinson of exaggeration and 'dragging health into politics'.³⁰ In another major episode when Wilkinson focused upon this theme, she dealt with matters much more specifically. In an interview with Middlesbrough's *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, she highlighted the scandal of the caravan colony of those waiting for proper council housing. She praised the heroism of women such as Mrs Smith, who had lost twins in these conditions. 'Two infants had been sacrificed and the health of other children on the colony was vitally at stake.'³¹ At a meeting of women in North Ormesby on 29 May 1931, Wilkinson drew on detailed mortality statistics to substantiate her arguments about the ill health of mothers and children.³² Her language again had undergone a metamorphosis: 'the death of mothers' and the 'baby death rate' (not the medical profession's terms, maternal and infant mortality) were above national averages, with poverty and underfeeding as the main causes. She appealed to 'save the babies' and linked this specifically to place:

There is a tendency for certain Government departments to shrug their shoulders over the very badly-hit industrial areas and declare them to be *dying* [my emphasis] areas in which it was not worth while [*sic*] for public money to be spent. South Wales and the North Eastern area, both colliery

and iron and steel areas, were often referred to in this way when Treasury grants were being considered. It was true that Middlesbrough was in the grip of world forces beyond its control but a really strong effort might remove some of the dark spots of the town's record.³³

Thus during her time at Middlesbrough she used death and suffering to frame injustice.³⁴ Her language shifted to the 'sacrifice'—implying martyrdom—of mothers and babies. Death became an injustice frame and was spatialised, mapping individual victims onto the site of those sufferings: the town itself. From the perspective of Henri Lefebvre's social construction of space, Wilkinson was thus beginning to transform the symbolic order of 'the lived or representational space' of the constituencies that she served.³⁵ This metaphoric shift towards a dying town foreshadowed a murdered town in her speeches during the Jarrow Crusade five years later. The similarities with her speech about 'dying Middlesbrough' are apparent:

Jarrow as a town has been murdered. It has been murdered as a result of the arrangements of two great combines—the shipping combine on the one side and the steel combine on the other. Jarrow is an object lesson in the working of a system of society that condemns these men of ours to unemployment, and that is something we cannot get away from. What has the Government done? I do not wonder that this cabinet does not want to see us. It does not want anyone to tell the truth about these black areas in the North, in Scotland, and in South Wales that have been left to rot. These are the by-products of a system where men are thrown on slag heaps, as is the stuff that it thrown out of the furnaces. They will not be treated like slag, like things you can throw away.³⁶

Despite their distinctiveness, neither Wilkinson's morbid metaphori-sation nor her spatialisation of the depression were unique. This was true even where Jarrow was concerned. In his famed travelogue *English Journey*, J.B. Priestley indicated that Jarrow was 'dead', 'never alive' and 'derelict'.³⁷ The language of the economic crisis had become a site of contestation in its own right. James Vernon has explored the way in which the rhetoric of hunger was a primary vehicle for the opponents of the National Government regarding unemployment.³⁸ Thus, Fenner Brockway castigated the government over social conditions in *Hungry England* (1932). The National Unemployed Workers' Movement, with which Ellen Wilkinson was periodically associated, coined slogans such

as 'we refuse to starve in silence' and 'stop this starvation of mother and child' as well as dubbing Neville Chamberlain a 'baby-starver'. As a spatialising strategy to banish to a peripheral elsewhere, the government turned not only to official denial of the extent of malnutrition but also to linguistic camouflage, as the 'distressed areas' were redesignated the 'special areas'.³⁹ Although Richard Overy deemed the intellectual climate of interwar Britain as morbidly preoccupied with death and the crisis of (capitalist) civilisation, he did not ponder *The Town That Was Murdered* in his chapter entitled 'The Death of Capitalism'.⁴⁰ Wilkinson's book certainly fitted with his line of argument. Instead, Overy opened with a discussion of the Webbs' *Decay of Capitalist Civilisation* (1922), following this with substantial scrutiny of G.D.H. Cole, John Maynard Keynes, Maurice Dobb and Walter Greenwood.⁴¹ Wilkinson was connected to such figures through the Labour Party, the Commons, pacifism, feminism and her Bloomsbury circle of friends. Implying the worst criminality on the part of those in authority, Wilkinson's accusatory rhetoric should be located in this social milieu and historical setting.

The martyred town also emerged from the imagined and then realised horrors of the new era of aerial bombardment and how it rendered urban civilisation vulnerable in a new way. Ellen Wilkinson co-authored *Why War?* with German communist refugee Edouard Conze. Looking forward to the next war, they (accurately) predicted that the goal of war would be to destroy the urban industrial centres that supplied modern war and offered a vision of the realities of a war with no respect for old boundaries between combatants and non-combatants, between military and non-military production and between the theatre of war and the zone of civilian safety. They offered, as other contemporaries did, an apocalyptic panorama of wartime urban realities. It was one in which the urban infrastructure was nightmarishly transformed into a force of its own destruction:

In plain English this means combining poison gas with high explosives and fire-raising bombs to get the maximum terror in the quickest time. The new electric thermite bombs can eat through stone and steel, and develop a temperature of 3000 degrees centigrade in 30 seconds. These will eat through to the gas and water mains, and water intensifies the heat of t[h]ermite. The ignited coal gas would add horror and fire to the cloud of poison gas and the falling masonry resulting from the high explosive bombs. In such a war Britain for the first time would really know what it feels like to be no longer an island country in war time.⁴²

The most noted civic martyrdom of the 1930s was Guernica; its destruction was immortalised by Pablo Picasso and the International Exhibition in Paris of 1937 brought it before a global audience. On 26 April 1937, the Luftwaffe's Condor Legion bombed the historic capital of the Basque country. Wilkinson was intimately aware of these events, being a signatory to a letter to *The Times* condemning the atrocity, 'which must shock all humane persons'.⁴³ The letter appealed on behalf of Basque children 'who have already been left homeless, many of them orphans, by the destruction of their town, or who are menaced with a similar fate if there is a repetition of this terrible method of warfare'. Wilkinson also spoke in the Commons concerning Guernica and the fate of Basque refugees.⁴⁴ During two trips to Spain during its civil war, Ellen Wilkinson witnessed the bombardment of its urban environment. She, the Duchess of Atholl, Eleanor Rathbone and Rachel Crowdy reported on the raids that had destroyed Tetuán, one of Madrid's working-class districts, with hundreds killed.⁴⁵ If Guernica was the most famed martyred town, Madrid was a quintessentially heroic urban space about which the slogans 'They shall not pass' and 'Madrid will be the tomb of fascism' were formulated. Wilkinson described the scene in the *Newcastle Sunday Sun*: 'poor streets where not a brick remained' and displaced women and children wandering the wreckage. She underlined the character of the bombing in socio-spatial terms: poor residential areas were targeted, whilst rich areas were hardly touched. During her visit, she noted the macabre spectacle of how the food queues were bombed, only to reform with a new bitterness after the dead were removed. She speculated about the hollowness of a Francoist victory over 'cities ruined, blackened and burned and a people whose survivors hate them [the fascists] with an intensity I have met nowhere else in the world'.⁴⁶ Her December 1937 trip with Labour Party leader Clement Attlee provided extensive photographic press coverage of them walking through the urban remains of aerial bombardment. In a short article in the Labour Party's pamphlet *We Saw in Spain*, Wilkinson described her visit to a school in Madrid: 'Bombs have fallen on schools just like this, wrecking them completely blowing teachers and children to bits. That is how fascists bring civilisation.'⁴⁷ Wilkinson's emphasis upon the obliteration of the urban infrastructure parallels a defining characteristic of recent scholarly definitions of urbicide. Again, Wilkinson vividly described the bombing of Barcelona in *Tribune*.⁴⁸ From great heights, Luftwaffe bombers shut off their engines about 30 miles from their targets and drifted silently.

They were in position to drop their half-ton bombs before Republican fighter planes or anti-aircraft artillery could respond. She painted a scene of what Henri Lefebvre would call the 'spatial practices of everyday life' and their obliteration. At 8.00 a.m. one Saturday morning, two half-ton bombs destroyed a workers' tenement block and, as Wilkinson remarked, 'all that was in them. ... the women cooking breakfast, the children still asleep in their cots, the tired munitions workers sleeping after night shifts.' The neighbouring buildings were rendered so unsafe that 3000 people had to be evacuated with their tragic bundles of possessions to crowded shelters where germs and bombs menaced the refugees. Ninety seconds' work by these two bombers was 'the ghastliest horror that is happening in the world', and Chamberlain stood by: 'Therefore Chamberlain must go. This horror must be stopped.' Wilkinson also attended the World Conference against the Bombing of Open Cities and the Restoration of Peace of the International Peace Congress (IPC) held on 23–24 July 1938 in Paris.⁴⁹ This event attracted 1000 delegates, with the support of twenty-four international organisations and 200 parliamentarians from thirty-four countries. It responded specifically to the horrific bombings in Spain and Canton. Wilkinson's message of support to the Conference read: 'I support with all my heart your campaign to stop the bombing of Canton and to outlaw bombing of civilians wherever it may be.'⁵⁰ The military uricide of the late 1930s was then a principal preoccupation for Wilkinson and ought to be considered in relation to her rhetoric about Jarrow's murder. Mike Davis mused upon the imagined dead cities of Wilkinson's contemporaries, such as H.G. Wells, Orozco, Bloch and Dos Passos, connecting these visions to capitalist modernity's deeper processes of crisis, redevelopment and war.⁵¹ Thus, Wilkinson's concept of martyred cities reflected a wider intellectual climate fearing for urban futures and alerting the world to preliminary iterations of inter-imperialist war conducted beyond a technological threshold that threatened to wipe entire cities away.

THE TOWN THAT WAS MURDERED (1939)

The title of *The Town That Was Murdered* thus resulted from a particular amalgam of Wilkinson's evolving rhetoric, her connections to a contemporary intellectual culture, understandings of military and economic uricide, and the spatialised battle with the government for recognition of unemployment and malnutrition. The subtitle *the Life Story of Jarrow*

sets up the interplay of life and death as a central motif.⁵² The cycle of life and death was a principal means of understanding Jarrow's *longue durée*, namely its successive reincarnations: the monastic age of Bede, agricultural settlement, pit village, shipyard town and finally victim of a murderous conspiracy.

The scholarly neglect of Wilkinson's last book is surprising given its exploration of concerns prominent in present-day scholarship: the language and spatialisation of death, the relationship between the local and global, features of systemic economic crisis and patterns of poverty and exclusion. *The Town That Was Murdered*, just as Wilkinson always connected her travels to domestic politics, situated her constituency of Jarrow within a global crisis of capitalist modernity. In a classic definition of economic urbicide, she sought to demonstrate how capitalism can 'sweep away the livelihood of a whole town overnight, in the interest of one powerful group, who need take no account of the social consequences of their decision'. Deploying an anthropomorphising metaphor, Jarrow underwent the life cycle of origins, the rise of capitalist industry and rationalisation after the First World War. Wilkinson applied her training as a historian to produce a brilliant polemic against unemployment and poverty under capitalism. In her view, the text was neither a guide book nor a complete history of the town, but a 'biography with a thesis' or a 'life history of Jarrow.' Written for the Left Book Club (LBC), she encouraged local LBC groups to study their own towns in like fashion. She viewed Jarrow with its strike movements and its martyrs as 'an illustrated footnote to British working-class history'.⁵³ As early as the third paragraph, Wilkinson refers to the town's martyrology:

Every stage of the class struggle in Britain has been fought out there in turn. It has had its martyrs, from Will Jobling hanged on the gibbet at Jarrow Slake, the young miners deported in the 1831 strike, Andrew Gourlay, hero of the Nine Hours' Movement in the shipyards, and then when everything had gone, the march of the forgotten men to London.⁵⁴

Written in a race to finish before Hitler launched war, the book is a remarkable feat of research.⁵⁵ It avoids parochial narrowness by situating Jarrow globally and in terms of epochal social formations. Her history of Jarrow stresses the town's Roman origins and its openness to continental influence at the time of Bede, the pirate raids and the Norman Conquest: Jarrow was a 'centre of learning known throughout Europe';

the Gregorian calendar was introduced to England via its scholars; and its missionaries were vital to the Christianisation of the Germanic peoples.⁵⁶ The monks of Jarrow struggled to maintain the memory of Bede, overshadowed by the powerful Bishop of Durham, until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540 when Henry VIII expropriated their monastic manor and handed it to Lord Eure.

The Town That Was Murdered examines Jarrow's first phase of capitalism: the expansion of the north Durham coalfield in the early nineteenth century. The employers—as they continued to do in the 1930s—shunned regulation and proper drainage and did everything in their power to underpay the miners, through low wages, fines and other means. The miners were hired via the archaic custom of the annual bond which tied them to an employer for an agreed wage and a cottage. Comparing the oppression of the mining population with a contemporary and anti-imperialist illustration, the coal owners, the Anglican hierarchy and the magistrates wielded power in county Durham and acted 'in a continual state of panic, as though they were surrounded by hordes of savages'.⁵⁷ During the 1832 and 1844 strikes in the Durham coalfield, this local ruling elite used the same language and techniques of class warfare that the Colonial Secretary was using against Uriah Butler's striking Trinidadian oil workers in her day. Shot through with subtle contemporary references, Wilkinson noted the phoney sympathy of the mine owners for slaves in America and their callousness with regard to atrocities in their own pits, 'a habit the English still maintain to the annoyance of other nations'.

Wilkinson scrutinised in turn: the inequities of the bond and the duplicity of the mine owners' agents—the keekers—on binding day, the danger of explosions in Jarrow's 'slaughter pits' and the unlimited working day of child labourers. The battle against the annual bond began as early as 1765 and lasted until 1872 when it was finally abolished. She surveyed its history, focusing on Jarrow. The biggest of the early strikes was the binding strike of 1810, which was met with waves of arrests to the extent that the Bishop of Durham's stables were used as 'concentration camps', with miners manacled to mangers. As with the other disputes, the miners were evicted and starved back to work. The pit earned its nickname and persisted in local folk memory:

Small explosions had always been common in the Jarrow pits, with a small but steady loss of life. When only two or three men lost their lives or were

badly burned, it was ... only rarely reported, except in the neighbourhood. But the tradition that Jarrow was a 'slaughter pit' lives on in the town.⁵⁸

Wilkinson recorded two major disasters: on 17 January 1826, when thirty-four men and boys in the pit lost their lives, and in August 1830, when forty-two were killed and over a hundred injured.

The text switches between the martyrdom of Jarrow's heroes and the death of the place in its various incarnations in a two-way process: the heroic individuals were avatars of Jarrow and the latter was anthropomorphised in its martyrdom. Wilkinson reconstructed the coalfield's disputes through her familiar trope of the humble anonymous heroes of which movements are made. A materialist approach and organic metaphor underpinned her analysis of those heroes. Solidarity and class struggle came not from theory but from practical necessity: 'The courage that was born of facing death daily in the slaughter-pits of this period was needed by the leaders, who were grown in the ranks of the miners.'⁵⁹ They faced victimisation, persecution and historical oblivion. In contrast to these 'anonymous working-class heroes of these early days', Wilkinson conjured a name that has passed down the generations: Thomas Hepburn, the miners' leader associated with the Association of the Colliers of Northumberland and Durham and the strikes of 1831 and 1832. After diligent preparation, on binding day 1831, 20,000 came from miles around to a great meeting on the Town Moor. The first location to which strike breakers were imported was Hebburn, where they were met with material being thrown down the mine shaft. A local magistrate with a reputation for ruthlessness stretching back to the sailors' strikes of 1818, Nicholas Fairless, arrived with the keeker and read the Riot Act, with the consequence that large numbers of special constables and soldiers were drafted into the area. The courts were used to intimidate the miners. Seven young miners, who were Primitive Methodists and union members, were sentenced to death for conspiracy. This was commuted to transportation. The case was met with indignation in the town. Wilkinson suggested that the 'Seven Lads of Jarrow deserves to rank with the martyrs of Tolpuddle'.⁶⁰ Although no agreement was signed, as this would have entailed recognition for the union, Hepburn's astute leadership of the dispute meant that by June the employers were conceding on money wages (rather than in payment by 'Tommy cheques') and a twelve-hour limit on the working day for boys. The miners welcomed this as a victory.

Employers prepared for binding day 1832 to restore their prerogative in the coalfield. To dent public sympathy for the miners, their keepers provoked violence, despite Hepburn's advice, with magistrates dispensing exemplary sentences to striking miners. Hepburn decided that the strike of 1832 would be for union recognition. In the first full week of May, large detachments of troops arrived in Jarrow. Striking miners were evicted from the white terraced cottages and in their stead lead miners from Alston were ensconced. South Wales miners who had been told of high wages and labour shortages due to cholera refused to blacken their legs with the coal dust of Jarrow pit.

Thus, the backcloth was in place for Wilkinson to tell one of the classic stories among Jarrow folklore: the murder of Fairless and William Jobling's death sentence. She recognised the persistence of the martyr status of Jobling in Jarrow. Fairless was lodging at Mr Forster's, who was the viewer of Jarrow colliery, so that the magistrate could read the Riot Act and thereby sanction the use of troops against the miners. An altercation took place between the magistrate and two striking miners, one of whom, Ralph Armstrong, assaulted the elderly Fairless, who later died from his injuries. Armstrong successfully escaped, his whereabouts and prodigal return becoming the stuff of legend. Jobling did not and, unable to afford a lawyer, faced the vengeful Justice Parker at Durham Assizes.

Wilkinson recognised the local status of Jobling, an innocent man who had been captured while his friend Armstrong had successfully escaped. Jobling was sentenced to death and his body was gibbeted in a spectacular display for the townsfolk. Wilkinson described this as a 'revived medieval horror'.⁶¹ She evoked the pathos of the scene in which Jobling calmly went to his death maintaining his innocence but, by unfortunate accident, his suffering was prolonged by the rope becoming somewhat displaced. She noted the connection between memory and place: 'Jobling was regarded as a martyr by the miners who knew him, and the memory of this revenge-execution still lingers in Jarrow.'

After a four-and-a-half month strike the miners returned to work, paying a heavy price for their defeat in victimisation and hardship. Hepburn was reduced to selling tea until eventually he was taken on by a viewer in Felling with the understanding that he would have nothing to do with the unions. Wilkinson turned to the romantic heroic idiom in summarising Hepburn's role:

During the strike Hepburn behaved like a hero. It was due to his influence that the desperate men had not flung themselves to certain death against the soldiery. For him there was no mercy. The union could no longer pay him the tiny wage that there had been voted with such joy at the 1831 victory meeting. For him there was no work anywhere in the district. Starved and shabby, he tried to earn a little by selling packets of tea. ... The well-to-do middle class generally only likes to be in on the successful labour movements. If there were individual exceptions to this attitude in 1832 as there are today, Hepburn did not seem able to find them. Nor did the Churches trouble themselves with a heroic fighter who was being crucified among them.⁶²

Bringing together the past and the present, Wilkinson turned to personal anecdote to conclude the chapter on 'Jarrow Colliery and its Martyrs'. Visiting miners' leader Thomas Hepburn's grave in St Mary's Church, Heworth, she encountered an old man sitting in the sun. He reflected on Hepburn's heroic virtues, which he believed belonged to a bygone era. The Jarrow MP replied that a local lad called Jobling had recently died in Spain with the International Brigade. The old man agreed that 'perhaps there are working-class heroes today, too'.⁶³

After the closure of Jarrow's colliery, the rise of Charles Mark Palmer's shipyard signalled Jarrow's great capitalist revival. Palmer was initially a colliery manager with John Bowes, becoming his partner in 1847. During Jarrow's new phase of capitalism, its population leapt from 3500 in 1851 to 33,000 in 1891. Its local government was a 'committee of local grafters' and Jarrow's new inhabitants were victim to speculative builders. In 1874, the parliamentary division of Jarrow was established and Palmer became its first MP, retaining the seat until his death. Challenging the image of Palmer cultivated over the decades as a great benefactor, Wilkinson observed that he saw no obligation to provide his company town with decent housing or social amenities. There was no water supply until 1864. This was the 'pirate period of nineteenth century capitalism', complete with squalor, epidemics and slums.

Wilkinson returned to trade union battles in Jarrow with the national lock-out in iron and steel in 1865. Her recurrent theme was the existence of a trade union spirit and the working-class heroes who should be remembered for the achievements of the past. One such figure was Andrew Gourlay, who started his trade unionism at Palmers agitating for a nine-hour day in 1866, but being dismissed in a sudden trade depression. He went on to lead the successful strike for the nine-hour day

in Sunderland. Although not called out in the selective action, Jarrow workers supported the nine-hours movement on Tyneside of May to October 1872.⁶⁴

The Town That Was Murdered charted Jarrow's half-century as a company town. Skilled men from the Midlands and Irish labourers arrived during the good times of expansion. The town's new phase of capitalist growth was chaotic and interrupted by 'bad times', when unemployment and hardship grew, families crowded together under the same roof and malnourishment increased. Ill health and epidemics of infectious diseases followed. Wilkinson presented a picture of a company able to exert local political control, pulling the strings of the local council. It used this influence to resist increases in the rates necessary to improve health and education. The price was a 'heavy toll of human sacrifice', with above-average death rates worsened by the absence of an infectious diseases isolation hospital and by inadequate sanitation in the town. Diarrhoea killed large numbers of children due to 'privy middens' (old-fashioned toilets).

Palmers entered the First World War with debts and having skipped dividend payments. For Wilkinson, the war provided an object lesson in the deficiencies of capitalism with its competitive scramble between private interests. The government compensated for this with greater intervention, with the appointment of controllers of shipping and the navy to coordinate with shipbuilders to maximise output. For the Jarrow shipbuilder, the war reversed its fortunes. Its debts were paid off, dividend arrears restored and profits soared. However, while Palmers was paying off its debts, other firms were accumulating sizeable reserves. The war brought a great influx of workers into the town. Many were from the south of England, causing resentment as they walked into better jobs than more experienced local workers who were not permitted to switch jobs because of wartime restrictions. This surge in the local population added to the problems of overcrowding. Again challenging the idea of employer paternalism, Palmers only recognised its responsibility to find housing for its workers very late in the day. The war brought other hardships with rationing and food queues. Jarrow was also the victim of an air raid in 1915 that targeted Palmers and cost lives in the machine and engine shops. With her motif of memory and forgetting, Wilkinson reflected wistfully that when the yard was eventually closed and the machines sold for scrap, two 'discoloured and corroding tablets' still adorned the walls, commemorating the sacrifice of those killed in the air raid and those from Palmers who had died at the front.

Wilkinson concluded the ‘fifty years of Palmerstown’ with war’s end. She evoked the town’s optimism that accompanied peace and victory. The reader’s hindsight anticipated the devastating emotional reversal to come, cleverly framing a sense of injustice at Jarrow’s decline. The story of Palmers after the war provided a telling indictment of the capitalist system. Wilkinson dramatised the hubris of the modern industrial colossus. The post-war period began with a boom during which the firm diversified into mining, constructing a new dock in Swansea and acquiring Spanish engineering and ore-mining shares. The company thereby contracted debts which drained future profits. Ship owners purchased ships during the boom because the freight rates were high and when these dropped, orders dried up. During the boom, the company rewarded shareholders with bonus dividends, encouraging new investors. Yet when the boom ended, so too did the dividends, and the small investors—including many of Palmers’s workers—lost their life savings when the clever money deserted the firm. For the workers, the acquisition of shares in Palmers was an investment in something real, in their own town and in their futures; it was inconceivable to them that this might fail. For the rich, Wilkinson observed, the motive was simply greed.

Wilkinson emphasised that Palmers remained a sound shipbuilder with a good reputation that was able to secure its share of available work, remaining the second largest shipbuilder on the Tyne. The vagaries of the financial side of its operations were the problem. Thus, private capitalism failed to safeguard an industry vital for the supply of foodstuffs and raw materials. Moreover, the defence of an island nation and a maritime empire depended on shipbuilding in the face of the contemporary threat that fascism posed to international security. In making this last argument, *The Town That Was Murdered* disclosed Wilkinson’s drift from internationalism to national and imperial defence.

Having presented the historical backdrop, Wilkinson then explained the closure of the yard. The industry set up the National Shipbuilders’ Security Ltd (NSS) to restore prices through cutting shipbuilding capacity. The NSS decision to close Palmers included a forty-year moratorium on shipbuilding at the yard. Wilkinson then recounted the cruel drama of the denial of a modern steelworks for Jarrow, blocked by the steel industry and the banks. In a case that she rehearsed in public meetings the length of the Jarrow Crusade, big business in the shape of the organisations of steel and shipbuilding employers had conspired to ‘murder’

Jarrow. This motif was deployed with the receivership of Palmers and its acquisition by the NSS:

And so, in a dull court-room in London on the last day of June 1933, the fate of Jarrow was decided. On the application, in formal phrases, of the counsel for Branch Nominees, Ltd., an order was made appointing a receiver to the company. An unknown company, its real backers hidden, cut Jarrow's lifeline.⁶⁵

This was only the first iteration of the metaphor of murder. The opening of the following chapter dramatically observed:

The great shipyard of Jarrow was dead ... killed because it was a powerful competitor ... rooted out, not because it was inefficient, but because it stood in the way of a group of big financial interests, who wished to consolidate their grip on the shipbuilding industry and get control of shipping prices.⁶⁶

Similarly, the imagery depicted the town's apparent salvation in the shape of a new steelworks: 'The Jarrow Steelworks was dead ... strangled at birth.' Again, Wilkinson underlined the agency of the act:

But the killing of this new steel plant was not an isolated incident. It was part of a deliberate policy of the Federation to prevent these new integrated plants, with the latest technical devices for reducing the costs of production, being set up to compete with the old plants.⁶⁷

The consequences for the town were devastating. She carefully spelled out Jarrow's social conditions: the inadequate relief, the difficulties for the council to raise money from the local rates, the exceptionally high maternal and infant mortality and slum housing. Connecting Jarrow's story to the case for socialism, she concluded that, though profiteers might ravage a town and move on elsewhere, the workers have a stronger attachment to place:

They were crowded into hovels, their children starved and died, and on their sacrifice great capital has been accumulated. It is now time that the workers took control of this country of ours. It is time that they planned it, organised it and developed it so that all might enjoy the wealth.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

Through making heroes and martyrs of Jarrow's inhabitants, past and contemporary, Wilkinson rendered them incarnations of place. The rhetorical corollary of anthropomorphising place was a short step. *The Town That Was Murdered*, then, was not an arbitrary title that arrived as Ellen Wilkinson first put pen to paper. It can be situated in terms of the evolution of her rhetorical responses to what she saw as the interconnected threats to urban civilisation: economic crisis and war, which she saw as twin features of capitalist modernity with its restless innovation in military technology, ownership patterns and organisational structures. As it evolved, the death of people (as a consequence of malnutrition or aerial bombardment) came to stand for the death of the urban space and its public infrastructure. Not only that, like urbicide, her formulation implies agency, turning her book in effect into a whodunit. Where urbicide and Wilkinson's conceptualisation part company is that the economic threat to the urban space has latterly been de-emphasised or at least decoupled from the military one in much of the new writing on urbicide. Furthermore, the recent scholarship on heroism helps to explain the potency of Jarrow's martyrdom. As Ellen Wilkinson underlined throughout *The Town That Was Murdered*, there was a universal quality to its fate, one that could haunt any town within the field of force of global capitalism. Jarrow constituted what Jean-Pierre Albert called a 'heroic inversion' of the lowly or weak against the mighty.⁶⁹ The particular nature of its death, or how Wilkinson represented this, was heroic and this gave it, as Stefan Czarnowski observed, its social impact. Equally, Wilkinson was at pains to stress the heroic greatness of Jarrow in the age of Bede and as a great shipbuilding centre that was closed down despite its high quality and advanced nature. She described the town's experience in quasi-religious terms of sacrifice and suffering. Moreover, as Jean-Pierre Albert observed, the psychological need for heroes typically comes at moments of national danger, which again Wilkinson stressed as the world stood on the precipice of the Second World War.⁷⁰ Wilkinson's intervention was not simply cynical romanticisation based on rhetorical sleight of hand and an astute understanding of the attributes of martyrdom. Wilkinson's discursive dexterity and persuasiveness found a powerful resonance precisely because she confronted the bewildering effects of local urbicide in the global age of extremes. For Wilkinson, aerial bombardment and deindustrialisation were twin features of the age in which she found herself.

That such place consciousness can be found in contemporary oral histories of rust-belt North America and Western Europe illustrates Wilkinson's immersion in popular movements and her desire to articulate the subjectivity of her unemployed constituents. *The Town That Was Murdered* should be considered a Marxist classic anticipating a widespread phenomenon of late capitalism: the urbicide that accompanies the loss of industry. Despite the popularity of *The Town That Was Murdered* at the time and its impact on British political culture, it has not been recognised as such and has not informed debates about deindustrialisation. Behind Wilkinson's popularising impulse and keenness to minimise jargon lies an insightful analysis grounded in the categories of capitalism and class struggle set in global and historical context. In this sense, it is a forerunner of the work of David Harvey, Doreen Massey and others who have grappled with the spatial dynamics of class struggle and deindustrialisation. David Harvey observed that deindustrialisation and unemployment in the Thatcher-Reagan years had the capacity to re-empower capital spatially and that this re-empowerment had a crucial ideological dimension in neo-liberalism.⁷¹ Through the martyrdom of place, Wilkinson sought to challenge an earlier iteration of the same phenomenon with an ideological counter-thrust to the supposed inevitability and anonymity of the forces of global capitalism. *The Town That Was Murdered* was the ideological companion to the Jarrow Crusade. While capital pushed the long-term unemployed to the depressed margins of public awareness ('the Special Areas'), the Jarrow Crusade spatially subverted this marginalisation, akin to Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane.

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David Oluwale: Making His Memory and Debating His Martyrdom

Max Farrar

INTRODUCTION

David Oluwale stowed away on the motor vessel *Temple Bar* which left Apapa Wharf in Lagos, Nigeria, on 16 August 1949. He and two others evaded detection as the ship was preparing to leave but were found during the voyage. They arrived at the port of Hull, on the north-east coast of England, on 3 September. As British citizens who had simply breached maritime regulations, they were merely sentenced to 28 days in jail. Oluwale was transferred to Armley Prison in Leeds, West Yorkshire.¹ He was among the 1600 stowaways estimated to have arrived in Britain between 1945 and 1951, two-thirds of whom came from West Africa and the rest from the West Indies.² Like them, Oluwale soon went to work in the least desirable manual occupations of 1950s Britain. Much of his twenty years in Yorkshire were spent in a psychiatric hospital in Leeds. On 4 May 1969 his body, bearing the marks of assault, was spotted by some children in the weir at Knostrop Cut, in the Aire and Calder canal, a mile or so east of Leeds' city centre. He was drowned, floating

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back towards Hull. On 23 November 1971, Inspector Geoffrey Ellerker and Sergeant Ken Kitching were found guilty of assaulting Oluwale, but, on the direction of Judge Hinchcliffe, they were acquitted of his manslaughter.

David Oluwale's story was largely forgotten after the publicity generated by the court case died down until two books appeared in 2007: Kester Aspden's *Nationality Wog—The Hounding of David Oluwale* and Caryl Phillips' *Foreigners—Three English Lives*, which included a long chapter titled 'Northern Lights', about Oluwale. To initiate a discussion on whether David Oluwale might become a martyr, this chapter will examine in some detail the different ways these books and several other texts, including essays, plays, poems, songs and a film, have responded since 1971 to his complex and tragic life.³

In interrogating these texts, the chapter does some of the work that always has to be done in order for a claim of secular martyrdom to be made. It examines the historical record, sifting through the material that might be taken as fact. Crucially, it works through the value-positions that have inflected the various texts, and debates whether or not an account can be produced of the life of a person who may be positioned as a martyr. The premise of this essay is that martyrdom is a sociological and political process during which a particular narrative about the life and death of the candidate for martyrdom is developed. This account must include certain elements. One of these is the meaning of the candidate's life, which normally includes his or her moral status and what she or he believed in and stood for. Another is the circumstances in which the person died; martyrs' deaths are untimely and ethically unjustifiable (at least by the standards of the time in which martyrdom is established). Then some agents have to make a concerted effort for the candidate's claim to be widely legitimated. This will involve educational and campaigning work, often creating a public memorial of some sort. As this chapter will show, some of these elements seem to be in place for David Oluwale, but others remain moot.

POSITIONING DAVID OLUWALE

There is a great deal of material in the National Archives which shows how officialdom responded to David Oluwale as he crossed the paths of employers, police and prison officers, and medical and welfare personnel. His friends have been interviewed, providing personality to the narrative.

When the police officers were in court, much more information entered the record. But the process of framing this story is more complex, requiring writers to foreground their value standpoints. 'Martyr' is one such framing device. But in the case of David Oluwale, there are other ways of contextualising his life which may be more useful.

Paul Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic provides one abstract framing of David Oluwale's story.⁴ David's life and death bear out some of the key points in Gilroy's exposition of the Atlantic not simply as an ocean, but as a conceptual space. David was a child of the British Empire, growing up in Lagos, Nigeria. We don't know whether he was born in 1926, 1929, 1930 or 1931. This tells us straight away that he was born poor, and outside the full rigour of the colonial bureaucracy. His father worked in the fishing trade. In one of the artistic representations of David by Oladipo Agboluaje, his mother is depicted (on stage, though not in the published script) as a lively market trader.⁵ In Jeremy Sandford's 1974 radio play, David is portrayed as ambitious, stowing away on a cargo ship in order to realise his dream of becoming an engineer in Britain. But there is little certainty about his early life in Africa. He left school at age 14 and worked as an apprentice tailor. 'Subject is not recorded in this country' is the fitting sign-off when Interpol in Nigeria was asked in 1970 to investigate David's history in that country.⁶

The Atlantic erases black bodies and it erases memory; thus the histories of impoverished black people are usually made invisible. David's ambition to escape poverty and create a new life in the 'mother country' relates directly to several aspects of Gilroy's conceptual scheme. David was forging a thoroughly modern existence out of the tools supplied by the industrial West as they merged with an African sensibility, at least partly shaped by a British colonial regime. He secreted himself on a merchant ship in 1949 and was soon labouring to rebuild dirty, derelict post-war Britain. David's African-ness was already imbued with North American-ness: his West African friends in Leeds in the early 1950s called him Yankee, such was his admiration for the films and music that were pulsing out of the USA and forming their global audience. Agboluaje touchingly imagines David talking to his mother, Alice, saying 'I'm going to the labour exchange tomorrow.'⁷ They say there is tailoring work for me there. I will sew Yankee trousers and people will say, is that not Alice's son looking like John Wayne?'⁸ As Gilroy has established, and all of Caryl Phillips's novels exemplify, this crossing of

the ocean is also a crossing-over, an interweaving, of bodies and the cultures they carry. In this early post-1945 period of British history, still burdened with Empire, yet to acquire the double-edged sword of 'post-coloniality', most of the incoming bodies were poor, but physically and mentally agile.

Between 1946 and 1948, 102 stowaways came from Nigeria. Between the summer of 1948 and the summer of 1949, 83 stowaways arrived in Hull. Thirty (non-British) were immediately sent home, while 45 of the 53 British colonials received, like David, 28 days in jail.⁹ Another source suggests 392 Nigerians arrived as stowaways between 1946 and 1949.¹⁰ Michael Banton stated that 'illiterate' West Africans were lured to Britain by seamen 'who spread ... exaggerated tales of a luxurious standard of living'. Some of the earlier stowaways 'were unemployed, others were adolescent delinquents'; there is no evidence that David or his fellow stowaways were in the latter category. Banton continued: 'in recent years nearly all the stowaways have been ambitious young literates. The view held by some persons in official positions that stowaways are the "dregs" of their own countries cannot be upheld.' (As scrutiny tightened, only 25 Nigerians made it in 1953, six in 1952.)¹¹ Gabriel Adams explained the situation succinctly in Corinne Silva's film *Wandering Abroad*. In 1948, in Lagos, he said: 'There was no prospect of a better life for me in my home town, with no education, so I decided to stow away, with six of us'. They spent 23 days on SS *Duke of Sparta*.¹² Like David Oluwale, Adams got a month in jail. Between 1949 and 1953 David took a succession of unskilled jobs in small tailoring workshops, the railways, engineering factories, on building sites, in an abattoir, in the meat market and at a gas company in Bradford, Sheffield and, mainly, Leeds. One of his friends, Vincent Enyori, said, recalling the job he did with David at Croft Engineering in Bradford: 'They didn't allow you to touch machines so that you might have made some money.'¹³ His rapid circulation through the labour market was one of many signs that David was not a victim. First generation Caribbean migrants to Leeds have told me that, however bad the jobs were and however noxious the racism they encountered, they always knew they could jack it in and get another, possibly better job a few hours later. Like them, David clearly did not stand still. Nevertheless, these migrants were not the relatively privileged African and Caribbean students who came to British universities in this period. David and his friends were blatantly exploited by capital in northern England.

After four years in manual jobs, David had a number of short stays in prison, almost ten years (1953–1961 and 1965–1967) in a psychiatric hospital, and two years as a destitute rough sleeper. During that last period he was systematically abused by two Leeds policemen, Ellerker and Kitching, who ‘hounded’ him to his death in the River Aire in 1969. (‘Hounded’ is the term used by the prosecutor when Ellerker and Kitching came to trial in 1971. Its deliberate ambiguity is discussed below.) With this sorry tale we pick up another point of Gilroy’s conceptualisation of the Black Atlantic: David Oluwale provides us with a tour of the hideous underbelly of modernity. If genocide—of Africans and Jews in particular—was the extreme negative point of modernity, the routine brutalisation of working-class, black African and Caribbean bodies was its daily operation in David’s time.

Gilroy, however, also stresses the positive, syncretic aspects of the Black Atlantic. His notion of a Black Atlantic prompts us to remember David Oluwale as a man who bears a reading of the modern period that highlights both the barbarism and the optimism that can arise when borders are crossed, boundaries are broken and interchange occurs. This conceptual overview is very important. Framing the Oluwale story in this nuanced way is more useful than the simpler notion that David was a victim of racism and police brutality. It is important to record the racism and police violence that marked David’s life and death, but the Black Atlantic frame allows us to include those foul acts while elaborating on David’s agency, his dignity and his moments of pleasure in England’s north.

A committee to investigate a memorial to David Oluwale was started, at Caryl Phillips’s suggestion, in 2007–2008. The David Oluwale Memorial Association was established as a charity in 2012. To date, it has not used the terminology of martyrdom. Its framework respects Gilroy’s Black Atlantic but is slightly different.¹⁴ It tells David’s story but also points to the positive changes that have taken place in the city of Leeds since his death in 1971. Black labour is still exploited, but the sites are cleaner and less dangerous. Black people are still the object of racism and police malpractice, but less so than in David’s day. Secondly, it adopts an ‘intersectional’ approach to Oluwale’s life and death. A range of structural forces collided in David’s life and death, particularly institutional racism and class exploitation. If we recall his characterisation (during the trial of the officers accused of his manslaughter) as a biting, fighting ‘miniature Mr Universe, as lithe as a panther’,¹⁵ we would add the

structuring factor of racialised masculinity to class and race. Oluwale's mental ill health and destitution can be seen as the abject outcomes of the operation of those intersecting forces on one man's body. Thirdly, with the charity's memorial garden it aims to insert a narrative of hope into this story. The garden will be close to the point on the River Aire in the centre of Leeds where it is thought that David was last seen in 1969, pursued by two men in police uniforms. It will be a place of beauty, growth, tranquillity and reflection, containing world-class public art. It will be a site for cultural expression and discussion, using information accessible via smartphones, helping the city of Leeds to think about and redress contemporary exclusions. One of those discussions will be about whether or not David Oluwale might be positioned as a martyr.

In staking out these ideas and activities, the charity is doing the kind of work that is done when martyrdom is being proposed. In its early days as a working party, it requested and obtained support from the Christian Bishops in Leeds, the leader of Leeds City Council, the chair of the Leeds West Indian Centre, the president of Nigerian Community Leeds, the Chief Constable and the editor of the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. As a charity, it has carefully assembled a Board composed of people with high credibility in civic life in Leeds. At its opening ceremony, on the land destined to be the interim memorial garden, the Lord Mayor was invited to make the key welcome address, and she enthusiastically agreed. (A photo of Cllr Ann Castle, Lord Mayor (sic), in her chain of office, flanked by Martin Patterson, the charity's first chair and a senior manager at St George's Crypt, the leading homelessness charity in Leeds, launching the charity in 2013, appears below as Fig. 9.1).

MARTYRDOM: DOES DAVID OLUWALE FIT THAT FRAME?

In creating a garden with an iconic sculpture in the name of David Oluwale, the charity is clearly engaging in another aspect of the work required for martyrs. Its activities legitimate the claim that Oluwale is a person most worthy of our memory, and the charity is mobilising the resources needed to establish a permanent memorial. This work has a significant origin. The idea for an Oluwale memorial in Leeds came to Caryl Phillips as he read a plaque dedicated to the Jews who lived in the ghetto imposed upon them by the Venetians (1516–1797). Phillips grew up in the city of Leeds at the time when Oluwale lived and died there. He researched David Oluwale's life and published his reflections



Fig. 9.1 Councillor Ann Castle, Lord Mayor of Leeds, speaking in support of the Oluwale Memorial at a cultural event on the site of ‘David’s Kitchen Garden’ in January 2013. (Copyright of Max Farrar)

in 2007. The Jews exterminated by the Nazis have been established as collective martyrs. Similarly, as described in this volume, the people who were killed at Tolpuddle are a (much smaller) group now seen as secular martyrs. In the religious tradition, however, martyrs were individuals who were persecuted and killed because of their defiance in standing up for their religious beliefs. More recently, martyrdom has been granted to people who died for their political beliefs. David Oluwale was not known for his beliefs. On the face of it, therefore, he only fits one element of that narrative: his utter refusal to give into the police officers’ efforts to beat him out of the city centre. As we shall see, Oluwale was an enormously courageous man. But so far as we know, he did not die for any ideology. What we know, and what we can only speculate about in terms of David Oluwale, is investigated in the following sections in order to provide a platform for further discussion of the applicability of martyrdom to this man. Thus, in discussing whether or not David Oluwale might be added to the pantheon of martyrs, I will address the following

questions. What are the sources for our knowledge of David Oluwale? How credible are the portraits that emerge from these sources? Was David Oluwale killed, and if so, under what circumstances? What did David believe in? What did he stand for? Can his death be understood ideologically? In what sense of the term might David Oluwale be seen as a martyr?

HOW DO WE KNOW DAVID OLUWALE? THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY, THE PROBLEM OF WRITING

Examining Texts by Jeremy Sandford and Kester Aspden

The evidential status of memory is a key problem when we examine in detail the various representations of David Oluwale. Since this is a relatively recent history, the key texts—which I take as Sandford, Aspden and Phillips—utilise the recorded memories of people who knew David, as well as, in varying amounts, relevant histories of the time, other records (particularly those in the UK's criminal justice archives) and, in Phillips's case, complex shifting points of view, including one which is Phillips's own viewpoint.¹⁶ Corinne Silva's short film *Wandering Abroad* (2009) also employs three first-person narratives reflecting on David Oluwale. So the first issue to be addressed is what we make of personal memories, particularly those of people who are asked to recall events more than 40 years after someone's death.¹⁷

The trial in November 1971 of police officers Ellerker and Kitching, accused of David's manslaughter and of actual and grievous bodily harm, made Oluwale something of a cause célèbre in Leeds, and to some extent nationally. Thus, many of those interviewed have had cause to reflect over the years. In the process of reflection, all sorts of things that have been heard, read and thought about on other occasions will interrupt, and interact with, the recall of an incident. Jeremy Sandford relied so heavily on the memory of Maureen Baker that a character called Maureen appears in his play *Smiling David* (broadcast by Brighton BBC radio in May 1972). Sandford had interviewed Maureen extensively just a year after the trial. Maureen Baker was an important figure in anti-racist organising in Leeds from the 1960s until shortly before her death in 2012. She formed the Leeds branch of the Congress of Racial Equality and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination. For many years she was

a leading figure in the Council for Community Relations in Leeds. She served as the UK Immigrant Advisory Service officer in Leeds. In conversation over the years, she told me she was of Irish origin, drawn to the West Indian community in Leeds when she shared the doctor's surgery in Chapeltown, Leeds, in the mid-1950s with other young pregnant women. Sandford frames his account of David Oluwale as a 'true story' based on facts provided to him by Maureen and by statements made under oath in court. For Maureen's account, as rendered by Sandford, to be absolute fact, she would have had to be meeting with David Oluwale in Leeds, more specifically in a club in Leeds, some time before he was incarcerated at Menston hospital on 11 June 1953. But, according to my communication with Maureen's daughter Abi Clay, Maureen was in London in 1953. She was pregnant in 1955, which is no doubt when she met the West Indian women she told me about.¹⁸ By this time David was being treated with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and largactyl in Menston Asylum.

There is a literature on the use of personal narratives in the writing of history which emphasises the problems therein. As Lynn Abrams has pointed out, 'memory is an active process ... a complex, fluid and contingent thing'.¹⁹ Working on the personal statements assembled over many years by the Mass Observation archive at Sussex University, James Hinton has observed that people's memories are 'shaped by the public memories of the times they had lived through'. Implying that historians are not so different from the 'mass observers', he added that in writing history we are finding 'meaning in our lives, reflexively standing outside ourselves sufficiently to understand ourselves as creatures of our times'.²⁰ Günter Grass wrote: 'Memory likes to play hide-and-seek, to crawl away. It tends to hold forth, to dress up, often needlessly. Memory contradicts itself; pedant that it is, it will have its way.'²¹ This brings to mind the trickster figure beloved in West African and Caribbean culture.²² The complex interaction between memory, the public discourses of the times when memories are formed and, I would add, the values held by those whose memories are being sought and those making the interpretations, should be born in mind throughout this chapter. Recognising the complexity of the process of making history helps us to understand the lacunae and even the contradictions among the people interviewed in pursuit of David Oluwale's story, and it explains the wide differences in the analysis of this life among those who have spoken to criminal investigators

or written, recited, sung and made films based on the stories they have absorbed.

Grass's view that memory dresses itself up is a poetic way of approaching Maureen Baker's recollection. The early period that Maureen described—that of the smiling, dancing, would-be engineering student David Oluwale—was the period before Maureen arrived in Leeds. She can have no memory of this. But she might well have heard that story told by David's early friends. Abi Clay refers, with affection, to her Mum's 'fable history'. The same story, reproduced by Sandford, is spoken by Arthur France, a good friend of Maureen Baker, in Corinne Silva's filmed interview with him: 'David used to like dancing.'²³ Arthur France arrived in Leeds in 1957.²⁴ If David did enjoy dancing, and it is likely from other accounts that he did, this would have been between 1949 and 1953, long before Arthur France became aware of him in the 1960s.

Aspden interviewed Maureen Baker. He simply summarises what she said to him in a brief appendix to his book.²⁵ His main text bears little or no relation to Maureen Baker's memory, or to Sandford's version derived from interviews with Baker. Aspden interviewed several of David's contemporaries, who reported their memories of time they spent with David both in the early 1950s and in the 1960s, when he emerged, broken, from Menston Asylum/High Royds Psychiatric Hospital (the latter was the new name for Menston). Since these were David's actual friends, it is understandable that Aspden relies on their accounts, and presents them as true. But it is important to acknowledge that these are still memories, subject to the tricks that memory plays. These friends' accounts do speak to the 'happy' David, in his early years in Leeds, summarised in Sandford's title *Smiling David*.²⁶

The portrait that emerges here is worth considering since it adds to the bathos of David's life. David seems to have come to Leeds because his fellow stowaway, Johnny Omaghomi, had friends in that city.²⁷ Gabriel Adams, known as Gayb, one of Johnny's Nigerian friends in Leeds, told me how much they enjoyed themselves in the pubs and clubs of Leeds.²⁸ They soon found ways around the hostility of white men when white women agreed to dance with them. Aspden also interviewed Gayb, and records him persuading the DJ to announce a 'general excuse me' dance, which allowed the black men to cut in on white couples.²⁹ He speaks of this, smiling broadly, in his interview with Corinne Silva.³⁰ In Silva's film, Arthur France also talks of wearing his three piece suit

and polished shoes when he went out dancing with his friends in 1950s and 1960s Leeds. Silva inserts an extract from one of Lord Kitchener's lovely 'London' calypsos at this point, with rather more subtle sexual references than Kitchener used in his Trinidad recordings:

On her wedding day
 We danced the modern way
 She said 'Kitch I have been told
 That you know how to rock and roll, darling'
 Chorus: I like to rock, right round the clock
 Rock and roll me, rock and roll me
 Right around the clock

Lord Kitchener³¹

In case independent evidence of the pleasurable encounter between black men and white women is needed, Sheffield's Chief Constable reported to the British Cabinet in 1952 that African and Caribbean men were very popular with white women, because they dressed so well and smelled so good.³² So, although neither Maureen Baker nor Arthur France could have witnessed this kind of happiness among David and his friends, there might be some truth in her 'fable memory', faithfully transcribed by Jeremy Sandford.

Gabriel Adams and many other West Africans married and/or had children with white women. Adams described himself to me, now in his 80s, as a contented British citizen, with two successful daughters, enjoying old age with his second white wife. It has been suggested that David had children too. Jeremy Sandford's radio script includes a scene where David dances with a white woman, and the published script includes a photo of 209 Belle Vue Road, a house in the Hyde Park area of Leeds, with a caption stating that this is where David and Gladys lived in the early 1950s.³³ Sandford's text also includes David saying he has two children. I presume this idea came from Maureen. Aspden confirms David lived there,³⁴ and that David and Gladys did have a relationship, but none of David's friends attests to there being children. Nor does Aspden report anyone saying that David had high aspirations, or that he went to night school to study engineering, as Maureen ascribed to him, as related

in Sandford's text. A happy life with wife and children brutally cut short is not a sufficient criterion for martyrdom, so whether or not this is an entirely true picture of David Oluwale is irrelevant to the wider discussion here, but it is important to recognise that there is no objective truth about David Oluwale. The point made by Alessandro Portelli in discussing the importance of oral history is exemplified in these constructions of David's story: 'There are no "false" oral sources.' He wrote that the historian checks them against other evidence, and he is correct to say that "wrong" statements are still psychologically "true", and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts'.³⁵

Examining Texts by Caryl Phillips

Kester Aspden adopts the voice of a hard-bitten, objective historian, while Caryl Phillips takes an entirely different approach, as enthusiasts for his novels would predict.³⁶ Phillips presents his Oluwale text in several different voices: as imaginative novelist; as historian of the facts about Leeds; as transcriber of the memories of people he has interviewed; as purveyor of retrieved documents (mainly from court statements); and as an omniscient narrator, interrogating his subject, sometimes writing in the first person, taking the stance of a contemporary researcher into David's life in Leeds, even presenting his own opinions. These narrative styles sit alongside each other with no subheadings, and the reader is pulled through a variety of viewpoints. The effect is to make each of us a critical reader, continually questioning the ideological status of each section of the text, and thus always being reminded of the precarious nature of truth. In this sense, Phillips might appear to have adopted a postmodern approach to writing about past events, but I suggest this is a prime example of the genre-breaking polyphonic form many have enjoyed in his novels. John McLeod's observation that in *Crossing the River* (Phillips's 1993 novel) the reader experiences 'a sonic space of difference, polyvocality and variation' applies to Phillips's representation of David Oluwale.³⁷ (Since Phillips writes about Oluwale in many voices, moving between fiction and fact, perhaps we could coin the term 'faction' for his style here?)

The chapter on David Oluwale in his book *Foreigners* is titled 'Northern Lights'. Phillips's novels are always interested in the particularities of place, and when it comes to his northern home city, Leeds, he is even more specific. Phillips arrived in Leeds in from St Kitts in

1958. David's territory, as he persistently carved out some warmer space for himself in shop doorways in the centre of Leeds, was not far from Caryl Phillips's childhood home. In those sections of 'Northern Lights' where place is named, particularly where Leeds's history is set out, the text gives the appearance of verisimilitude. Phillips's approach to telling the history of Leeds bears importantly on the ideological context in which any claim to Oluwale's martyrdom might be placed. His first historical section on Leeds has two main points. Firstly, we see the crucial importance of water to the city's growth and prosperity. David crossed an ocean and drowned in the River Aire which flows through the city centre. The river is the reason for the first settlements in this part of northern England. (Corinne Silva's beautiful film uses long shots of the River Aire interspersed with her interviews. Phillips's 2009 essay in the catalogue that accompanied the film is called 'The City by the Water'.) Secondly, this passage reminds us all that, since the earliest days of settlement, Leeds has been a place of immigration, attracting Celts, Romans, Anglo Saxons, Vikings and Normans.³⁸ A later history section takes us from the eighteenth century to the present, again emphasising the city's connections by water. By 1816 a waterway linked Leeds to Liverpool; the canal to Hull was already in place. Thus Leeds was a global city by the early nineteenth century. Phillips did not feel the need to make the point that this connection to Liverpool was Leeds's connection to slavery. In this section Phillips picks up his abiding concern with the widening gap between rich and poor, and the fact that drunkenness, crime and destitution were already rife among the latter. Requiring readers to think of Oluwale, he writes: 'The Leeds Workhouse was always full', and 'vagrants and paupers [were] on the streets'. We learn that Armley gaol, one of David's prisons, was built by 1847 'to cope with vagrants and other undesirables'.³⁹ A third historical section (pp. 209–226) brings the migration story up to date. Phillips describes the arrival of the Jews and the Irish in the nineteenth century, noting their status as unwelcome outsiders, and the miserable conditions of existence that they endured. Africans and Caribbeans only settled in very small numbers in David's time (107 from the Caribbean and forty-five from Africa in 1951; by 1961 just over 2,000 black people lived in Leeds, which meant they were 'visible and vulnerable', but still 'a community was being formed'.)⁴⁰ While these history pages mainly take an objective tone, a curious break appears where Phillips includes, with my name attached, an email I sent him in 2006. My comments are manifestly sociological, mixing facts

about Chapeltown's buildings with interpretation based on my long study of that area of Leeds in which most black and Asian people had settled since the 1950s.⁴¹ This authored section serves to remind readers that Phillips is constructing his history from a variety of texts infused with their writers' values. The emphasis on migration, poverty and vulnerability in the story of Leeds that he has produced exhibits Phillips's own values.

Phillips moves easily from history to speculative reconstruction. The opening few pages of 'Northern Lights' stage a meeting between a West Indian adolescent and David Oluwale on Chapeltown Road. At first the reader might think this was Caryl Phillips's own youthful meeting with David. Then we learn that this is the voice of a young black woman.⁴² So anyone who has taken the trouble to learn that Caryl Phillips is not Carol Phillips is made aware that the author is revisiting his work as a novelist here.⁴³ There are other parts of the complex narrative Phillips has constructed in which readers will assume from the authorial voice that they are getting the facts about David. The home at 209 Belle Vue Road in which Oluwale sometimes lodged is referred to—but, for Phillips, it is a discordant, polyglot place, and he makes no mention of Gladys or children.⁴⁴ Phillips repeats the dubious engineering aspiration, putting him in college on some nights of the week,⁴⁵ probably derived from his own interview with Maureen Baker.

The next section, separated only by a blank line, reverts to the first person, but it is not the young girl's voice from the opening section. I can recognise this as the voice of Maureen Baker, constructed from Phillips's interview with her. (This is confirmed by Abi Clay, Maureen's daughter.) We now know that this section is fictitious, because the narrator gives the date as 1950 or 1951, and Abi told me that Maureen was in Ireland in those years. In this 'memory', this informant noticed that David was in the Cambridge Pub on North Street, one of the few that did not operate a colour bar, and that he was smartly dressed. There actually was a Cambridge public house, but it was on Chapeltown Road,⁴⁶ not North Street, and it probably did admit black clientele. Baker is transcribed as saying she saw him leave the pub in a different direction to the other Africans. David went, according to Maureen's fable, towards the university area of Leeds, so she assumed he was a student, while the other Africans were workers.⁴⁷ Again, there are potential truths to be excavated here. David might well have had a drink in the Cambridge in the 1950s and even in the 1960s. (It was demolished in

the late 1960s.) Maureen might have seen him there in the mid-1960s. Since he did sometimes live in the Hyde Park area (his occasional lodging place in Belle Vue Road is in Hyde Park), which is where the old university is, he would sometimes have walked off in that direction. The only photo of David, taken by the police, shows him in a suit. There was a group of West African university students in Leeds in the mid-1950s, including Wole Soyinka and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (There were at least 2,548 West African students in UK universities in the academic year 1952–1953.)⁴⁸ But Caryl Phillips told me that his friend Wole Soyinka told him that the West African students in Leeds did not drink with their working-class compatriots.

Oluwale's friend Gabriel Adams said to me that in this period no Africans walked alone in Leeds, because there was always a chance they would encounter violent racism. That is a view confirmed by one of Phillips's narrators, another Nigerian stowaway who arrived in Leeds just after David. This man fills out David's character, stating that David strongly objected to the racism they were subjected to and could be highly verbally aggressive, especially with the police, 'always telling them to "fuck off"'. He said that David, unlike the rest of them, would walk off on his own, because he was a loner.⁴⁹ The important question of whether or not David was mentally ill before he reached Menston in 1953 requires more research, but it is significant that this narrator, as set out by Phillips, said that David 'wasn't crazy, he just didn't understand the system, that's all'. The clear implication is that, in this person's opinion, David did not follow the informal rule of the other Africans at this time that you put up with racism and police abuse; you do not contest it. He described David as short and stout; Maureen described him as slim.⁵⁰ Police records imply he was short and stout. Police records are assumed to be accurate—but they are not always necessarily so. It has to be stressed that here, just as with Maureen's eloquence, we are dealing with individual memory, which can dress itself up. With the court records, and with the email inserted from me, names are given. This technique again prompts us to ask questions about the truth claims of each section of Phillips's story. Maureen then appears for a third time.⁵¹ Her account is confusing about dates. Was the meeting she described on Woodhouse Moor with David, now severely ill, in the 1961–1965 period, when he was out of hospital, or 1967–1969 after his second spell in hospital? Because Baker mentioned the Black Power movement starting in Leeds, and said that David was sleeping rough in the city centre,

it is probably the latter period. She said she and her husband sometimes took David into their house near Woodhouse Moor for the night. That is corroborated by Abi, her daughter, who told me that she remembered as a child being frightened by this dishevelled, mute man in her family's kitchen.⁵² Maureen said to Phillips that he would read the *Guardian*, stoutly refuse any further help and go on his way. No one else ever spoke of David as someone who might read the *Guardian*, and it was one of Baker's trademarks to remind everyone that black migrants to Britain were much smarter than white people ever recognised. In Kester Aspden's book we also read of David's pride, dignity and resolute independence, even at the end of his time. So again I feel that there is something real in Maureen's statement. In her brief fourth appearance in Phillips's account of David Oluwale,⁵³ Maureen makes an observation which strikes me as highly important. She points out that David could have avoided the brutality of Ellerker and Kitching by sleeping outside the city centre. But he kept going back to their city centre beat (pun intended). '[H]e wouldn't give up.' David Oluwale wanted to 'claim his right to be in the city'.

THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The ideological context of Oluwale's story is beginning to emerge. When Baker spoke of Oluwale staking out his claim to the right to stay in the centre of Leeds, the words 'to be' in Maureen Baker's sentence quoted by Phillips hold great poignancy. David Oluwale was denied the right to 'be'. In this he had something in common with all the black people I have interviewed and worked with since the 1970s in Leeds. It was very rare for a black person to go into the city centre at night. The reggae singer Paulette Morris made this very point at the Remember Oluwale Partnership Symposium (in Leeds, on 17 May 15), marvelling when her teenaged daughters blithely announced a few years ago that they were 'off to town'. Some of today's older black people in Leeds remember the physical battles they fought in the mid-1980s with racist whites to stake out their 'right to be' in the city centre's newly burgeoning night-time economy. David was their pioneer.

Earlier, the politics of Oluwale's story were set out in graffiti. I am one of many who first enquired about David's case because, in 1972, I saw the words REMEMBER OLUWALE, painted in large white letters, on the dark Yorkshire stone wall near the Hayfield Hotel on

Chapeltown Road. A member of the West Indian Afro Brotherhood, a militant Black Power grouping active in Chapeltown at this time, had written these words some time after the trial of Ellerker and Kitching in November 1971. This stimulates reflection on 'collective memory'. The Brotherhood (which included women) saw Oluwale's fate as symptomatic of the plight of all black people, not only in Leeds but across the UK in the 1970s. This claim is controversial. Reference to black people as a collective, remembering Oluwale and responding to his life and death as a group, is refuted in Kester Aspden's account of David Oluwale's life and death. Responding to his interview with me, Aspden wrote:

In Chapeltown, 'Remember Oluwale' was daubed on a wall near the Hayfield pub but in truth Chapeltown never really knew him. In what sense was he really part of a 'black community', any community for that matter, this man who died on the streets protected by nobody. This man who twice went to the grave unmourned.⁵⁴

There is no question mark here because Aspden appears not to accept the notion that people sometimes think collectively and, in this case, advocate active remembering as part of a political project, however they may respond to an individual. (The testimony Aspden quotes in his book from African friends of David, and Maureen Baker and her husband Paul, who did try to help him, somewhat contradicts his claim that individuals abandoned him.) But Aspden might be hinting at a wider point about this graffiti. It might allude to guilt that people felt when they recognised, too late, that David had been cruelly failed by individuals and institutions in the city.⁵⁵ It is clear, however, that Aspden takes a literalist view of 'community'. He ignores evidence, such as the material I included in an earlier reference to David Oluwale, that not only people of African origin, but leaders of both the Indian (Sikh and Hindu) and Muslim (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) populations in Leeds placed on record to a 1972 Parliamentary Select Committee that David's death demonstrated 'racial prejudice' and incited 'the ordinary man's suspicions about the partiality of the police'.⁵⁶ Aspden merely notes their 'reference' to Oluwale.⁵⁷ These leaders stretched beyond the boundaries of ethnicity to see the connections between this African man's brutalisation and the fate of all people of colour in Leeds. For them, 'community' is wide. Aspden presumably rejects the argument I and others have made

that 'community' is an ideal, something yearned for, as well as something with real, practical components. The treatment of David Oluwale by 'official' Leeds demonstrates the polar opposite of the ideals of 'community' that so many of us espouse and struggle towards.

The ideological context in Leeds in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, of racial prejudice and anti-racist solidarity, often crossing colour borders, is crucial to a full understanding of the plight of David Oluwale. That prejudice was well documented by the time of Oluwale's death and provided part of the basis for the anti-racist movement that was forming. The most authoritative survey at the time, by Policy and Economic Planning, was reported in 1967. It examined 500 potential discriminators (including employers, trade unions, housing providers and services such as insurance companies) and showed that discrimination was demonstrated in 90% of the 'situation tests' they set up, where the experiences of African, Caribbean, South Asian, Cypriot and Hungarian immigrants were studied. In an employment test, fifteen white English people and ten white Hungarians were told there was a vacancy and they should apply, but only one 'coloured immigrant' got that response. Three out of four housing accommodation agencies were practising racial discrimination, while two out of three estate agencies were doing the same.⁵⁸ Other surveys were similarly emphatic. One in north London in 1964 established that 49% of residents objected to having a black neighbour. In another, 62% of people polled by the Institute of Race Relations justified their hostility to immigrants with the (erroneous) argument that immigrants took more from the welfare services than they put in via taxation.⁵⁹ Racists attacked Asians in Leeds shortly after David Oluwale died. A small white gang set upon Bhupinder Singh, Dian Singh Ball and other Asians in the Burley area of Leeds, just north of the city centre, on 27 July 1969. One of the gang, Kenneth Horsfall, was killed. A few days later, somewhere between 800 and 1000 white men and women surged into Hyde Park Road, attacking Asian-owned shops and setting fire to a car believed to be owned by a Pakistani. Humphry and John reported: 'Nazi salutes were given and cries of "Sieg Heil" as scuffles between the police and the crowd broke out. Four policemen were hurt making twenty-three arrests.'⁶⁰ This was the context in which Maureen Baker, her friends in the United Caribbean Association and others took up Oluwale's cause and many other instances of racism in Leeds, often organised under the auspices of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination.⁶¹ Racism, Black Power and the multicultural anti-racist

movement in this period provides one leg on which a claim to martyrdom might stand. Even if David Oluwale did not actively proclaim a set of beliefs, he might be positioned as representing all those black and brown people who were subjected to vicious racism in the UK from the 1950s onwards. 'He died for us' might be said of David Oluwale.

WAS DAVID OLUWALE MURDERED BY TWO POLICE OFFICERS IN LEEDS?

*Examining Texts by Leeds United fans, Ian Dubig, Linton Kwesi
Johnson, Dave Whittaker, Kester Aspden, Jeremy Sandford,
Oladipo Agboluaje and Caryl Phillips*

For Oluwale to be positioned as a martyr, the circumstances of his death have to be agreed upon. If he was murdered by two white policemen because he was black, in a context of widespread racial prejudice, the case would be strengthened for stretching the parameters of martyrdom to include David Oluwale. Proponents of his martyrdom might argue that David Oluwale stands for the rights of all black people to live in dignity and for the human rights of all members of a society. They could argue that he was murdered by people who denied him his autonomy and his rights, and that his killers stood for the wider forces of racism operating in Britain. 'David was martyred because he was black in a racist society' might run in parallel with those who say 'the Tolpuddle demonstrators were martyred standing up for the rights of their class in a society where the working class are oppressed and exploited by a ruling class'.

Was David Oluwale murdered by Ellerker and Kitching? On this there is a clear contradiction between what the judicial record established and what most commentators, particularly in published poetry and song, have argued. There is no doubt that he drowned in the River Aire. The question that remains for everyone who lacks confidence in the British judicial system is whether or not he was deliberately killed.

Leeds United football fans, sections of whom were openly racist at the time, made their answer to that question very clear. In the early 1970s, after the trial of these infamous officers, to the tune of 'Michael, Row the Boat Ashore', they chanted this to the force assembled to keep them in order at each home game:

The River Aire is chilly and deep—Oluwale
 Never trust the Leeds Police—Olu-wa-a-le

To the tune of ‘My Old Man’, they would sing:

Policeman said ‘Get in the van,
 Don’t dilly dally on the way’
 They had him in the van and in half a minute
 They were down by the river and they chucked him in it
 Cos he dillied and he dallied, dallied and dillied
 Lost his way and dint know where to roam
 And you can’t trust a copper if your name is Oluwale
 When you can’t find your way home.⁶²

It is doubtful that the Leeds United fans knew just how poignant was the last line: ‘When you can’t find your way home’. In Yoruba, ‘Oluwale’ means ‘God comes home’. The critically acclaimed Leeds poet Ian Duhig included these lines about David Oluwale in his poem ‘from “The Masque of Blankness”’:

He was a paradox, a Christian
 and godson of Oceanus and Oshun
 whose surname *Oluwale’s* Yoruba
 in English ‘God Comes Home’—God’s own County
 Yorkshire! What could be more right than that?
 His last home was our Holy City Centre
 final circle of his Christian hell.⁶³

Duhig refers directly to the football chant in another poem, ‘Via Negativa’, in its final stanza, the only one which uses Oluwale’s name. This powerful poem does, however, remind us of the ECT and largactyl imposed on David in hospital, and it is redolent of the insult to Christianity that David’s life represents. In Duhig’s poem, Leeds is ‘Not

City of God but Motorway City'; David inhabits 'Not My Father's Mansion but Chapeltown slum'. David is 'Not fisher of men fished from a weir'. Duhig places David 'Wandering Abroad' in the centre of Leeds. Since this collection was published the Oluwale paradox in Leeds has intensified: a glittering new shopping mall called Trinity has arisen at the rear of the Holy Trinity Church on Boar Lane. That church, dating from 1727, was one of David's sleeping places and is close to the river. In another poem, 'Flooding Back', specifically in memory of David, Duhig writes, 'masked gods walk among us as a test / for hospitality's a sacred duty / binding all who claim morality'.⁶⁴ Leeds's 'Holy City Centre' hardly matched that duty. If a poem about Oluwale the martyr was to be written, Ian Duhig would be the person to turn to.

Ian Duhig doesn't answer the 'murder' question. Two other artistic responses to Ellerker and Kitching's trial appeared in 1975 and 1979 from an equally illustrious source, but took a different approach. In the poem 'Night of the Head' Linton Kwesi Johnson wrote:

Such a victim of terror as he was,
 Oluwale on the last onslaught,
 just broke into pieces and died.⁶⁵

In his later poem 'Time Come', Johnson, backed by Dennis Bovell's dub band, went further:

When yu fling me inna prison
 I did warn yu
 When yu kill Oluwale
 I did warn yu
 When you pick upon de Panthers
 I did warn yu.⁶⁶

It is important to note that Johnson has no hesitation in saying that Oluwale was a victim of terror, who died 'in the last onslaught' and, just in case there is any ambiguity, he adds 'you' killed Oluwale. I read 'you' here not as 'the police', but as 'you white British'. The second poem, with its overt reference to the Black Panthers in London, of which

Johnson was a member in the early 1970s, is redolent of the political rage of black Britain.

Another poetic response from Dave Whittaker, a Leeds taxi driver, appeared in 2013. Whittaker told me he had known Ellerker's son Gary while they were at college learning the printing trade. 'Gary was a complete twat', he said.⁶⁷ Like everyone else in the class, Dave knew that Gary's father, Geoffrey Ellerker, had been imprisoned for the abuse of David Oluwale, so when Aspden's book appeared many years later he read it, set up a Facebook page, summarised David's story and wrote his own poem. Whittaker's prose sticks to the material presented in Aspden's book, but in his poem he clearly states what he thought had actually happened:

Kicked and battered and abused once more,
He lay there helpless at the hands of the law,
They'd had their fun and an almighty bash,
It was made complete with an almighty splash.⁶⁸

'He' in this poem is Oluwale and 'They' are Ellerker and Kitching. After their 'bash' they had chucked David in the river, according to Whittaker. Gabriel Adams concurred: 'Then they chase him into the River Aire, the police.'⁶⁹

But the judicial system rejected the charge of murder, proposed by the extremely thorough Metropolitan Police investigator, Chief Superintendent John Perkins. Kester Aspden presents a lucid account of the material he examined in the UK's National Archive at Kew, London, released after being held for the statutory 30 years after the trial. The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) argued that, although the court would hear evidence that two men in police uniforms chased an elderly man along the bank of the River Aire in the centre of Leeds, there was no evidence that these men, or anyone else, deliberately drowned David Oluwale.⁷⁰ Instead, the DPP charged them with manslaughter, actual and grievous bodily harm. Speaking about David Oluwale, the prosecutor, John Cobb QC, told the jury that Ellerker and Kitching 'hounded him, harassed him and assaulted him: they teased him cruelly, and they made a torment of his life ... they unlawfully brought about his death by causing him to fall or jump into the River

Aire, whence he never emerged, save sixteen days later as a corpse'.⁷¹ His faintly antique prose provided an appropriately macabre tone to his opening address. The *Yorkshire Post* summarised: 'Police hounded "loner" Oluwale to death—QC'.⁷² 'Hounding' is now inserted into one of the key texts that help us approach David's death: the term artfully leaves open the precise circumstances of his death, while capturing the iniquity of these policemen's brutal work on David's body.

Several officers gave evidence of a catalogue of assault and other types of abuse by Ellerker and Kitching, including PC Batty who saw him being urinated upon outside the John Peters store, in whose doorway David often slept.⁷³ Ex-police officer Hazel Ratcliffe testified that, while in the custody area at Millgarth station, David had been kicked in the genitals so hard that he was raised off the ground. Hazel said he offered no resistance of any sort. Her husband, Phil, who resigned from the force with his wife because of what they had witnessed, told the court that David was a broken man.⁷⁴ In Corinne Silva's film, Arthur France,⁷⁵ a founder of the United Caribbean Association and lifelong campaigner for social justice and equality, who attended the trial and read the press reports, speaks of this incident as though he were there.⁷⁶

Bus conductor David Condon's crucial evidence that he had seen two men in police uniform pursuing a scruffy man down Call Lane was challenged in court. Call Lane is adjacent to the River Aire, which is accessible via an alley near the Leeds Bridge, thus Condon's sighting potentially linked Ellerker and Kitching to David's body subsequently being found in the river. Under cross-examination, Condon admitted he could not identify the officers and he could not say whether the man being pursued was white or black because it was dark.⁷⁷ Judge Hinchcliffe told the jury that this insubstantial evidence meant that he would direct them not even to consider the charge of manslaughter against Ellerker and Kitching. He also directed them that there was no evidence of grievous bodily harm (GBH), merely actual bodily harm, so they must not consider the GBH charges.⁷⁸ In his summing up, Hinchcliffe described David as a 'menace to society', a 'frightening apparition to come across at night', while policing was a 'fine and splendid profession'.⁷⁹ When the jury found them guilty of assault, he admonished Ellerker and Kitching with these words: 'By your wicked misbehaviour to this coloured vagrant, you bring disgrace not only on your wives and family, but on the whole of the police force of this country.'⁸⁰ On 24 November 1971, Ellerker was found guilty of four charges of assault and was sentenced to

three years in jail; Kitching was found guilty of three charges of assault and got 27 months.⁸¹

Jeremy Sandford's radio script dealt with the 'murder' question by providing these stage directions: 'David is limping along. The TWO POLICEMEN have given chase. Riverside. There is the sound of single running feet, then DAVID runs towards us, trips and falls into the River Aire. He screams as he falls.'⁸² Here he treats David's death as an accident. But in a stimulating postscript to the publication of his play script, with the subtitle 'Some thoughts on the death of David Oluwale', Sandford lists a series of possible answers to his question 'Who is responsible for the death of this man?' His list of culprits includes (all with question marks after them): two 'sadistic' members of Leeds police; David committing suicide; the psychiatric hospital; the prison welfare service; the Mental Health Act (1959); the Supplementary Benefits Commission (for closing down hostels); local authorities; charities; and the 'curious custom of moving vagrants on?' He concluded with a quote from a Midlands councillor who said on BBC radio that 'one must exterminate the impossibles'. This man replied 'Why not?' when asked if he really meant what he said.⁸³ If listeners to Sandford's radio play thought that David simply tripped and fell into the river, reading the postscript to his book would lead to quite different conclusions. Significant to the discussion of the wider context of Oluwale's death, Sandford indicts a series of institutional failures in the health welfare system in the UK, as well as two sadistic policemen.

Dramatising Aspden's book for Dawn Walton's Eclipse Theatre,⁸⁴ Oladipo Agboluaje dealt with the 'murder' question by giving prominence to Chief Superintendent John Perkins's view.⁸⁵ Perkins was certain that Ellerker and Kitching should be charged with the murder of David. On stage, Perkins says this:

In my opinion there is evidence to suggest Inspector Ellerker and Sergeant Kitching had continued their pursuit down to Warehouse Hill and as a result David Oluwale had jumped or been forced to jump into the river. These despicable individuals had little or no regard for Oluwale as a human being and as such they desired to get him out of Leeds.⁸⁶

The DPP's 'lack of evidence' response is then provided. Agboluaje had already shown the audience a scene with Ellerker and Kitching encountering David in a doorway and beating him. Immediately following,

the stage directions are: 'DAVID escapes and runs clutching his bag. Darkness. The sound of waves lapping against a shore. Then a loud splash.' At that point, Agboluaje follows Aspden's agnostic approach to the question of 'murder'. It is possible that some in the audience will accept Judge Hinchcliffe's view, while others will side with Chief Superintendent Perkins, Leeds United fans, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Dave Whittaker and Arthur France.

Kester Aspden and Caryl Phillips were, coincidentally, writing their books at the same time. The forensic, 'true crime' approach taken by Aspden was not Phillips's. Aspden sticks to what he takes to be the facts, and is non-committal on the question of murder. Phillips, on the other hand, slowly builds his picture of the circumstances of David's death through interviews he conducted and documents he accessed. A policeman who drove a van and witnessed the 'merciless, merciless' beatings described David as 'courageous' in coming back into the city.⁸⁷ Straight after that transcript, Phillips presents a man who describes himself as a 'West Indian community leader' who said that it 'created a very bad feeling in the West Indian community when we found out [David Oluwale] had been killed'. These are the words of Arthur France, referred to above.⁸⁸ From the 1960s to the present, France has organised politically for black people's rights. He has also been the originator and backbone of the Leeds West Indian carnival, which he sees as another limb of black emancipation,⁸⁹ and he was among the founders in 2008 of the first Oluwale Memorial committee, established at what is now Leeds Beckett University. He is a man whose memory I know to be prodigious. But here too we are dealing with an individual's recollections, some from the time of David's death, when other people's memories are coming to the surface, which perhaps merge with memories of his own encounters with David. Just as Linton Kwesi Johnson had no doubt about what had actually happened, whatever the judge had decided, Arthur France used the word 'killed' in his interview with Caryl Phillips. France said he remembered David from the early days at dances, and then noticed him much later, on the side of the road, crying. France's testimony is crucial for Phillips's understanding Oluwale's story, and points to the ideological context of his death:

It was very painful when we learned that he had been hunted like a fox by the police ... It just made things got worse for the police. We used to tell them right out, if you want another Oluwale then they were not going to

get another one from us. We now knew exactly what we were dealing with when it came to the British policeman.⁹⁰

As noted above, militant black people in Leeds had exhorted the city to REMEMBER OLUWALE. Within a couple of months of the trial, another advocate of Black Power, Ron Phillips (no relation to Caryl), wrote that the case demonstrated that ‘racism dominates all the important institutions of social control in Britain’.⁹¹ Ron Phillips was reporting in detail on the trial for the publication *Race Today*, published by the first Institute of Race Relations (IRR).⁹² He recorded that PC Seager told the court that Ellerker had said ‘A lot of them would be better off if they went for a swim like David’.⁹³ In his commentary on the case, Ron Phillips argued that:

[T]he destruction of David Oluwale represented the inevitable result of contact between a powerful institution and a powerless individual, where that individual is defined as threatening or superfluous ... If Ellerker and Kitching did chase or throw David Oluwale into the river Aire, they would have been acting, as they saw it, in defence of a society which defines black people as a threat.⁹⁴

It seems likely that ‘If’ was placed in that last sentence to save the IRR from libel action.

Caryl Phillips weaves together a series of documents that form a heart-rending image of David’s life and death in the reader’s mind. There is a list of the dates David went in and out of prison,⁹⁵ a list of his clothing on his final release on 10 April 1969 (‘most ... in poor condition’),⁹⁶ the prison discharge report on that date (‘It is increasingly obvious that he is unable to function on the outside’),⁹⁷ and a list of the items found in his pockets when the police frogman pulled him out of the river at Knostrop Weir, including ‘2 Photos’, ‘2 After Care forms’, ‘6 Forms 103’ and ‘A Blue bead necklace with a crucifix’.⁹⁸ Then we find a list of places where Sergeant Kitching told Detective Superintendent Fryer (part of the investigatory team) that he had found David sleeping and ‘kicked his behind’. There are seven places, including Holy Trinity Church in Boar Lane, referred to by Ian Duhig.⁹⁹ The central question that every reader must be asking—did they kill him?—is quietly answered among these documents. In the authorial voice, Phillips wrote:

At 3 a.m. on the morning of 18 April [1969] former Inspector Ellerker and Sergeant Kitching found David in the doorway of John Peters' furniture shop in Lands Lane in the centre of Leeds. They 'moved him on' ... David ran down Call Lane in the direction of Warehouse Hill. He entered the River Aire at the bottom of Warehouse Hill, just by Leeds Bridge. On 4 May, 1969, Leeds police frogman Police Constable Ian Haste recovered David Oluwale's body from the River Aire some three miles east of the city centre at a point near Knostrop Sewage Works.¹⁰⁰

Phillips's cool prose here is counterpointed by his italicised insertions: ('We dragged him to his feet and I booted his backside. I did not kick him hard, just enough to wake him up. He screamed, but then he always screamed when I dealt with him.' Sergeant Kitching).¹⁰¹ Phillips waits until the end of his text to offer this answer to the murder question: 'You did not jump, David.' Phillips repeats this three times.¹⁰² Then readers will want to know 'why did they commit this appalling crime?' Phillips signs the book off with another quote from a friend of David's (perhaps the one we heard from before),¹⁰³ who met him when they were about 15, and then again in Hatfield Steelworks (in Sheffield)¹⁰⁴ in the early 1970s:

I was really happy to see a face from Lagos, but I worried about him. He wouldn't let anything go ... and his attitude was getting him into trouble. If the foreman said anything to him, it would be 'fuck off' and there wasn't any point in talking to him ... [David] was a stubborn fighting man who simply found it impossible to back down and work the system.¹⁰⁵

Caryl Phillips eschews the didactic style of Ron Phillips, nor does he reference the macabre quotation from the councillor quoted by Jeremy Sandford, but their conclusions are similar. David was killed by two Leeds policemen because he was, in their view, a threatening excrescence. All of Phillips's work is complex and nuanced, and his subtle prose in this essay does not allow for that blunt view. So the book ends with a melancholic rumination on David's pauper's grave in Killingbeck cemetery, on a rising hill, overlooking the city. This reader at least extracts a glimmer of hope from Phillips's closing words: 'Everybody can rest peacefully. You have achieved a summit, David. Climbed to the top of a hill, and from here you can look down. You are still in Leeds. Forever in Leeds.'¹⁰⁶

WHAT DID DAVID OLUWALE STAND FOR?

There is no clear evidence of what David Oluwale believed in. The rosary found in his sorry list of possessions implies he was a Catholic, but there is no record of him attending church. Nor do any of his friends speak of connections with social or political causes during the period that we hope was a relatively happy one for him between 1949 and 1953. After the brutal experience of prison, psychiatric hospital, destitution and beatings on the streets of Leeds, it is understandable that he had little to say for himself. But a picture has emerged in the testimony and analysis offered above of someone of real substance around whom some important principles may circulate.

At the beginning of this chapter I related the framing of David within the Black Atlantic paradigm and within the ambitions of the David Oluwale Memorial Association. The charity aims to establish a narrative for the city of Leeds based upon the Oluwale story. This speaks of progress, but of much more that has to be done to bring the marginalised and excluded into their proper place within a city, one that we say must speak for social and economic justice. The charity has not considered the question of whether or not David Oluwale might be considered a martyr. Nevertheless, we can begin to set out, schematically, what he stands for:

- David Oluwale was an agent in his own right, not simply a victim. We have seen that, faced with racism and police brutality, he never backed down.
- David Oluwale endured a myriad of problems after he decided to seek a better life in Britain. Although he was a British citizen, his plight reminds us of the extraordinary difficulties and hostilities faced by refugees and asylum seekers. His resilience is an inspiration. His death is an omen.
- David Oluwale was an emblem of the struggle for black people to be treated equally and fairly wherever they choose to live.
- In drawing people of all colours and classes together in a campaign for memory and for social progress, David Oluwale stands for the longing among all types of people for sanctuary, community, conviviality and equality.

CONCLUSION: THE DAVID OLUWALE MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION AND THE 'MARTYR' QUESTION

I am secretary to the charity which is quite deliberately memorialising David. In building a garden containing iconic public art in his name,¹⁰⁷ we are engaging in a social practice similar to those who seek legitimacy for their efforts to transform an historic figure into a martyr. We are treating him as an icon, a symbolic marker of an interlocking series of challenges that he faced during his twenty years in the north of England: mental ill health, destitution, homelessness, incarceration in prisons and psychiatric hospitals, possible alcohol problems, police brutality. All these were predicated on the racism inflicted on him because of his status as an immigrant from Nigeria. We construct David Oluwale not as a passive victim but as one, in effect if not by design, who bore steadfast witness to the cruelty, injustice and inhumanity of British society. In deliberately intervening in urban space, creating a memorial, and in evaluating the records and engaging in further research in order to construct a compelling narrative, we are behaving much like those who have already established the status of martyr for their subjects. The fact that there is no settled view about whether or not David Oluwale was killed by the two policemen has implications for the question of whether or not he is positioned as a martyr. It is my opinion that they did kill him, but I am unsure if David is best understood as a martyr. I see him more as a proud man utterly victimised both by two policemen and by welfare institutions entrapped in prejudice. David Oluwale was a man who was chewed up and spat out by professionals of various types who would not rid themselves of the confines of their racialised mentalities. As such, he can be represented as a model of what happens to people who are relentlessly subjected to violently oppressive social structures, but who struggle, in their own ways, against that oppression. Since martyrdom is a category claimed by the supporters of that person's or group's struggle against terrible odds, and since it requires much historical and contemporary work to legitimise that claim, over a period of time it might be that David Oluwale is inserted within the 'martyr' paradigm. But for me, it suffices to remember him with enormous respect in order to contribute to a new narrative for the city of Leeds, as a place which welcomes the Other, and treats everyone, whatever their status, as an equal.

NOTES

1. See Kester Aspden (2008), *The Hounding of David Oluwale* (London: Vintage), the revised version of his 2007 publication with a similar title. This work contains meticulous research by a professional historian writing in a lively and accessible style. It is the source for most of the facts in this chapter, unless otherwise referenced.
2. Tony Kushner (2012), *The Battle of Britishness—Migrant Journeys 1685 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), Chap. 8.
3. David was first inscribed in local consciousness by the words REMEMBER OLUWALE, painted in huge white letters on the wall of Chapeltown Road, Leeds, UK in 1971. At the time of writing, the principal responses to the life and death of David Oluwale are as follows. An article by Ron Phillips (1972), 'One Lame Darkie', in *Race Today*, January. There was a song about Oluwale made up by Leeds United fans. After the trial, a radio play by Jeremy Sandford (1974), *Smiling David* (London: Calder and Boyars) was produced. There were also poems by Linton Kwesi Johnson (1975, 1979) ('Time Come' on *Forces of Victory* CD, with Dennis Bovell Band, Island Records. track available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chIHgTqX3Dk>). Much later books by Caryl Phillips (2007), *Foreigners—Three English lives* (London: Harvill Secker) and Kester Aspden (2008), *The Hounding of David Oluwale* (London: Vintage) and (2007), *Nationality: Wog—The Hounding of David Oluwale* (London: Jonathan Cape) appeared as well as a stage play by Oladipo Agboluaje (2009), *The Hounding of David Oluwale by Kester Aspden, Adapted for the Stage by Oladipo Agboluaje* (London: Oberon Books). Corinne Silva's short film *Wandering Abroad* (2009), Leeds Art Gallery, curated by Nigel Walsh, Leeds City Council, was produced and is available at <http://corinnesilva.com/index.php/project/wandering-abroad-2009/>. Ian Duhig's three important poems reflecting on David's death appeared (2010) in *Pandorama* (London: Picador Poetry). Leeds-based writer/performer Zodwa Nyone's poem (2011) dedicated to David's mother, 'A Letter for Mama Oluwale', is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZgOtf-SQKk>. Sail Roads (2012), 'Oluwale' is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlbDvVtc_vg. Leeds taxi driver Dave Whittaker's synopsis of David's life and his poem (2013) is available at 'Remember David Oluwale—Support the Memorial', a Facebook Group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/42111313783/?fref=ts>. Gary Kaye's song about David (2014), 'Me Fe Lo Le', available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8PpjqKVqsU>. Historian Tony Kushner (2012), *The Battle of Britishness—Migrant Journeys 1685 to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), also included

David in his account of 'stowaways and others' arriving in Britain from Africa in the 1940s and 1950s.

4. Paul Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso).
5. Agboluaje, *The Hounding*.
6. Aspden, *The Hounding*, pp. 41–2.
7. Agboluaje, *The Hounding*, p. 111.
8. Ibid.
9. Kushner, *The Battle of Britishness*, pp. 194–5.
10. Michael Banton (1955), *The Coloured Quarter—New Immigrants in an English City* (London: Jonathan Cape), p. 49.
11. Ibid., pp. 45–55.
12. Silva, *Wandering Abroad*.
13. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 45.
14. Information on this charity may be obtained from its website at <http://www.rememberoluwale.org> and from Facebook and Twitter at RememberOluwale. The author of this chapter co-founded this charity and is its secretary.
15. Said by defence counsel Gilbert Gray QC, cited by Aspden in *Hounding*, p. 221.
16. Sandford, *Smiling David*; Aspden, *Nationality: Wog*; Aspden, *The Hounding*; Phillips, *Foreigners*.
17. Tony Kushner not only provided important facts about stowaways derived from government reports, he also used the books by Caryl Phillips and Kester Aspden, Sandford's and Agboluaje's plays and a poem by Linton Kwesi Johnson to set out David Oluwale's story. These contribute to his project of restoring the subaltern's voice to the history of stowing away. He also referred to the work I've been doing in creating a Memorial Garden for David. Kushner points out that 'In spite of the efforts of Sandford, Farrar, Johnson, Phillips, Aspden and Agboluaje, memory work of this Nigerian stowaway is still in its infancy and relatively marginal'. By implication, perhaps we know too little to frame Oluwale as a martyr. See Kushner, *Britishness*, pp. 197–8.
18. Abi Clay, email correspondence with me, April 2015.
19. Lynn Abrams, 'Memory as Both Source and Subject of Study: The Transformations of Oral History', in Stefan Berger and Bill Niven (eds) (2014), *Writing the History of Memory* (London: Bloomsbury).
20. James Hinton (2016), *Seven Lives from Mass Observation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 5.
21. Richard Lee and Ben Knight (2015), 'Gunter Grass, Giant of Literature, Dies at 87', citing Grass's *Peeling the Onion* (2006), *The Guardian*, 14 April 2015.

22. Emily Zobel Marshall explains the origins of the trickster Anansi in West Africa and its transition to the Caribbean. Memory may be best understood as a trickster. See Emily Zobel Marshall (2012), *Anansi's Journey—A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press).
23. Sandford, *Smiling David*; Silva, *Wandering Abroad*.
24. Arthur France MBE, a page from the *Moving Here* website of the National Archives. Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.movinghere.org.uk/stories/story125/story125.htm>, accessed 8 May 2015.
25. Aspden, *Hounding*, pp. 231–2.
26. Sandford, *Smiling David*.
27. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 43.
28. My filmed interview with Gabriel Adams, 27 February 2013.
29. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 35.
30. Silva, *Wandering Abroad*.
31. 'Rock n Roll Calypso' was released originally by Melodisc, title no. 1400, some time between 1956 and 1958. On Melodisc, see the Wiki entry at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melodisc_Records, accessed 27 May 2015. Lord Kitchener's career is outlined at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Kitchener_\(calypsonian\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Kitchener_(calypsonian)), accessed 14 May 2015. The song is available on vol. 4 of *London Belongs to Me* (Honest Jons Records, 2006), available at <http://honestjons.com/shop/search/london%20is%20the%20place>, accessed 27 May 2015.
32. This quote from Sheffield's Chief Constable's report in 1952 told it so well: 'The West Africans are all out for a good time, spending money on quaint suits and flashy ornaments and visiting dance halls at every opportunity. The Jamaicans are somewhat similar, but they have a more sensible outlook and rarely get into trouble. They take great pains with their appearance and use face cream, perfume etc. to make themselves attractive to the females they meet at dances, cafes etc. One feels, however, that they only attract a certain type of female by reason of the fact that they have more money to spend than the average young Englishman.' Note the representation of Jamaicans as sensible and law-abiding. See Bob Carter, Clive Harris and Shirley Joshi (1987), *The 1951-5 Conservative Government and the Racialisation of Black Immigration* (Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, Policy Paper No. 11, October 1987). Available at https://web.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CRER_RC/publications/pdfs/Policy%20Papers%20in%20Ethnic%20Relations/PolicyP%20No.11.pdf, accessed 23 March 2015.
33. Sandford, *Smiling David*.

34. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 47.
35. Alessandro Portelli (1991), *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press), cited by Andrew Perchard (2013), “Broken men” and “Thatcher’s Children”: Memory and Legacy in Scotland’s Coalfields’, *International Working-Class History*, vol. 84, Fall, 79–98.
36. *Hounding*, Phillips, *Foreigners*.
37. John McLeod (2009), “A Sound that Is Missing”: Writing Africa in the Anglophone Caribbean’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vol. 7, number 3, 329–42, at 337.
38. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, in *Foreigners*, pp. 176–81.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–9.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
41. Max Farrar (2002), *The Struggle for ‘Community’ in a Multi-Ethnic, Inner City Area: Paradise in the Making* (New York and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press).
42. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, p. 169.
43. In an interview with Francesca Wade coinciding with the issue of Caryl Phillips’s 2015 novel *The Lost Child*, Phillips makes fun of the confusion some people have about his gender. It’s available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/11470135/Caryl-Phillips-If-they-dont-look-at-my-picture-they-think-Im-a-woman.html>, accessed 27 April 2015.
44. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, pp. 182–3.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
46. The Leeds historian Janet Douglas explained to me: ‘Barry Pepper [a historian of public houses] ... mentions the Cambridge as being above the [St Clement’s] church, and when you look at the OS 1908 map, on the corner of Chapeltown Rd and Barrack St is a building labelled PH [Public House] which I am presuming was the Cambridge. On the opposite side of Chapeltown Rd were Roscoe Terrace, Barrack Rd, Cambridge Place, Cambridge Terrace, Cambridge Row, and the next street off Chapeltown Road was Leopold Street—this helps to orientate you. Barrack Road led to Chapeltown Cavalry Barracks.’ Email from Janet Douglas, 26 April 2015.
47. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, pp. 183–5.
48. Banton, *Coloured Quarter*, p. 56.
49. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, pp. 190–2.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 186.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 204–8.
52. My filmed interview with Abi Clay on 25 September 2014.
53. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, pp. 218–19.

54. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 223.
55. I am grateful to Dr Andrew Warnes, School of English, Leeds University, for this point. Warnes assisted Caryl Phillips in his research on David Oluwale.
56. Farrar, *The Struggle for 'Community'*, p. 222.
57. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 224
58. W. W. Daniel (1968), *Racial Discrimination in England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).
59. Dilip Hiro (1973), *Black British, White British* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books).
60. Derek Humphry and Gus John (1972), *Because They're Black* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 151.
61. Maureen Baker's role in CARD is described in Benjamin W. Heineman (1972), *The Politics of the Powerless: A Study of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination* (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations).
62. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 195.
63. Duhig, *Pandorama*, p. 19.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–18.
65. Linton Kwesi Johnson (1975), 'Night of the Head', in *Dread Beat and Blood* (London: Bogle l'Ouverture Publications), pp 34–5. This poem is also cited in Kushner, *Britishness*, p. 196.
66. Linton Kwesi Johnson (1979), 'Time Come', on *Forces of Victory*, CD, with Dennis Bovell Band, Island Records.
67. Conversation with the author, 17 February 2015.
68. Whittaker, 'Remember David Oluwale'.
69. Silva, *Wandering Abroad*.
70. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 204.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 192–4.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
75. On Arthur France, see *Arthur France MBE*, a page from the *Moving Here* website of the National Archives. Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.movinghere.org.uk/stories/story125/story125.htm>, accessed 8 May 2015.
76. Silva, *Wandering Abroad*.
77. Aspden, *Hounding*, p. 204.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

81. Ibid., p. 222. Ian Duhig told Kester Aspden that he met Kitching soon after Kitching was released from prison. Kitching was the security man at Hepworth's cloth warehouse, where Duhig worked in 1974. Duhig said he was a cold man, resented by his workmates because he'd 'shamed their city', and got this 'soft job' straight after his 'short and soft' spell in prison. Kitching 'treated Oluwale hatefully as a pariah, then Kitching was a hated pariah', which Duhig took as a moral example, reprising the old adage 'You become like what you hate' (Aspden, *Hounding*, pp. 238–9).
82. Sandford, *Smiling David*, p. 88. Sandford seems to have converted his earlier radio script into a screenplay.
83. Ibid., pp. 93–5.
84. See <http://eclipsetheatre.org.uk/about-us/> for information on this important company. Accessed 21 October 2016.
85. Agboluaje, *Hounding*.
86. Ibid., p. 107.
87. Phillips, 'Northern Lights', pp. 227–8. We now know that this person was a former Police Constable named Alex Wooliams. Wooliams, a young PC, left the Leeds force because of the antipathy between him and Sergeant Kitching. A transcript of Caryl Phillips's extraordinary interview with this brave police officer has been published. See Caryl Phillips (2010), 'David Oluwale (1930–1969), an interview', in Kathleen Gyssels and Bénédicte Ledent (eds), *Présence Africaine en Europe et au-delà/African Presence in Europe and Beyond* (Paris: L'Harmattan), pp. 93–108.
88. Arthur France has given me permission to use his name here (telephone conversation, 8 May 2015).
89. See Geraldine Connor and Max Farrar (2004), 'Carnival in Leeds and London, UK: Making New Black British Subjectivities', in Milla Cozart Riggio (ed.), *Carnival: Culture in Action—The Trinidad Experience* (London and New York: Routledge).
90. Phillips, Caryl 'Northern Lights', p. 229.
91. Phillips, Ron 'One Lane Darkie', p. 17.
92. Two years later a political challenge to that regime resulted in a Marxist Institute of Race Relations, led by A Sivanandan, publishing *Race and Class*, and a Jamesian-Marxist collective, led by Darcus Howe, including Linton Kwesi Johnson, which published *Race Today*.
93. Phillips, 'One Lane Darkie', p. 17.
94. Ibid., p. 18.
95. Phillips, 'Northern Lights', pp. 238–9.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 244–5.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
103. Caryl Phillips informed me (email 27 July 2015) that this man was Joseph Odeyemi, interviewed in Sheffield on 28 April 2004.
104. ‘Hatfields’ was actually called Hadfield’s Steelworks, in Sheffield, on the site where the Meadowhall shopping centre now stands. See Sheffield Forum thread at <http://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/showthread.php?t=208673>, accessed 5 May 2015.
105. Phillips, ‘Northern Lights’, pp. 258–9.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
107. The charity aims to open an interim Memorial Garden for David Oluwale in the centre of Leeds in 2017, near the place where David Oluwale was last seen. This will provide a different kind of text, as well as a particular kind of place, in which David’s life and death will be contemplated. Its planters may be read as signs of productive growth. The river running nearby might signify David’s passage to Leeds—and that of so many other migrants from the British Empire. It reminds us of the centrality of water transport to the emergence of Leeds as a global city. The web-linked information points in the garden will provide a cornucopia of texts about David, about the marginalised and excluded in Leeds today, and about the Remember Oluwale charity’s educational and campaigning work. In the permanent garden (projected for 2018–2019), world-class public art will be open, as with all great art, to multiple readings, some of which will further the charity’s vision of hope, inclusion, equality, diversity and social justice: <http://www.remember-oluwale.org>.

Bobby Sands, Martyrdom and the Politics of Irish Republican Memory

Stephen Hopkins

Bobby Sands was the first of the ten Irish republican hunger strikers to die during the course of 1981, and his is the name that ‘lives on’ in the wider world when it comes to the legacies and memories associated with this existential struggle. A recent feature-length documentary film, *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*, concentrated largely on *his* story, to a greater degree than that of the hunger strike more broadly. It utilised Sands’s own diary entries to structure the narrative.¹ His memory continues to be revered by a new generation of Irish republicans, many born after the Provisional Irish Republican Army’s (IRA) violent campaign was brought to a definitive end by the ceasefire of 1997. Sands had been the IRA prisoners’ ‘officer commanding’ in the Maze/Long Kesh gaol, and whilst leading the hunger strike, he had been elected as Westminster MP for Fermanagh—South Tyrone in a by-election in April 1981. He also left behind a body of writing that has been published and promoted by the Bobby Sands Trust and the republican movement (primarily through the political party, Sinn Féin [SF]).² For these reasons, among others,

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as Danny Morrison has pointed out, ‘Bobby Sands’ name tends to overshadow the names of his nine comrades’.³

Since the twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006 the memory politics associated with the Irish republican hunger strikes of 1980–1981, and the struggle over their legacies, has become contested and complex. This battle has been framed not simply by the expected disputes between the republican narrative and those memories associated with the Protestant/unionist/loyalist community or the ‘official’ British state narrative. For many years, the republican ‘family’ could commemorate and celebrate the memory of Sands (and the other dead hunger strikers) as one of the most prominent martyrs for the cause, and one who consciously replicated the sacrifices of previous generations of republicans. This was a foundational and unifying narrative for the Provisional movement, and was clearly modelled on the martyrdom of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916, which had served a similar purpose for earlier generations of Irish republicans. Indeed, 1981 was understood by republicans as ‘the northerners’ 1916’.⁴

However, in a profound rupture with this Provisional ‘master narrative’, there has been an increasingly bitter contest regarding how to interpret the hunger strike *within* the broad republican ‘family’. In 2005, the former public relations officer for the prisoners, Richard O’Rawe, alleged in his memoir, *Blanketmen*, that the hunger strike was prolonged by the IRA leadership outside the gaol for political gains.⁵ The claims were incendiary and triggered a long-running dispute between erstwhile comrades. The politics of remembering the iconic figure of the Provisional republican commemorative landscape, Bobby Sands, is no longer pristine and uncomplicated. Rather, the historical and mythical figure of Sands has been recruited by all sides in the contemporary political conflict. This has seen the legacy of Sands become a weapon in the battle over the past of the movement, but also over the current and future trajectory of Irish republicanism. Many so-called dissidents, including ex-Provisionals and republican socialists,⁶ have tried to utilise Sands as a posthumous critic of the compromises (or ‘betrayals’) of the leadership of SF President (since 1983) Gerry Adams, and until January 2017 the Deputy First Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive, and erstwhile IRA commander Martin McGuinness. In turn, the ‘mainstream’ republican movement has jealously guarded its ‘ownership’ of the legacies and memories of Bobby Sands and the hunger strikes, treating O’Rawe and his band of supporters as usurpers.

Notwithstanding these recriminations, Bobby Sands has been understood by all sides in this internecine republican dispute as a martyr, deserving of commemoration and the deepest respect. It is also worth pointing out that even amongst some of those he would have considered his enemies there has been a willingness to remember Sands as an idealist (even if misguided), and a brave, selfless individual. This chapter first examines the historical evolution of Irish republican attitudes to self-sacrifice or martyrdom, arguing that hunger strikes have been a particularly important, and recurrent, dimension of the movement's politics and culture. In the words of Richard Kearney, the republican movement of the revolutionary period 1916–1923, and by extension the Provisional movement since 1970, which laid claim to its heritage, was motivated, at least in part, by the ‘mythic resuscitation of some sacred national “tradition”’.⁷ Duncan Greenlaw has argued that, in much of the literature, there is an oscillation between two kinds of account: on the one hand, there is the ‘mythic’ interpretation shared by authors such as Kearney and Padraig O’Malley, in which the 1981 hunger strikers were self-consciously re-enacting the traditions of their forebears, part of ‘the eternal cycle of sacrifice and rebirth’.⁸ This was part of a ‘mythic logic which claimed that defeat is victory, failure is triumph, past is present’; in this view, the hunger strikes were a performative action, based upon a cult of sacrifice. On the other hand, and more common according to Greenlaw, there is an interpretation which ‘treats the strikes as a progressive, rather than repetitive, event’; the hunger strikes were part of a costly but ultimately successful effort to resist British rule and the British ‘framing’ of the conflict.⁹ Arguing persuasively for a more ‘open’ engagement with the legacies of 1981, Greenlaw has called for a more nuanced approach: ‘to settle fully for either of the above views—of identical repetition or cumulative progress—would be to close the account by “coming to terms” with the dead’.¹⁰ In the second section, the chapter analyses the religious context for republican hunger strikes. A third section is devoted to the memories and legacies associated with Bobby Sands in terms of the ‘master narrative’ that the Irish republican movement has constructed around this emblematic and iconic figure. The conclusion discusses the contemporary challenges to this dominant narrative within republicanism, and seeks to address the ambivalence which surrounds the legacies of Sands almost forty years after his death.

ENDURING THE MOST: IRISH REPUBLICANISM AND MARTYRDOM

It has become something of a commonplace that the Irish republican movement is, in many respects, in thrall to the 'dead generations', in the phrase immortalised in the Proclamation of the Republic issued by Patrick Pearse on behalf of the rebels at Easter 1916. Indeed, arguably the movement has been utilising and mobilising the memory of the 'patriot dead' almost from its inception with the United Irish rebellion of 1798. Concomitantly, the leaders of Irish republicanism in its many guises have been consistent in seeking to 'sanctify current strategies by association with the memory of dead volunteers'.¹¹ Of course, not all volunteers who died in service of 'the Republic' have necessarily been considered as martyrs. (For the Provisionals, 'the Republic' was considered as a 'living entity', despite the 'unfinished business' of partition, which meant that neither of the 'actually existing' jurisdictions in Ireland were considered legitimate.) Or rather, some of those who made the ultimate sacrifice are viewed as more worthy of the description than others. At the apex of the hierarchy are those imprisoned republicans who sought to use the only weapon left at their disposal, their bodily existence, to both galvanise, or even 'resurrect', the movement, and also to shame their enemies. As Alan Ford has argued, 'no one can deny the power of political martyrdom in modern Irish history. The blood of those who died for the nationalist faith has repeatedly been invoked to inspire and stiffen the sinews of their successors fighting to free Ireland from foreign rule.'¹² But, as we have already seen in the case of Bobby Sands, not all hunger strike deaths have been remembered in the same fashion, even when individuals have been engaged in the same protest. Moreover, not all have become potent myths or symbols, capable of mobilising large-scale support in succeeding generations, or of defining the legacy of an era. James Healy stated the point in the following terms: 'If you die on [hunger] strike in Ireland there will probably be some to recall your name in their own campaigns later on, but who invokes the names of Murphy and FitzGerald who died with MacSwiney in 1920? And who names the Irish strikers who died in 1940? In 1946? In 1974? In 1976?'¹³

O'Neill has put forward five reasons for the enduring power of self-sacrifice in Irish republican culture.¹⁴ Several of these considerations also apply to the broader nationalist and Catholic culture in Ireland, which helps to explain the significant ambivalence of many non-Provisionals to

the political and emotional appeal of the hunger strikes in 1980–1981. Firstly, the politics of self-sacrifice makes a virtue of necessity; hunger striking is the quintessential tactic of the powerless, and a significant component of the resistance of those who lack sovereign power.¹⁵ According to Sands's biographer, the prisoners in the Cages of Long Kesh (including Sands) first learned to 'use their powerlessness as a weapon' during and after the burning of the camp in September 1974.¹⁶ For Laurence McKeown, one of the hunger strikers who survived after the intervention of his family, the decision to undertake the strike was not made as a result of strategic calculation, but rather out of a desperation that the prisoners' protest against the British government's criminalisation policy should not simply peter out after five years, and the perceived failure of the first hunger strike of 1980: 'I was delighted that we would be embarking on a second hunger strike. For a while it had seemed as if we would just give up or be forced to concede defeat.'¹⁷ Liam McCloskey, an Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) hunger striker who also survived, reflected that the commitment of the men was to each other, first and foremost, but also as a means to regain a sense of agency: 'it was a situation of desperation and desperate men will do desperate actions'.¹⁸

The second dimension of the hunger strike as a recurring theme was precisely its capacity to demonstrate the political, rather than criminal, motivation of the IRA prisoners. Although ostensibly the hunger strike was about gaol conditions, and the 'five demands' that the blanketmen argued would constitute 'political status', in fact they were more pre-occupied with contesting the *legitimacy* of the state's narrative of the republican campaign, and asserting their own alternative interpretation of the 'struggle' against 'oppression'.¹⁹ As O'Malley has argued,²⁰ with specific reference to Bobby Sands's writing at the start of the hunger strike: he 'does not mention the five demands or indicate what he might settle for. Only that he will die, [but] that the Republic of 1916 will never die, that he is sustained by the memories of Thomas Clarke, Terence MacSwiney, Frank Stagg,²¹ Michael Gaughan, Thomas Ashe,²² Sean McCaughey and,²³ above all, James Connolly.'

This leads directly to the third reason for the power of self-immolation in the republican culture: it has been self-consciously commemorative in nature, providing an immensely strong bond between republicans of different generations and, crucially, attempting to uphold the essential continuity of the struggle for freedom. It is this capacity to provide

models for emulation and inspiration that is hugely significant in the histories and memories of the repetitive ‘waves’ of hunger strikers that have taken the ultimate step in giving their lives for the cause. In some, though not all, cases they have managed to offer the movement and its sympathisers an image of an ‘exemplary’ Irish republican life, and perhaps an exemplary, courageous and selfless, death as well. This is akin to the manner in which other avowedly revolutionary movements, such as communism, have similarly sought to construct a martyrology, based upon heroic narratives of victimhood and persecution, but also resistance and fortitude. As Kevin Morgan has argued with reference to the autobiographical writing of leading communists, this resulted in a ‘personalised form of official party history’.²⁴

Bobby Sands has not only become associated with just such an ‘exemplary life’, but his approach to the hunger strike was explicitly based upon his understanding of and emotional attachment to those who had travelled a similar route before him. Ruán O’Donnell made the point that Sands ‘possessed a keenly historical mind and both embodied and extolled the militant republican ideology of succession, continuity and lasting contribution through martyrdom’.²⁵ Even in the early stages of the ‘blanket’ protest, in October 1978, Sands was invoking the memories of earlier martyrs, both from the revolutionary era of 1916–1923 and from the previous decade of the Provisionals’ campaign: ‘I remember, and I shall never forget, how this monster [the British state] took the life of Tom Ashe, Terence MacSwiney, Michael Gaughan, Frank Stagg and Hugh Coney, and I wonder each night what the monster and his black devils will do to us tomorrow’.²⁶ O’Donnell makes the significant point that Sands’s use of the diminutive ‘Tom’ to reference Ashe suggested ‘a sense of personal interest with a long-deceased icon’. However, Sands’s identification with the recently deceased hunger strikers, Frank Stagg and Michael Gaughan, was clearly deeply rooted and heartfelt. Indeed, when Sands had been visited in the gaol in 1979 by the MP for Fermanagh—South Tyrone, Frank Maguire (whose seat Sands would contest and win after the unexpected death of Maguire in early 1981) had made a deep impression with his memories of meeting Stagg whilst he was on hunger strike in Wakefield prison. Sands, ‘acutely aware of the symbolic potency of his own death’, even went so far as to propose at one point that he be buried in County Mayo, in the same

republican plot as Stagg and Gaughan.²⁷ Denis O'Hearn recounted that Sands had insisted he was not being 'morbidly flamboyant' in putting forward this desire, but that he had 'serious personal reasons for the request'.²⁸ In the end, Sands was laid to rest in Milltown cemetery in West Belfast, the site of an extensive republican plot.

In many ways, the use made of dead martyrs by the Irish republican movement has replicated this sense of constructing a heroic and useable history, in which new recruits and sympathisers can be inculcated with the glorious memory of those who paid the ultimate price. The fourth element identified by O'Neill, therefore, is the complex way in which followers and fellow-travellers can feel themselves to be bonded with the martyr, and can share in the nobility of the cause. As we shall discuss below, the adoption of Sands as an icon by the Provisional movement has been maintained, if not strengthened, over the course of the last thirty-five years despite, or rather *because* of, the fact that the movement has undergone such momentous ideological and strategic shifts.

The fifth aspect of what O'Neill terms the 'cult of self-sacrifice' in Irish republicanism relates to its propensity to cater for both 'machismo and masochism'. Without delving too deeply into the psychological dimension of this debate, it may be argued that establishing a pervasive sense of victimhood amongst the nationalist and republican population of Northern Ireland has been an implicit, and sometimes explicit, objective of the Provisional movement from its inception. Seán MacBride, in his introduction to the prison diary of Bobby Sands, argued that for many Irish Catholic nationalists, who had not previously supported the 'armed struggle' of the IRA, their ambivalence and sympathy towards the hunger strikers was due precisely to the interpretation of their actions in the context of a deeply rooted collective memory of British colonial misrule, dating back at least to the Great Famine. Kearney summarised MacBride's point thus: 'the hunger strike was not some isolated political happening of our time, but a deep symptom of a historically recurring persecution'. In this understanding, MacBride had identified 'the basic *rationale* of the republican prison campaign in terms of the memory of the nationalist people's historical suffering, a memory of heroic martyrdom ...'.²⁹ This victimology quite deliberately invoked an interweaving of republican politics and culture with a Catholic religious ethos which was too insistent to ignore.

A CATHOLIC HUNGER STRIKE?

There were both implicit and explicit dimensions to this religio-political mythology of sacrifice, which helped to define the hunger strikes. This complex question has generated a good deal of discussion in the literature, and it is worth surveying the arguments briefly. It has been argued that 'although all the hunger strikers were Catholic and the community and political affiliation they represented were uniquely Catholic all disclaimed any specifically religious motivation'.³⁰ But, that is to interpret 'religion' in a 'narrow institutional way'. Malachi O'Doherty, who was brought up in both a Catholic and republican/nationalist milieu in West Belfast, has argued that there is a close affinity between these belief systems. Specifically, 'both republicanism and Catholicism in their histories of martyrdom accept that death can be part of the struggle. Failure is negated, because to die in the assertion of your belief is to advance your cause.'³¹ Both ideologies reject the 'worldly realism' that compromise would be more expedient, 'because both gain more in total defeat than in compromise'.³² O'Doherty goes further: 'Bobby Sands became a virtual saint, as Patrick Pearse had seven decades before him', proving that the mechanisms for creating martyrs remained powerful and attractive to a movement inured to strategic stalemate. He concluded with the observation that 'republicanism sustains itself, in part, for the work of respecting the dead'. In a dialectical relationship, 'if the cause collapses, there may be no one left to tend their graves or honour their memory. Conversely, if people forget to honour the dead, the cause will collapse ...'.³³

For Begoña Aretxaga, the power of a specific tradition of sacrificial martyrdom, based upon 'a profusion of Christological metaphors', was clearly an important dimension of the prison campaign, both in terms of the Christlike images of the blanketmen during the no-wash protest, and in the redemptive narrative of the hunger strikers. However, this was not the sole discourse of the republican prisoners: both 'the rational discourse of military strategy and the expressive idioms of religion and myth' were combined in a powerfully effective appeal to the broad mass of Catholic nationalist Ireland.³⁴ Arguably, though, it was the latter dimension that had the stronger appeal for many Catholics, perhaps particularly in the south of Ireland, who were unconvinced by the rationale for violent insurrection, and had not lent their support to the Provisionals during most of the 1970s. Several of the surviving

hunger strikers insist that their motivations were largely the product of 'cold, rational, clinical analysis of the situation', and that this was guided not only by the desperate position the prisoners found themselves in, but also by the needs of the wider republican struggle outside the gaol, which was flagging by the late 1970s.³⁵ According to Aretxaga, 'Bobby Sands ... produced cold and evaluative political communiqués as well as a poetic narrative filled with religious images and feelings'.³⁶ She went on to argue convincingly that 'after the hunger strike the prisoners grew self-conscious of Christological elements in their ideology, in part because such elements were used to accuse them of sectarianism ...'. Such distancing also suited the purposes of a movement which, for a short-lived period during the early 1980s, flirted with an ideological radicalisation, and presented the IRA's 'war' as a national liberation struggle with distinctly Marxist overtones. However, even this radical social politics was probably inspired more by 'liberation theology' than Marxist-Leninist doctrine. As O'Doherty persuasively argued, with reference to his schooling by the Christian Brothers, the structure of traditional Catholicism and republicanism displayed a 'marked correspondence', as if they 'shared the same template'.³⁷ Moreover, just as 'lapsed' Catholics may well return to the Church, so Irish republicanism tended to view 'constitutional nationalists' as immanent converts (or re-converts) to the 'true path': 'for the apostate republican as for the apostate Catholic, there is always a community that understands better where you truly belong'.³⁸ The hunger strikes were one tried and tested method for reinvigorating the ardour of this broader communal 'political family'.

One of those from the Catholic nationalist community of Northern Ireland who interpreted the hunger strike as a 'sacred drama' was the future Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney, from Bellaghy in South Derry. Interviewed by Dennis O'Driscoll, he recognised that he had had sympathy for the hunger strikers, and even some admiration for their courage, but he was 'wary of ennobling their sacrifice beyond its specific historic and political context'.³⁹ Heaney knew the family of Francis Hughes (the second striker to die) and attended the wake for Thomas McElwee (the ninth to die), but he had long since left Northern Ireland to live in the south, and felt deeply ambivalent about the protest. Heaney recalled in his poem 'The Flight Path' a chance meeting he had had, during the blanket protest, with SF publicity director Danny Morrison, who had hectored him about his perceived indifference to the plight of the prisoners. Heaney 'rebelled at being commanded', and

though he had ‘toyed with the idea’ of dedicating some of his work to the prisoners, ‘our friend’s intervention put paid to any such gesture’. During the hunger strike itself, Heaney was ‘highly aware of the propaganda aspect ... and cautious about being enlisted’.⁴⁰

Bobby Sands was by no means the first Provisional hunger striker to frame his actions in terms that were unmistakably religious-spiritual in content, as well as form. In the hunger strike of May 1972, which successfully moved the UK government to concede ‘special category status’, Proinsias MacAirt (the ‘OC’ of IRA prisoners) released a statement explaining the strike in the following terms: ‘Today, we humbly commit the lives and future of our comrades to Almighty God who gave our fathers the courage and determination to persevere through long centuries of ruthless tyranny. We ask His Divine blessing on the struggle ...’.⁴¹ Barry Flynn argued that ‘the notions expressed amounted, in short, to a belief that the hunger strike was a case of republican good against British evil’; such an ‘unsophisticated and flawed’ argument, resting upon ‘crude religious ideals’, belied the fact that in the two weeks of the strike up to that point, twenty-eight people had been killed in the intensifying violence, the majority by the Provisionals.⁴²

Ernie O’Malley, during his forty-one-day civil war hunger strike, recalled his ‘state of exultation, in which one is removed from worldly thoughts and cares ...’.⁴³ When O’Malley learned that his comrade Denis Barry had died on hunger strike, he wrote to Mrs Childers (the widow of Erskine, who had been executed in 1922 by the Free State authorities): ‘After all, I have not had the honour of going over the top [dying] first. I got the evening paper and saw Barry’s death on it and felt so happy not sad that it was like ecstasy. I felt strengthened and a sense of great peace so I know he is happy and I’m sure it will help us to follow.’⁴⁴ Sands expressed a similar sense of fatalism, accompanied by a sense of spiritual-religious peace, according to the testimony of many who saw him at the beginning of the strike: ‘he did look like someone who had made a decision about life and was happy with that decision, or had that look that reflected contentment or inner calm.’⁴⁵ On the day before he commenced the strike, Sands saw many of his comrades at Mass: ‘everyone was talking to him, and shaking his hand; his reply to them was, “You are talking to a dead man.”’⁴⁶ Sands reported that the prisoners were ‘saying the rosary twice every day’.⁴⁷ Others among the hunger strikers may have been more outwardly pious (such as Ray McCreesh, the third hunger striker to die), and there is no doubt that

Sands was deeply critical of the church hierarchy's ambivalent, or even hostile, attitude to the prisoners.⁴⁸ However, only a few days before he died, a priest was saying Mass in H4, and reported that he had visited Sands: 'He [Fr Toner] told us of reading the Bible to him and at one stage Bobby stopped him and motioned for him to read over the last few lines. ... What he asked him to read was, "God loves those who hunger for justice."' ⁴⁹

‘UNDAUNTED AND UNCHANGED’: BOBBY SANDS AND THE REPUBLICAN FUTURE⁵⁰

The very young, often teenage, recruits to the Provisionals in the early 1970s 'hardly knew what they were fighting for, apart from fighting back against loyalism, the police or the Army'.⁵¹ Bobby Sands was no exception to this pattern; he did not hail from a 'republican family', and was not primarily motivated to join the movement by republican ideology, but rather by the regular sectarian confrontations that occurred in the loyalist-dominated Rathcoole estate. Sands's family was forced to move out to a new estate in Twinbrook, on the edge of West Belfast. His politicisation came in gaol, after his prosecution in October 1972, aged eighteen, when he signed a statement confessing to his role in an armed robbery. He was sentenced to five years. A small group of IRA men from the Short Strand enclave in East Belfast took Sands into their group in Cage Seventeen of Long Kesh, where the prisoners enjoyed the relative freedom to wear their own clothes and organise their own activities. Like many other young IRA men, Sands used this time productively, to read and discuss both Irish history and the contemporary politics of international revolution. By the mid-1970s, he had come under the influence of Gerry Adams, who had encouraged him to see the value of political organisation (rather than military brute strength); according to O'Hearn, 'in Adams, Sands found a role model to help him complete his personal journey toward becoming a politicized militant'.⁵²

As well as reading Che Guevara, Sands (along with Adams and other 'progressive' thinkers) looked for inspiration to Irish republican historical thinkers. The one that Sands came to admire most was Liam Mellows, an anti-Treaty IRA man who had been imprisoned without trial by the Free State government; in December 1922, he was one of four 'irregulars' executed as a cold-blooded reprisal for the murder of two Free

State members of the Dáil. In this sense, Mellows was understood by these young Provisionals as not simply a theorist and writer of the revolution, but also as a republican martyr; this was a powerful and intoxicating combination. The lesson that Adams took from Mellows's gaol notebooks was that fashioning the 'living Republic' was not a task that should await military victory, but alternative governing structures should be built in republican districts in parallel with the IRA's campaign. After his release in April 1976, and in the wake of the lengthy and debilitating ceasefire by the IRA in 1975, Sands threw himself into building this 'active republicanism' in Twinbrook; this involved the takeover of the tenants' association, and allied efforts to construct a revolutionary counterculture, with the creation of sports and music clubs, Irish language lessons and so on. This experimentation was not envisaged as paving the way towards an *electoral* strategy, and it did not occur at the expense of continuing commitment to the IRA's violence. However, Sands's renewed engagement on 'active service' did cost him his marriage. After a very brief, but intense, six months (his only period of freedom as a fully fledged adult), Sands was re-arrested and sentenced to fourteen years for possession of a gun, during the firebombing of a furniture showroom in Dunmurry. Geraldine, whom Sands had married whilst on remand in 1973, believed that he had reneged on a promise not to go back on 'active service', and from then on the couple were effectively estranged.

On the blanket protest in the H-Blocks, Sands once again threw himself into active resistance. In extremely difficult conditions, he was nevertheless a prolific writer, and was instrumental in efforts to rally the blanketmen, putting energy into Irish language learning, storytelling and political analysis of the position inside and outside the confines of the gaol. Sands was one of those who argued that, after three years of protest, 'quiet determination' was no longer sufficient; there was a need for escalation, and hunger strike was the ultimate form of escalation. As O'Hearn has put it, 'at its core the protest was about legitimating armed struggle *outside* the jail'.⁵³ A hugely significant part of Sands's motivation was to recall the republican and wider Catholic nationalist constituency to the unchanging (and teleological) sacred ideals of 'the Republic'. It is in this sense that Sands was livid with Brendan Hughes's decision to call off the first hunger strike, in December 1980, when one of the strikers, Seán McKenna, slipped into a coma and appeared only hours from death. In the aftermath, the narrative promoted by the republican movement was that the British had reneged on promises with regard to

gaol conditions, but the reality, for Sands at least, was that Hughes had called off the strike too early, and thereby relieved the pressure on the Northern Ireland Office and the prison authorities.⁵⁴

It is in this fraught context that Sands's determination to reinvigorate the movement by embarking upon a second hunger strike must be interpreted. There is some interesting debate in the literature concerning the extent to which Bobby Sands should be remembered as an 'ordinary' representative of the Provisional movement or, by contrast, an 'extraordinary' and inspirational icon. On the one hand, SF have been keen to stress that Sands was not somehow removed from the bulk of IRA volunteers who had fought the war, and were committed to the movement's ethos of military discipline. The fact that he followed in a long line of republican martyrs, and that he was accompanied in his sacrifice by nine other heroic individuals, suggested that he should not be remembered as either uniquely determined or uniquely courageous. For Adams, 'if you met Bobby Sands there would be nothing about his demeanour or his appearance that set him apart from the rest of us'.⁵⁵ And yet, this 'very ordinary young man did a very extraordinary thing', and was also 'very remarkable'.⁵⁶ English has summed up Sands's impact thus: 'it was his ordinariness that gave his extraordinary gesture such power.'⁵⁷ Some of the ambivalence in this regard is captured in the words of fellow blanketman Felim O'Hagan: 'I didn't know what set Bobby off from others (and I detest the "sanctification" of any person) but he must have had an extra quality of political perception.'⁵⁸ If a political martyr can persuasively appear as an exemplary member of the wider collective, their power is enhanced, and their status may assume an iconic significance.

Although initial support for the second hunger strike was difficult to generate, the election of Sands to Westminster kick-started a mass campaign, which from this point onwards attracted huge international attention. Sands became the personification of the hunger strike and his image was widely reproduced, providing a human touch for the republican movement's publicity effort. The iconic image of Sands, in which he is smiling broadly, with shoulder-length hair, was reproduced from an original photograph smuggled out of Long Kesh in 1973. Danny Morrison, the secretary of the Bobby Sands Trust, has described it as 'a very pacifistic photo'; the image continues to form the centrepiece of a mural, painted on the gable wall of Sevastopol Street, next door to the SF headquarters on the Falls Road in Belfast.⁵⁹ Emilie Pine has

convincingly argued that the memorialising of the hunger strikers, and of Sands in particular, began even before they had died.⁶⁰ O'Malley argued that, despite the hopes for salvation that had been raised by Sands's election, as the strike wore inexorably on, the 'death watch became a communal vigil'.⁶¹ This image of a 'son, a brother, a victim of discrimination and the inequities of the criminal justice system, a young writer ...', was probably important in helping the hunger strikers to become associated with victimhood, despite the best efforts of the British and unionists to portray them as 'men of violence'.⁶² Whilst Sands was undertaking his hunger strike, fourteen people were killed outside the gaol (Fig. 10.1).

After his agonising death, within the gaol Sands's comrades grieved for him as they would for a brother. There was demoralisation and 'deep hatred' for the British; the blanketman Kevin Campbell recalled his



Fig. 10.1 Bobby Sands: Photo of a mural of Bobby Sands on the gable wall of a house in Seavastopol St. Belfast (Copyright of Stephen G. Hopkins)

reaction: 'I prayed that morning—in a hypocritical manner—that the IRA would blow the Brits to hell, that we would send scores of hundreds of the bastards back in boxes and make Thatcher regret ... what she had done to Bobby and his family.'⁶³ In Armagh gaol, where republican women had been engaged in the protest for political status (three women had joined the 1980 hunger strike), Síle Darragh, the 'OC', recalled the hugely powerful effect on the women of hearing that Bobby Sands had died. In her memoir, Darragh reproduces the last 'comm' she had received from Sands, at the start of his hunger strike: 'Well Comrade keep your heart and save the tears for the later years' cause as a movement we haven't suffered anything yet! That was the poet in me tryin' to get out. Ha! (Thank God it didn't!).'⁶⁴ Sands's funeral was attended by approximately 100,000 people, and was accompanied by a huge outpouring of emotion across nationalist and Catholic Ireland. This was a renewed demonstration, after the Fermanagh—South Tyrone result, of Sands's success in binding large numbers of Irish nationalists into a cohesive community; critically, this was a community that largely interpreted his death as a martyrdom *on its behalf*, whether they had been active supporters of the IRA or not. Unexpectedly, and paradoxically, Sands's electoral victory (alongside that of two other hunger strikers in the election to Dáil Éireann in June 1981) revitalised the political fortunes of the Provisionals and paved the way for an increasing concentration on the electoral politics of SF, rather than the military strategy of the IRA, or the revolutionary activism espoused by Sands. This development, which evolved slowly over the course of two decades, has put SF centre stage in the politics of Northern Ireland, as a governing party, and increasingly in the Republic of Ireland as well. In the words of SF's then vice-president, Gerry Adams, the republicans were 'conscious for the first time of our ability to galvanise public support and to marshal support through elections. The hunger strikes were the beginning of the end of spectatorism in Republican politics.'⁶⁵ Sands's legacy was remembered in a relatively straightforward fashion in the Provisional 'master narrative' of the 1980s as the 'clearest symbol of republican determination to continue the struggle to the end'.⁶⁶ But, over the course of the period since the IRA ceasefire of 1994, what precisely the 'struggle' consists of, and the trajectory the movement is taking, are no longer clear, and certainly not straightforward.

CONCLUSION

Healy recognised that ‘we need to be careful to avoid too simple a reading of Irish funerals, which can be as sophisticated as they are powerful. We can pay respects to the dead man without endorsing his whole life, sympathizing with his cause or with his chosen path to death.’⁶⁷ As Brown and Viggiani point out, though, the martyr’s funeral, and the subsequent commemoration of his or her death, could be ‘political tools and weapons too’; this was turned into a ‘ritual performance’ by the movement.⁶⁸ After 1981, as the years went by, some of this identification with the self-sacrifice of Sands and his comrades dissipated somewhat, but it has never been renounced. O’Malley made the point in 1990 that ‘they still march in Belfast on 5 May, the anniversary of Bobby Sands’ death. The crowds grow a little thinner each year, memories a little more dim, the rhetoric a little more worn.’⁶⁹ In the 1990s, however, as the Peace Process progressed unevenly towards the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, controlling the historical narrative or ‘memoryscape’ of the hunger strike arguably became of even greater significance to all factions in the increasingly divided movement. Bobby Sands and his comrades have been of crucial importance for the Provisional leadership in providing retrospective justification for the movement’s contemporary strategy, which has involved dramatic departures from republican orthodoxy.

The martyrdom of Bobby Sands has been utilised by the leadership in an effort to convince grass-roots republicans that, despite the ending of ‘armed struggle’, the decommissioning of IRA weapons and SF’s entry into devolved government at Stormont, nonetheless the movement remains committed to revolutionary goals, and there is an essential continuity in its ultimate objectives, even if the means to pursue them have altered radically. The problem for the Adams/McGuinness leadership is that the absence of discernible momentum towards Irish unity in the twenty-first century has led a number of those in the republican ‘family’ to argue that the struggle has been neutered. These dissenting critics, whilst they have not necessarily joined one of several splinter groups which have emerged, have been vociferous in their rejection of the leadership’s custodianship of the martyrs’ legacies and memories. The allegations of Richard O’Rawe, that the hunger strike in 1981 was prolonged for hoped-for political gains, have provided these dissenters with a hugely symbolic means to articulate their grievances.⁷⁰ One of

the most tenacious critics has been Anthony McIntyre, a former blanket-man who served eighteen years in gaol for the Provisional movement. In 2006, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the hunger strike, he gave the oration at a commemoration in Bundoran, County Donegal: 'We gather to pay true homage to fallen comrades rather than use their imagery and exploit their memory to add wind to the sails of political careers.'⁷¹ He was scathing about those in the SF leadership who would use the hunger strikers as a 'crutch' to 'provide cover' for their opportunistic embrace of a 'partitionist destination'; this was to 'steal a sacrifice'.⁷² McIntyre recognised that, in 2006, it was impossible to say where the dead hunger strikers would stand on the contemporary politics of the movement. However, it was not exploiting their sacrifice, in McIntyre's perspective, to restate what the hunger strikers believed in 1981: 'when the men lost their lives they died in opposition to a reformed Stormont; they died in opposition to acceptance of the Unionist veto dressed up in the language of the consent principle; they died in opposition to Leinster House [the seat of the Dublin parliament]; they died in opposition to a British police force enforcing the law of the British state in any part of Ireland.'⁷³ The implication was crystal clear: the SF leadership now accepted all of these ideological about-turns.

The Bobby Sands Trust, with Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison as key members since its inception, has resisted all efforts of the 'dissenters' to establish a 'counter-memory' of the hunger strikes. The Trust holds the copyright of Bobby Sands's poetry and prose, and continues to promote them, according to the SF leadership's 'master narrative'. There is a cryptic sentence on the Trust's homepage: 'For a time Bobby's two sisters, Marcella and Bernadette, were members of the Trust.'⁷⁴ Bernadette has, in fact, been a vehement critic of the direction travelled by SF since the mid-1990s, and has lent her support to the 32 County Sovereignty movement. She has explicitly rejected the commercial and political use made of her brother's legacy by the Trust: in 2016, after the publication of a graphic novel entitled 'Bobby Sands—Freedom Fighter', the Sands family issued a statement, which called upon the Trust to 'disband and desist from using Bobby's memory as a commercial enterprise. Once again an opportunity to promote Bobby's ideals and sacrifice that he died for has been diminished by those who seek to promote different agendas—both personal and political.'⁷⁵

If the memories and legacies of Bobby Sands's martyrdom have been used in recent years in an effort to fortify the pretence of secure

foundations for SF's radical transformation, then this endeavour has not been wholly successful. As Rebecca Graff-McRae has written, the hunger strikes have been a 'dangerous weapon to deploy', and highlight the 'inherent instability of republican attempts to ground profound change in the imagined permanence of the past'.⁷⁶ The legacy of the H-Block martyrs was to 'broaden the battlefield' of republican activity, but according to some within the 'republican family', the leadership have, instead, ended up by vacating the battlefield.⁷⁷ The tight-knit 'resistance community' of the Provisional movement, which had been united in its veneration of Sands and the other martyrs, has been internally divided in an irrevocable fashion. There is a clear historical parallel to be drawn here between the early years of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: just as the Irish Parliamentary Party felt that it needed to 'convince [the Irish] people that it stood for the same cause as the heroic dead', and (in Willie Redmond's words) that the party was attempting by constitutional means to 'bring about precisely the same objects as the Fenians of fifty years ago', so Gerry Adams, as President of SF since 1983, must persevere with this obeisance to the dead.⁷⁸ As Boyce has argued, 'thus there developed an at times grisly struggle for the memories (and sometimes for the bodies) of Ireland's martyred dead ...'; just as the southern Irish state 'only needed the martyred dead as the dominant home rule party had needed them between 1870 and 1914—as important but essentially ritualistic figures', so SF's memory of Bobby Sands has been similarly constrained.⁷⁹ Some republicans, though, continue, in the words of Seán O'Faoláin, to be 'blinded and dazzled by our icons, caught in the labyrinth of our dearest symbols'.⁸⁰ There are some whose commitment to the idealised, 'living Republic' of 1916 remains unshaken and unshakeable, and for them Bobby Sands remains an icon to be emulated, not merely revered.

NOTES

1. *Bobby Sands: 66 Days* (dir. Brendan Byrne) was given a cinema release in Britain in September 2016.
2. As well as the diary, which he kept for the first seventeen days of the hunger strike, Sands had previously written a lengthy piece recounting a day in the life of a 'blanketman'; along with poems and songs, he was also a regular contributor to the republican press, contributing articles under the pen name 'Marcella' (the name of one of his sisters). See Bobby

- Sands (1983), *One Day in My Life* (Cork and Dublin: Mercier) and (1982), *Skylark, Sing Your Lonely Song* (Cork and Dublin: Mercier). For a later collection, see (1998) *Writings from Prison* (Dublin: Mercier).
3. Danny Morrison (2006), 'Introduction', in D. Morrison (ed.), *Hunger Strike: Reflections on the 1981 Hunger Strike* (Dingle, Co. Kerry: Brandon), p. 17.
 4. See Neil Jarman (1997), *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg), p. 148; also R. K. Walker (2006), *The Hunger Strikes* (Belfast: Lagan), p. 11.
 5. Richard O'Rawe (2005), *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin: New Island). The protesting republican prisoners were known as the 'blanketmen', after they refused to wear prison-issue clothes, which designated them as ordinary criminals. The blanket protest began in 1976, after 'special category status' was removed for paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland. For a fuller analysis of the controversy generated by O'Rawe's memoir, see Stephen Hopkins (2014), 'The Chronicles of Long Kesh: Provisional Irish Republican Memoirs and the Contested Memory of the Hunger Strikes', *Memory Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, 425–39.
 6. Three of the hunger strikers who died in 1981 belonged not to the Provisional movement, but to the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a splinter group from the 'Official' IRA. See Elisabetta Viggiani (2014), *Talking Stones: The Politics of Memorialization in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berghahn), pp. 109–27; see also Stuart Ross, "A Full and Committed Role": The Irish Republican Socialist Movement and the hunger strikes', *Irish Review*, forthcoming.
 7. Richard Kearney (2006), 'Myth and Martyrdom: Foundational Symbols in Irish Republicanism', in R. Kearney, *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays, 1976–2006* (Dublin: Lilliput Press), p. 34. (This essay was originally published in 1978.)
 8. Padraig O'Malley (1990), *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press), p. 116.
 9. Duncan Greenlaw (2004), *Borders of Mourning: Remembrance, Commitment and the Contexts of Irish Identity* (Bethesda, MD: Academica), p. 113.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.
 11. Henry Patterson (2011), 'Beyond the "Micro Group": The Dissident Republican Challenge', in P. M. Currie and M. Taylor (eds), *Dissident Irish Republicanism* (London: Continuum), p. 81.
 12. Alan Ford (2001), 'Martyrdom, History and Memory in Early Modern Ireland', in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 43.

13. James Healy (1982), 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923', in *Studies*, vol. 71, no. 283, 213–26. Terence MacSwiney was the commandant of the IRA's 1st Cork Brigade, and became Lord Mayor of the city during the Anglo-Irish war. He was sentenced to two years for possession of seditious material, and announced his intention to fast from the dock. After a short but successful hunger strike which secured his release in 1917, MacSwiney may have been confident that the British would again capitulate, but it was not the case; he spent seventy-four days on hunger strike before he died in Brixton gaol. Both Michael FitzGerald (commandant of the 1st Battalion, Cork No. 2 Brigade of the IRA) and the 17-year-old Joseph Murphy died on hunger strike in Cork gaol. Murphy died later on the same day as MacSwiney, and his death was 'overshadowed by the events at Brixton'. See Barry Flynn (2011), *Pawns in the Game: Irish Hunger Strikes 1912–1981* (Cork: Collins Press), pp. 43–5, 51–9. See also Francis Costello (1996), *Enduring the Most: The Life and Death of Terence MacSwiney* (Dingle: Brandon).
14. D. J. O'Neill (1984), 'The Cult of Self-Sacrifice: The Irish Experience', *Eire-Ireland*, vol. 24, no. 4, 83–105. See also George Sweeney (1993), 'Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 421–37.
15. K. M. Fierke (2014), *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 14.
16. Denis O'Hearn (2006), *Bobby Sands: Nothing But an Unfinished Song* (London: Pluto Press), p. 66.
17. Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown and Felim O'Hagan (eds) (1994), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time: The H-Block Struggle 1976–1981* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale), pp. 138–9.
18. Liam McCloskey, cited in James Dingley and Marcello Mollica, 'The Human Body as a Terrorist Weapon: Hunger Strikes and Suicide Bombers', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 30, no. 6, 459–92.
19. The 'five demands' were the right of the prisoners to wear their own clothing, to refuse to engage in prison work, to organise free association with other political prisoners, the right to one visit, parcel and letter per week, and the full restoration of remission.
20. O'Malley (1990), *Biting at the Grave*, p. 57. It is interesting to note that Clarke and Connolly were not hunger strikers, but are viewed as martyrs of the Easter Rising after their executions by the British authorities in the wake of the rebellion.
21. Frank Stagg and Michael Gaughan were two IRA men who died on hunger strike in English gaols in 1976 and 1974 respectively, having demanded to be treated as 'prisoners of war'. They were eventually

- buried in the same republican plot in Ballina, Co. Mayo, despite the Irish government's refusal to allow Stagg's body to be interred in the same plot. See *Tírghrá: Ireland's Patriot Dead* (2002; Sinn Féin), pp. 142 and 186, and Flynn (2011), *Pawns in the Game*, pp. 152–61. See also (2009) *Michael Gaughan: Prepared to Fight or Die* (Dublin: Parnell) (a booklet in the *Irish Republican Legends* series, produced by SF newspaper *An Phoblacht*).
22. Thomas Ashe was the first Irish republican hunger striker to die, in September 1917; he died after refusing to cooperate with the prison regime in Mountjoy gaol, Dublin, and undertaking a hunger strike in protest at the authorities' insistence that he would be treated as an 'ordinary' inmate. An inquest into his death revealed that he died due to complications as a result of 'force feeding'. See Flynn (2011), *Pawns in the Game*, pp. 18–38.
 23. Sean McCaughey was an IRA leader who died on hunger strike in 1946. Unlike the others described here, McCaughey had been sentenced, and was imprisoned in the Irish Free State at Portlaoise. The Irish authorities had shown themselves to be willing, on occasion, to allow men to die on hunger strike, both during the 'Emergency', but also during the aftermath of the Irish civil war in 1923. See Flynn (2011), *Pawns in the Game*, pp. 110–25. For the civil war hunger strikes, see James Healy (1982), 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923'; and Charlotte Fallon (1987), 'Civil War Hungerstrikes: Women and Men', *Eire-Ireland*, vol. 22, no. 3, 75–91.
 24. Kevin Morgan, 'An Exemplary Communist Life? Harry Pollitt's *Serving My Time* in Comparative Perspective', in J. Gottlieb and R. Toye (eds) (2005), *Making Reputations: Power, Persuasion and the Individual in Modern British Politics* (London: add), p. 56.
 25. Ruán O'Donnell (2015), *Special Category: The IRA in English Prisons, Vol. 2: 1978-1985* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Irish Academic Press), p. 199.
 26. Ibid., p. 199. See also O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 50.
 27. O'Donnell, *Special Category*, p. 199.
 28. O'Hearn, *Bobby Sands*, p. 375.
 29. Seán MacBride (1983), 'Introduction', in Bobby Sands, *One Day in My Life*, pp. 7–21. Richard Kearney (2006), 'The Triumph of Failure: The Irish Prison Tradition', in Kearney, *Navigations*, pp. 50–1.
 30. Dingley and Mollica, 'The Human Body as a Terrorist Weapon', p. 472.
 31. Malachi O'Doherty (1998), *The Trouble with Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA* (Belfast: Blackstaff), p. 21.
 32. Ibid., p. 21.
 33. Ibid., p. 22.

34. Begoña Aretxaga (1997), *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 96.
35. Laurence McKeown (2001), *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners, Long Kesh 1972-2000* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale), p. 231.
36. Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, p. 96.
37. O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns*, p. 19.
38. Ibid., p. 22.
39. Dennis O'Driscoll (2008), *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 260.
40. Ibid., pp. 257–9.
41. See Flynn, *Pawns in the Game*, p. 133.
42. Ibid., pp. 133–4.
43. Ernie O'Malley (1992), *The Singing Flame* (Dublin: Anvil [original publication, 1978]), p. 262.
44. Richard English and Cormac O'Malley (1991), *Prisoners: The Civil War Letters of Ernie O'Malley* (Dublin: Poolbeg), p. 54.
45. Laurence McKeown cited in Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan (eds), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, p. 147.
46. Sean Lennon cited in ibid., p. 147.
47. Sands, *Writings from Prison*, p. 222.
48. See Margaret Scull, 'The Catholic Church and the Hunger Strikes of Terence MacSwiney and Bobby Sands', *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, 282–99.
49. Ciaran McGillicuddy cited in Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan (eds), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, p. 167.
50. In his diary entry for 9 March 1981, Sands expressed his confidence that the leadership of the republican movement would 'always remain undaunted and unchanged' (*Writings from Prison*, p. 228).
51. O'Hearn, *Bobby Sands*, p. 47.
52. Ibid., p. 85.
53. Ibid., p. 227.
54. See Thomas Hennessey (2014), *Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA, 1980–1981* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press), pp. 117–18.
55. Gerry Adams (2001), *An Irish Journal* (Dingle: Brandon), p. 142.
56. Ibid., pp. 140–2.
57. Richard English (2003), *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA* (London: Macmillan), p. 196.
58. Felim O'Hagan cited in Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan (eds), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, pp. 140–1.
59. Morrison has argued that the British authorities attempted, during the by-election, to persuade the media to use a less flattering arrest

- photo of Sands, but this image was already too well established in the public mind (see ‘The Wrong Man Interviewed’, <http://thepensivequill.am/2014/09/the-wrong-man-interviewed.html>). The mural has recently been repainted, and was subtly redesigned to include small portraits of other hunger strikers, including Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty (who both died after Sands) and Sean McCaughey. See *An Phoblacht*, May 2015, p. 14 and Stuart Borthwick (2015), *The Writing on the Wall: A Visual History of Northern Ireland’s Troubles* (Liverpool: Bluecoat), pp. 142–3.
60. Emilie Pine (2011), *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 102.
 61. O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, pp. 61f.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 63. Kevin Campbell cited in Campbell, McKeown and O’Hagan (eds), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*, p. 169.
 64. Sile Darragh (2011), *John Lennon’s Dead?: Stories of Protest, Hunger Strikes and Resistance* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale), p. 121–2, 128–9.
 65. Gerry Adams (2003), *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland* (Dingle: Brandon), p. 49.
 66. Jarman, *Material Conflicts*, p. 149.
 67. Healy, ‘The Civil War Hunger-Strike’, 224.
 68. Kris Brown and Elisabetta Viggiani (2009), ‘Performing Provisionalism: Republican Commemorative Practice as Political Performance’, in Laura FitzPatrick (ed.), *Performing Violence in Contemporary Ireland* (Dublin: Carysfort), pp. 229–31.
 69. O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 260.
 70. For more details on divisions within the ‘republican family’ see Stephen Hopkins, “‘Our Whole History Has Been Ruined!’: The 1981 Hunger Strike and the Politics of Republican Commemoration and Memory”, *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 44–62.
 71. Anthony McIntyre (2008), ‘The Price of Our Memory’, *Good Friday: The Death of Irish Republicanism* (New York: Ausubo), p. 111 (first published in *The Blanket*, 26 August 2006).
 72. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
 73. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
 74. Bobby Sands Trust homepage: <http://www.bobbysandstrust.com/bobbysandstrust> (accessed 15 February 2017).
 75. ‘Sands family responds to publication of book—“Bobby Sands—Freedom Fighter”’, *Pensive Quill* (<http://thepensivequill.am/2016/02/sands-family-responds-to-publication-of.html>) (accessed 25 February 2016).

76. Rebecca Graff-McRae (2010), *Remembering and Forgetting 1916: Commemoration and Conflict in Post-Peace Process Ireland* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press), p. 59.
77. Liam Clarke (1987), *Broadening the Battlefield: The H-Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan).
78. Redmond cited in D. G. Boyce (1986), “‘A Callous Story and a Dirty Deed’: Political Martyrdom in Ireland since 1867”, in Yonah Alexander and Alan O’Day (eds.), *Ireland’s Terrorist Dilemma* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff), pp. 18–19.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
80. O’Faoláin cited in Kearney, ‘Myth and Martyrdom’, p. 42.

‘The People’s Flag Is Deepest Red,
It Shrouded Oft Our Martyred Dead’:
Martyrdom and the People’s History

Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn

In later Christian tradition, Christ was the first martyr. The Roman state demanded that Christ renounce his assertion that he was the Son of God. He refused. He suffered mockery, torture and death. Apparent defeat was transformed into victory because from this sacrifice came the redemption of humanity. The first martyrdom indicates three defining features of martyrdom. Firstly, it arises in a context of conflict. Secondly, the martyr is on the side of truth and, later, justice; conversely, the martyr’s killers are on the side of error and injustice. So, thirdly, the conflict is a moral one, between good and evil, not merely a battle between wills or a contest of power. The conflict is one where the good are weak and the mighty are evil; hence the evil are able to bring suffering and death on the martyr. But good triumphs in the end.

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The underlying contention of this book is that the secular martyrdoms of the oppositional movements of the Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries share features with the sacred martyrdoms of earlier centuries in the Christian churches which are sufficiently important to render the phrase 'the people's martyrology' not merely memorable but also meaningful and illuminating. Those features are the association of a violent or premature death or suffering with a cause which is the focus of conflict with the state or another powerful organisation; the successful attribution of qualities of innocence, faultlessness, courage and steadfastness, either alone or in combination, to the martyr; and the memorialisation of the martyr by the construction of memorial objects and buildings, the naming of organisations such as schools and features of public spaces such as streets and parks after the martyr, the institution of anniversaries, the transmission of stories, tales, songs, dramas, histories and myths which show the martyr in a light which demonstrates qualities admired by the members of his or her community. Each of the cases considered here shows these features to a greater or lesser extent. They are perhaps most obvious in the cases of the martyrs of the Easter Rising and Bobby Sands and most vestigial, as Daryl Leeworthy's chapter shows, in the case of John Hopla, whose marble memorial plaque in a South Wales social club was panelled over and only rediscovered and restored in 2014.¹ Max Farrar's chapter on David Oluwale treats an exceptional case in that it demonstrates a reluctance to transform a death into a martyrdom on the ground that it transforms the dead person into a symbol and, in doing so, denies their humanity in all its contradictoriness and complexity. As Collette has written of Davison: her 'death transformed her into a heroine, but erased her identity'.²

We also pointed out that, just as there were discernible common features to the martyrdoms considered here, so there were common features to the state's responses to the situations in which a martyrdom might arise. The state in all the cases considered here has shown an understanding of the value of a martyr to the cause it is resisting and has often sought to avoid the creation of new martyrs by one means or another. The most obvious consequence of this, as we pointed out in Chap. 1, is that martyrs, and possibly secular martyrs in particular, have frequently been killed by accident, or by subordinates who for one reason or another have been distant from the political centre. This, too, implies that martyrdoms, including secular martyrdoms, have common features. It also suggests that martyrdoms frequently imply a failure

of the state—sometimes a tactical failure, as in the failure of troops to quell the disturbance at Featherstone by simply overawing the crowd, and as in 1960s Leeds by the failure to maintain discipline among police officers such as Ellerker and Kitching; and sometimes a strategic failure caused by an inability to prevent situations arising where the state faces the unpalatable choices of making objectionable concessions or accepting the creation of new martyrs, as with Bobby Sands. Conversely, we can see silent successes of the state (or perhaps simply episodes of good luck) where situations have been weathered in which martyrdoms might well have been created but were not: the General Strike is the most celebrated example among liberal and conservative historians; the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, the wartime suppression of British fascism and the 1958 Notting Hill race riots are others. Perhaps controversially we would suggest that the 1984–1985 miners' strike also merits a place in this list—notably, the 'police riot' at the Orgreave Coking plant in June 1984 inflicted assaults and later wrongful arrests, unlawful detentions and malicious prosecutions on at least 39 pickets, but nobody was killed and nobody suffered life-changing physical injuries, as Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary, pointed out in 2016. As a result the NUM was successfully deprived of a martyr.³ The Coalfield Communities Campaign (formed in May 1985 and now the Industrial Communities Alliance), which might have become a custodian for the martyred coalfields, instead formed itself into a lobbying organisation which has eschewed the popular political tactics of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the Jarrow march.⁴

What changes a death into a martyrdom? As we noted in Chap. 1, the conventional answer within the historiography of Christianity is 'a community of believers' and the institutions of the Church.⁵ Others conceptualise the process somewhat differently, writing of the production of a 'collective' or 'social' memory (i.e., a real or purported memory shared by members of a community).⁶ The cases studied here suggest that community, leadership and custodial institutions are of varying importance in the production of a martyr, but in England and Wales for one reason or another the role of a community and community leaders has usually been primary. Indeed, the absence of custodial institutions of a power comparable to the early, medieval and Reformation churches can often explain the comparative weakness of the people's martyrdoms. The communities involved have sometimes been local, face-to-face communities and sometimes 'imagined' communities brought together

by communication technologies ranging from the printing press to the telephone and television. The Peterloo martyrs were created by political leaders and a national 'imagined community' of Chartist and later reformers rather than a local community of partisans. In contrast, the memory of the Tolpuddle Martyrs has benefited from the institutional custodianship of the TUC, but again the community of importance has been a national, 'imagined' community of trade unionists centred initially on London. The memory of Featherstone, we argued, was sustained by a local and an occupational community but found no broader national institution to act as a custodian. It thus conforms to the conventional historiography of Christianity in that its failure can be readily explained in its terms. The martyrdom of Jarrow varies only in degree; its natural national custodian, the Labour Party, has been reluctant to be seen as the party of the unemployed or the party of the derelict areas. The success of Tonyandy, too, conforms to the conventional view, though the community involved has remained south Welsh rather than national and the custodians (the South Wales Miners' Federation, the South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers, the South Welsh branches of the CP and the Labour Party) have remained similarly subnational and, except for the last, are now, for all practical purposes, defunct. Davison was and is almost entirely without a local supporting community: she was born in London and spent most of her life there but her network of friends and correspondents was a national one, not one based solely on the face-to-face interactions of everyday life; her community is again an imagined one. Her reputation was promoted by the WSPU and languished after its dissolution in 1917; since then she has had no institutional home as second and third wave feminism have eschewed conventional organisational forms in Britain. The contrast with the martyrs of the Easter Rising is extreme, with custodians and promoters taking powerful institutional forms in the shape of the nascent Irish state, Sinn Féin and the IRA; similarly with Bobby Sands except that, as Stephen Hopkins shows, the official custodians have been increasingly challenged in recent years. Finally, we saw the struggle of David Oluwale's history to survive in memory, with neither a strong local community nor any obvious institutional custodian of a potential martyr to racist policing.

As we remarked in the first chapter of this book, the role of the martyr's tormenters and killers has been neglected. Apart from the cases considered here and surveying a global history, the deliberate, open-eyed

creation of martyrs after full deliberation by the powers in place, fully aware that they risked creating a martyr, appears to have been a rare event since the era of the early Church. Nevertheless, there are some prominent cases including the treatment of English Protestants and Catholics in the English Reformation, the Parliamentary treatment of Charles I, the Tokugawa Shogunate's treatment of the martyrs of Japan, the German execution of Edith Cavell, the fatal hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney in 1920 and the extra-judicial execution of Che Guevara in 1967.⁷ In the episodes studied here, only the martyrdom of Bobby Sands can be said to have been consequent on the deliberate acts of the highest authorities against which they fought. The execution of the Dublin martyrs was the work of General Maxwell, the Military Governor under the martial law that had been proclaimed days before his arrival. The speed and secrecy of the courts martial caused alarm in Whitehall and, as Mark McCarthy's chapter notes, Asquith intervened to stop them. The danger that the British government, by allowing Sands to die, would create another martyr was, however, well understood. But Thatcher would have nothing of any special treatment.⁸

Despite these parallels with Christian martyrdom, the examples of secular martyrdom considered here frequently diverge from the ideal of Christian martyrdom and raise questions not often considered in the history of the Church. The first of these concerns the secular martyrs' view of themselves. Davison, as Collette shows here, was a self-conscious martyr with a clearly articulated and sophisticated understanding of martyrdom as a living sacrifice and steadfast witness. Patrick Pearse self-consciously risked martyrdom in the Easter Rising, believing, as McCarthy shows here, that 'the blood of the sons of Ireland' was needed to 'redeem' Ireland. Bobby Sands, as Hopkins's chapter shows, was imbued with the history and myths of the republican movement, including its history of patriotic self-sacrifice; he did not expect a victory in the form of concessions from the British government but the 'victory in death' of the canonical Christian martyrs. But there is no evidence that those killed or wounded at Peterloo, arrested at Tolpuddle, shot at Featherstone, those who suffered unemployment and poverty in Jarrow, or David Oluwale thought of themselves as prospective or actual martyrs and indeed it would be remarkable had they done so. How they did think of themselves is now often impossible to judge. None of those who died at Peterloo or at Featherstone left any testimony that has survived, nor

did Oluwale. Their last words were not recorded. They are blank slates. Hence the 'vessels of remembrance', to use Cozens's phrase, became Henry Hunt and Samuel Bamford for Peterloo and Ellen Wilkinson for Jarrow, with some limited assistance from J. B. Priestley.⁹ However, George Loveless of Tolpuddle left his own account of his life and trials which makes it clear that he did not claim the title 'martyr' nor the status of a hero but, as the title of his memoirs indicates, that of a victim. Those who endured the 'murder' of Jarrow remain voiceless; all we can see is that Priestley presented them as helpless victims, wearing the 'drawn masks of prisoners of war',¹⁰ while Wilkinson, as Matt Perry's chapter shows, was concerned to show them as universally representative working-class heroes whose sufferings earned them the title 'martyrs'.

The second question concerns the contestation of the character, image or identity of the people's martyrs by the state and the media. The most prominent of the alternative images put forward by those wishing to prevent the emergence of a narrative of martyrdom is one of victims of a state or its agents sometimes admitted to be vicious but often stated to be merely careless or imperfect. Deaths are presented as regrettable but either inevitable or merely accidental and therefore of no greater significance than any other unpreventable or accidental death. Oluwale's death is the exemplar of this manoeuvre; Davison's death was presented as an accident, a suicide or as an episode of uncontrolled wilfulness¹¹; Jarrow was not murdered, it was said: it died as a result of the inevitable processes of global industrial change; those that protested at this were communist agitators. Another manoeuvre is to blame the dead for their own deaths: those at Peterloo should not have arrived carrying seditious flags, should not have gathered in numbers plainly designed to intimidate, should not have attended a treasonable meeting; the Tolpuddle Martyrs broke the law; Duggan and Gibbs and everyone else present at Ackton Hall Colliery had been ordered to leave but did not do so; the participants in the Easter Rising were traitors. A variant casts doubt on the moral worthiness of the martyr: Bobby Sands, as Thatcher pointed out, was a convicted criminal and a member of the IRA, which had murdered many people.¹² The contestation over the image and memory of the dead is thus more wide-ranging than it has been in the Christian Church; those who died in the Marian and Elizabethan persecutions were presented as heretical or treasonous (where there is an established church, heresy and treason may differ but little). These opposing images kept the contestation firmly on the ground of religious difference. Protestants did not have

to rebut claims that Hugh Latimer or Nicholas Ridley had illegally carried arms or had threatened to kill the Queen; Catholics did not have to rebut claims that Edmund Campion had planned explosions that would have maimed and killed and were left free to dissociate themselves from Guy Fawkes who had, of course, planned to do precisely that.

Thirdly, the 'performance' of martyrdom has become more variable than it was in the Christian Church of Roman times or in the Reformation period. The martyrs of the Roman persecutions endured deaths by torture and/or execution or by exposure to wild animals; the legislation initiating the Marian persecution specified that the penalty must be death by burning. In contrast, the secular martyrs examined here have died of publicly inflicted sabre cuts and other wounds and injuries (Peterloo), have suffered imprisonment and exile to a country far distant (Tolpuddle), have been publicly shot dead by soldiers firing rifles (Featherstone), have suffered injuries inflicted by a galloping horse before extensive crowds of racegoers (Davison), have been deliberately shot in a private place (the Easter Rising), have suffered the consequences of unemployment in public but in a place far from the centres of power and influence (Jarrow), have drowned in unclear circumstances, possibly quite alone (Oluwale), and have starved themselves to death in a place inaccessible to the public (Sands). Many of these circumstances offered challenges to an effective performance of martyrdom. Some were imaginatively surmounted. The publicity achieved by 'Peterloo', including of course its unforgettable appellation, was impressive; so, too, was that achieved by Tolpuddle; the Jarrow marchers sought to bring the public but distant plight of the town to the spatial centre of the people's polity in Hyde Park in London and to the formal centre of power in the House of Commons at Westminster. Oluwale, however, had no audience until those who travelled up and down the Chapeltown Road in Leeds saw painted in large white letters on the soot-darkened stone of a long wall 'Remember Oluwale'.

Despite these variations there remain commonalities between the cases considered here. Each of these martyrdoms happened at a 'moment' marked by new movements or new counter-movements and new times. Peterloo and Tolpuddle pointed up movements of the working classes described at the time as towards 'Liberty' and against 'Tyranny' and seen in retrospect as towards democracies both formal and substantive. Featherstone marked the birth of the new unionism and the beginnings of the Labour Party. Similarly, Tonypandy marked the moment at

which Welsh liberalism began its long decline and labourism, socialism and radical leftisms became entrenched in the South Wales Coalfield. Davison's martyrdom marked the high point of militant women's suffragism. The Easter Rising marked the beginning of a process that led to an independent, if dismembered, Ireland. Jarrow emphasised the rethinking of industrial policy and the creation of a regional policy initiated by the Special Areas Act of 1934 which endured into the Thatcher era. Sands's death led to a hardening of attitudes in Northern Ireland and a new phase of the sectarian conflict. Oluwale's death, or rather the prosecution of Ellerker and Kitching that eventually followed from it, marked the end of a long era in which racist policing was silently accepted.

These martyrdoms were also, to a greater or lesser degree, 'events' in the sense suggested by William Sewell, that is, 'sequences of occurrences that result in transformations of structures'.¹³ Sewell's first example of an event was the storming of the Bastille in Paris in 1789, which led to fundamental transformations of political economic and social structures in France. In contrast, the mutiny of members of the crew of Captain Bligh's ship *HMS Bounty* in the same year was a drama but not an event; it had a major impact on the lives of those immediately affected but transformed none of the structures of contemporary society. Sewell emphasises that events do not occur but are made and without a making will fail to transform any structure. The storming of the Bastille shows this in Sewell's account. It was not of major military significance, but it was almost immediately freighted with a symbolic importance that has made it almost synonymous with the French Revolution ever since. In the same way, as shown repeatedly through this book, martyrs are made and without a making their deaths remain only deaths.

A martyrdom that is also an 'event' may be a positive or a negative event for the martyr's community. The cases considered here include notable successes and failures. That there have been failures is indubitable. Featherstone did not noticeably shorten the life of the Liberal Party or diminish the power of the 'fetish property'. Its main impact might be said to be the intense caution it produced in Winston Churchill during his handling of the riots in Tonyandy nearly twenty years later. The martyrdom of Jarrow may have ultimately had an impact on regional and industrial policy in the period between the 1930s and the 1980s but has not prevented similar scenes of devastation and dereliction around the steelworks, coal mines and shipyards of Wales, northern England and

Scotland emerging from the 1960s onwards. The martyrdom of Emily Davison did not bring votes for women, although her example may have helped to strengthen more recent feminisms. The martyrdom of David Oluwale did not prevent the botched investigation of the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 by an 'institutionally racist' Metropolitan Police Service.¹⁴ Others have been marked successes: the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Irish hunger strikes of 1981 each transformed the Irish political landscape. Tonyypandy was instrumental in producing a culture of socialism or labourism in the South Wales valleys which endures to this day. Peterloo and Tolpuddle effectively aided the movement for reform in the nineteenth century with the latter providing the 'foundation myth' of the British trade union movement. This is not to pretend that the martyrdoms of Manchester and Dorset were crucial to those steps of progress—structural changes in the economy, society and politics were the most powerful forces. The common feature shared by the successes of Tonyypandy, the Easter Rising and Bobby Sands would seem to be the combination of cohesive, local, face-to-face communities and powerful institutions.

It is often remarked that the history of Christian martyrdom is a history of the early Church, when the Church was weak, and of periods of religious conflict from the Christian crusades to the confessional conflict that marked the Reformation. Martyrs (as opposed to their celebration) are characteristic of the early years of a movement when it is weak and without the means to stop the killing of its adherents. Within the Christian Church, the 'age of the martyrs' was brought to an end by the actions of Constantine in the fourth century. The opposition became the establishment. The last officially recognised Christian martyrdoms in England were those executed for their supposed roles in the Popish Plot. Of the official martyrdoms of Ireland, the last was that of Oliver Plunkett, another victim of the Popish Plot, and in Scotland the last was that of James Renwick, a Covenanter executed in Edinburgh in 1688. There are other, later Christian martyrs of British or Irish nationality, many of whom were missionaries killed overseas, but none who suffered their martyrdoms in Britain or Ireland. Similarly, there have been no feminist martyrs in England since the First World War; no Bolshevik martyrs since the 1920s; no Nazi martyrs since Horst Wessel, shot in 1930; no martyrs of the British labour movement since the Second World War; and no US civil rights martyrs since the 1960s.

This implies that there is a discernible general history of martyrdom. Martyrs are characteristic of the early years of a movement when it is weak; but if, and as, the movement gains strength it enters a period of heroes. To find modern martyrs we need to look at movements which are currently weak but opposed by lethal force: some struggles in the Middle East; the movements for gun control in the USA that preserve the memory of Cassie Bernall, one of the victims of the Columbine High School massacre of 1999; the movements for female education in Pakistan, Nigeria and elsewhere emblemised by Malala Yousafzai, shot by a Taliban gunman in 2012; and the movements against racist policing and imprisonment in the USA and the UK. Secular martyrdom, like its Christian precursor, however romantic some instances may be, signifies only youth, defencelessness and vulnerability.

NOTES

1. *The Western Mail* [Cardiff], 22 October 2014.
2. Carolyn P. Collette (2013), *In the Thick of the Fight: The Writings of Emily Wilding Davison, Militant Suffragette* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), pp. 2–3.
3. Seumas Milne (2014), *The Enemy Within: The Secret War against the Miners*, 4th ed. (London: Verso Books). The earlier deaths of David Gareth Jones, a picket at Ollerton, Nottinghamshire and Joe Green, a picket at Kellingley Colliery, near Pontefract, Yorkshire, were never successfully turned into martyrdoms, despite moves towards this, and are now barely remembered: Peter Wilshire, Donald Macintyre and Michael Jones (1985), *Strike: Thatcher, Scargill, and the Miners* (Falmouth: Coronet Books), pp. 59–63. However, the NUM does organise a memorial service at the NUM headquarters each year, at the NUM offices in Barnsley, and in March 2017 the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign also organised a protest outside the House of Commons, ‘Make Some Noise for Orgreave’.
4. Royce Turner (1994), ‘Regenerating the Coalfields: Local Authorities, the European Community and the Coalfields Community Campaign’, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4, 622–36.
5. Robert Bartlett (2013), *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 636.
6. Elizabeth A. Castelli (2004), *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press); Valérie Rosoux (2004), ‘The Politics of Martyrdom’, in Rona M. Fields (ed.),

- Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (Westport, CT: Praeger), pp. 83–116.
7. C. R. Boxer (1951), *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press); Katie Pickles (2007), *Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). The existing literature on MacSwiney remains largely hagiographic; Lloyd George's insistence against much opposition from within the Cabinet, from the King and from public opinion that MacSwiney be given no concessions is documented in Thomas Jones (1969–1971) (ed. Keith Middlemas), *Whitehall Diary*, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press), vol. I, p. 279 and vol. III, pp. 36–7; Robert Rhodes James (1969), *Memoirs of a Conservative: J. C. C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910-37* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson), p. 98; and Stephen Roskill (1970–1974), *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, 3 vols (London: Collins), vol. II, p. 189. Will Grant (2007), 'CIA Man Recounts Che Guevara's Death', BBC News, 8 October, available online at <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk> (accessed 8 January 2017).
 8. Thomas Hennessey (2014), *Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA 1980-1981* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press).
 9. Ellen Wilkinson (1939), *The Town that Was Murdered* (London: Victor Gollancz); J. B. Priestley (1933), *Wonder Hero* (London: William Heinemann), a novel where Jarrow is called Slakeby; idem (1934), *English Journey* (London: William Heinemann).
 10. Priestley, *English Journey* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books edition, 1977), p. 296.
 11. Collette, *In the Thick of the Fight*, p. 1.
 12. Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, to the House of Commons, *Hansard*, 5 May 1981, vol. 4, column 17.
 13. William H. Sewell Jr. (2005), *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 227.
 14. The quotation is from the Macpherson Report of 1999: *Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny*, Cm 4262, 24 February, Chap. 6.

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