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Title:

Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Narratives of Democracy, the Emotions of Politics and Memories of Militant Suffragism: Britain, Ireland, USA and Australia'

Chapter:

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In May 2016, feminist activist Caroline Criado-Perez, who successfully campaigned to get Jane Austen on the new £10 note in 2014, launched a campaign to have a monument to a woman erected in Parliament Square, directly outside the British Houses of Parliament, London. There were 11 monuments in the Square and all were dedicated to prominent men. The following month, on the 150th anniversary of the first woman suffrage petition being presented to parliament in 1866, Criado-Perez presented a petition for a statue of a woman – with 74,000 signatures – to parliament. Her campaign was successful. The woman chosen to be honoured was Millicent Fawcett. Fawcett had been campaigning for the female franchise since the 1860s. She played a leading role in the founding, and later in the running, of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS, established 1897), an umbrella organisation which gathered together many of the more influential individual and non-militant suffrage societies existing at the time. The statue of the leader of the constitutional suffrage movement holding a banner with the words, 'Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere', was unveiled in April 2018.¹

The campaign for the woman vote won partial success in 1918 when the franchise was extended to relevant women over 30 years old. Women were granted voting rights on an equal basis with men in 1928. The story of how women won the vote forms a significant part of the wider narrative about the development of democracy in Britain. It is not surprising, then, that a monument to one of the most influential leaders of that suffrage movement would be included in Parliament Square, albeit after much delay and energetic campaigning. In the face of vehement opposition, Fawcett and her followers had patiently employed lawful constitutional methods, like petitioning and public parades, in their long road to the franchise. Her statue – that of a quietly determined woman calling for courage – evokes that sense of feminine patience.² It is dignified and decorous. There is nothing about her monument that calls to mind the bitter opposition of the past. It does not stand to rebuke or embarrass those who were on the losing side of the woman suffrage debate; those who got it wrong.

Yet, it took more than a feminine sense of resolve to win the woman vote. In the last two decades of the 70 year march to enfranchisement, a militant form of feminism helped to propell the campaign towards success.³ The methods deployed by militants like Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, leaders of the smaller organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU, established 1903), were decidedly

indecorous, unwomanly and impatient. Their aggressive public demonstrations, destruction of public and private property and, in some instances, their use of physical force against male politicians were met with passionate, often violent response. These militant activists invoked an array of harmful emotional reactions, from indignation and repugnance to fear and hostility. Yet, it was the leader of this highly contentious movement for democratic reform who had a public monument dedicated to her, unveiled by former prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, in the full sight of the British Houses of Parliament, almost 80 years before her constitutional counterpart. Given how radically transgressive, aggressive and sometimes violently disruptive militant suffragists were, how was it that they were some of the first to be commemorated and celebrated after the vote was won? How was their story rationalised and integrated into traditional narratives of democracy, when it took so long for their peaceful, less disruptive sisters to gain equal recognition?

This chapter examines the memory of militant suffragism. It does so by adopting a comparative approach. How have militant feminists been remembered in Britain? How, too, have they been remembered in other national sites linked, or formerly linked, to Britain, including Ireland, Australia and USA? The chapter pays particular attention to how remembering the transgressions of radical feminists has had an impact on accepted national narratives of democracy. It also casts a light on how the emotional politics of citizenship and nationalism have helped to shape how militants are remembered.

The Distinct Disruptiveness of Militant Feminists – Fear of the Female Citizen Soldiers and Concerns about Corrupted Emotional Regimes

Before going on to examine how militant suffragists have been remembered, it is necessary to very briefly outline why militant feminists excited such highly strung emotional backlashes, compared with those feminists who adopted non-militant methods. Conservatives were uncomfortable with the idea of women exercising overt political power. However, women exercising aggressive and sometimes violent tactics in the attempt to gain this political power elicited emphatic feelings of discomfort.⁴ There are reasons for this. Many, feminists included, believed that women were the pacifist sex, laden with trying to keep the potential violence of men in check.⁵ Women being physically aggressive in the name of their sex, no matter how small they were in number, upset this belief.

There are also other related reasons linked to the gendered nature of citizenship and the emotional regimes governing men's and women's behaviour in society. If women earned the right to vote, would they be subject to military service in the way that men were? For some, like renowned anti-suffragist Sir Almoth E. Wright, this possibility evoked horrific images of male-female violence – of 'men and women shooting each other down and falling upon each other with bayonets' and 'of the female body shot and run-through'. There surge into the mind, Wright said, 'visions also of the possibility of women soldiers fighting and killed in a condition of pregnancy; and worst nightmares'.⁶ The consequences of such a calamity were not simply physical, they were also emotional. Until now, conservatives asserted, emotional regimes or honour codes – with their focus on chivalry and fairness – had protected men and women from each other's excesses. For

example, under these codes, the physically stronger, more aggressive sex was directed to protect the physically weaker, more loving sex from harm. Fighting women upset not only the chivalrous aspects of honour codes, but also the traditional model of sex-differentiated citizenship. Physical and emotional chaos threatened.

Not surprisingly, then, physically aggressive women elicited negative emotional responses from those keen to preserve the integrity of sex differentiation, on which British notions of civilisation were based; civilised ideals which were transported and transplanted around the vast British empire.⁷ Women who used force to demand the rights of citizenship (whether or not they agreed with the model of the female citizen soldier) created a volatile emotional milieu which had consequences not only for those trying to maintain stability within the nation and the empire, but also for those who were tasked with ‘remembering’ the work of these feminist radicals later. Officially commemorating the achievements of women who had used womanly virtues – like patience and a peaceful but determined resolve – to win the vote meant dealing with the embarrassing fact that authorities had got it wrong for so long. But, inserting transgressive women into national narratives of democratic reform – women who had provoked intense shame, anger and hatred because they appropriated methods that were usually deemed men’s domain, like physical destruction – was a considerably more difficult task. Rehabilitating these transgressives called for much more emotional work on the part of the memory makers. In this remainder of this chapter, I will explore a number of those commemorative projects and processes.

United Kingdom: A National Narrative of Gradual Reform and a Regional Story of Radical Democracy

The story that Britain tends to tell of itself is that it was, and is, a place of gradual, peaceful democratic reform. Unlike other unruly parts of Europe, for example, Britain has not been home to violent upheaval and revolution. This is as befits the long-time head of a vast and troublesome empire; a nation at the centre of an expansive global network charged with transporting and transplanting civilisation in remote and barbarous places.

And yet, Britain was home to an intensely disruptive campaign for democratic reform in that it played host to militant suffragism. The ‘confrontational, assertive and “unladylike” tactics’ of the militant WSPU re-energised the suffrage campaign by forcing the feminist issue into the limelight.⁸ From 1905 to 1912, the campaign took the form of heckling politicians, noisily disrupting political meetings, and a willingness to go to prison rather than paying fines for ‘unruly’ behaviour. From 1912, until they ceased their militant campaign at the outset of the Great War in 1914, suffragettes moved on to more violent and often illegal forms of activity such as mass window-breaking raids, vandalising post boxes, attacking public property, setting fire to buildings, and going on hunger strikes.⁹ Consequently, they were subject to some of Britain’s first ever counter-terrorist surveillance techniques. These radical tactics may have reignited the British suffrage campaign, but they also angered and embarrassed many onlookers. They drew the wrath of

conservative anti-suffragists, like members of the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage (NLOWS), who were dismayed that Britain's reputation for gradual, rational, liberal democratic reform was being corroded – and by women.¹⁰ How, then, did a former British prime minister come to dedicate a monument to the most notorious of these militant suffragists, Emmeline Pankhurst, within view of the British Houses of Parliament?

In 1930, the Suffragette Fellowship, a group of former militant suffragists now dedicated to preserving the memory of the militant movement, erected a statue to Pankhurst in Victoria Tower Gardens, alongside the Houses of Parliament.¹¹ The statue is of this notorious militant, raised on a plinth, striking a respectable and commanding pose, as if about to address a crowd. At the base of the statue a stone inscription states: 'This statue of Emmeline Pankhurst was erected as a tribute to her courageous leadership of the movement for the enfranchisement of women'. For many years, former suffragists made regular pilgrimages to the site around Emmeline Pankhurst's birthday (15 July). Whereas once the statue commanded an impressive view of Westminster, over the decades it has become somewhat obscured by growing foliage and the erection of a fence around Victoria Tower Gardens. The garden setting has worked to domesticate Pankhurst. There is little about her statue that suggests that she led a movement that alternately embarrassed and angered the British public. Rather than recalling Pankhurst's disruptive character, the militancy and violence she provoked or the revolutionary nature of the reform that she helped to usher in, the monument evokes a sense of solid citizenship.

Laura Nym Mayhall argues that this statue to the disruptive militant was only possible because, at its unveiling, it was dedicated to a story of conservative democracy rather than revolutionary reform. More specifically, its respectability was contingent on a conversion narrative, with the Pankhursts at the centre of that narrative. At the outbreak of World War One (1914-1918), the Pankhursts abandoned militancy and instead adopted a highly patriotic form of suffragism by effectively using their commitment to war work to legitimise their push for the vote.¹² When unveiling the monument, Baldwin chose to subsume Emmeline Pankhurst's activism into a British tradition of 'gradual, peaceful reform, a tradition he viewed as evidence of Britain's distinctiveness from the rest of Europe'. He further pointed to the 'very English' nature of the dedication proceedings which had brought previous rivals together to honour a controversial leader.¹³ Those who had opposed the woman vote, like Baldwin and his peers, were right to be sceptical of women's ability to fulfil the full duties of citizenship, until they had seen them perform this citizenship in an appropriate manner as they did during the war.¹⁴ This 'conversion' – from unwomanly, aggressive transgressives to devoted patriots – worked to absolve men of the embarrassment of taking the wrong side.

Interestingly, this integration of radical protest into a less threatening tradition of gradual liberal reform is not embraced evenly across the country. In Manchester, home of the Pankhursts and the birthplace of the WSPU, there is no need to sanitise or deradicalize the militants. Rather, their militancy is appropriate for a region that refers to itself as the radical north. There, they have been pulled into the narrative of a region known for its radical politics, from Chartism and the Peterloo Massacre to anti-slavery campaigns to the militant suffrage movement and the birth of the Independent Labour Party.¹⁵

This integration of the Pankhursts into an unembarrassed narrative of the radical north's contribution to the development of British democracy – the north keeping the south accountable through exerting pressure of a militant kind, from the Chartists to suffragettes – can be seen in the People's History Museum. This Manchester-based museum states that it is 'the national museum of democracy, telling the story of its development in Britain: past, present, and future'.¹⁶ The women's fight for the vote is presented as one significant part of that journey, incorporated into the museum's 'Revolution', 'Reformers', 'Workers', and 'Voters 1880–1945' permanent exhibition. One exhibit, the reconstructed kitchen of Hannah Mitchell, self-educated socialist and suffragette (a former member of the WSPU) who became a Poor Law Guardian and later a Manchester City Councillor (Labour Party) and a magistrate, reminds visitors that as stifling as the home was for disenfranchised women, it was often from here that radical activism was launched. Domesticity is simultaneously a site of confinement and political organisation.

Museums subsume histories of militant suffragism into narratives which suit their overall agenda. The Museum of London, for example, exhibits artefacts from the militant movement in its 'People's City 1850s-1940s' gallery, demonstrating how the fight for the vote brought women to the streets and therefore to the forefront of London life.¹⁷ The story that is told of militant suffragism in the radical north's People's History Museum likewise suits its remit. Here, in a site dedicated to shining a light on people's agency in pushing through democratic reform, the story told is of intersectional politics: gender and class-based inequities and protests merge. Movements for labour and feminist reform intertwine.

Not far away, and similar to Mitchell's kitchen exhibit, this message about the dual functioning of the domestic is made even more explicit, although in a more affluent setting. The parlour in the former home of the Pankhursts has been recreated and opened to the public.¹⁸ The restored parlour exemplifies the intimacy of feminine domesticity. However, suffrage memorabilia – the now familiar green, purple, and white sash, and a Roll of Honour of Suffragette Prisoners 1905–1914 signed by fellow militant Emmeline Pethick Lawrence – scattered among everyday artefacts, like cups and saucers, works to showcase the intersections of private domesticity and public activism. The room performs as a 'living monument'; a reconstructed domestic dwelling that simultaneously evokes the excitement of radical feminism and all the frustrations of a stifling and confined middle-class female existence.

In many ways, the feminine domesticity of recreated spaces like Mitchell's kitchen and the Pankhurst parlour, risks belying the radical and even the violent nature of the activism spawned there. However, visitors to the Pankhurst Centre are left in no doubt about how they are expected to interpret militant women's contributions to the development of democracy, however domestic the setting, for, as one display note states, because of 'Manchester's radical and forward-thinking history, it was a logical place for the Suffragettes to come from'.¹⁹ Here in the radical north, there is no need to rehabilitate radical women to fit with a narrative of gradual, non-violent democratic reform as in the nation's capital. Their anger is not an embarrassment. It is part of the region's emotional narrative of democratic reform.

Australia: Celebrating British Militant Connections and Core-Periphery Turns

In Australia, the granting of the woman vote has been used to tell a different story of democracy than either that of the peaceful south or radical north. There, at the far ends of the empire, women's suffrage was subsumed into a grander foundational narrative of the shift from disparate colonies to democratic nation (1901, when the colonies morphed into a federation). It has been drawn into the democratic tale of the attainment of the 'working man's paradise'.²⁰ However, the story of the woman vote has also been used for another political purpose. It was deployed to turn the imperial tables as it were; to upset empire hierarchies and conventions by claiming Australian leadership on matters of democracy.

Women in the Australian colonies were granted the parliamentary franchise much earlier than those in the imperial centre. Indeed, the Australian colonies were some of the first, globally, to grant white women the right to vote (1902).²¹ Some have used this point to build what is now a tenacious, mythological account of Australian men offering their womankind the vote as a form of 'gift'.²² British anti-suffragists, for example, declared that the woman vote in the former colonies was nothing more than 'an idle compliment Australian men have paid their women'.²³ In doing so, they completely ignored the fact that women conducted long and sometimes acrimonious campaigns for the vote in the six Australian colonies.²⁴

The vote in Australia may not have been a 'gift' but there was no violence in the way that there was in the British 'mother country'. Australian suffragists also tended to shy away from the notion of public spectacle in the form of parades and pageantry.²⁵ Their preferred method was petitioning. One example of this is the 'Monster Petition'. This was a massive scroll containing 30,000 signatures collected by leading activists such as Marie Kirk, Vida Goldstein and Annette Bear-Crawford, working with organisations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Victorian Women's Suffrage Society. The petition was presented to the Victorian Parliament in 1891, although the state was not to grant the vote until 1908. A sculpture has since been erected in Melbourne to commemorate this feat of organised constitutional protest.²⁶ A massive ribbon unfurls elegantly against the backdrop of Burston Reserve, Melbourne, in the shadow of St Patrick's Cathedral, and reminds passers-by that petitioning – a non-militant, non-violent form of protesting – was one of the most relied on political activities carried out by suffragists in Australian states.

The nature of the various Australian campaigns for the vote means that there are few procession banners, sashes, photographs, and fund-raising merchandise for collectors, as there is in Britain. There are no Australian hunger striking medals, chains and belts, hammers and truncheons or police surveillance photographs, such as those on display in the Museum of London. There is no return train ticket carried in the purse of an activist, like the WSPU's Emily Wilding Davison, who died for the vote. However, Australia does boast links to the British militancy in that a significant number of women did travel to England to participate in the colourful, exciting and contentious militant movement there.²⁷ Accordingly, Australian heritage sites have had reason to exhibit artefacts that exemplify these Australian-British links.

In recent years, the Museum of Australian Democracy, situated in Old Parliament House in the nation's capital, Canberra, has devoted a significant portion of its suffrage display to these Australian-British militant connections. For example, in the early 2010s, the museum acquired and displayed a hunger strike

medal – one of only about one hundred medals produced – which belonged to British woman Charlotte Blacklock, the suffragette board game, Pank-A-Squith (a game pitting foes, Emmeline Pankhurst and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, against each other) and a pair of black stockings embroidered with the suffragette slogan ‘Votes for Women’ that was almost certainly worn on suffragette marches.²⁸ Aesthetically, these objects are ‘visually arresting’.²⁹ However, they also facilitate a narrative about Australia’s national identity, its evolving colonial-imperial relationship and claims about national pride, even colonial supremacy.

Historian Ann Curthoys explains that prior to World War Two (1939-1945), many Australians embraced a national identity premised on an integration of Australianness and Britishness. After that, relations loosened with many Australians even denying their Britishness. In the 1980s, however, it appeared that many who continued to deny Australian-British connections were in fact attempting to evade a history of complicity in the dispossession of the indigenous population in this British white settler colony.³⁰ Rejecting connections with Britain was no longer a comfortable political process for a significant proportion of those in this settler society. Recognising and commemorating the interconnecting suffrage movements offered one pathway for confronting those connections.

Another reason for the importance of twenty-first century explorations of Australian-British feminist connections relates to power differentials in metropolitan-periphery narratives, seen through competing narratives about democracy. The presence of Australian activists in London helped Australian suffragists then, and historians since, to challenge reigning assumptions in the imperial centre that influence only flowed from the metropole to the peripheries.³¹ As historian Barbara Caine has argued, Australian women had managed to trump their sisters in the mother country by obtaining the right to vote decades before them. These factors combined to alter the nature of the relationship between feminists in the metropole and those in the peripheries. They allowed antipodean women their first opportunity ‘to turn the imperial tables as it were, and to offer their unfortunate British sisters help, guidance and advice’.³²

Not surprisingly, British conservatives at the time denied any such reversal of core-periphery flows. Instead they saw Australian claims of parity, even supremacy, as naively embarrassing.³³ Still, the fact of the pioneering Australian woman vote helped to bolster the new settler-colonial nation’s claims for international, and certainly empire, leadership in matters of democratic reform. Displaying artefacts which epitomise this, such as the ephemera that Australian women took back from the British militant movement, has only served to support this triumphant narrative. Past association with the women who had produced so much anger in the imperial centre, was now harnessed to fuel national pride in the antipodes.

United States of America: Militant Tactics Embarrass the New Global Leaders of Democracy

The American suffrage movement also had close ties with the British militant movement. Unlike in Australia, however, US women did not simply travel to Britain and take part in the militant campaign there. When back in the US, they responded to their increasing frustration with the American constitutional movement’s apparent lack of progress by adopting militant tactics. The militant organisation, the National

Woman's Party (NWP), led by activists such as Alice Paul (who had participated in militancy in Britain), Lucy Burns and Harriot Stanton Blatch, aimed to speed up the suffrage campaign through adopting visually dramatic and disruptive techniques. From 1917, for example, the NWP instituted the 'Silent Sentinels', whereby women's bodies were staged as silent forms of protest outside the White House in Washington D.C.³⁴ Although American militant tactics did not escalate to fire-bombing property or assaulting politicians, as in the UK, they did set fire to speeches and even effigies of their president. Both practices were intended to physically and emotionally harass the leader of their government; a dangerously disruptive approach to adopt during wartime when patriotic emotions were running high. US suffragists may not have appropriated British militants' more extreme tactics but the physical assaults they experienced at the hands of angry spectators and police and the arrests, hunger strikes, and force feeding that they were subsequently subjected to were reminiscent of the pre-First World War British movement.

Yet, in contrast to Britain, the story of American militancy is publicly commemorated less than its constitutional counterpart. There are multiple possible explanations for this. One is that the specific physical and emotional tactics employed by militants severely disrupted the new nation-state's developing narrative of democracy, amid the backdrop of a devastating global conflict. Unlike the WSPU, American militants provided authorities with no conversion story which could be used to integrate them into the post-suffrage national narrative of democracy. Another is that the public memory of the suffrage movement in the US has been dominated by the momentous task of trying to overcome the racialised fissures that were to mar the wider women's movement.

The idea of citizenship that emerged from the republican nation-state was, controversially, both gendered and racialised. African American men were enfranchised immediately after the American Civil War (1861-1865).³⁵ White women in the US were not given the vote for another half a century, with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment of the US Constitution in 1920.³⁶ The racist reaction to black men's enfranchisement by a prominent section of the women's movement – despite a strong history of joint feminist-abolitionist activism – caused irreparable divisions between black and white suffragists.³⁷ Therefore, memories of the US women's suffrage movement were not drawn into triumphant narratives of the birth of the new democracy as they were in Australia, where white women were inducted into the newly federated nation-state immediately after that federation (while indigenous people were excluded). Instead, efforts to remember the American suffrage movement are largely characterised by racialised discomfort and a desire to align a pre-Civil War alliance of abolitionist and gender-based activism with a post-war history marred by division and animosity.

One heritage site which has managed to do this successfully is the Women's Rights National Historical Park (WRNHP) in Seneca Falls in upstate New York. The WRNHP – a collection of restored former homes of suffragists and abolitionists, as well as a Visitors' Centre and reconstructed Chapel³⁸ – celebrates the fact that the 72 year campaign to secure the vote for American women originated in the Seneca Falls Wesleyan Methodist Chapel where the first Women's Rights Convention was held (1848).³⁹

Adopting a ‘living monument’ approach, not unlike the Pankhurst Centre in Manchester, it tells the story of women’s simultaneous confinement to the domestic sphere and their use of the home to launch their activism. This approach is particularly evident in the restored home of leading suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton who detested the stifling confines of the home but was compelled to organise the women’s rights movement from there.⁴⁰ The uniqueness of the WRNHP, however, is that some of these domestic settings were also used to hide fugitive slaves, forming part of a nineteenth century network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.⁴¹ The home of Quaker reformers, Thomas and Mary Ann M’Clintock is a case in point. The M’Clintock family hid runaway slaves in the basement of the house. It was also in their house that the manifesto of the women’s rights movement, the ‘Declaration of Sentiments’, was written and signed.⁴² The home which served to confine the frustrated feminist – reminding her of her exclusion from the public world of politics – also functioned as a site from which privileged but confined white women could provide shelter for the fugitive black slaves. Commemorating mid-nineteenth century white women’s simultaneous feminist and abolitionist activism has created an opportunity for the WRNHP to navigate around the racialised fissures that certainly appeared later in the women’s movement.

When considering the militant branch of the wider women’s movement, it was not the racialised nature of its campaign that caused the most controversy at the time, although it was undoubtedly as complicit in its exclusion of black feminism as many other early twentieth century suffrage organisations. Rather, it was the nature of the emotional tactics deployed by the NWP, particularly the politics of embarrassment.

During the First World War, America championed itself as the saviour of democracy. American men were fighting for their lives – and that of ‘western’ democracy – on international battlefields. The American president, Woodrow Wilson, was leading the quest to secure world peace and stability at the post-war negotiations. The new republican nation was positioned to take over the reins of global leadership in matters of liberty and democracy from a decaying old world, epitomised by a decadent and now severely declining Europe. However, the NWP had stated that it was following the ‘deliberate’ policy of exposing its government’s embarrassing *faux pas*, namely its ‘boasted crusade for world democracy, with the glaring inconsistency of the denial of democracy at home’.⁴³ Here Wilson was, the NWP’s paper *The Suffragist* said, ‘a world leader with the almost pathetic trust of the peoples of the world, riding like a knight of old, championing the ideals of liberty, fraternity, democracy, equality and what not’.⁴⁴ Yet, he denied those ideals at home. The Silent Sentinels were staged outside the White House to act as a humiliating reminder of his failure. Doubtless, the ferocity of the backlash against the Sentinels is partially explained by wartime emotions; by anger and frustration with what appeared to be selfish acts of treachery at a time when American men were dying abroad – all in the name of liberty and democracy. Unlike the British WSPU, the NWP did not abandon their disruptive tactics in the face of the war. They did not prove themselves patriotic. Therefore, they provided subsequent governments with no reason to draw their story into the official narrative of the ascendancy of US democracy.

However, recent moves have been made to amend this, particularly in the state of Virginia. As the 2020 centenary commemorations of the Nineteenth Amendment approach, Virginia has worked to claim the memory of the militants; to make itself known as the militant memorial capital of the US.⁴⁵ At the time of writing, the region was in the process of constructing heritage sites dedicated to telling an alternative story of American democracy: a tale of womanly sacrifice, endurance and martyrdom in the name of equal and fair representation. Virginia is a fitting place for this endeavour, for it was here, in 1917, where the most dramatic assaults on militant bodies were launched; at the Occoquan Workhouse in Lorton, Virginia, when over 70 suffragists were imprisoned there after protesting outside the White House.

The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association (TPSMA) has successfully conducted a long fund-raising campaign to establish a garden-style memorial to suffragists, located near the Occoquan Workhouse, to be officially opened on 26th August 2020, the 100th anniversary of the certification of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁴⁶ The Association's rationale for honouring the militants over the constitutionalists is that their 'courage, methods and commitment', as well as their suffering, provided the spark or 'turning point' that led to the passing of that Amendment.⁴⁷

However, the TPSMA's decision to dedicate a site of peaceful contemplation to the memory of the militants is radically different from the museum currently occupying the actual Occoquan Workhouse grounds. The new 2020 Lucy Burns Museum, named after the militant suffragist and close friend of Alice Paul, tells the story of the 91 years in which the Lorton complex operated as a correctional facility.⁴⁸ Here, the drama, passion, romantic idealism and suffering of the militants – of those 'imprisoned without due process of law, for supporting their beliefs' – takes centre stage, helping to knit together other tales of idealism, activism and incarceration (for example, other exhibits commemorate the fact that civil rights protestors, Noam Chomsky and Norman Mailer, were imprisoned there after peaceful demonstrations in Washington).⁴⁹

The story of the road to American democracy which the new museum champions is a visually arresting and seemingly inclusive one. The Virginian monuments shift the focus from militant suffragists' deliberate attempts to embarrass their government at a time when it was endeavouring to carve an international reputation for itself as the global leader of democracy to their womanly willingness to sacrifice themselves so that America could achieve that reputation for democracy. In doing so, they remove any need for embarrassment and discomfort when remembering the radical exploits of these disruptive but courageous women.

Concluding Thoughts: Ireland, Uneven Narratives of Democracy and the Limitations of Memory

In places where there is a strong sense of dissonance regarding narratives of democracy, memories of militant women are not so readily massaged and integrated into national stories. Ireland is such a place. Irish feminists participated in the British militant suffrage movement. As part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (UK) since the 1800 Act of Union, they were, after all, campaigning for a vote in the

same British parliament. They also inaugurated their own militant campaign in Ireland from 1912.⁵⁰ In the 1910s and 1920s, Irish women also performed militancy and/or violence for intersecting political causes, including feminism, nationalism and socialism. However, once Ireland was partitioned into two legislatures – the 26 counties Free State arising out of the War of Independence (1919-1921) and the 6 counties region that is still part of the UK – remembering the intersectional militant woman became a fraught process. How could two different states with two narratives of liberty and democracy – one which celebrated national freedom and another which experienced the trauma of 30 years of violent conflict arising out of a civil rights campaign (The Troubles, 1969-1998) – commemorate the group of women who employed militant tactics and who may even have resorted to violence for multiple forms of democratic reform in pre-partition Ireland?

One way to address these questions is to use the example of Constance Markievicz. Markievicz was a feminist and a militant. She urged Irish women to arm to defend themselves *and* their country. She was a close ally of militant suffragists, like Hanna Sheehy Skeffington who led the preeminent militant organisation, the Irish Women's Franchise League. She was a socialist and nationalist soldier and was the only woman sentenced to be executed for her leading role in a failed rebellion against British imperialism in 1916 (a sentence commuted to life imprisonment, doubtless because of her sex). She was also the first woman to be elected to British Parliament, although she refused to take her seat and was the first woman minister in the inaugural Irish Parliament.⁵¹ Women like Markievicz – members of the Cumann na mBan (Women's Council of the Irish Republican Army), for example – fought alongside and/or supported armed men in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) and the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). The memory of this militant, revolutionary woman – and in this case, a woman who exercised violence in the name of political reform – manifests itself differently north and south of the Irish border that she and many of her peers fought against. Her memory has been harnessed to support divergent regional and political narratives.

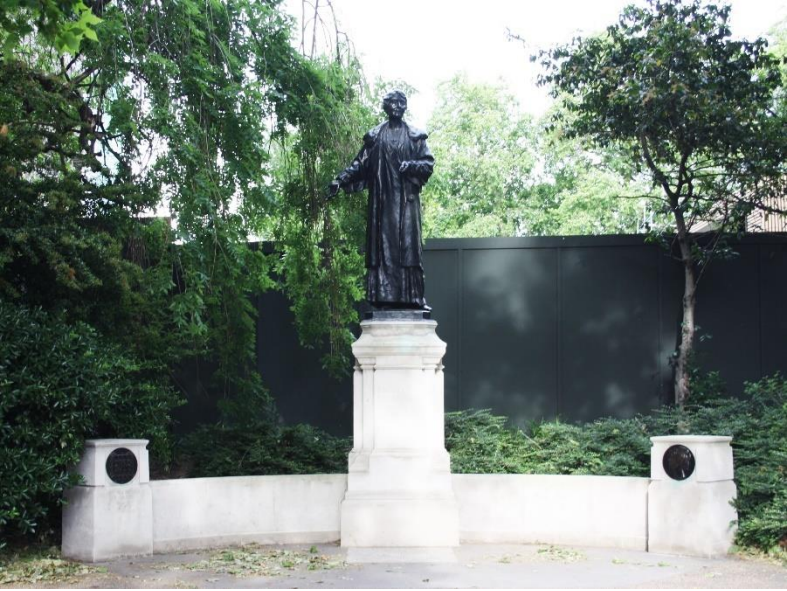
In Dublin, the capital of independent Ireland – as the statue of Markievicz with her pet cocker spaniel, Poppet, demonstrates – it is possible to disarm and domesticate this militant leader (not unlike her militant counterpart in England, Emmeline Pankhurst). Postcolonial Ireland has no need to be reminded of the embarrassing, even shaming, fact that its womankind once begged a British government for the vote or that the revolutionary Irish man needed the help of his militant sisters to win the war against the British imperialist. For some, it is in their best interests to sanitise her memory.

North of the border, however, where instability constantly threatens and the potential for further outbreaks of violence still exists, despite the end of the 30 years Troubles, there is less need to remove the embarrassing memory of the militant woman's potency. Instead, some communities – in this case, the West Belfast nationalist community – there is much to be gained from recognising and representing the militant Irish woman's revolutionary and violent potential.

In all the sites examined in this chapter, successive generations of feminists have worked to publicly commemorate the contributions and achievements, tactics and sacrifices, of the early twentieth century

militant women who fought for democracy. When viewed together, it becomes clear that, in many cases, publicly remembering militants means rehabilitating them. It means disarming them, rendering them unthreatening, and integrating them into narratives which celebrate particular brands of democratic reform, for example, those arising out of different political contexts (postcolonial, republican, settler-colonial, imperial). Analysing how transgressive women are remembered – and certainly women who were deemed dangerous in their own time because they defied gender-based conventions which dictated that only men should use aggressive and/or violent tactics in the name of citizenship – reveals the limitations of feminist memory. Constance Markievicz is an excellent case in point here. Markievicz refused to take her seat in the British Houses of Parliament. The first woman to be elected there in 1918, she refused to recognise the authority of the British Parliament and instead took a seat in an alternative Irish parliament (Dáil Éireann). And yet, in 2018, a painted portrait of Markievicz was gifted to the UK Parliament by the Irish Parliament (Houses of the Oireachtas). This exchange was one of numerous ways in which the British and the Irish governments joined to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 which gave women – in Ireland and Britain – the vote in a British parliament.⁵² Despite this militant woman's wish not to be represented in Westminster, her memory has served the purposes of these two early twenty-first century governments, and there she now sits. Whether inside, alongside or in a prominent place in front of the British Houses of Parliament, radical women have been deradicalized; made respectable enough to be integrated into relevant narratives of democratic reform. There is little need now to be embarrassed, shamed or even angered by their former transgressions.







¹ Government of the United Kingdom 'Historic Statue of Suffragist Leader Millicent Fawcett unveiled in Parliament Square', 24 April 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-statue-of-suffragist-leader-millicent-fawcett-unveiled-in-parliament-square> (accessed 7 January 2020). For a more comprehensive examination of the various monuments to Fawcett and other suffragists in London and across England, see chapter 1 Suffragists and Suffragettes in Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism* (London and New York; Routledge, 2018).

² Sandra Stanley Holton remarks that the arduous 'constitutional' work performed by the NUWSS may be characterised as 'dull stuff compared to window-breaking, arson and imprisonment'. However, that kind of campaigning did require 'its own kind of courage'. See Sandra Stanley Holton, 'The Language of Suffrage History', *Women's History Review* 28:7 (2019): 1227-1234, 1231.

³ Many still debate the efficacy of suffrage militancy. See, for example, June Purvis' and Elizabeth Crawford's articles both entitled 'Did Militancy Help or Hinder the Granting of Women's Suffrage in Britain?' in *Women's History Review* 28:7 (2019): 1200-1217 and 1217-1227.

⁴ For an extensive discussion of the discomfort of the violent woman, see Chapter 7 'The Shame of the Violent Woman' in Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash, Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890-1920* (Routledge: New York, 2018), pp. 193-230.

⁵ Many still do, despite the recent opening of frontline combat to women in many countries. The armed forces of Australia (limited 2013, unrestricted 2018), Britain (2016), USA (2013) and Ireland (1979) have allowed women into frontline combat roles.

⁶ *Anti-Suffrage Review*, no. 111, January 1918, pp. 4-5.

⁷ The nature and cause of British imperial anxieties at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries has been well-explored. See, for example, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Marie Corelli's British New Woman: A Threat to Empire?', *The History of the Family* 14:4 (2009): 416-429.

⁸ June Purvis, 'Fighting the Double Moral Standard in Edwardian Britain: Suffragette Militancy, Sexuality and the Nation in the Writings of the Early Twentieth-Century British Feminist Christabel Pankhurst', in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Dasklova (New York: Routledge, 2013), 121-125, 121.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ For an introduction to anti-suffragism in Britain, see Julia Bush, 'The Anti-Suffrage Movement', *Votes for Women*, British Library, 5 March 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/the-anti-suffrage-movement> (accessed 10 January 2020). For an in-depth analysis of anti-suffragists' reactions to suffrage tactics, see Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*.

¹¹ The Fellowship was established in 1926. See Hilda Kean, 'Public Histories of Australian and British Suffrage: Some Comparative Issues', *Public History Review* 14 (2007): 1-24, 5. Also see 'The Suffragette Fellowship' entry in Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement. A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 663. A.G. Walker sculpted the memorial. Historic England, National Heritage List for England, 'Memorial to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst', <http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1357336> (accessed 7 January 2020).

¹² Pankhurst even stood for election as a Conservative Party candidate – a long way from the original WSPU's affiliation with the Independent Labour Party. See Laura Nym Mayhall, 'Domesticating Emmeline: Representing the Suffragette, 1930-1993', *NWSA Journal* 11:2 (1999): 1-24. Laura Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For discussions about the WSPU's contribution to the war effort and anti-suffragist views of this, see: Nicoletta Gullace, 'The Blood of Our Sons'. *Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and, the chapter on 'War and the Dishonourable British Feminist' in Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, pp. 131-164.

¹³ Mayhall, 'Domesticating Emmeline', p. 6.

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Commentators still work to understand why the north became such a site of radical protest: *BBC Radio*, 7 September 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07syyrh> (accessed 20 April 2017).

¹⁶ People's History Museum, <http://www.phm.org.uk/> (accessed 7 January 2020). For more information about the development of the museum, see Frank Bongiorno, 'The Pumphouse: People's History Museum, Manchester', *Labour History*, 76 (May 1999): 149-152.

¹⁷ Curatorial Notes to 'People's City' permanent exhibition, Museum of London, UK.

¹⁸ By the 1970s, the Pankhurst house at 62 Nelson Street, Manchester, had fallen into disrepair. Activists saved the building from being demolished and now the house, reclaimed in the 1980s, operates as a dual functioning heritage site and outreach centre for those suffering domestic abuse. In 2014, the Pankhurst Trust (Incorporating Manchester Women's Aid) was formed as a merger between The Pankhurst Trust which ran the Pankhurst Centre (museum and women-only space) and Manchester Women's Aid, 'Manchester's largest specialist provider of domestic abuse services'. See The Pankhurst Trust, 'About Us', <https://www.pankhursttrust.org/about-us> (accessed 2 January 2020).

¹⁹ Museum notice, Exhibition Room Two, The Pankhurst Centre, Manchester, UK (author's visit, June 2015). A statue has also been dedicated to Emmeline Pankhurst in Manchester, addressing the fact that, apart from Queen Victoria, there was no monument to women. See Helen Pidd, 'Thousands Welcome Emmeline Pankhurst Statue in Manchester', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/dec/14/thousands-turn-out-for-unveiling-of-emmeline-pankhurst-statue-in-manchester> (accessed 17 January 2020).

²⁰ Frank Bongiorno, 'A Working Man's Paradise?', in *Glorious Days Australia 1913*, ed. Michelle Hetherington (Canberra: National Museum of Australia Press, 2013), pp. 109-119.

²¹ Aboriginal women and men in Queensland and Western Australia were not enfranchised in 1902. They were not granted the right to vote until 1962. For a discussion of the exclusion of indigenous subjects and complicity of white women in this racial exclusion, see Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, ed. *Creating a Nation, 1788-1900* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994) p. 2; and, Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia. A Gift or a Struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 64-66.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, 27, February 1911, pp. 25-26.

²⁴ Over the years 1894 to 1908, the six existing colonies variously granted women the right to vote in state elections. For a comprehensive account of the struggle for the franchise, see Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*.

²⁵ Quoted in Kean, 'Public Histories of Australian and British Suffrage', 4.

²⁶ The Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne commissioned Susan Hewitt and Penelope Lee to produce the 'Great Petition' sculpture. See the commentary provided by historian Marilyn Lake on a plaque accompanying the sculpture in Burston Reserve, Melbourne. See also Culture Victoria, 'The Great Petition Sculpture', <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/womens-suffrage/the-great-petition-sculpture> (accessed 7 January 2020).

²⁷ A number of prominent Australian suffragists travelled to Britain and supported or participated in the militant movement there. See Clare Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2018); Barbara Caine, *Australian Feminism and the British Militant Suffragettes* (Canberra: Department of the Senate, 2003); and, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'The National and the Transnational in British Anti-suffragists' Views of Australian Women Voters', *History Australia*, 10:3 (2013): 51-64.

²⁸ Libby Stewart, 'Suffragette Hunger Strike Medal', *Museum of Australian Democracy Blog*, 7 September 2011, <http://moadoph.gov.au/blog/suffragette-hunger-strike-medal/> (accessed 10 January 2020). See also: Libby Stewart, 'The Pank-A-Squith Board Game', *Museum of Australian Democracy Blog*, 22 August 2011, <http://moadoph.gov.au/blog/the-pank-a-squith-board-game/> (accessed 10 January 2020).

²⁹ Libby Stewart, 'Beyond the Glass Ceiling: The Material Culture of Women's Political Leadership', in *Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present*, ed. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein and Mary Tomsic (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2014), p. 242. Other exhibitions display similar militant objects. In February 2018, for example, the National Library of Australia opened its 'Deeds Not Words: Women's Suffrage in Britain' exhibition which displayed Bessie Rischbieth's collection of British and Australian suffrage memorabilia. Rischbieth travelled from Australia to Britain and conceived of her transnational collection as a 'bridge over the British and Australian demand for the vote'. National Library of Australia, 'Deeds Not Words: Women's Suffrage in Britain', <https://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/deeds-not-words-the-bessie-rischbieth-collection>, (accessed 10 January 2020).

³⁰ Ann Curthoys, 'White, British, and European: Historicising Identity in Settler Societies', in *Creating White Australia*, ed. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 3-24, 10-11.

³¹ Clare Wright's latest book is an example of this. It examines in detail Australian women's influence on the British suffrage movement. In doing so, it offers a somewhat triumphant history of Australia's position as a global leader in political, social and industrial reform. Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*.

³² Caine, 'Australian Feminism and the British Militant Suffragettes'.

³³ There are many examples of expressions of embarrassment and rejection of Australian claims to parity in matters of empire-colony relations in the paper of the NLOWS. See, for example, *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, 16, March 1910, p. 3.

³⁴ For a history of the militant movement see, for example, Bernadette Cahill, *Alice Paul, the National Woman's Party and the Vote: The First Civil Rights Struggle of the Twentieth Century* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015). See also Belinda A. Stillion Southard, 'Militancy, Power, and Identity: The Silent Sentinels as Women Fighting for a Political Voice', *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10:3 (Fall 2007): 399-417.

³⁵ African American men were enfranchised at the cessation of the American Civil War when the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States' Constitution was ratified. This granted citizenship and equal civil and legal rights to African Americans. With this

Amendment, gendered language was introduced into a previously gender-neutral Constitution for, as Laura E. Free has pointed out, the word ‘male’ appeared three times in the Amendment’s second section. See Laura E. Free, *Suffrage Reconstructed. Gender, Race, and Voting Rights in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 2.

³⁶ For a concise summary of the US suffrage movement, see June Hannam, Mitzi Auchterlonie and Katherine Holden, *International Encyclopedia of Women’s Suffrage* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000), pp. 300–306. For an extended analysis, see Christine Bolt, *The Women’s Movement in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

³⁷ For a detailed discussion of the alliance between abolitionist and gender-based activism before the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment and intensifying racialised divisions within the women’s rights movement, see Judith Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

³⁸ The site includes the former residences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton House (Seneca Falls), Thomas and Mary Ann M’Clintock House (nearby Waterloo), the Richard P. Hunt and Jane C. Hunt House (Waterloo) and the Wesleyan Chapel (Seneca Falls) which hosted the first Women’s Rights Conventions. See Rebecca Conard, ‘*All Men and Women Are Created Equal*’: *An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park* (New York: Organization of American Historians and US Department of The Interior, National Park Service, April 2012).

³⁹ Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls*; Sally McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰ Stanton was prompted to initiate a formal women’s rights movement after she, and other American women, were denied the right to speak at a London-based anti-slavery convention. However, she later became known for her negative reaction to the enfranchisement of African American men.

⁴¹ McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, p. 82.

⁴² This is not to claim that privileges and biases were not explicit in this document. White women who compiled the Declaration of Sentiments were complicit in perpetuating notions of racialised or class superiority for, as McMillen points out, the document ‘elevated white women above male immigrants, free blacks, and the destitute who lacked the advantages many middle-class women possessed’. See McMillen, *Seneca Falls*, p. 91.

⁴³ Doris Stevens, ‘The Militant Campaign’, *The Suffragist*, 7:28 (1919): 8-9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ There are memorials to individual members of the NWP. For example, there is the Alice Paul Institute, a not-for-profit organization located in Paul’s birthplace, New Jersey, which works to use Paul’s legacy to inspire young women to become leaders through educational outreach programs. See the Alice Paul Institute website, <http://www.alicepaul.org/about-us/> (accessed 12 August 2015).

⁴⁶ Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, Press Release, ‘Groundbreaking for the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial’, 21 November 2019, <https://suffragistmemorial.org/groundbreaking-for-the-turning-point-suffragist-memorial/> (accessed 13 January 2020).

⁴⁷ Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, ‘About TPSM’, <https://suffragistmemorial.org/about-turning-point-suffragist-memorial/> (accessed 13 January 2020).

⁴⁸ The Lucy Burns Museum Grand Opening is scheduled for 9th May 2020. The museum is part of the Workhouse Arts Centre which functions as a community of artists open to the public. See Workhouse Arts Centre, ‘Lucy Burns Museum’, <http://www.workhousearts.org/lucyburnsmuseum/exhibits/> (accessed 16 January 2020). The new museum replaces a smaller, less formal heritage site which has long been operating on the Lorton site where visitors have been invited to read about the gory details of force-feeding, and to use their senses to imagine the experience by, for example, touching the force-feeding tubes and feeling the rough material of a suffragist’s prison uniform. (The author visited the Lorton complex in June 2018.)

⁴⁹ Workhouse Arts Centre, ‘Museum History Exhibits’, <http://www.workhousearts.org/lucyburnsmuseum/exhibits/> (accessed 16 January 2020).

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion of Irish women’s militancy, with a special focus on their relationship with British militants, see Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, ‘Divided sisterhood? Nationalist feminism and militancy in England and Ireland’, *Contemporary British History*, 32:4 (2018): 448-469.

⁵¹ For a much more detailed examination of Markievicz and her memory, see chapter 2 Revolutionary Nationalists, in Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women’s Activism*, pp. 79-124.

⁵² Parliament UK, ‘Picture of First Elected Woman MP, Constance Markievicz, Displayed in Parliament’, *Art in Parliament*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/art-in-parliament/news/2018/july/markievicz/> (accessed 18 January 2020).