



Contesting the Capital:
Space, Place, and Protest in London,
1780–2010

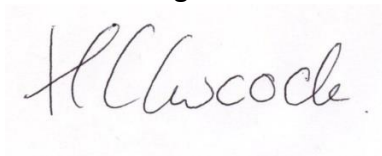
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Declaration of Authorship

I, Hannah Awcock, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H Awcock". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered below the "Signed:" label.

Date: 22/07/17

Abstract

This thesis investigates the relationship between space, place, and protest in London between 1780 and 2010, focussing primarily on four themes: communication and organisation; control of, and access to, public space; memory and commemoration; and repertoires of protest.

Space, place, and protest are shown to be mutually constitutive, impacting and shaping each other in complex and interactive ways. The thesis demonstrates that although developments in areas such as communication technology and policing have impacted protest in the capital since 1780, some elements remain relatively unchanged: the ways in which protesters communicate and organise, despite new media; the ongoing struggle with the authorities for the highly symbolic public space of the capital; the ways in which collective memories of past protests are constructed and used; and the ways in which repertoires of protest develop.

Combining a long-term historiographical approach with an event-based empirical focus, the thesis examines four case studies: the Gordon Riots (1780), the Hyde Park Railings Affair (1866), the Battle of Cable Street (1936), and the Student Tuition Fee Protest (2010). This thesis is primarily an exercise in historical geography, but it draws on, and contributes to, a range of scholarship in geography, history, and social science concerned with protest, social movements, London, and the urban. Archival

research—engaging with a wide variety of historical sources, including pamphlets, newspaper articles, images, and social media—was used to explore the ways that space and place shape, and are contested during, protest.

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1

Introduction: Researching the Historical Geographies of Protest in London

Saturday 30 May 2015 was an average late-spring day in London; the weather was sunny with scattered clouds and the temperature was in the mid-teens Celsius.¹ The London International Antiquarian Book Fair was underway at Olympia, the Camden Rocks Festival was in full swing, and on Wandsworth Common there was an attempt to break the world record for the largest number of people performing jump squats.² Meanwhile, in Trafalgar Square there was a protest to support the striking workers at the National Gallery; at the Kensington head office of the *Daily Mail* there was a demonstration against the newspaper's portrayal of Filipino nurses; and in Westminster there was a march organised by UK Uncut, during which a large anti-austerity banner was hung from Westminster Bridge.³ What the events of this Saturday show is that protest—no less than book fairs and music festivals—is an everyday part of life of the city. Moreover, even a cursory glance at the city's history reveals that this has long been the case. Therefore, any attempt to understand the city would be incomplete

¹ Time and Date, "Past Weather in London, England, United Kingdom—May 2015," no date, accessed February 28, 2017, <https://www.timeanddate.com/weather/uk/london/historic?month=5&year=2015>.

² Londonist, "Things to Do in London This Weekend: 30–31 May 2015," no date, accessed February 28, 2016, <http://londonist.com/2015/05/things-to-do-in-london-this-weekend-30-31-may-2015>,

³ Alexandra Rucki, "National Gallery Staff Stage Rally in Trafalgar Square Opposing Privatisation Plans," *Evening Standard*, last modified May 30, 2015, accessed February 28, 2017, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/national-gallery-staff-stage-huge-rally-in-traffic-square-opposing-privatisation-plans-10286592.html>; Steve Ford, "Filipino Nurses Protest Outside National Newspaper Office," *Nursing Times*, last modified June 1, 2015, accessed February 28, 2017, <https://www.nursingtimes.net/roles/nurse-managers/filipino-nurses-protest-outside-national-newspaper-office/5085441.article>; Damien Gayle, "Anti-Austerity Protesters Gather in London to Demonstrate Against Cuts," *The Guardian*, last modified May 30, 2015, accessed February 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/30/protests-anti-austerity-london-cuts-westminster-government>.

without a consideration of dissent. As such, it is important to understand how protest in London functions, how it is shaped by the city, and, in turn, how it impacts the city. Examining the protests of 30 May 2015 more closely raises questions about expressions of dissent in the city.

All three of the protests were organised by established groups or unions that had at least some experience of coordinating demonstrations. This level of coordination is not, however, always the case; sometimes protest events can escape the control of organisers. Three weeks before the 30 May protests, on 9 May, a demonstration that was described as “unplanned” took place in central London in response to the Conservative Party’s recent General Election victory.⁴ This example of organisation with no clear leader raises questions, such as how do participants in ‘unplanned’ protests know where to go and what to do? How do they share information? How do they coordinate their activities?

All three of the 30 May protests took place in locations that were in some way meaningful: in Trafalgar Square outside the National Gallery, which was attempting to privatise the employment of ‘visitor-facing’ staff; at the headquarters of the *Daily Mail*, who had questioned the NHS’s practice of hiring Filipino nurses following the conviction of one nurse from the Philippines of poisoning twenty-one patients; and in the heart of Westminster, the symbolic and literal home of the British government responsible for policies of austerity. The demonstrators’ right to protest in these locations is protected by UK law, but this has not always been the case; protesters have, historically, had to struggle with the authorities for their right to access public space in London. The fact that fifteen demonstrators were arrested during the anti-government protest on 9 May 2015 demonstrates that the right to protest is only protected within certain limits.⁵ This example raises questions related to the relationship between protest and public space in London, including how do protesters and

⁴ BBC News, “Police Arrest 15 in Anti-Austerity Protest in London,” last modified May 10, 2015, accessed July 14, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/election-2015-32678518>.

⁵ BBC News, “Police Arrest 15 in Anti-Austerity Protest in London.”

authorities contest public space? What impact does this conflict have on the form of protest in London?

The UK Uncut demonstrators used the chant ‘Who’s Streets? Our Streets!’, which journalist Damien Gayle describes as “now almost traditional.”⁶ Gayle’s suggestion that some elements of protest are repeated and become common prompts questions about the way protests are remembered, how that memory is used, and how protesters reproduce certain actions. For example, why are certain protest tactics and slogans used so often that they become recognised as such? How do ‘traditional’ elements of protest get passed down from one generation of activists to the next? Does the collective memory of past protests inform modern dissent? What is the significance of space and place to the memory and traditions of protest? At a time when protest in London is increasing in the face of long-term austerity and unpopular politicians, it is arguably more important than ever to further our understanding of the geographies of protest in the city.

In this thesis, I draw on literature from a range of disciplines including history, sociology, and social movement studies to conduct an analysis of the historical geographies of protest in London. I investigate the relationship between space, place, and the rich history of protest in London, focussing on the period between 1780 and 2010. In order to balance the breadth of such a long-time frame with in-depth analysis, I have selected four case studies that, in various ways, are representative of protest in London: the Gordon Riots (1780), the Hyde Park Railings Affair (1866), the Battle of Cable Street (1936), and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations (2010). I approach the relationship between space, place, and protest from four thematic perspectives: organisation and communication; the contested nature of public space; the memorialisation and commemoration of protest; and repertoires of protest. My interrogation of these case studies has been supported by extensive

⁶ Gayle, “Anti-Austerity Protesters Gather in London to Demonstrate Against Cuts.”

archival research that has engaged with a wide range of sources in order to respond to four research questions:

1. By what means have protesters (and their opponents) communicated and organised their activities? In what ways has geography mattered to these processes?
2. What does the history of protest in London tell us about the contested nature of public space?
3. How have historic protests been memorialised, and commemorated? To what extent have these legacies shaped later protests?
4. How have repertoires of protest responded to, and been shaped by, the specific geographies of protest events?

This thesis contributes to extant research on protest, the history of London, and the historical geographies of protest in Britain. Over the last few decades, there have been multiple attempts to theorise protest based around concepts such as collective action, social movements, and contentious politics.⁷ Each school of thought has a different approach to the study of protest, and in this thesis I combine what I consider to be the strengths of each approach to form the theoretical basis of my analysis. Scholarship on the history of London generally falls into one of two categories: broad studies that cover long periods of the city's history, and in-depth analyses of short periods or single events.⁸ I contribute to both

⁷ See, for example Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

⁸ Examples of broad studies include Peter Ackroyd *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001); Clive Bloom *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 [2003]); Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People's History of London* (London: Verso, 2012). Examples of focussed studies include Ian Haywood and John Seed, ed., *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Louise Raw, *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History*

approaches by combining the observation of long-term changes and trends with in-depth analysis of four protest events from London's history. The final area of research to which I contribute is the historical geographies of protest in Britain. By this, I mean scholarly work on historic protest that prioritises the spatial in its analysis. Key recent examples of such work are Carl Griffin's study of rural protest, Katrina Navickas' work on protest in Manchester and the north of England, and Christina Parolin's research on radical locations in London.⁹

In the rest of this chapter I outline the theoretical context that has shaped the approach of this thesis. I explain and justify the parameters of the research, including my decision to focus on London, and why I chose the case studies I did. I also account for the use of four case studies over a long-time frame, contextualising my approach in relation to other similar methods. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Research Design: Learning from the Annales School and Microhistories

It would be disingenuous to claim that I designed the research questions of this project at its outset then spent the next four years working towards answering them. The research questions have changed as my awareness of the availability of sources and my understanding of the topic has developed. Nevertheless, the focus of the project has always been on the relationship between geography, London, and protest over time, and every iteration of the research questions has reflected that focus, as have my methodological decisions.

(London: Bloomsbury, 2011); John Tully, *Silvertown: The Lost Story of a Strike that Shook London and Helped Launch the Modern Labor Movement* (New York: Monthly Review, 2014).

⁹ Carl J. Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c.1845* (Canberra: The Australian National University E Press, 2010).

There are a number of reasons why I chose London as the focus of this research. I discuss the relationships between protest and cities generally in Chapter 2, but there are certain factors that make London unique among British cities. As well as local protests, London has frequently played host to national protests, that attract participants from beyond London. These protests are about issues that affect the whole country, sometimes even further afield. There are three reasons why London is so often chosen as the location of national protests. First, the city is at the centre of a whole range of networks that aid the communication and mobilisation of protesters.¹⁰ London's role as a transport hub makes it easy for demonstrators to get in and out of the city. In addition, the bias of the national media towards London makes it easier to get coverage of a protest.¹¹ The second reason London is the focus of so much national protest is its abundance of buildings and structures symbolic of political, economic, and religious power. During protests, buildings often stand in as symbols of intangible power structures, and London has no shortage of such symbols.¹² The Houses of Parliament, the Bank of England, embassies, and the national headquarters of corporations have all attracted protest. The third and final reason London is the location of so much protest is because it seems, to many protesters, like an obvious choice. Writing on the history of protest in the United States, Lucy Barber argues that protest in Washington, D.C. is so ubiquitous that the possibility of protesting elsewhere is rarely considered.¹³ I would argue that the same is true of London. London's history of protest has built up a range of "associative experiences, collective memory of struggles and protests, and existing

¹⁰ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

¹¹ Hannah Awcock, "London Calling: The Capital as a Focus of Protest and Dissent," (paper presented at the 16th International Conference of Historical Geographers, London, July 5–10, 2015); Joe Collins, "The London Newspaper Bias: Half of 'National' News is About the South East," *New Statesman*, last modified August 9, 2013, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.newstatesman.com/newspapers/2013/08/london-newspaper-bias-half-national-news-about-south-east>.

¹² Tonkiss, *Space, the City, and Social Theory*.

¹³ Lucy G. Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (California: University of California Press, 2002).

formal and informal networks” that makes future protest more likely.¹⁴ London’s history as a political and economic capital has created a unique combination of communication and mobility networks, protest targets, and traditions of dissent that make it a frequent location of protest. It is this combination of factors that means London is the location of both local and national protests, and that fact makes the history of protest in London such a rich topic of study.

The project’s research questions were designed to reflect both the breadth of the topic and the key themes on which it focuses. The specific case studies all relate to the key themes of the thesis, but were selected to explore particular aspects of the historical geographies of protest. The study of the Gordon Riots has an emphasis on communication and organisation (Research Question (RQ) 1). Even at the time, there was speculation about how organised the protesters were, with most contemporaries concluding that a secretive body organising the riots from behind the scenes was the only possible explanation for the disciplined behaviour and actions of the rioters. Whilst it is unlikely that there is any truth to these speculations, the ways in which the rioters did organise is an intellectually compelling subject of investigation. The Hyde Park Railings Affair allows examination of the contested nature of public space (RQ2). When the Affair took place, there were no clear rules about whether or not protest was permitted in Hyde Park. As such, the protest acted as a sort of ‘test case,’ sparking debate about the nature and purpose of the park. The Battle of Cable Street highlights the memorialisation and commemoration of protests (RQ3). It is arguably one of the best-known protests in London’s history, in both popular and academic contexts. The Battle’s fame is largely due to the way in which it has been remembered, memorialised and mythologised, which makes it an optimal case study for considering the ways in which protests are commemorated and employed as historical narratives. The final case study, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, is

¹⁴ Ugo Rossi and Alberto Vanolo, *Urban Political Geographies: A Global Perspective* (London: SAGE, 2012); 144.

used in part to think about the interconnections between these questions. The protests encompassed a variety of actions, and the use of new communication technologies by both protesters and observers, as well as new policing tactics, offers the scope to consider the themes of the previous three chapters in a new light. Repertoires of protest (RQ4), are discussed in relation to all of the case studies.

There are a number of theoretical debates that have influenced this thesis, including deliberations over the functioning of crowds, protest, and collective memory. The form of this thesis has, however, been influenced most strongly by the debate over how best to conduct historical research. There are two main approaches to historical research on which I drew whilst structuring this thesis: the Annales school and microhistory. The Annales school developed in France in the interwar period under the guidance of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and, later, Fernand Braudel.¹⁵ In 1929, Bloch and Febvre founded a new journal, *Annales D'histoire Economique and Sociale*. The journal would give its name to one of the most significant historical approaches of the twentieth century, one that sought to use ideas from other disciplines to study history.¹⁶ Another key focus of the school was its “challenge to the conventional view of time as unified, linear process.”¹⁷ The work of Fernand Braudel, who became influential amongst Annales scholars after World War Two, is arguably the root of this challenge. Braudel argued that there are three levels of historical time, some of which are more worthy of study than others:

1. *Histoire événementielle*: the short term. This level of time is associated with rapid change, usually in the form of political or military events. Braudel thought of this as the least

¹⁵ Michael Bentley, “*Annales*: The French School,” in *Modern Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2005): 105–16.

¹⁶ Bentley, “*Annales*.”

¹⁷ Eileen Ka-May Cheng, *Historiography: An Introductory Guide* (London: Continuum, 2012); 114.

important level of history, and criticised other historians for focusing on it too much.

2. *Intermediate level/ history of conjunctures*: gradual changes taking place over a longer period of time, such as economic or demographic.
3. *Longue durée*: very long periods of time associated with structures that change slowly, if at all. These structures include physical geography and the environment, but also social constructions, such as behavioural norms.¹⁸

For Braudel, the *longue durée* was by far the most significant time-scale. He sought to emphasise the continuity of history, arguing that whilst it may appear as though history is full of dramatic ruptures, little *actually* changes.¹⁹

Whilst the approach of the Annales school allows valuable insight into the influence of underlying structures, it does have several significant flaws. Braudel questioned the importance of politics as a driver of historical change, a position that rapidly becomes untenable when studying the historical geography of protest.²⁰ In addition, Braudel did not focus his work on people, either collectively or individually. To him, “[p]eople are merely the instruments through which the great historical processes of the rise and fall of civilisations are accomplished.”²¹ Developments such as new social history and the ‘cultural turn’ in the second half of the twentieth century have illustrated the utility of studying people, and with the benefit of these insights it seems counterproductive to overlook their role.

In contrast to the Annales school, microhistory is “the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well defined smaller object, most

¹⁸ Cheng, *Historiography*.

¹⁹ Olivia Harris, “Braudel: Historical Time and the Horror of Discontinuity,” *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 161–74.

²⁰ Cheng, *Historiography*.

²¹ Harris, “Braudel;” 168.

often a single event.”²² Microhistorians focus on what Braudel would term *histoire événementielle*, constructing a very different view of history from those who study large-scale social structures and trends. This does not mean, however, that microhistory cannot contribute to our understanding of large structures and changes; as Eileen Ka-May Cheng explains, “microhistorians sought to understand a culture by using seemingly trivial and unimportant acts or signs as clues to its underlying assumptions rather than through larger generalizations based on a pattern of observations.”²³ Microhistory developed in the 1970s as one of a number of responses to growing dissatisfaction with structuralist theories such as Marxism.²⁴ It is frequently concerned with human agency, considering why humans act the way they do, both within and beyond normative structures.²⁵ For example, Philip Abrams uses microhistory to support his concept of historical sociology.²⁶ Abrams has argued that there is no difference between history and sociology as academic disciplines, because they both seek to understand the same thing: human agency and its constraint by social structuring.²⁷ For Abrams, microhistory is the ideal vehicle for the study of historical sociology, because it demonstrates that “it is not social structure as a timeless world of facts or social action as a timeless world of meanings but history that is the proper subject matter of sociology—that structure and meaning are related through action in time.”²⁸ Microhistory allows us to see how structure and meaning relate to action.

Another key advantage of microhistory is that it can test our understanding of phenomena that we think of as already understood; social structures and organisations can look very different when

²² Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013); 4.

²³ Cheng, *Historiography*; 123.

²⁴ Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity, 1991): 93–113.

²⁵ Levi “On Microhistory;” and Magnússon and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory?*

²⁶ Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Somerset: Open Books, 1982).

²⁷ Abrams, *Historical Sociology*.

²⁸ Abrams, *Historical Sociology*; 7.

approached on a new scale.²⁹ Arguably the biggest issue with microhistory is the question of how representative its conclusions are; just how much can the specific really tell us about the general?³⁰ This is a question with no easy answer, but I suggest that as long as it is not assumed that the specific *is* the general, with no further enquiry, then microhistory can be a valuable approach. In this thesis, I have attempted to combine the strengths of the Annales school and microhistory. The long time-frame provides the opportunity to identify long-term trends, whilst the in-depth studies allow me to develop a detailed understanding of how protests in London can operate, as well as an awareness of how and why people participate in protests.

I chose a long time-frame for the project in order to allow the identification of trends in the history of protest in London. I did not, however, want to attempt to deal with the entire history of London. I chose 1780 as the starting point because the Gordon Riots arguably embody a transition period for British protest. Due to events such as the American War of Independence, the Gordon Riots, and the French Revolution, protest came to be seen as a dangerous phenomenon to be avoided or even repressed, rather than an acceptable way of allowing the working classes to let off steam. As Miriam Wallace argues, “[t]he 1780 riots became a kind of fulcrum, pointing back on the one hand to traditions of carnivalesque popular revolt, and forwards on the other towards a nineteenth-century concept of mass protest and revolutionary action by the proletariat.”³¹ I am not suggesting that the Gordon Riots were the exact moment when this transformation took place; it is rarely possible to identify a specific moment when such a change happens. In this case,

²⁹ Levi, “On Microhistory.”

³⁰ Magnússon and Szijsártó, *What is Microhistory?*

³¹ Miriam L. Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots: Romantic Revisionings,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 162–82; 163. See also Charles Tilly and R.A. Schweitzer, “How London and its Conflicts Changed Shape: 1758–1834.” *Historical Methods* 15, no. 2 (1982): 67–77.

however, the Gordon Riots act as a useful division between one period of London's history and the others.

My decision regarding which case studies to focus on reflected a number of factors including how best to represent different types of spaces and protest in London's history, and ensuring an even dispersal across the time period. Choosing to focus on individual events has allowed me to balance the scope of the long time-frame with in-depth analysis; it has given me the opportunity to explore the 'microgeographies' of London's spaces. The focus on such a small number of case studies does create tensions with the long time-frame; for example, the utility of comparing individual events that occurred in such varied contexts, and for such varied reasons, is debatable. Nevertheless, my approach arguably offers a *balance* of detail and comparison that is beneficial.

1.2 Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 is contextual, explaining and justifying the theoretical context of the thesis. The chapter explores the existing literature on geography and protest. I explore various scholarly approaches to dissent—collective action, social movements, contentious politics, and protest. I explain why I chose to use the term protest, as well as highlighting how the other schools of thought have influenced my theoretical framework. I then evaluate how certain key terms in geography—space, place, scale, and networks—contribute to our understanding of protest, and what they bring to this research. Finally, I discuss key traditions within historical geography which this thesis both builds upon and contributes too. Each empirical chapter also contains its own discussion of the relevant academic literatures; Chapter 2 focuses specifically on the literature that underpins the *entire* thesis.

Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the methodology I employed to conduct the research presented in this thesis. First, I outline and justify the project's research design, the project's time frame, and its sources. Second,

I discuss the literature on archives, evaluating the impact of archives' embedded power relations on research. Third, I examine the methodological considerations necessary when consulting different types of archival sources, including published sources, official papers, unpublished sources, and social media. Finally, I outline my analytical approach—one that required a large degree of flexibility to incorporate the wide range of sources to which I referred in my research.

The empirical section of the thesis, covering Chapters 4 to 7, is structured both chronologically and thematically. In Chapter 4, I consider how both the participants in the 1780 Gordon Riots, and the authorities that eventually repressed them, communicated and organised across the spaces of late eighteenth-century London. A march to present a petition to Parliament in June 1780 led to a week of rioting in which Newgate Prison was burned down and the Bank of England was attacked. For many decades, perceived wisdom about riotous crowds held them to be irrational, violent mobs. However, the behaviour of the Gordon Rioters, and recent scholarship on crowd psychology, suggests otherwise. I explore the various methods of communication—written or printed, verbal, and non-verbal—that the rioters employed, and the methods they used to achieve a mode of informal organisation. I then compare this mode of organisation to the ways that the authorities communicated and organised, and use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophical concept of the rhizome to argue that the rioters' informal, rhizomatic organisational networks allowed them to move around London in a way with which the authorities' rigid, arborescent organisational structure could not compete.³²

Chapter 5 moves from 1780 to 1866 to look at the contested nature of public space through the prism of the Hyde Park Railings Affair. In rapidly expanding Victorian London, large spaces for political meetings were at a premium, and the authorities had realised that they could control dissent

³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: London: Athlone, 1987).

by controlling access to public space. The Reform League was founded in 1865 to campaign for universal male suffrage, but their demonstration on 23 July 1866 in Hyde Park quickly became a focus for anger at oppressive policing strategies when the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police banned it. Angry demonstrators broke down the railings of the park, using materials found in the park as improvised weapons in running skirmishes with the police. I use this event, and the extensive public debate that surrounded it, to explore the relationships between space, place, and protest with a particular focus on public space. First, I examine how the microgeographies of Hyde Park impacted the protest, and how the protest in turn affected space. Second, I look at struggles over the production of Hyde Park, both as a public space, and a cultural place. I investigate how understandings of who had access to particular public spaces, and what activities were socially acceptable within them, were constructed and contested. I then consider the implications of the collective definition of public space for a healthy public sphere. I also look at the different ways in which the Hyde Park Railings Affair has been represented in order to understand how the protest became part of perceptions of Hyde Park as a place.

Chapter 6 also considers issues of representation. It focusses on the Battle of Cable Street on 4 October 1936, perhaps one of the best-known protest events in London's history and, as such, an ideal case study to examine the ways in which protests are commemorated, remembered, and mythologised. In this chapter, I use Pierre Nora's writings on *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory—as a theoretical underpinning for my analysis.³³ I examine how different representations of the Battle—

³³ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,' *Representations* no. 26 (1989): 7–24; Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 1, Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 1, Conflicts and Divisions*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 2, Traditions*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.),

including, variously, its name, a commemorative mural in Cable Street, and the ways it has been described in recent popular history books—have contributed to the development of a mythology around the events of that day. I then consider how this mythology has been used by both local communities and activists as a source of identity and inspiration. I also scrutinise how the myth has changed over time; how it has shifted and been (re)interpreted in order to suit the needs of those utilising it. I argue, consequently, that it is perhaps more important for academics to examine how mythologies of protests are used than it is for them to establish how accurate they are.

Chapter 7 is holistic, bringing the themes of the previous three chapters together by comparing the preceding case studies with the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, which took place in November and December 2010. I look at the themes of each of the previous three chapters in turn, evaluating the differences and similarities between case studies. First, I explore the ways that the student protesters communicated and organised, drawing comparisons with the participants in the Gordon Riots. I focus particularly on how the 2010 protest manifested on Twitter, and, consequently, suggest a new typology of protest tweets. Second, I consider the contested nature of public space in 2010, examining how the authorities controlled public space, and how protesters challenged and undermined that control. Third, as it is too early to evaluate the commemorative legacies of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, I again turn to Twitter to examine how people used past protests to support, criticise, understand, and interpret the 2010 protests as they happened. The impact of new technologies, and ongoing contestation of space and place, are two things that resonate throughout the comparisons. Chapter 8, in concluding the thesis, summarises my responses to the research questions, explaining how my arguments contribute to existing literature.

Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 3, Symbols. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Contesting the Capital is an investigation into the historical geographies of protest in London. Taking inspiration from both the Annales school and microhistory, I have conducted in-depth research that is also capable of identifying long-term trends. As such, the research makes contributions to literature on social movements, protest, and activism; the history of London; and the historical geography of protest. This thesis supports the argument that space, place, and protest are mutually constitutive, but in other respects it questions dominant ideas. For example, I argue that it is important to study what activists do *during* protests, not simply *in between* them (the approach that most social movement scholars take). In addition, I resist the tendency to focus overwhelmingly on the role of new technology, arguing that it has *shaped* protest rather than *transforming* it. In other areas, I build on existing literatures on communication and organisation, public space, and memory and commemoration, applying them to the historical geographies of protest in London. I argue that, far from being irrational, crowds of protesters have a range of methods that allow them to share information and organise without a clear leadership structure. I also argue that, for centuries, Londoners have struggled with the authorities for access to the city's public space. The conflict is particularly fierce because of London's national significance. As well as this, I explore the memory of historic protests in the city, arguing that it shapes, and is shaped by, modern Londoner's identities and concerns. Finally, I contend that repertoires of protest are key to how protesters organise and function. I also explore the spatial variation of repertoires of protest, arguing that the specific conditions for, and histories of, protest in London result in unique repertoires of protest in the city.

2

Theories of Space, Place, and Protest

Although historical in scope, this project is geographical in approach, and is grounded in a wide range of geographical scholarship. In this chapter, I discuss this literature with a view to elucidating the scholarly landscape within which my research is situated. The chapter is divided into three sections, each one focused on a different section of that scholarly landscape. In the first, I examine literature on protest. Protest has been subjected to analysis in multiple academic disciplines, and numerous concepts have developed to describe it. I reflect on some of these terms—collective action, contentious politics, and social movements—and justify my decision to use ‘protest’ as the key terminology in my own research. In the second section, I consider what a geographical approach can bring to the study of protest, particularly through the concepts of space, place, scale, and networks. In the third section, I look at the historical geographies of protest, and the work of historians of protest whose research is strongly influenced by space and place. This thesis contributes to all three of these areas of scholarly research.

2.1 Terminology of Protest

Protest has long been a topic of research for scholars from a wide range of disciplines. As a result, a number of different theoretical approaches have been developed that inform our understanding of dissent. Each approach has a different focus, and most employ different terminology. In what follows, I discuss some of these approaches and the ways in which they have influenced this thesis, as well as justifying my decisions regarding the terminology I employ.

2.1.1 Collective Action

Collective action is a concept that originated in economics and was adopted by the social sciences after the publication of *The Logic of Collective Action* by Mancur Olson in 1965.³⁴ It can be defined as “actions taken by two or more people in pursuit of the same collective good.”³⁵

There is nothing inherently political or contentious about collective action, it simply refers to multiple people working towards a common objective.

George Marwell and Pamela Oliver explain that this encompasses a large range of activities beyond protest, including raising a barn, organising a business cartel, and building a bridge.³⁶

Those who study collective action are concerned with how and why groups function to achieve a goal.³⁷ Some scholars theorise collective action as the product of the reasoning of multiple individuals.³⁸ Others argue that people behave differently when part of a group, and that collective action frequently manifests characteristics that members of the group as individuals do not possess.³⁹ In this way, studies of collective action are concerned with many of the same issues as the field of crowd psychology, or collective behaviour, as it has been known in recent years.⁴⁰

The lack of any inherently political motivation in the definition of collective action makes it an inappropriate term for this project, given my focus on dissent. Another limitation is that it does not acknowledge the possibility of a protest performed by an individual. Nonetheless, the focus on the rationale and (dis)incentives of participating in a collective action has influenced this project. The possible motivations for participating in a

³⁴ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

³⁵ Gerald Marwell and Pamela Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action: A Micro-Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); 4.

³⁶ Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*; 2.

³⁷ See, for example, James S. Coleman, *Individual Interests and Collective Action: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁸ Such as Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*; and Coleman, *Individual Interests and Collective Action*.

³⁹ See, for example, Marwell and Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*.

⁴⁰ Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behaviour* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972 [1957]).

protest are numerous and varied. In this thesis, I consider a range of different types of protests in which people participated for a number of different reasons. Those reasons shaped how the protests unfolded, influencing their outcomes. It is important, therefore, to consider these motivations when analysing a protest.

2.1.2 Social Movements

Social movement studies is one of the most established fields that analyses protest, with specialist journals, book series, and research groups.⁴¹ Social movements are “[t]he organized efforts of multiple individuals or organizations, acting outside of formal state or economic spheres, to pursue political goals.”⁴² There are multiple approaches within social movement studies that focus on different aspects of social movements. These approaches include:

- grievance theories, which argue that resistance develops in response to oppressive economic conditions;
- political opportunity theories, which argue that the potential for resistance is limited by what is tolerated by governments and societies;
- resource mobilisation theories, which argue that the potential of a social movement is controlled by its access to financial, institutional, and cultural resources;
- and ‘new social movement’ theories, which hold that social movements changed during the 1960s, focussing more on identity politics than industrial relations.⁴³

⁴¹ Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

⁴² James McCarthy, “Social Movements,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, ed. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 695–96; 695.

⁴³ della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*; Wendy Wolford, “This Land is Ours Now: Spatial Imaginaries and the Struggle for Land in Brazil,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 2 (2004): 409–24.

One approach which is particularly relevant to this project is that of urban social movements. The term is attributed to Manuel Castells, who highlighted the importance of consumption, as well as production, in understanding class relations.⁴⁴ He moved “the focus of class analysis from capitalist relations within the workplace to social relations in the urban community.”⁴⁵ There is a substantial body of work on the characteristics of urban areas that facilitate social movements. For example, Simon Parker argues that cities are imperative for the formation of both dominant authorities and resistance to that authority, which Parker terms “the dangerous classes.”⁴⁶ Fran Tonkiss goes into more detail, proposing four reasons why cities like London are so important to resistance and protest action:

1. Cities provide the actual physical public spaces for alternative politics to occur within;
2. Cities contain ready-made networks for mobilisation and the transmission of information;
3. Cities bring together social networks capable of supporting dissent;
4. Cities foster the formation of ‘communities of interest’; groups of people with similar identities and/or interests.⁴⁷

Scholarship such as this facilitates analysis of the ways in which London’s unique character, form, and structures have influenced the protest that occurs there.

Whilst social movement scholars have contributed much to our understanding of protest, I chose not to utilise the terminology in this thesis. This is because social movement studies tend to focus on the organisational techniques of long-term, large-scale campaigns at the

⁴⁴ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grass-Roots* (London: E. Arnold, 1983).

⁴⁵ della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*; 10.

⁴⁶ Simon Parker, *Cities, Politics, and Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); 58.

⁴⁷ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City, and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

expense of other topics of research and individual events. Whilst organisation is the focus of one chapter in this thesis, it is not the only theme considered. In addition, my case studies are events rather than entire campaigns. Some of my case studies were part of social movements, but I am approaching them as standalone events rather than as part of larger campaigns. As such, social movement is not the most appropriate terminology to use in this case.

2.1.3 Contentious Politics

Contentious politics is another term that has become the subject of dedicated books and research groups.⁴⁸ It was developed by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly in their 2001 book *Dynamics of Contention*.⁴⁹ Their definition of the term has evolved over the past fifteen years, but one recent incarnation defines it thus:

[I]nteractions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared programs in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims or third parties.⁵⁰

For McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, contentious politics includes, but is not limited to, social movements. Other phenomena included are civil wars and

⁴⁸ Examples of research groups include the Contentious Politics and Social Movements Working Group of the Political Sociology Research Council of the International Political Sciences Association (IPSA), the Contentious Politics Circle based at the Panteion University of Social and Political Science in Athens, and Contentious Politics Workshop in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics. Dedicated publications include Ronald R. Aminzade, ed., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch and Wayne te Brake, eds., *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Seraphim Seferiades and Hank Johnston, eds., *Violent Protest, Contentious Politics and the Neoliberal State* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012); and Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

⁴⁹ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*.

⁵⁰ Sidney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); 3.

guerrilla warfare, events not typically associated with protest.⁵¹ This breadth is arguably the greatest strength of contentious politics as a scholarly concept, as it highlights the similarities and continuities between various forms of dissent, rather than the differences. This fact allows the researcher to engage with the frequently complex nature of political events that occur outside of formal political channels. For example, the riots in London in August 2011 were sparked by protests over the shooting of Mark Duggan by police.⁵² What started as a demonstration outside the police station in Tottenham became a pitched battle with police, which then became a riot that spread across London and to several other cities in England. One form of protest can evolve into another, and a single individual or group may employ a variety of tactics in order to achieve their goals. This complexity is evident in the case studies in this thesis; all four began as protest marches or demonstrations, but evolved into violence which in some cases has been described as riots.

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's conception of contentious politics is not without its critics. Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin Sziarto argue it is too state-centric, interest-orientated, and does not sufficiently acknowledge the differences within collective action.⁵³ Their criticisms are not without merit, but they do not justify the abandonment of contentious politics altogether. The concept is part of the theoretical framework of this study in that, although I have chosen not to adopt the term itself, I include a wide variety of tactics in my definition of protest, including riots.

2.1.4 Protest

Unlike social movements and contentious politics, protest has not become the focus of a devoted body of research, but it is a term used widely across

⁵¹ Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates*.

⁵² Greg Morgan, "Mark Duggan: A Single Death that Sparked the Riots," *The Telegraph*, last modified January 8, 2014, accessed May 12, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10559449/Mark-Duggan-a-single-death-that-sparked-the-riots.html>.

⁵³ Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin M. Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, no. 2 (2008): 157–72.

multiple disciplines, including geography, sociology, and politics. Nevertheless, the term has a scholarly history which reflects both our developing academic understanding and structural changes in dissent. In 1990, Alan Marsh defined protest as “unconventional political behaviour [which]...does not correspond to the legal and customary regime norms regulating political participation.”⁵⁴ This definition is based on an outdated understanding of clear demarcations between ‘conventional’ politics within institutions and ‘unconventional’ politics outside of them.⁵⁵ Most scholars now agree that protest is an increasingly normalised type of political participation in democracies, rendering descriptions of it as unconventional problematic.⁵⁶ Brian Doherty proposes a more nuanced definition, describing protest as “collective, public action based on social or political demands.”⁵⁷ However, this definition is still disputable as it disregards acts of dissent by individuals.⁵⁸ As such, the definition of protest employed in this thesis is “public action based on social or political demands.”⁵⁹

Although all the concepts I have discussed here have influenced this thesis, protest is the key theoretical concept I employed during my study. I adopted a similar approach to Carl Griffin in his book *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700–1850*.⁶⁰ Griffin is not explicit in his definition of protest, but he uses the term to describe a diverse range of activities including arson, animal maiming, and sending threatening letters.⁶¹ There are several reasons for taking this approach. Protest as a concept allows for the breadth of dissenting activities inherent in contentious politics without being a somewhat controversial term, whose use requires justification. In

⁵⁴ Alan Marsh, *Political Action in Europe and the USA* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1990): 15.

⁵⁵ Brian Doherty, “Protest,” in *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, eds. Matthew Flinders, Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay, and Michael Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); 719–31.

⁵⁶ Brian Doherty, “Protest.”

⁵⁷ Brian Doherty, “Protest;” 720.

⁵⁸ James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ Brian Doherty, “Protest;” 720.

⁶⁰ Carl J. Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

⁶¹ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*.

addition, the term encourages a focus on events rather than campaigns. All of the case studies in this thesis are either single events or a collection of events which are generally grouped together. Some of them are part of social movements, such as the nineteenth-century suffrage movement (the Hyde Park Railings Affair) and the recent anti-austerity movement (the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations), but I am considering them as individual events, not as part of wider social movements. As Brian Doherty explains, “not all protests are part of social movements and not all that social movements do is protest.”⁶²

Whilst it is possible to trace the provenance of, and highlight the differences between, various concepts relating to dissent, in reality many of these terms are used in tandem or interchangeably by scholars. Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto use ‘contentious politics’ interchangeably with ‘social movements’, arguing that the former has replaced the latter as the dominant term used to describe organised resistance to authority.⁶³ Donatella della Porta regularly uses the term ‘collective action’ whilst writing about social movements.⁶⁴ As such, it is unhelpful to dwell for too long on the semantics of these terms, but it is nevertheless worthwhile to acknowledge their theoretical contribution. Many of the terms discussed here have their origins in different academic disciplines. Whilst geography has not yet contributed its own term, it has contributed significantly to the study of protest in other ways. It is to that contribution that I now turn.

2.2 Geographies of Protest

As previously stated, protest is not the province of a single academic discipline, it is studied by scholars from sociology, history, politics, psychology, and law, amongst others. Each discipline brings a unique epistemological approach to the study of protest, and geography is no different. Geographers, as well as students of those disciplines that have

⁶² Doherty, “Protest;” 725.

⁶³ Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, “The Spatialities of Contentious Politics.”

⁶⁴ della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*.

embraced the 'spatial turn,' have highlighted the significance of a variety of spatial concepts to our understanding of protest. In this section, I discuss the contribution of four of these concepts: space, place, scale, and networks.

2.2.1 Space

As geography has developed as a discipline, so too have the ways that space has been conceptualised by geographers.⁶⁵ The various stages of this development have been covered extensively elsewhere, so I will not rehearse those debates here.⁶⁶ The most basic, and oldest, conception of space is that of 'absolute space,' in which space is understood as a fixed, inert container in which life occurs. This conception of space broadly underpins the understanding of positivist and quantitative geographers.⁶⁷ The next concept to develop was 'relative space,' which defines spaces according to spatial relations between objects and events rather than a fixed-coordinates system. This concept led to spatial analysis as a methodology, but was criticised for reducing social relations to spatial ones. The most recent set of theories to develop are known collectively as 'relational space.'⁶⁸ Relational conceptions of space operate on the understanding that space and social relations are interrelated, and consider the impact that social processes have on the world.⁶⁹ Most modern geographers arguably have a relational conception of space, in which they understand the spatial and the social to be mutually constitutive; they each have the agency to influence the other.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Phil Hubbard *et al.*, *Thinking Geographically: Space, Theory and Contemporary Human Geography* (London: Continuum, 2002).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Derek Gregory, "Space," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 707–10.

⁶⁷ Hubbard *et al.*, *Thinking Geographically*.

⁶⁸ Gregory, "Space."

⁶⁹ Gregory, "Space."

⁷⁰ See, for example, Javier Auyero, "Spaces and Places as Sites and Objects of Politics," in *The Oxford of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 564–78.

How space is conceptualised is far from static and singular; it continues to change, and there are multiple conceptualisations being used at any one time. However, over the last few decades some scholars' work on this term has emerged as particularly influential, including that of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Doreen Massey. In his 1991 book *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre recognised the complexity of space, deliberately refusing to finalise his analysis because he saw space as intangible and therefore hard to define.⁷¹ Despite this, he did argue that there are three complementary processes that contribute to the production of space. These are:

1. **Spatial practices:** Concrete and everyday flows, processes and movements;
2. **Representations of space:** Images, books, films and other cultural products that work ideologically to legitimate or contest particular spatial practices;
3. **Spaces of representation:** The space that is lived and felt by people as they go about their everyday lives.⁷²

Arguably, spaces of representation are more applicable to the concept of place than space, which I discuss in more depth below. Nevertheless, since Lefebvre's work was introduced to geographers, it has left an indelible mark on how space is conceptualised.

In his 1988 book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau developed some influential ideas about how the relationship between the spatial and the social functions.⁷³ For de Certeau, practice is integral to our understanding of everyday life. De Certeau's ideas about strategies and

⁷¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Chichester: Wiley, 1991); Rob Shields, "Henri Lefebvre," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, 2nd edition, eds. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (London: SAGE, 2011): 279–85.

⁷² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

⁷³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

tactics are particularly significant to the study of protest. Strategies are the tools and methods employed by elites to create space in a particular fashion, such as architecture and rules about acceptable behaviour in a space.⁷⁴ Tactics are the tools and methods employed by everyone else to subvert these intended discourses and spaces, such as walking directly across a patch of grass rather than on the path at its edge.⁷⁵ For Mike Crang, “[s]trategy claims territory and defines place; tactics use and subvert these places.”⁷⁶ The concept of strategies and tactics demonstrates how power relations can be intertwined with, and played out through, space—an idea which forms a significant theoretical underpinning of this thesis.

The work of Doreen Massey further illuminates the interaction between space, power relations, and politics.⁷⁷ Massey argues that space has three main characteristics. First, space is produced by interactions. Second, space and multiplicity are contingent upon each other; space is the “sphere...of coexisting heterogeneity.”⁷⁸ Third, space is always being produced. It is never ‘finished,’ it is “a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”⁷⁹ For Massey, this potential to become something new is what makes space political; what is politics if not a debate about what the future should be? I argue that an awareness of the political potential of space is critical to understanding the spatiality of protest.

The concept of ‘space’ employed in this thesis is influenced by a combination of such ideas. When I refer to space in this study, I mean the material objects and features in an area, with an understanding that these objects and features are mutually constitutive with the social, and, as such, can be represented, controlled, and subverted in particular ways to produce effects. By employing this definition of space, this thesis builds on

⁷⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

⁷⁵ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

⁷⁶ Mike Crang, “Michel de Certeau,” in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, 2nd edition, eds. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (London: SAGE, 2011): 106–12.

⁷⁷ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).

⁷⁸ Massey, *For Space*; 9.

⁷⁹ Massey, *For Space*; 9.

the work of scholars such as de Certeau and Massey, who centralise power in their understandings of space.

As previously discussed, there has been a tendency within geography to view space as a passive container for human activity, and William Sewell argues that this propensity extends to scholars of protest.⁸⁰ There are some authors, however, who have understood space and protest as mutually constitutive.⁸¹ With this understanding, space can influence protest in a variety of ways. For example, Walter Nicholls argues that the unevenness of various factors across space, such as capitalism, mobility, and state power, can shape both the grievances and development of social movements.⁸²

Space can also influence protest on a much smaller scale; the specific shape and features of space can affect how a protest unfolds. Sewell refers to this as the impact of the 'built environment,' and there are multiple empirical studies which have explored these impacts.⁸³ For example, in his discussion of two processions to mourn three executed Irishmen in Manchester, Mervyn Busted details the specific routes of the processions using maps.⁸⁴ The routes were affected by the built environment and physical space; for example, the processions passed through 'Irish' areas of the city, and avoided churches, because the Catholic Church had attempted to discourage the processions.⁸⁵ Supporting the argument that space and protest are mutually constitutive, there are also examples of protest, or at least the *fear* of protest, shaping the built environment. Almost as soon as work began constructing Trafalgar Square

⁸⁰ William H. Sewell, Jr., "Space in Contentious Politics," in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, eds. Ronald R. Aminzade *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 51–88.

⁸¹ Deborah G. Martin and Byron Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics," *Mobilization* 8, no. 2 (2003): 143–56; Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics."

⁸² Walter Nicholls, "The Geographies of Social Movements," *Geography Compass* 1, no. 3 (2007): 607–22.

⁸³ Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics."

⁸⁴ Mervyn Busted, "Parading the Green: Procession as Subaltern Resistance in Manchester in 1867," *Political Geography* 24 (2005): 903–33.

⁸⁵ Busted, "Parading the Green."

in London in 1840, it became a popular site for protest.⁸⁶ The primary purpose of the fountains in Trafalgar Square was to discourage such protest, reducing the amount of open space available for rallies.⁸⁷ Similarly, the dual level of the square was meant to make it harder for demonstrators to move around the space.⁸⁸ Such attention to the detail, or microgeography, of space is an approach which I have adopted in this thesis. As such, my work reinforces the case for taking the physical characteristics of space into consideration when studying protest.

2.2.2 Place

If 'space' is the physical environment, then 'place' encompasses the meanings, connotations, and emotions that get attached to a space. Like space, place is a contested concept which means different things in different situations. In everyday language, for example, a place is "a geographical locale of any size or configuration."⁸⁹ For human geographers, however, it is more than that. Exactly what it is though, is subject to constant negotiation.⁹⁰ In this thesis, place is understood as what Tim Cresswell calls "a meaningful location."⁹¹ It is fluid rather than fixed, in a constant state of 'becoming.'⁹² This understanding of place was developed in the 1970s by humanistic geographers such as Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan, who understood place as "unique, meaningful material constructions that reflected and articulated cultural perceptions and habits."⁹³ This idea was complicated by feminist geographers and 'new' cultural geographers in the 1980s, who argued that place is experienced differently by different

⁸⁶ Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, 2nd edition (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2005 [1976]).

⁸⁷ Mace, *Trafalgar Square*.

⁸⁸ Mace, *Trafalgar Square*.

⁸⁹ George Henderson, "Place," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 539–41; 539. See also Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁹⁰ Henderson, "Place."

⁹¹ Cresswell, *Place*; 7.

⁹² Henderson, "Place."

⁹³ Henderson, "Place;" 540.

people based on various facets of their identity.⁹⁴ More recently, and particularly relevant to the topic of dissent, the role of place in reinforcing the social order has been considered.⁹⁵

Returning to Lefebvre's tripartite definition of space, there is little difference between the conception of place I employ and Lefebvre's spaces of representation. Space and place have long been intertwined as concepts; Tim Cresswell has argued that space "has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning."⁹⁶ Lefebvre's writing on the social production of space blurred these distinctions even further, raising questions about the utility of treating space and place as two separate concepts.⁹⁷ I do not dispute Lefebvre's arguments, but for the sake of clarity I maintain a separation between space and place in this thesis.

Recent research on place has highlighted and explored the relationship between power and place. In his 1996 book *In Place/Out of Place*, Tim Cresswell argued that places are used to enforce regimes of normative behaviour; people and activities are judged as 'in-place' or 'out-of-place' according to rules that are frequently unspoken.⁹⁸ This argument illustrates how place is intertwined with dissent, as Cresswell explains:

The use of place to produce order leads to the unintended consequence of place becoming an object and tool of resistance to that order—new types of deviance and transgression such as strikes and sit-ins become possible.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Henderson, "Place."

⁹⁵ Henderson, "Place."

⁹⁶ Cresswell, *Place*; 10.

⁹⁷ Cresswell, *Place*; Henderson, "Place."

⁹⁸ Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁹⁹ Cresswell, *Place*; 103.

As I illustrate in this thesis, particularly in relation to the Hyde Park Railings Affair, the transgression of place-based social norms is an integral element of protest.

As with space, the relationship between place and protest is mutually constitutive. Deborah G. Martin and Byron Miller use Cresswell's ideas of 'in place/out of place' to discuss how repertoires of contention are formed in the context of place-specific social norms.¹⁰⁰ This attention helps to explain how protest is often able to shock, because actions are occurring that are outside the bounds of what is considered acceptable for that particular place. Sewell argues that a particularly big, successful, or well-known protest can sacralise a place, making it a symbolic space of protest that both enhances the significance, and increases the likelihood, of future protests in the same place.¹⁰¹ Linda Hershkovitz and Nelson K. Lee have both looked at how Tiananmen Square in Beijing became a symbolic place of protest, and although they disagree about the exact form of the process, they both argue it was due to big protests.¹⁰² Trafalgar Square has undergone a similar process. This fact does complicate the idea of protests being 'out of place,' as some places become so strongly associated with protest that it is not shocking when dissent occurs there. Yet protest continues to occur in spaces such as Trafalgar Square, so there must be other factors involved in the decision to locate these acts in particular places.

Protests can alter the symbolic meaning of places, but the symbolic meaning of place can also influence protest. In Lisa Benton-Short's analysis of the impact of post-9/11 security measures on the National Mall in Washington, DC, she argues that the increased security alters the symbolic meaning of the Mall, damaging its status as a symbol of democracy,

¹⁰⁰ Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics;" Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*.

¹⁰¹ Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics."

¹⁰² Linda Hershkovitz, "Tiananmen Square and the Politics of Place," *Political Geography* 12, no. 5 (1993): 395–420; Nelson K. Lee, "How is a Political Public Space Made? The Birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement," *Political Geography* 28, no. 1 (2009): 32–43.

freedom, and equal access. Benton-Short is concerned that this fact will make the Mall less attractive as a location of protest.¹⁰³ London's long history means there are few locations in the capital without some form of symbolic meaning. Some locations in the capital, such as Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square, and Downing Street, have a long association with protest. Any protest that occurs in the capital must take place within these symbolic contexts, and place is a significant concept for understanding how protesters respond to this symbolism. In this thesis I consider how protesters have interacted with London's symbolic places.

The conceptualisations of space and place employed in this thesis are not innovative; it is not unusual to define space as the physical and material environment, and place as the meanings that become attributed to that environment. What is perhaps less common is the centrality which I attribute to power in my conception of space and place. Power relations are entwined with space and place; they produce each other. Spaces and places are the manifestation of power, a fact which also makes them targets of dissent and subversion. As such, a geographical approach, which privileges the concepts of space and place, can enhance our understanding of protest. Steve Pile argues that geography and resistance are mutually constitutive; geography enables or limits resistance, and resistance can lead to the creation of new spaces, or geographies.¹⁰⁴ For Pile, "[a]t the heart of questions of resistance lie questions of spatiality."¹⁰⁵

2.2.3 Scale

Both protest groups and the organisations and processes they oppose operate on a variety of scales, from the local to the international. Lynn

¹⁰³ Lisa Benton-Short, "Bollards, Bunkers, and Barriers: Securing the National Mall in Washington, DC," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 3 (2007): 424–46.

¹⁰⁴ Steve Pile, "Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance," in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997): 1–32.

¹⁰⁵ Pile, "Introduction;" 27.

Staehele argues that scale is relevant to protest in two ways.¹⁰⁶ First, the processes that shape the structural context of protest operate on different scales; and second, different spatial scales provide different political opportunities to protest groups and activists.¹⁰⁷ One tactic available to protesters is that of 'jumping scale,' which involves expanding activities to a regional, national, or international scale in order to overcome difficulties at the local level.¹⁰⁸ Jumping scale in a successful and progressive manner is difficult, however, as evidenced by the ongoing debate in the literature.¹⁰⁹

Raymond Williams coined the term 'militant particularism' in 1989 to describe an intense local struggle.¹¹⁰ Militant particularisms can be a powerful political tool but they also have a tendency to rely on bounded understandings of place which can lead to reactionary and xenophobic politics. In 1996, David Harvey attempted to theorise a way in which militant particularisms could become part of large-scale international struggle, but he has been criticised for rejecting the very differences he attempts to embrace.¹¹¹ In an attempt to respond to such critiques, David Featherstone has argued for a relational conception of militant particularisms. This conception understands them as the product of multiple large-scale networks and processes, in an effort to discourage reactionary politics at the local level.¹¹² Accepting Featherstone's argument makes it difficult to delineate boundaries between local and larger-scale protests; "[r]ather than local political activity being neatly separate from

¹⁰⁶ Lynn A. Staeheli, "Empowering Political Struggle: Spaces and Scales of Resistance." *Political Geography* 13, no. 5 (1994): 387–91.

¹⁰⁷ Staeheli, "Empowering Political Struggle."

¹⁰⁸ Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics;" Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics;" and Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics."

¹⁰⁹ Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics;" Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics;" Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics;" and Staeheli, "Empowering Political Struggle."

¹¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989).

¹¹¹ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); David Featherstone, "Some Versions of Militant Particularism: A Review Article of David Harvey's *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*," *Antipode* 3, no. 1 (1998): 19–25.

¹¹² David Featherstone, "Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: Or Why the Geographies of Past Struggles Matter for Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation," *Antipode* 37, no. 2 (2005): 250–71.

the formation of universal political ambitions, it suggests that such political activity can decisively shape connections.”¹¹³

The study of protest in London can also blur the boundaries between local and larger-scale politics; protest in the city operates on multiple scales. As with any other location there are local issues that provoke protest. Focus E15 is a group that has campaigned for affordable housing in the capital since 2013, after a group of women were offered social housing in cities as far away as Manchester and Birmingham instead of Newham, their borough.¹¹⁴ The group continues to campaign for increased affordable housing and against gentrification in East London; their concerns are wholly local. Due to a concentration of symbolic locations and events in London, however, the capital also plays host to a large number of national- and international-scale protests. The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations were a response to a national policy change; London was chosen as the location for the protests because it is the home of the national government. The Battle of Cable Street is an example of a protest that complicates the boundaries between scales. It was an attempt to prevent the British Union of Fascists from marching through a local area, but it was tied into national and international anti-fascist campaigns. The protesters’ slogan, “No Pasaran!”, was adopted from those fighting for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War; there was an obvious awareness amongst participants of implications beyond East London. These examples demonstrate how the concept of scale can both illuminate and complicate our understanding of protest.

2.2.4 Networks

Networks are another inherently geographical concept. Defined as a “kind of spatial arrangement that consists of a collection of linked elements which typically exhibit a de-centred and non-hierarchical form,” they are

¹¹³ Featherstone, “Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms;” 264.

¹¹⁴ Focus E15, “About Us,” no date, accessed November 14, 2016.
<https://focuse15.org/about/>.

important when thinking about social movements, as it has been argued that social movements are made up of networks of various types and strengths.¹¹⁵ Activists and protesters utilise networks for the sharing of information, strategies, and tactics, and the development of shared political identities.¹¹⁶ Walter Nicholls argues that different networks perform different, often complementary, roles in social movements, and can impact the stability of the movement.¹¹⁷ The larger the scale of the network the harder it is to build and sustain, however, and activists with high economic and social capital are better able to overcome the difficulties of long-distance networks than those with limited capital.¹¹⁸ Whilst this literature provides a useful theoretical basis for the analysis of networks in this thesis, it does tend to focus on the existence of networks *in between* protests, rather than *during* them. It is important to understand how social movements are built and sustained in between periods of activism, but it is also necessary to consider the character of networks employed by activists and demonstrators whilst a protest is occurring. This thesis begins to address this inconsistency.

In addition, there is arguably a tendency to focus on the modern context, such as the role of modern communication technologies in facilitating networks. For example, Yannis Theocharis uses Social Network Analysis to evaluate the role and significance of Twitter as a networking tool for occupations during the 2010 Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations.¹¹⁹ For Kjerstin Thorson *et al.*, digital media drastically

¹¹⁵ Nick Bingham, "Network(s)," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 498–99; 498; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics;" and Walter Nicholls, "Place, Networks, Space: Theorising the Geographies of Social Movements,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34, no. 1 (2009): 78–93.

¹¹⁶ Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics."

¹¹⁷ Nicholls, "Place, Networks, Space."

¹¹⁸ Nicholls, "Place, Networks, Space;" Paul Routledge, 'Convergence Space: Process Geographies of Grassroots Globalisation Networks,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 3 (2003): 333–49.

¹¹⁹ Yannis Theocharis, "The Wealth of (Occupation) Networks? Communication Patterns and Information Distribution in a Twitter Protest Network," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 10, no. 1 (2013): 35–56.

altered the networking capacities of social movements, making them much more accessible.¹²⁰ Whilst it is beneficial to study the role of digital technologies in protest networks, there is the danger of overlooking the role of networks before the invention of modern communication technology. The work of David Featherstone helps redress the balance. For example, he uses the London and Newcastle port strikes of 1768 to demonstrate the existence of networks of radicalism and solidarity long before the invention of modern communication technologies.¹²¹ Using transatlantic networks of radicalism during the eighteenth century, Featherstone argues that networks, as well as the spaces and identities which they produce, are not fixed.¹²² Theorising networks as transient is helpful in the context of protest, as social movements, protest organisations, and individual activists come and go. A node in a network can disappear but the network continues to function, albeit in an altered form. I employ this understanding of networks in this thesis.

There are several prominent geographers who have published extensively on modern social movements, protest, and resistance, including Paul Chatterton and Jenny Pickerill.¹²³ Another geographer whose research is of

¹²⁰ Kjerstin Thorson *et al.*, "YouTube, Twitter and the Occupy Movement: Connecting Content and Circulation Practices," *Information, Communication and Society* 16, no. 3 (2013): 421–51.

¹²¹ David Featherstone, "Spatial Relations and the Materialities of Political Conflict: The Construction of Entangled Political Identities in the London and Newcastle Port Strikes of 1768," *Geoforum* 35, no. 6 (2004): 701–11; Featherstone, "Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms."

¹²² David Featherstone, "Atlantic Networks, Antagonisms and the Formation of Subaltern Political Identities," *Social and Cultural Geography* 6, no. 3 (2005): 387–404.

¹²³ See, for example: Paul Chatterton, David Featherstone, and Paul Routledge, "Articulating Climate Justice in Copenhagen: Antagonisms, the Commons, and Solidarity," *Antipode* 45, no. 3 (2013): 602–20; Paul Chatterton, Stuart Hodgkinson, and Jenny Pickerill, "Beyond Scholar Activism: Making Strategic Interventions Inside and Outside the Neoliberal University," *ACME* 9, no. 2 (2010) 245–75; Paul Chatterton and Jenny Pickerill, "Everyday Activism and Transitions towards Post-Capitalist Worlds," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, no. 4 (2010): 475–90; Kevin Gillan and Jenny Pickerill, "Transnational Anti-war Activism: Solidarity, Diversity and the Internet in Australia, Britain and the United States after 9/11," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 1 (2008): 59–78; Jenny Pickerill, *Cyberprotest: Environmental Activism Online* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

note is Paul Routledge.¹²⁴ His work utilises all four of the geographical concepts discussed here, and over the last three decades he has engaged with social movements in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. As in this thesis, Routledge conceptualises space, place, and protest as mutually constitutive:

[T]he relationship between resistance practices and the places wherein they are articulated are mutually constitutive, albeit in different ways. Hence, while the strategic mobilities of resistance may constitute particular spaces as homeplaces, the material, symbolic, and imaginary character of places will also influence the articulation of resistance.¹²⁵

Routledge's work is characterised by rich empirical detail and a centrality of power. He is concerned with power relations in all their forms; not just between social movements and those they resist, but also within social movements, and between scholars and activists.¹²⁶ For example, one concept that Routledge has developed over several publications is 'convergence spaces.' Convergence spaces are the locations, both physical and metaphorical, where activists and social movements come together to interact and exchange information, knowledge, and resources.¹²⁷ They are

¹²⁴ See, for example: Andy Cumbers, Paul Routledge, and Corinne Nativel, "The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 2 (2008): 183–201; Paul Routledge, "Critical Geopolitics and Terrains of Resistance," *Political Geography* 15, no. 6/7 (1996): 509–31; Paul Routledge, "A Spatiality of Resistances: Theory and Practice in Nepal's Revolution of 1990," in *Geographies of Resistance*, eds. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997): 68–86; Routledge, "Convergence Space;" Paul Routledge, "Voices of the Damned: Discursive Resistance Amidst Erasure in the Narmada Valley, India," *Political Geography* 22, no. 3 (2003): 243–70; Paul Routledge, "Sensuous Solidarities: Emotion, Politics and Performance in the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army," *Antipode* 44, no. 2 (2012): 428–52.

¹²⁵ Routledge, "A Spatiality of Resistances;" 71.

¹²⁶ Cumbers, Routledge and Nativel, "The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks;" Routledge, "Convergence Space;" and Routledge, "Voices of the Damned."

¹²⁷ Cumbers, Routledge and Nativel, "The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks;" Routledge, "Convergence Space."

like hubs in a network, but whilst networks are sometimes theorised as de-centralised, horizontal, and non-hierarchical, convergences spaces are intrinsically uneven “sites of contested social and power relations.”¹²⁸ They are also inherently spatial, “comprised of place-based, but not necessarily place-bound movements.”¹²⁹ Whilst this thesis does not borrow directly from Routledge’s terminology, it does share, and build on, his conception of geography as central to understanding protest but also highly uneven and shot through with power relations.

The concepts of space, place, scale, and networks are central to the discipline of geography. That centrality is reflected in the ways in which geographers theorise and understand protest. The sub-discipline of historical geography shares these foci, but also has concerns that are not necessarily shared by other areas of geography. In the next section, I shall explore how some of the key concerns of historical geography and protest history have impacted the study of protest.

2.3 Historical Geographies and History’s Geographies of Protest

Historical geography is a broad sub-discipline, largely concerned with “the geographies of the past and with the influence of the past in shaping the geographies of the present and the future.”¹³⁰ There are also a number of accomplished historians whose research on protest is concerned with the geographical. Historical geographers and historians who research protest share many of the same influences, and there is significant crossover between the two disciplines. As such, historical research that gives a central position to space and place is also discussed in this section. The body of research on protest within historical geography and history is extensive,

¹²⁸ Cumbers, Routledge and Navitel, “The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks;” 196.

¹²⁹ Cumbers, Routledge and Navitel, “The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks;” 192.

¹³⁰ Michael Heffernan, “Historical Geography,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 333–5; 333.

and it would not be appropriate to detail it all here. Scholars worthy of note whose work is not discussed include Andrew Charlesworth, Paul Griffin, Ruth Percy, Iain Robertson and Andy Wood.¹³¹ I have selected some of the key themes in historical geography and the histories of protest to discuss in relation to this thesis: historical geography from below; the ‘spatial turn;’ protest, practice, and performance; and the historical geographies of protest in London.

2.3.1 Historical Geography from Below

The work of E. P. Thompson is highly influential over the historical geographies of protest. *The Making of the English Working Classes* (1963) was an early example of ‘history from below,’ an approach that focuses on social history rather than elites.¹³² Alongside scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, Thompson began to study the relationship between protests and the people who performed them. *The Making of the English Working Class* theorises class as a process rather than an economic category.¹³³ One impact of this approach was a recognition of the agency of the working class, an acknowledgment that ‘ordinary’ people had the ability to shape events, culture, and society.¹³⁴ Agency remains a key vector in the historical geographies of protest. For example, in her analysis of

¹³¹ Andrew Charlesworth, “The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700–1850: A Comment,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 8, no. 1 (1980): 101–11; Andrew Charlesworth, ed. *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain, 1548–1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Andrew Charlesworth, “An Agenda for Historical Studies of Rural Protest in Britain, 1750–1850,” *Rural History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 231–240; Paul Griffin, “Labour Struggles and the Formation of Demands: The Spatial Politics of Red Clydeside,” *Geoforum* 63 (2015): 121–30; Ruth Percy, “Picket Lines and Parades: Labour and Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century London and Chicago,” *Urban History* 41, no. 3 (2014): 456–77; Iain Robertson, “The Role of Women in Social Protest in the Highlands of Scotland, c. 1880–1939,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997): 187–200; Iain Robertson, “Spaces of Assertion: Informal Land Occupations in the Scottish Highlands after 1914,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 53 (2016): 45–53; Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

¹³² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 2013 [1963]).

¹³³ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

¹³⁴ John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Education: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015 [2006]).

negotiations over land enclosure in the sixteenth century, Briony McDonagh highlights the role of the working classes in the production of the English landscape through their attempts to maintain access to common land.¹³⁵ Research such as this recognises and promotes the agency of those normally thought of as powerless.

Although Thompson's work was groundbreaking, the work of George Rudé, another proponent of the 'history from below' approach, has had a more significant impact on the approach I take in this thesis. Rudé, a Norwegian-British historian, attempted to identify the 'faces in the crowd' of historical protests. He found it difficult to obtain an academic position because of his affiliation with the Communist Party of Great Britain, but he nonetheless managed to produce multiple in-depth studies into what he termed 'popular disturbances,' particularly in France and England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹³⁶ His publications include "The Gordon Riots: A Study of Rioters and their Victims" (1956); *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (1959); *The Crowd in History* (1964); and *Captain Swing* (1969), written with Eric Hobsbawm.¹³⁷ Rudé used innovative historical sources to analyse the social composition of both rioters and their victims in order to better understand the protests themselves, as well as the motives of the protesters. He argued that the traditional sources utilised by historians, including memoirs, pamphlets, correspondence, and newspapers, "will often tend to present the question exclusively from the point of view of the government, the official political opposition, the

¹³⁵ Briony McDonagh, "Subverting the Ground: Private Property and Public Protest in the Sixteenth-century Yorkshire Wolds," *The Agricultural History Review* 57, no. 2 (2009): 191–206; Briony McDonagh, "Making and Breaking Property: Negotiating Enclosure and Common Rights in Sixteenth-Century England," *History Workshop Journal* 76, no. 1 (2013): 32–56.

¹³⁶ Doug Munro, "George Rudé: Communist Activist and Inactivist," *Working USA* 19 (2016): 147–162.

¹³⁷ George Rudé, "The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1956): 93–114; George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848*, 2nd edition (London: Serif, 2005 [1964]); Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969).

aristocracy, or the more prosperous middle class.”¹³⁸ Therefore, they are of limited use when it comes to studying protest, which is most frequently performed by other groups. As those who participated in protests did not tend to leave their own records, Rudé turned to other sources to conduct his research, including: police, hospital, and court records; Home Office papers; and parish registers. As I detail in Chapter 3, the use of alternative sources is an approach I have also adopted for this research.

Rudé attempted to establish the social composition of participants in protest, including factors such as their age, occupation, and address. Rudé approached the crowd as individuals as well as a collective, so that “the crowd may eventually appear not as an abstract formula but as a living and many-sided historical phenomenon.”¹³⁹ His approach is epitomised in the 1956 article “The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims.” Rudé attempted “not only to identify the rioters and their victims, but to throw a fresh light on the pattern of the riots and on the motives that prompted their participants.”¹⁴⁰ He used quantified data about the rioters and their targets to make nuanced arguments about the character and motivations of the rioters. More than 450 people were arrested during the course of the riots, and Rudé found records from 160 resulting trials, at which seventy-five people were found guilty.¹⁴¹ He used these records to dispute the commonly held belief that the rioters were unemployed criminals; out of 110 trials where the accused’s occupation was stated, 76 were wage-earners, and 22 were small employers.¹⁴² After exploring the social composition of the rioters, Rudé then went on to examine their motives, using information about the victims of the riots. Out of forty-seven claimants for significant amounts of compensation for damage done by rioters, all but four were either Catholic, or involved in attempting to quell

¹³⁸ Rudé, *The Crowd in History*; 12.

¹³⁹ Rudé, *The Crowd in History*; 15.

¹⁴⁰ Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 94.

¹⁴¹ Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 99.

¹⁴² Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 106.

the riots.¹⁴³ However, it was only certain sectors of the Roman Catholic community that were targeted. 136 claims for compensation stated the occupation of the claimants; most were from the middle and upper classes, including two doctors, five schoolteachers, and twenty-four shopkeepers.¹⁴⁴ Rudé used data such as this to argue “that behind the slogan of ‘No Popery’ and the other outward forms of religious fanaticism there lay a deeper social purpose: a groping desire to settle accounts with the rich, if only for a day, and to achieve some rough kind of social justice.”¹⁴⁵

The above example is illustrative of the way in which Rudé used detailed research and quantified data to analyse protesting crowds as individuals as well as collectives. In this way, he was one of the first historians to give serious consideration to protesters and rioters as anything more than a ‘mindless mob.’ Rudé’s methodology is not perfect, however; he himself acknowledged that it is “impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy the composition of the rioters as a whole;” the historical record does not allow it. The quantities and statistics he produced can only ever be an indication. There is arguably a concern that Rudé’s readers may assume his statistics to be more representative than they really are. As such, I chose not to adopt Rudé’s quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. What has influenced my own approach is his concern for the protester, his attempts to identify the ‘face in the crowd.’ Rudé devoted significant attention to understanding protesters as individuals in order to understand the protest as a whole. Using fine-grained details such as this to gain a more sophisticated appreciation of a protest event is a technique that I have adopted in my own work.

The work of James C. Scott can also be classified as ‘history from below.’ Scott criticises historians such as Rudé, however, who focus on large-scale protest movements and overlook what Scott terms ‘everyday

¹⁴³ Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 107–8.

¹⁴⁴ Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 109.

¹⁴⁵ Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” 111.

forms of resistance.¹⁴⁶ These are small, individual, uncoordinated, quiet actions such as foot dragging, false compliance, desertion, and poaching. When replicated on a large scale, they can significantly undermine the ability of a powerful group to function.¹⁴⁷ Scott argues that such everyday forms of resistance are “the most vital means by which lower classes manifest their political interests.”¹⁴⁸ As such, ignoring everyday forms of resistance and focusing solely on overt protest actions results in an incomplete picture of how the working classes resist the actions of, and rules imposed by, more powerful groups.¹⁴⁹

Whilst Scott’s work was significant in acknowledging the wide range of actions available for expressing dissent, he has been criticised for drawing too sharp a distinction between covert and overt forms of protest.¹⁵⁰ In his work on rural protest in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Carl J. Griffin studies both everyday forms of resistance and protest movements, trade unionism, and radical politics.¹⁵¹ He conceptualises the “toolbox of rural resistance” as including “all acts and practices that served to challenge and oppose,” including riots, incendiarism, poaching, verbal threats, back-talking, and foot dragging.¹⁵² In this way, covert and overt forms of protest are theorised as being part of the same range of options available for resistance, rather than being separate entities. Although this thesis focuses on overt practices of dissent, I have adopted Griffin’s understanding of resistance. As such, I understand the case studies featured in this thesis as moments in ongoing struggles between different groups in London.

¹⁴⁶ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (London: Yale University Press, 1985); James C. Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance,” *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 4 (1989): 33–62.

¹⁴⁷ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance.”

¹⁴⁸ Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance;” 33.

¹⁴⁹ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance.”

¹⁵⁰ Michael C. Gutmann, “Rituals of Resistance: A Critique of the Theory of Everyday Forms of Resistance,” *Latin American Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (1993): 74–92.

¹⁵¹ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*.

¹⁵² Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*; 85.

2.3.1.1 Microhistory

George Rudé and James C. Scott were not the only historians to devote attention to the details of events. ‘History from below’ influenced the development of microhistory, another key school of historical thought. As discussed in section 1.1, microhistory is the study of a clearly-defined, focused subject, such as a single community or event.¹⁵³ Within the historical geography of protest, it developed as an alternative to national-scale studies in the late 1980s and 1990s.¹⁵⁴ Two recent examples of microhistories of protest are *Silvertown: The Lost Story of a Strike that Shook London and Helped Launch the Modern Labor Movement* (2014) by John Tully, and *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History* (2011) by Louise Raw.¹⁵⁵ In *Silvertown*, historian John Tully documents a largely forgotten strike, and evaluates its significance in the wider development of New Unionism.¹⁵⁶ In late 1889, the unskilled labourers employed at Silver’s India-Rubber, Gutta-Percha and Telegraph Works Company in West Ham struck for three months in a bid for better pay.¹⁵⁷ The strike failed, largely because of the determination of Silver’s management and shareholders, and the refusal of the skilled workers employed at the works to act in solidarity with the strikers.¹⁵⁸ Tully provides a detailed account of the historical context of the strike, the strike itself, and its significance and impacts. Tully was meticulous in his research, even determining what the weather was like during the strike in order to offer a sense of what the strikers must have felt and experienced. For example, the strike was close to collapse at the end of November:

¹⁵³ Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Sziujártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁵⁴ Griffin, *Protest, Politics, and Work in Rural England*.

¹⁵⁵ Louise Raw, *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); John Tully, *Silvertown: The Lost Story of a Strike that Shook London and Helped Launch the Modern Labor Movement* (New York: Monthly Review, 2014).

¹⁵⁶ Tully, *Silvertown*.

¹⁵⁷ Tully, *Silvertown*.

¹⁵⁸ Tully, *Silvertown*.

Wednesday, 27 November, dawned dark and bitterly cold. The temperature struggled to rise above freezing and the first snow of winter fell on Silvertown...The strikers were cold and hungry, their dwellings not much warmer than the frigid air outside, their boots and clothing worn thin.¹⁵⁹

This is a level of detail that is just not possible in a long-term history. Neither would it be desirable; a book documenting the daily weather in London over two thousand years would be tedious and unwieldy. However, in the context of a detailed evaluation of a single strike, it serves a narrative and analytical purpose.

Like John Tully, Louise Raw is a historian, but one of the core arguments of her book *Striking a Light* relies heavily on a geographical perspective.¹⁶⁰ *Striking a Light* documents the 1888 strike of the unskilled female workers at the Bryant and May match factory in Bow, East London. Raw argues that the women's strike is largely overlooked by most historians of New Unionism, who do not believe that the women would have influenced the largely male workforce which participated in the famous Docker's strike a year later.¹⁶¹ Raw used census data to demonstrate that the matchwomen lived in the same streets and houses as men who worked at the docks.¹⁶² The dockers would have known the women who participated in the Bryant and May strike, they would have seen the women's success, and realised the potential of strike action.¹⁶³ Networks (see 2.2.4) would have been crucial in this transfer of knowledge and experience from the matchwomen to the dockers. Raw's in-depth research into the Bryant and May strikers as individuals, including where they lived, provided the evidence to support the argument that the Bryant and May strike was more influential in the history of New Unionism than has

¹⁵⁹ Tully, *Silvertown*; 177.

¹⁶⁰ Raw, *Striking a Light*.

¹⁶¹ Raw, *Striking a Light*.

¹⁶² Raw, *Striking a Light*.

¹⁶³ Raw, *Striking a Light*.

previously been supposed.¹⁶⁴ This thesis builds on the traditions of history from below and microhistory; each case study contains in-depth analysis that considers the agency of protest participants as individuals as well as part of collectives.

2.3.2 The ‘Spatial Turn’

Over the past two decades, many of the social sciences and humanities have experienced a ‘spatial turn;’ an increased awareness of the significance of geographical concepts such as space and place.¹⁶⁵ History in particular is a discipline in which “space and place are now firmly on the map.”¹⁶⁶ In some cases, attention to the spatial is superficial, little more than an “access point” to a more traditional historical study.¹⁶⁷ In other circumstances, however, the spatial turn is producing “innovative and thought-provoking texts that challenge established claims and perspectives in fresh new ways.”¹⁶⁸ Two such studies of particular relevance to this thesis are *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (2016) by Katrina Navickas, and Christina Parolin’s *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c.1845* (2010).¹⁶⁹ Both studies locate space and place at the centre of their analysis of historical radical movements, emphasising “the importance of access to spaces in which to assemble and communicate, to organise, gain inspiration and to embrace followers.”¹⁷⁰

Whilst both studies are concerned with similar time periods, their geographical scope is different: Navickas looks at the north of England, whilst Parolin focuses on London. There are other, more subtle, differences. For example, their theoretical frameworks differ. Whilst acknowledging its

¹⁶⁴ Raw, *Striking a Light*.

¹⁶⁵ Diarmid A. Finnegan, “The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 41 (2008): 369–88; Ralph Kingston, “Mind Over Matter? History and the Spatial Turn,” *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 1 (2010): 111–21.

¹⁶⁶ Kingston, “Mind Over Matter?,” 111.

¹⁶⁷ Fiona Williamson, “The Spatial Turn of Social and Cultural History: A Review of the Current Field,” *European History Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2014): 703–717; 710

¹⁶⁸ Williamson, “The Spatial Turn of Social and Cultural History;” 715.

¹⁶⁹ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c.1845* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁰ Parolin, *Radical Spaces*; 4.

weaknesses, Parolin uses Habermas' model of the 'public sphere.' She attempts to integrate working and middle class public spheres into the model, both mainstream and radical. In addition, *Radical Spaces* addresses the relationship between gender and the public sphere, an issue overlooked by Habermas.¹⁷¹ Parolin explores how different spaces both aided and hindered women's access to the public sphere at a time when they were becoming increasingly marginalised from radical culture.¹⁷² In contrast, Navickas abandons the public sphere to avoid conflating the experiences of the working, middle, and upper classes. She argues that working class radicals employed elements of the public sphere, but were not simply trying to enter the political world of the middle and upper classes. They were trying to create something different.¹⁷³ As such, Navickas prefers the concept of the 'body politic' to describe a "participatory political culture" which different groups sought to shape to best suit their interests.¹⁷⁴ Navickas' theoretical framework also draws on the work of scholars most commonly associated with geography, including Henri Lefebvre, Ed Soja, and Nigel Thrift.¹⁷⁵ For example, Soja's concept of 'thirdspace' is used to explore "how plebeian protesters could subvert the symbolism associated with buildings constructed by elites."¹⁷⁶

Despite such differences, the key arguments of the two studies reinforce one another. Both contend that space and place were integral to the form and development of radical movements in the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. Parolin focuses on the spaces themselves, arguing that they were co-constitutive with radical culture and identities: "there is a dynamic, dialectical and symbiotic relationship between radical culture and the sites in which it operated."¹⁷⁷ Spaces such as prisons, pubs, and radical meeting halls both shaped, and were shaped by, the radical

¹⁷¹ Parolin, *Radical Spaces*.

¹⁷² Parolin, *Radical Spaces*.

¹⁷³ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*.

¹⁷⁴ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; 9.

¹⁷⁵ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*.

¹⁷⁶ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; 14.

¹⁷⁷ Parolin, *Radical Spaces*; 279.

culture in London at the time. For example, Parolin traces how penal reforms in the infamous Newgate Prison altered the dynamics of radical communities within the prison between the 1790s and the 1820s. By the 1820s, the life of prisoners and their visitors was more closely regulated, and the practice of paying for better conditions was more restricted. As such, Newgate was not the hub of radical debate and publishing in the 1820s that it had been in the 1790s, although such activity did still occur.¹⁷⁸

Taking a slightly different approach, Navickas' attention is occupied by the conflict between radicals and elites over access to such spaces:

From 1789 to 1848, national and local governments, propertied elites and aspirant wealthy middle classes sought to deal with the rise of popular movements for reform and workers' rights by restricting their opportunities to meet and to speak in public space and in the governing body politic. Protesters contested and claimed the symbolic and physical uses, and memory of particular sites of meeting.¹⁷⁹

For Navickas, these conflicts were just as formative of radical movements as the spaces themselves were for Parolin. National and local governments and elites realised how significant access to space was for radical movements and worked to prevent such access. The "negotiation and contestation" of these restrictions was an integral part of developing not just the movements themselves, but also collective identities.¹⁸⁰

Despite their differences in approach and focus, both *Radical Spaces* and *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place* are examples of how the spatial turn in other disciplines both builds on, and can contribute to, our understandings of the historical geographies of protest. Both studies foreground space and place in their analysis, and therefore develop our

¹⁷⁸ Parolin, *Radical Spaces*.

¹⁷⁹ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; 311.

¹⁸⁰ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; 314.

knowledge of how these two key geographical concepts relate to protest. This thesis continues that development.

2.3.3 Protest, Practice, and Performance

Performance is currently “one of the most pervasive metaphors in the human sciences.”¹⁸¹ It has been utilised in a number of ways, including research into embodiment, the production of social life through everyday practice, and de-naturalising social categories.¹⁸² Nigel Thrift defines performance as “the enactment of events with what resources are available in creative, imaginative ways which lay hold of and produce the moment.”¹⁸³ Theatre and protest have a long history of association; the procession is one of the most common forms of protest as well as one of the oldest forms of street theatre.¹⁸⁴ Therefore it is unsurprising that some scholars researching protest have embraced the concept.¹⁸⁵ All protest is a performance of some kind, whether or not participants embrace the inherent theatricality. London has a long association with theatre and performance. Peter Ackroyd argues there have been two dominant metaphors for London over its history: the prison and the theatre.¹⁸⁶ He notes an “innate and exuberant theatricality” in the city.¹⁸⁷ Londoners have always been “devoted to drama” and they have thrived on acts of protest and dissent.¹⁸⁸ It is worth noting the spatiality of this metaphor; viewing the

¹⁸¹ Nigel Thrift, “Afterwords,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, no. 2 (2000): 213–55; 225.

¹⁸² Geraldine Pratt, “Performance,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); 525–26.

¹⁸³ Thrift, “Afterwords;” 225.

¹⁸⁴ Annalise Moser, “Acts of Resistance: The Performance of Women’s Grassroots Protest in Peru,” *Social Movement Studies* 2, no. 2 (2003): 177–90.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example Marcelle C. Dawson, “Protest, Performance and Politics: The Use of ‘Nano-media’ in Social Movement Activism in South Africa,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17, no. 3 (2012): 321–45; and Moser, “Acts of Resistance.”

¹⁸⁶ Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002).

¹⁸⁷ Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001); 152.

¹⁸⁸ Ackroyd, *Albion*; 313.

city as a theatrical stage is inherently geographical. This thesis will consider the performativity inherent in protests in the city.

The very nature of historical research raises difficulties for investigating practice and performance. Miles Ogborn explores the historical geography of practice through a heated verbal argument between two men that took place in Jamaica in 1724.¹⁸⁹ Their words were recorded in an archive, but Ogborn argues that in order to understand the encounter we have to acknowledge that it was more than an exchange of words; “[t]he encounter, the moment, is affective, embodied, situated and dramatic.”¹⁹⁰ These elements, however, are difficult to access through the archive:

There is, therefore, the challenge to be faced that all of what is interesting to those concerned with practice is only available to historical geographers through the mediation of what remains, textual or otherwise, and that much of that can only hint at the routines, gestures, embodiments, feelings and performances of the people in the past.¹⁹¹

Ogborn does not view this challenge as impossible to overcome, however. In fact, he argues that it is a challenge that *must* be overcome; “in a world of practice historical geography needs ways of going on that are adequate to both the archive and the worlds of the past; that work between them without conflating them.”¹⁹²

The work of historical geographer Carl Griffin on rural dissent in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain is an illustrative example of exploring the historical geographies of practice and performance. Griffin approaches the archive with cautious creativity, arguing for the “need to

¹⁸⁹ Miles Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language: Historical Geography in a World of Practice,” *Historical Geography* 37 (2009): 5–21.

¹⁹⁰ Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language;” 5.

¹⁹¹ Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language;” 7.

¹⁹² Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language;” 18.

cast an imaginative eye over the archive, to search for suggestion and then proceed with interpretive caution.”¹⁹³ The result is research that foregrounds the practical, performative, and emotional aspects of protest. Griffin acknowledges the difficulties of researching practice and performance in the archive, and advocates “engag[ing] with historical texts in ways that highlight the intimate connections between language and embodied practice.”¹⁹⁴ Griffin’s work is frequently structured according to different dissenting practices, rather than social movement, time period, or locale, which emphasises the significance of practice and performance in his work.¹⁹⁵

It can often be difficult to establish the motivation behind historical actions; whether they were intended as an expression of dissent, or perhaps something else. In response to this limitation, Griffin focuses on how such actions were *perceived* by their victims and the media.¹⁹⁶ As a result, much of Griffin’s work centres around the affective capabilities of protests actions; their ability to create emotions within those who witness or even hear about them. This affective violence can be just as successful as physical violence:

Violence can therefore be more fruitfully understood as something that could have a psycho-physical manifestation as well as a straightforwardly physical manifestation.

Violence did not have to involve flesh (or weapon) upon flesh to achieve its goals, rather through language, gesture and the performing of (disembodied) pain, bodies could be

¹⁹³ Carl J. Griffin, “‘Cut Down by some Cowardly Miscreants’: Plant Maiming, or the Malicious Act of Cutting Flora, as an Act of Protest in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rural England.” *Rural History* 19, no. 1 (2008): 29–54; 34.

¹⁹⁴ gr 11.

¹⁹⁵ See, for example, Griffin, “‘Cut Down by some Cowardly Miscreants’;” Carl Griffin, “Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict: Understanding the Spaces of ‘Tree-maiming’ in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (2008): 91–108.

¹⁹⁶ Griffin, “‘Cut Down by some Cowardly Miscreants’.”

made to feel something every bit as agonizing as a physical attack.¹⁹⁷

Griffin argues that such affective violence is a popular tactic for expressing dissent, because inflicting pain on embodied proxies, such as animal maiming, threatening letters or graffiti, or burning effigies, carries less risk than inflicting pain on people.¹⁹⁸ This focus on the practice, performance, and emotion of protest enables a more complete understanding of how protest is experienced by both protesters and others, and is an approach I have adopted in my own work. For example, in Chapter 4, I include an analysis of the verbal and non-verbal methods that the Gordon Rioters used to communicate and organise, which is key to understanding why the riots caused such panic amongst London's elites. Only rioters were killed or injured, but their embodied acts of violence such as looting and burning houses was enough to make the city's wealthy residents fear for their lives.

One of the first questions that comes to mind when thinking of protest as a performance is "who is the performance for?" There are several answers to this question, namely other protesters, the authorities, and the general public. The role of protest in maintaining protester morale and demonstrating solidarity with other groups is a significant one. Gavin Brown and Helen Yaffe analysed how the Non-Stop Picket outside the South African embassy in London in the second half of the 1980s "*performed* their solidarity with those resisting apartheid in South Africa."¹⁹⁹ The practices of the picket, such as organised shifts, colourful placards, and songs, developed solidarity between the members of the picket as well as with those resisting apartheid in South Africa and Namibia.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Carl J. Griffin. "Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early Nineteenth-Century English Protest," *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 139–62.

¹⁹⁸ Griffin, "Affecting Violence."

¹⁹⁹ Gavin Brown and Helen Yaffe, "Practices of Solidarity: Opposing Apartheid in the Centre of London," *Antipode* 46, no. 1 (2014): 34–52; 35 (italics added). See also David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed, 2012).

²⁰⁰ Brown and Yaffe, "Practices of Solidarity."

Protest is not only performed for those within social movement and activist circles however; it is also for the authorities and the general public. Wendy Parkins and Maggie B. Gale argued that the suffragettes “broke the law as a means of being seen and heard: they needed to make their political presence visible” in a society where they had no legal voice.²⁰¹ Protest is a way of attracting attention to a cause. As technology has developed, the audience for this performance has expanded far beyond those who witness a protest directly; newspapers, television news, the internet, and social media all play a role in disseminating the message of a modern protest. The system is not perfect however, as Maggie B. Gale demonstrates in her discussion of the difficulties feminist protesters face trying to get their message across through a media in which the exploitation of female bodies is institutionalised.²⁰² Clive Bloom has raised concerns that protesters will lose sight of their ideology in a rush to be media friendly, becoming merely “pastiche protest.”²⁰³ Whilst Gale’s argument is valid, Bloom is perhaps overlooking the long history of protesters engaging with the mass media. For example, the radical group known as the Levellers, prominent during the English civil wars in the 1640s, were well-aware of the power of printed pamphlets for influencing public opinion, and employed them to great effect.²⁰⁴ Protesters and radicals have been adapting their performances to best suit the mass media for centuries; Bloom’s concerns are, therefore, largely unfounded.

If a performance needs an audience, it also (often) requires a script. The term implies that the performers have at least some idea of what they are doing. Protesters’ scripts come in the form of what Charles Tilly calls

²⁰¹Wendy Parkins, “Protesting Like a Girl: Embodiment, Dissent and Feminist Agency,” *Feminist Theory* 1, no. 1 (2000): 59–78; Maggie B. Gale, “Resolute Presence, Fugitive Moments, and the Body in Women’s Protest Performance,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 25, no. 3 (2015): 313–26; 322.

²⁰² Gale, “Resolute Presence, Fugitive Moments and the Body in Women’s Protest Performance.”

²⁰³ Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 [2003]); xxxvi.

²⁰⁴ John Rees, *The Leveller Revolution: Radical Political Organisation in England, 1640–1650* (London: Verso, 2016).

‘repertoires of collective action.’²⁰⁵ Such a repertoire encompasses “a limited number of well-known performances repeated with relatively minor variations.”²⁰⁶ Activists have a certain number of protest actions to choose from, such as a march, a rally, or an occupation, with which most people are familiar. Even if an individual has not actually participated in a protest action before, they arguably know what behaviour and actions would be expected of them if they did. For example, Carl Griffin describes repertoires of protest in relation to riots in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries thus:

The actants involved in food riots knew the “moves.” Most food riots were, in a sense, tightly choreographed. They also knew that their “dance” had to be rigorous. Riot was a performance, a staging of a demand, a playing out of a right, but above all it had to be assertive.²⁰⁷

Most protesters know what to do and how to act without being told; they know the ‘script.’ The organisational role of repertoires of protest will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 7. For now, however, it is sufficient to note simply that repertoires of protest are significant in terms of how a protest functions as a performance.

2.3.4 Historical Geographies of Protest in London

Walk into any bookshop in London and you will find a wealth of titles, both academic and popular, dealing with the history of the city; there is no shortage of research on London’s past.²⁰⁸ Most of this research is not dedicated to the history of dissent in the city, but there are still a significant

²⁰⁵ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Center for Research on Social Organization Working Paper No. 156 (1977); Charles Tilly, *Britain Creates the Social Movement*, Centre for Research on Social Organization Working Paper No. 232 (1981).

²⁰⁶ Tilly, *Britain Creates the Social Movement*; 9.

²⁰⁷ Carl J. Griffin, “Affecting Violence;” 140.

²⁰⁸ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 2000 [1994]).

number of studies on the subject. For example, both David Featherstone and Diarmaid Kelliher have used the city to illustrate their analyses of agency and solidarity in the labour movement.²⁰⁹ Both argue that London is central to networks of solidarity, Featherstone in relation to dock strikes in 1768, and Kelliher in relation to the 1984–5 miner’s strike.²¹⁰ Kelliher’s work in particular has a focus on in-depth analysis of specific events or groups in order to shed light on large-scale developments, which he terms “small-scale histories.”²¹¹ This approach is similar to the one adopted in this thesis.

Kelliher argues that the conflict between neo-liberalism and alternative visions of how to move beyond the post-war settlement in London in the late twentieth century was spatialised. Enterprise zones such as the London docklands were physical manifestations of Thatcherism, whilst women’s centres, radical bookshops and other sites advocated alternatives.²¹² Resistance groups sought a physical presence in the capital, which “helped embed politics in particular localities.”²¹³ These radical bookshops and support centres were resources for the campaign to support the 1984–5 miner’s strike, providing space for solidarity meetings and collection points for food and money. In addition, the solidarity campaign temporarily politicised other spaces such as bars, theatres, and student unions when they were used to host fundraisers.²¹⁴ In this way, the

²⁰⁹ David Featherstone, “Spatial Relations and the Materialities of Political Conflict;” David Featherstone, “Atlantic Networks, Antagonisms and the Formation of Subaltern Political Identities;” David Featherstone, “Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms;” David Featherstone, “Contested Relationalities of Political Activism: The Democratic Spatial Practices of the London Corresponding Society,” *Cultural Dynamics* 22, no. 2 (2010): 87–104; Diarmaid Kelliher, “Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners 1984–5,” *History Workshop Journal* 77 (2014): 240–62; Diarmaid Kelliher, “Contested Spaces: London and the 1984–5 Miners’ Strike,” *Twentieth Century British History* 28, no. 4 (2017): 595–617; Diarmaid Kelliher, “Constructing a Culture of Solidarity: London and the British Coalfields in the Long 1970s,” *Antipode* 49, no. 1 (2017): 106–24.

²¹⁰ Featherstone, *Spatial Relations and the Materialities of Political Conflict*; Kelliher, “Constructing a Culture of Solidarity.”

²¹¹ Kelliher, “Solidarity and Sexuality;” 257.

²¹² Kelliher, “Contested Spaces.”

²¹³ Kelliher, “Contested Spaces; 598.”

²¹⁴ Kelliher, “Contested Spaces.”

campaign could reach out to the general public, and attempt to widen the miner's support base.

As well as exploring the spatial elements of the solidarity campaign to support the miner's strike, Kelliher's work also places the campaign in the long-term development of "mutuality" between miners and other groups.²¹⁵ If the period 1984–5 is looked at in isolation, the miners received significantly more support than they gave. However, with a wider scope it becomes clear that a mutual relationship of solidarity was built up between London and the coalfields from the late 1960s.²¹⁶ Events such as miner's strikes in 1972 and 1974, and the Grunwick strike in 1976–8 contributed to "a culture of solidarity, albeit an uneven and contested one, in which labour activists could and did expect to receive support during struggles."²¹⁷ Kelliher's research explores the spatiality of local activism within London, but also the city's role as a hub of networks of activist agency and solidarity.

The case studies in this thesis have themselves been the subjects of various academic studies. These studies have informed this research, but in some cases their conclusions have also been questioned by the findings of this thesis. As such, it seems pertinent to discuss these studies in order to contextualise this research.

As one of the most significant contentious events in London's history, there is a substantial body of research on the Gordon Riots. In 1926, John Paul de Castro published *The Gordon Riots*, a text that remains one of the most significant scholarly accounts of the riots.²¹⁸ De Castro subscribed to the le Bonian understanding of crowd psychology. Gustave le Bon's text on crowd psychology, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, was first published in 1896, but remains influential.²¹⁹ Le Bon argued that

²¹⁵ Kelliher, "Constructing a Culture of Solidarity;" 106.

²¹⁶ Kelliher, "Constructing a Culture of Solidarity."

²¹⁷ Kelliher, "Constructing a Culture of Solidarity;" 106–7.

²¹⁸ John Paul de Castro, *The Gordon Riots* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926). This work has been extensively referenced by other scholars, such as Anthony Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain: From the Gordon Riots to the Gibraltar Incident* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²¹⁹ Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Dover Publications: Mineola, New York, 2002 [1896]).

an individual loses their identity when in a crowd and becomes part of a “collective mind,” incapable of reasoned judgment and highly susceptible to suggestion.²²⁰ Le Bonian ideas have been extensively critiqued, and largely dismissed, over the last century.²²¹

George Rudé’s contrasting 1964 account of the Gordon Riots is also influential amongst contemporary scholars. Rudé was critical of de Castro’s analysis, arguing that the rioters were a collection of individuals, motivated by a whole range of complex factors rather than an abstract, single body.²²² As discussed in Section 2.3.1, Rudé’s work highlights the fact that the rioters came from a wide range of social backgrounds rather than a single criminal ‘underclass.’ Rudé’s analysis is thoughtful, nuanced, and well-supported, and has also been influential in the writing of this thesis.

The most recent scholarly publication on the Gordon Riots is *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2012), edited by Ian Haywood and John Seed.²²³ In the introduction to this collection, Haywood and Seed evaluate the extant literature and conclude that the riots represent an interaction of political concerns and socio-economic inequality:

The pressing question is not whether the Gordon Riots were politically motivated or rooted in economic and social grievances, but how specific grievances connected with specific political discourses and actions in the London of 1780.²²⁴

²²⁰ le Bon, *The Crowd*; 2.

²²¹ There is some relatively recent scholarship in which le Bonian ideas persist, however. See, for example: John Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England 1780–1840* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000).

²²² Rudé, “The Gordon Riots;” Rudé, *The Crowd in History*.

²²³ Ian Haywood and John Seed, ed., *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²²⁴ Ian Haywood and John Seed, “Introduction,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1–17; 11.

The book then embarks on “a number of different revaluations and recontextualisations,” analysing the political contexts, representations, and aftermath of the riots.²²⁵ It contains a number of thoroughly researched and convincing arguments on a variety of topics, including the culture of petitioning in British politics at the time; the writings of well-known former slave Ignatius Sancho on the riots; and the impact of the riots on attitudes towards Britain’s harsh criminal justice system.²²⁶

The Hyde Park Railings Affair is not as well-known as the Gordon Riots, nor as significant in the history of London, which arguably explains why it has received less scholarly attention. In his study of the history of dissent in London, historian Clive Bloom casts the Hyde Park Railings Affair as the last gasp of a particular style of dissent in the capital: “one of the last of the old-style mob riots.”²²⁷ In contrast, in their history of protest in the capital, Lindsey German and John Rees contextualise the Affair as just one event in a longer campaign for democratisation which culminated in the passage of the second Reform Act in 1867.²²⁸ In both cases, the protest is framed in such a way as to function as evidence for the authors’ narrative of the evolution of dissent in London. Examples such as this highlight the necessity of being wary of the representation of events in secondary sources.

As perhaps one of the most famous protests in London’s history, the third case study in this thesis, the Battle of Cable Street (1936), has been the subject of much scholarly research. Different studies position different

²²⁵ Haywood and Seed, “Introduction;” 12.

²²⁶ Mark Knights, “The 1780 Protestant Petitions and the Culture of Petitioning,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 46–68; Brychan Carey, “‘The Worse than Negro Barbarity of the Populace’: Ignatius Sancho Witnesses the Gordon Riots,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 144–61; Tim Hitchcock, “Renegotiating the Bloody Code: The Gordon Riots and the Transformation of Popular Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 185–203.

²²⁷ Clive Bloom, *Violent London*; 210.

²²⁸ Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People’s History of London* (London: Verso, 2012).

groups as the key organisers of the demonstration. For example, Clive Bloom attributes the event's organisation solely to the Communist Party of Great Britain, and Lindsey German and John Rees acknowledge the role of the Labour Youth League.²²⁹ Neither mention the role of Jewish groups, however, and as such present only a partial account of the protest's organisation. In contrast, David Rosenberg's study of Jewish responses to fascism in East London in the 1930s presents a more rounded account of the role of Jewish groups in organising the response to the BUF's march.²³⁰

One of the most substantial scholarly works on the Battle of Cable Street is the edited collection *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society* (2000).²³¹ The book aims "to explore further what has become a highly contested memory."²³² Published in a series focusing on Jewish studies, the book unsurprisingly approaches the Battle from the perspective of British Jewish history, but it also considers gender, ideology, and class.²³³ The editors also acknowledge the utility of a geographical perspective, particularly when it comes to the study of identity. Kushner and Valman identify three elements of the Battle in which a geographical perspective can be beneficial: first, the Battle's place in a wider struggle for local belonging; second, national networks of Jewish communities and anti-fascists who travelled to London to participate in the Battle; and third, the Battle as part of an international campaign against fascism, particularly its connections to the Spanish Civil War.²³⁴

²²⁹ Bloom, *Violent London*; German and Rees, *A People's History of London*.

²³⁰ David Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End: Jewish Responses to Fascism in the 1930s* (Nottingham, Five Leaves: 2011).

²³¹ Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman, eds. *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000).

²³² Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman, "Introduction: Minorities, Fascism and Anti-Fascism," in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000); 1–22.

²³³ Julie Gottlieb, "Women and Fascism in the East End," in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000); 31–47; David Renton, "Dockers and Garment Workers, Railwaymen and Cabinet Makers: The Class Memory of Cable Street," in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000); 95–108.

²³⁴ Kushner and Valman, "Introduction;" 19.

As a relatively recent event, there has been less opportunity for scholarly reflection on the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, although there have been some studies published on the protests. The subjects include: damage as a form of political communication; the reasons for participating, or not, in high-risk activism; and the protests as a form of moral economy.²³⁵ Of particular note is Yannis Theocharis' research on the ways in which the demonstrators used digital forms of communication such as websites, blogs, and social media, to inform, interact, and mobilise.²³⁶ Theocharis' analysis informed my own on communication during the demonstrations (see section 7.2.1), and I built on his 'Tweet typography' when developing my own.

The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations also feature in several books published in 2011 that are part record of emerging social movements, part political manifestos.²³⁷ The editors of *Springtime: The New Student Rebellions* (2011) describe the book thus:

This book...consists largely of accounts by student participants in the wave of struggle that have stretched from the West Coast of the United States to much of Western Europe. It is a chronicle, but not just a chronicle. It is the formulation of an experience. We hope that its cumulative

²³⁵ Barts Cammaerts, "The Mediation of Insurrectionary Symbolic Damage: The 2010 U.K. Student Protests," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013): 525–48; Alexander Hensby, "Networks, Counter-networks and Political Socialisation: Paths and Barriers to High-cost/risk Activism in the 2010/11 Student Protests against Fees and Cuts," *Contemporary Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2014): 92–105; Joseph Ibrahim, "The Moral Economy of the UK Student Protest Movement," *Contemporary Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2014): 79–91.

²³⁶ Yannis Theocharis, "Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation: How the Internet Shaped the Student Occupations," *Parliamentary Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2012): 162–94; Yannis Theocharis, "The Contribution of Websites and Blogs to the Students' Protest Communication Tactics during the 2010 UK University Communications," *Information, Communication, and Society* 16, no. 9 (2013): 1477–513; Yannis Theocharis, "The Wealth of (Occupation) Networks?"

²³⁷ Michael Bailey and Des Freedman, eds. *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* (London: Pluto, 2011); Clare Solomon and Tania Palmieri, eds. *Springtime: The New Student Rebellions* (London: Verso, 2011).

impact will be to develop alternatives that challenge the priorities of capitalist society.²³⁸

Ambitious aims for a hastily published book, but such publications nevertheless provide useful first-hand accounts of the protests, in many ways performing a similar role to pamphlets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

London is perhaps one of the most frequently represented cities ever. From books to films to scholarly research, there is no shortage of interpretations of historical protest in the city. The academic literature on the historical geographies of protest in London frames the work of this thesis. Some of the key traditions within historical geography and protest history, namely history from below, the 'spatial turn,' and protest, practice, and performance, have also contributed to the empirical grounding of this thesis.

2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored three areas of literature that this research both builds upon and contributes to. The scholarship on protest is extensive, and originates from a number of academic disciplines. There are a variety of approaches to the study of protest which have influenced my own, including collective action, social movements, and contentious politics. There are also four key geographical concepts that are significant to this research project: space, place, scale, and networks. Within the sub-discipline of historical geography, there are several discussions and traditions within which my research is situated. These conceptions and approaches form the theoretical framework on which my own analysis builds. In this chapter, I have explained the theoretical basis for this thesis. In the next, I explain and justify my methodological approach.

²³⁸ Clare Solomon and Tania Palmieri, "Introduction," in *Springtime: The New Student Rebellions*, eds. Clare Solomon and Tania Palmieri (London: Verso, 2011): 1–16; 1–2.

3

Methodology

Conducting a research project that spans 230 years raises multiple challenges, not least that of having to contend with the wide variety of sources resulting from over two centuries of technological development. From printed pamphlets to social media, the number of ways of recording something (e.g., texts, images, and film), and, therefore, the number of sources for studying the past, proliferated between 1780 and 2010. Each source material involves different methods of production and preservation, resulting in different materialities. Each was produced for different reasons, and with different purposes in mind. Each is valued differently by society and academic communities. Each contains different kinds of information and records different kinds of voices. When employing such sources for historical research, all of these factors need to be taken into consideration for every individual source, let alone each type of source.

Historical sources are typically stored in archives, those places where “records are kept so that they can be used as sources of information.”²³⁹ Admittedly this is a broad definition, but recent critical engagement with the concept of the archive has led to a more nuanced understanding which makes a more specific definition difficult and unhelpful.²⁴⁰ Alan Baker has imagined the archival researcher as a detective, piecing together clues to reveal the ‘truth.’²⁴¹ This kind of perception, that the archive contains objective, unbiased sources, just

²³⁹ Miles Ogborn, “Finding Historical Sources,” in *Key Methods in Geography*, 2nd edition, eds. Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French, and Gill Valentine (London: SAGE, 2010): 89–102; 92.

²⁴⁰ See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Hayden Lorimer, “Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography* eds. Dydia DeLyser *et al.* (London, SAGE, 2010): 248–73; Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001).

²⁴¹ Alan Baker, “‘The Dead Don’t Answer Questionnaires:’ Researching and Writing Historical Geography,” *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 21, no. 2 (1997): 231–43.

waiting to be uncovered by a researcher, was once common.²⁴² However, most scholars now acknowledge that “all archives are incomplete, have their own biases on the basis of inclusion, omissions, and point of view,” and are more reflective about the process of archival research as a result.²⁴³

In this chapter, I build upon this self-reflective tradition by detailing the range of sources and methodologies employed in this thesis, and discussing the methodological issues faced whilst conducting the research. The rest of this chapter is divided into four sections. The chapter begins with a discussion of this project’s research questions, and of how I designed a methodology to answer them. As the majority of my research was conducted in archives, in the second section I discuss the issues and debates around archival research which are currently occupying scholars. The third section is a consideration of each type of source consulted during this research, in which I examine their potential and limitations for historical research. The fourth and final section details in specific terms how I analysed the sources upon which I have drawn, a specific issue which seems to be frequently overlooked in methodological discussions of research in historical geography. The methodology I developed for this thesis reflects the questions I wanted to answer and the potential I identified whilst conducting preliminary research. In the next section, I explain in detail how I responded to each of the four research questions.

3.1 Research Design: Responding to the Research Questions

Each case study and each research question required the use of a different combination of sources. In Table 1 below, I have identified which case

²⁴² Randall C. Jimerson, “Archives and Memory,” *OCLC Systems and Services* 19, no. 3 (2003): 89–95.

²⁴³ Susan J. Douglas, “Writing from the Archive: Creating Your Own,” in *Media History and the Archive*, ed. Craig Robertson (London: Routledge, 2011): 8–17.

studies and sources I used to respond to each of the four research questions.

Table 1: A summary of which case studies and sources relate to the research questions.

RQ	Case Studies	Applicable Sources
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gordon Riots • The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Old Bailey Proceedings Online • Unpublished manuscripts • Official papers • Ephemera • Pre-recorded participant interviews • Twitter
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hyde Park Railings Affair • The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper articles • Pamphlets • Maps • Websites • British Laws and Acts of Parliament • Twitter
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Battle of Cable Street • The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper articles • Official papers • Pre-existing oral history recordings • Visual representations of the Battle of Cable Street • Textual representations of the Battle of Cable Street • Twitter
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gordon Riots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hyde Park Railings Affair • The Battle of Cable Street • The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations 	
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As the above table demonstrates, different types of source were used to answer different research questions. Some sources, such as newspapers, pamphlets, and Twitter, were used in relation to almost all the questions. This is because one way in which sources such as this can be used is to provide basic, although not in any sense objective, information about events and how they unfolded. Despite biases and inaccuracies, with careful source triangulation it is generally possible to construct a narrative of events in which one can be confident. Other forms of source were more useful in relation to specific case studies and research questions.

RQ1 relates to how London protesters and their opponents have organised and communicated, with a particular focus on the Gordon Riots. In order to respond to this question, I wanted to incorporate the perspective of those involved as far as possible. With that in mind, I used official papers to understand how the authorities attempting to quell the riots acted, and what motivated their actions. Finding sources that contained the perspective of the rioters was more difficult, and required creative use of sources, particularly the Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online. The transcripts of the trials of rioters have, to some degree, preserved the voices of London's working classes, giving an insight into their experience of the riots.

RQ2 refers to debates over the use and control of public space, referring mainly the Hyde Park Railings Affair. A key aspect of my response to this question is the various ways that people talk about public space, and lay claim to it. Pamphlets and newspaper articles, particularly letters to

the editor, were useful in relation to the Hyde Park Railings Affair. For the comparative element, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, Twitter provided a useful insight into the ways in which public space was debated and claimed. Maps of varying formats also proved useful in relation to both case studies, acting as visual representations of the ways the people perceive and utilise public space. The second key element of this research question, how public space is controlled by authorities, was addressed through consultation of the laws governing dissent in public space in both 1866 and 2010, and accounts of the actions of the Metropolitan Police on both occasions.

RQ3 relates to how protests are commemorated and remembered, and how those memories are reused in later protest events. The main case study I employ in response to this question is the Battle of Cable Street. I analysed visual and textual representations of the Battle in order to better understand how the narrative of the Battle has developed and been reproduced over the last eighty years. I also used newspaper articles, including letters to the editor, in this process. I used the official papers of Tower Hamlets borough council to understand the process behind the production of the Cable Street mural.

RQ4 is holistic, requiring consideration of all four case studies in order to evaluate the ways in which repertoires of protest have developed over the period of my research. As such, there are no specific sources that were utilised to answer this research question, as I make use of all the data and analysis I have collected and conducted on the topic.

Most of the research itself took place in an archive of some form. In the next section, I review the literature on the characteristics of archives, and the ways in which they influence historical research.

3.2 Archives

Over the course of the project, I have conducted archival research at the British Library, the National Archives, the Guildhall Library, London

Metropolitan Archives, the Imperial War Museum, the London School of Economics Archive, Senate House Library, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, the Jewish Museum London, and Infoshop 56a. The sources consulted in these archives included newspaper articles, images, handbills and flyers, pre-existing interviews, pamphlets, diaries, Home Office papers, and Tower Hamlets local authority papers. In each case, the relevant sources were either photographed or transcribed, depending on the regulations of the archive. In the case of some of the images held at the Jewish Museum London and the London Metropolitan Archives, I was given or purchased scanned copies of the images.

From the moment of their creation, archives are infused with multiple power relations that impact the research process. Over the past few decades, scholars have come to recognise that an archive is not “a goldmine for the extraction of select elements and valuable information.”²⁴⁴ Archives are not inert storage containers; they are, as Kurtz explains, political:

Because they are actual places, archives are finite. They cannot hold every trace, nor can they serve every patron at once. Some selection is necessary, which means the archives on which (and in which) geographers conduct research are inherently political.²⁴⁵

Researchers cannot alter the selection decisions that were made in the past, or events such as war, fire, or natural disaster that might have impacted what has survived. In this respect, there is little that can be done to counter the inherent power relations of the archive. However, having an awareness of these biases, and using innovative research methods to

²⁴⁴ M. Kurtz, “Archives,” in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, eds. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (London: Elsevier, 2009): 179–83; 179.

²⁴⁵ Kurtz, “Archives;” 182.

attempt to account for them, can go some way towards opposing them. Biases cannot be removed, but they can at least be exposed.

Historically, archival sources have privileged the most powerful groups in society, as elite voices are heard and recorded most frequently.²⁴⁶ This bias is particularly evident when researching protest, as traditional historical sources such as memoirs, pamphlets, and newspapers rarely record the perspective of the protesters directly.²⁴⁷ For example, the majority of surviving eyewitness accounts of the Gordon Riots are from the perspective of outsiders, members of the middle and upper classes who had the skills and resources to write or publish their narratives. These accounts are skewed by the class bias of the authors; as John Seed has noted, “[t]hough often eye-witnesses to the events, it is striking how little these contemporaries see.”²⁴⁸ The authors frequently assumed that the rioters were ignorant and unable to understand religious issues, which was not the case for many members of the crowd.²⁴⁹ These kinds of prejudices can be found in the sources relating to all four of the case studies in this thesis. The issue is compounded by elite control over the selection and cataloguing of archival sources, influencing which materials get preserved and how they are interpreted.²⁵⁰ This bias can be partially countered by the creative use of historical sources, such as images and court records. For example, the Proceedings of the Old Bailey contain transcripts of the trials that took place at the Old Bailey, including many of those resulting from the Gordon Riots. Many of the witnesses in the trials were not wealthy or well-educated, but their accounts are preserved in the Proceedings. Instead of using court papers to calculate crime statistics, they can be used as a rare insight into the perspective of the working and lower middle

²⁴⁶ Jimerson, “Archives and Memory.”

²⁴⁷ George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848*, 2nd edition (London: Serif, 2005 [1968]).

²⁴⁸ John Seed, “‘The Fall of Romish Babylon Anticipated’: Plebian Dissenters and Anti-Popery in the Gordon Riots,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 69–92; 71 (Italics in original).

²⁴⁹ Seed, “‘The Fall of Romish Babylon Anticipated.’”

²⁵⁰ Mike Featherstone, “Archive,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, no. 2–3, 2006: 591–96.

classes. By engaging with sources in unconventional or creative ways, it is possible to find traces of the participants of protest.

There are other inherent characteristics of archives that can influence research. Archival sources are representations of the events and people they record. History, however, was much more than representations; it was lived, embodied experiences and actions, it was *practice*.²⁵¹ The development of non-representational theory has led cultural geographers to focus on practice and embodiment, an area not immediately suited to “a dusty archive brimming with words and symbols.”²⁵² Historical geographers can, and do, research practice, but they have to transcend the either/or approach to look at practice *through* representation (see 2.3.3).²⁵³

Another issue to consider is that archives remove sources from their original contexts, and sometimes alter the materiality of the sources. Sources can be bound and rebound, restored, and converted to microfilm or digitised, material changes that can have an impact on how they are interpreted by a researcher. For example, Adrian Bingham highlights the significance of the remediation of newspapers:

There is a danger in this process of forgetting that newspapers were material objects that were bought, read and passed around, and that the location and presentation of individual articles is of central importance in understanding how those articles were received by readers and how much significance was ascribed to them.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Miles Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language: Historical Geography in a World of Practice,” *Historical Geography* 37 (2009) 5–21.

²⁵² Carl J. Griffin and Adrian B. Evans, “On Historical Geographies of Embodied Practice and Performance,” *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 5–16; 6.

²⁵³ Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language.”

²⁵⁴ Adrian Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians,” *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 225–31; 230.

Processes such as digitising a source transforms its materiality, potentially obscuring vital clues about how the source was produced, used, and preserved.²⁵⁵

Researchers also need to recognise their own positionality and influence over the process of archival research. Academics have been debating the effect of a scholar's social and cultural experiences on their research since the 1980s, and it is now widely accepted that positionality *does* have an impact.²⁵⁶ Maria Tamboukou has considered the role of the researcher in archival research, using the work of Karen Barad to argue that research outputs such as journal articles and monographs emerge from 'intra-actions' (relations between components, rather than interactions, which imply relations between separate entities) between the researcher, the object of research, and the context of the research.²⁵⁷ A whole range of factors, including the researcher's preconceptions, their routine at the archive, and practical considerations such as time and financial constraints, influence how a particular narrative is created out of archival sources.²⁵⁸ The researcher is intertwined with their research.

Thanks to recent critical evaluation of archives, they are now understood to be diverse and complex, shot through with various power relations. Elites, archivists, and researchers, amongst others, all impact the archive as they interact with it. The critical debate about the nature of archives has also expanded the definition of archives, as the next section, which discusses the various types of sources I utilised during this research, illustrates.

²⁵⁵ Maryanne Dever and Linda Morra, "Literary Archives, Materiality and the Digital," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 223–26; Ala Rekrut, "Matters of Substance: Materiality and Meaning in Historical Records and their Digital Images," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 238–47.

²⁵⁶ Geraldine Pratt, "Positionality," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); 556–57.

²⁵⁷ Maria Tamboukou, "Archival Research: Unravelling Space/Time/Matter Entanglements and Fragments," *Qualitative Research* 14, no. 5 (2014): 617–33; 621–22. See also Maria Tamboukou, "Feeling Narrative in the Archive: The Question of Serendipity," *Qualitative Research* 16, no. 2 (2016): 151–66.

²⁵⁸ Tamboukou, "Archival Research."

3.3 Sources

3.3.1 Published Sources

During my research, I consulted two forms of published historical sources: newspapers and pamphlets, both of which present their own methodological challenges when it comes to analysis and interpretation. Having been somewhat neglected in the past as a historical source due to their questionable accuracy and ephemeral nature, the 'cultural turn' saw researchers beginning to realise the potential of newspapers.²⁵⁹ Pamphlets, in contrast, have long been trusted by researchers as historical sources. Short publications on topical subjects, pamphlets were popular in the eighteenth century as they allowed authors to express themselves rapidly, anonymously, and inexpensively.²⁶⁰

Newspapers are a significant source for historical research, and can be used in a number of ways. Stephen Vella sums up their complex nature thus:

So what is a newspaper? It is at once a text, a record of historical events, a representation of society and a chronicle of contemporary opinions, aspirations and debates. A newspaper is also a business enterprise, a professional organization, a platform for advertisements and itself a commodity.²⁶¹

At their most basic level, newspapers provide "a wealth of detail on specific news events;" they can tell us what happened and when.²⁶² Like all

²⁵⁹ Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives."

²⁶⁰ Kenneth Margerison, "Pamphlets," in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195104301.001.0001/acref-9780195104301-e-523>.

²⁶¹ Stephen Vella, "Newspapers," in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History*, ed. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009): 191–208; 194.

²⁶² Edwin Hirschmann, "Using South Asian Newspapers for Historical Research," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (1971): 143–50; 145.

historical sources, however, newspapers cannot be trusted implicitly, they are “gatekeepers and filterers of ideas.”²⁶³ Editors and journalists make decisions about which stories are covered, and they shape how those stories are interpreted and received.²⁶⁴ Newspapers reflect the views and values of those who produce them, and in turn shape the views and values of those who read them.²⁶⁵ In this way, newspapers contribute to the (re)production of dominant political discourses.²⁶⁶ In relation to protest, this often entails “delegitimization and marginalization of protest groups that challenge established orders.”²⁶⁷ As such, newspapers need to be used carefully by researchers, particularly in the context of protests. During the course of this research project I utilised newspapers to provide information about events. Particularly in the case of the Hyde Park Railings Affair, I also used newspapers to gain an understanding of how people perceived, and talked about, protest events. One useful feature of newspapers in this case was letters to the editor, through which I could see how people other than editors and journalists were responding to events.²⁶⁸

Even once historians realised the potential of newspapers, the sheer amount of material available and problems with access made researching newspapers a time-consuming and impractical methodology.²⁶⁹ However, recent digitisation projects have made many newspapers easier to access, and have allowed new approaches to researching them.²⁷⁰ Most digital newspaper archives are currently designed around the same set of blueprints: entire articles can be searched according to a number of criteria including keyword and date (see Figure

²⁶³ Vella, “Newspapers;” 193.

²⁶⁴ Vella, “Newspapers.”

²⁶⁵ Vella, “Newspapers.”

²⁶⁶ Thomas McFarlane and Iain Hay, “The Battle for Seattle: Protest and Popular Geopolitics in *The Australian Newspaper*,” *Political Geography* 22, no. 2 (2003): 211–32.

²⁶⁷ McFarlane and Hay, “The Battle for Seattle;” 212.

²⁶⁸ Vella, “Newspapers.”

²⁶⁹ Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives.”

²⁷⁰ Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives;” Bob Nicholson, “The Digital Turn: Exploring the Methodological Possibilities of Digital Newspaper Archives.” *Media History* 19, no. 1 (2013): 59–73.

1).²⁷¹ During the course of this research project I used three online newspaper databases: the *Illustrated London News* Historical Archive, the *Times* Digital Archive, and the 19th Century British Library Newspapers database. All three can only be accessed with a license, usually held by Higher and Further Education institutions, so are not universally accessible.

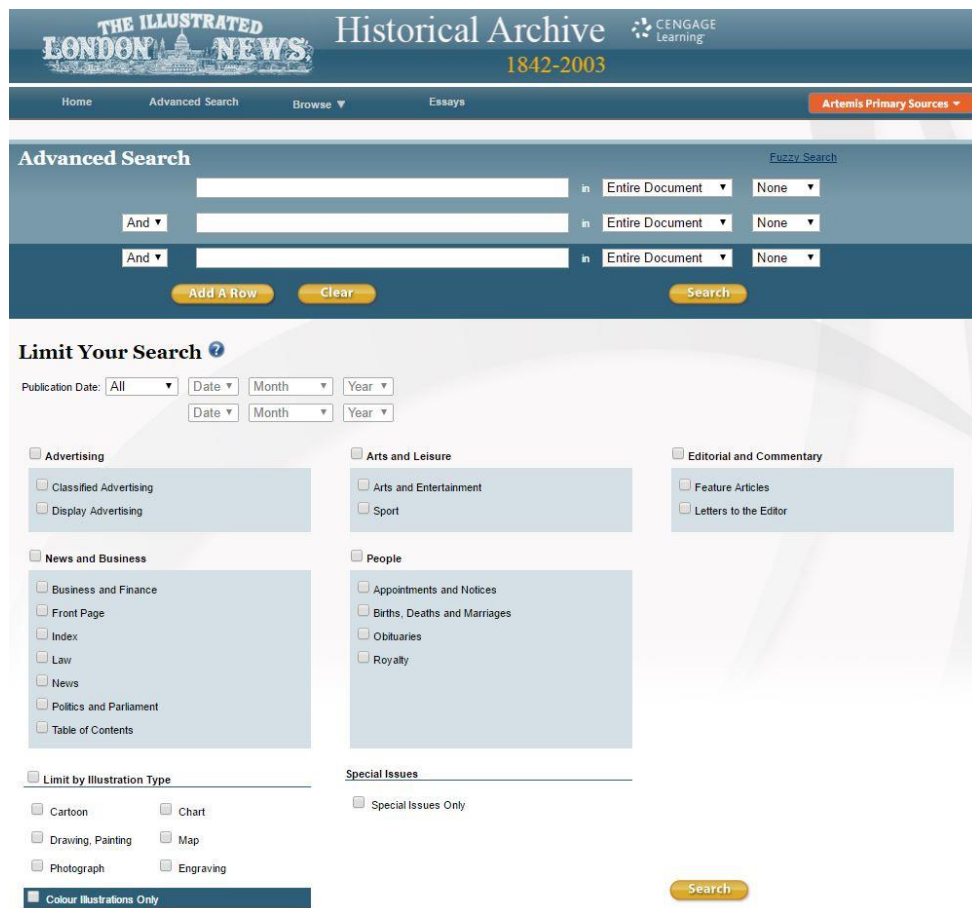


Figure 1: The 'Advanced Search' function of the *Illustrated London News Historical Archive* allows the user to conduct a search based on a wide range of criteria. Source: *Illustrated London News Historical Archive*, "Advanced Search," no date, accessed March 1, 2014, <https://www.gale.com/uk/c/illustrated-london-news-historical-archive>. Image reproduced by permission of Gale, a Cengage company.

The digitisation of archival material is an ongoing, but slow, expensive, and contested process. Nevertheless, digital archives have several benefits. They can be accessed from anywhere in the world,

²⁷¹ Nicholson, "The Digital Turn."

reducing the time and financial costs of archival research.²⁷² Keyword search functionality can also save the researcher time, transforming the way in which a researcher approaches historic newspapers. In a physical archive, a researcher starts with a particular publication, then progresses to individual issues, specific articles, and finally data.²⁷³ In a digital archive, a keyword search can take one directly to the data required.²⁷⁴ This, and a whole range of 'text mining' techniques, are allowing new forms of research that simply would not have been possible before, such as tracing the cultural evolution of a particular word or phrase.²⁷⁵ For example, when researching the Hyde Park Railings Affair, I was able to enter the search term 'Hyde Park,' and an appropriate date range into the databases' search engines, and I quickly had access to many relevant newspaper articles. I deliberately used a broad search term as contemporaries were referring to the Affair by a range of names, but the location was a constant which most articles mentioned. Due to these innovations, I was able to collect a variety of opinions and commentary about the Affair in a relatively short space of time.

There are also risks to the use of digital archives, however. The ease of accessing and using digital archives may skew research in favour of material that has been digitised.²⁷⁶ The cost of accessing particular digital archives may also discourage or prohibit researchers from using specific sources.²⁷⁷ As previously mentioned, the digitisation process is slow, and it should not be assumed that a research project can be conducted entirely with digital resources.²⁷⁸ It is important to select the sources that are most likely to be helpful, not simply those that are easiest to access. With

²⁷² Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives;" Edward Hampshire and Valerie Johnson, "The Digital World and the Future of Historical Research," *Twentieth Century British History* 20, no. 3 (2009): 396–414.

²⁷³ Nicholson, "The Digital Turn."

²⁷⁴ Nicholson, "The Digital Turn."

²⁷⁵ Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives;" Nicholson, "The Digital Turn."

²⁷⁶ Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives."

²⁷⁷ Bingham, "The Digitization of Newspaper Archives."

²⁷⁸ Katrina Dean, "Digitising the Modern Archive," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 2 (2014): 171–74.

newspapers from the seventeenth and eighteenth century in particular, uneven typography can confuse the software that transcribes the articles, leading to inaccuracies in transcription.²⁷⁹ Keyword searches are not guaranteed to find everything relevant to a particular topic, and privilege text over images.²⁸⁰ As such, it is important to acknowledge that digital archives need to be used by researchers with the same consideration as material archives.

Pamphlets are most commonly found in analogue form, but their use in archival research still presents methodological issues that need consideration. Particularly popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, pamphlets were relatively short texts bound together and sold cheaply or distributed for free.²⁸¹ Their purpose was to persuade, and several characteristics made them well suited to this function. They were cheap to produce; they could be printed anonymously, which meant there was a low risk of falling foul of censorship or libel laws; and they could be published quickly, which allowed authors to respond rapidly to current events or criticism.²⁸² Pamphlets were a significant channel through which political debate was conducted, to the extent that historian Janet Polansky has declared that “[p]amphlets, not muskets, ignited the revolutions that swept through America and Europe at the end of the eighteenth century.”²⁸³

During the course of this research project I consulted pamphlets relating to the Gordon Riots and the Hyde Park Railings Affair. They all took the form of accounts of the riots, apart from one, which reported Lord George Gordon’s trial for high treason in the wake of the riots. Miriam L. Wallace has undertaken a detailed analysis of *A Plain and Succinct*

²⁷⁹ James E. Tierney, “The State of Electronic Resources for the Study of Eighteenth-Century British Periodicals: The Role of Scholars, Librarians, and Commercial Vendors,” *The Age of Johnson* 21 (2011): 309–XIV.

²⁸⁰ Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives.”

²⁸¹ Margerison, “Pamphlets.”

²⁸² Margerison, “Pamphlets.”

²⁸³ Janet Polansky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); 17.

Narrative, an account of the Gordon Riots written by Thomas Holcroft, which illustrates the methodological considerations required when working with pamphlets.²⁸⁴ Just starting his career as an author in 1780, Holcroft was commissioned to write the pamphlet by his publishers, Field and Walker.²⁸⁵ He published the pamphlet under a pseudonym, posing as a lawyer in an effort to lend his account greater credibility.²⁸⁶ Wallace argues that Holcroft had mixed emotions about the rioters: “[t]here is a tension in Holcroft’s account between anxiety about irrational mass violence and admiration for the ‘energies’ of the crowd.”²⁸⁷ In this tension, it is arguably possible to see signs of Holcroft’s later radicalism.²⁸⁸ *A Plain and Succinct Narrative* was popular, going through at least two reprints in 1780.²⁸⁹ When using it and other similar pamphlets as a historical source, all of these factors need to be taken into consideration; commercial appeal and the aims, background, and politics of the author and publisher significantly impacted the content of pamphlets. Critical evaluation needs to be undertaken with every historical source, but these elements, as well as the cultural and social context, need to be given particular attention when analysing pamphlets.

3.3.2 Official Papers

The records of national and local governments are not the most obvious sources for researching protest and unrest. However, they can be revealing in terms of how authorities respond to unrest. The papers of government bodies and departments present a particular set of challenges to researchers, not least of which being the ‘twenty-year rule’, which means

²⁸⁴ Miriam L Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots: Romantic Revisionings,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth Century Britain*, ed. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 162–82.

²⁸⁵ Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots.”

²⁸⁶ Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots.”

²⁸⁷ Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots;” 174.

²⁸⁸ Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots.”

²⁸⁹ Wallace, “Thomas Holcroft and the Gordon Riots.”

public records cannot be accessed for twenty years after their creation.²⁹⁰ The Freedom of Information Act (2000) gives everyone a legal right to view documents held by public organisations, but requests to view sources can be denied, particularly when releasing the information might cause harm.²⁹¹ None of the documents I used fell within the twenty-year limit, but Alan Booth and Sean Glynn have identified four other challenges of using public records:

1. Official records should be treated with caution as they are incomplete and potentially misleading.
2. State papers can only inform a researcher about the process of policy making, rather than their causes or effects.
3. Political papers tend to be self-justificatory, and omissions may be just as informative as contents. Historians need to cross-reference with alternative sources whenever possible.
4. Relying solely on government papers may lead to biased conclusions.²⁹²

Andrew McDonald has criticised Booth and Glynn for overstating the difficulties of engaging with public records as well as not recognising their full potential.²⁹³ In addition, all of Booth and Glynn's challenges apart from the second can be applied to all forms of archival source, not just official papers. All archival sources are incomplete, potentially biased, and were created to serve a particular purpose. As with digitised sources, it seems

²⁹⁰ National Archives, "20-year Rule," no date, accessed August 16, 2016, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-projects/20-year-rule/>.

²⁹¹ National Archives, "About Freedom of Information," no date, accessed August 16, 2016, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/freedom-of-information/about-freedom-of-information/>

²⁹² Alan Booth and Sean Glynn, "The Public Records and Recent British Economic Historiography," *The Economic History Review* 32, no. 3 (1979): 303–15; 315.

²⁹³ Andrew McDonald, "Public Records and the Modern Historian," *Twentieth Century British History* 1, no. 3 (1990): 341–52.

that most of the difficulties can be navigated by a researcher who is diligent, attentive, and willing to get to know the context of the sources.

During the course of this project, I made use of government papers on several occasions. I used Home Office papers, stored at the National Archives in Kew, London, to investigate how the government responded to the Gordon Riots and the Battle of Cable Street. I also used local government papers held at the Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives to examine the commission, completion, and preservation of the Cable Street mural. Finally, I used the Old Bailey Proceedings Online to analyse the transcripts of the trials of those arrested during the Gordon Riots. The two physical archives have different policies on photography, which affected how I recorded the sources. The National Archives have no restrictions on photography, so all the sources were photographed in order to be analysed at a later date (see Figure 2). This did, however, result in a large number of photographs to analyse, an example of time-saving techniques actually being more time-consuming in the long run, a risk highlighted by Edward Hampshire and Valerie Johnson.²⁹⁴ The Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives charges a £5 daily rate for the use of cameras. As a result, I photographed some of the material, but also transcribed some. This made the process of analysis more manageable, particularly as transcription acts as an early form of analysis, something which I shall discuss in more detail below.

²⁹⁴ Hampshire and Johnson, "The Digital World and the Future of Historical Research."

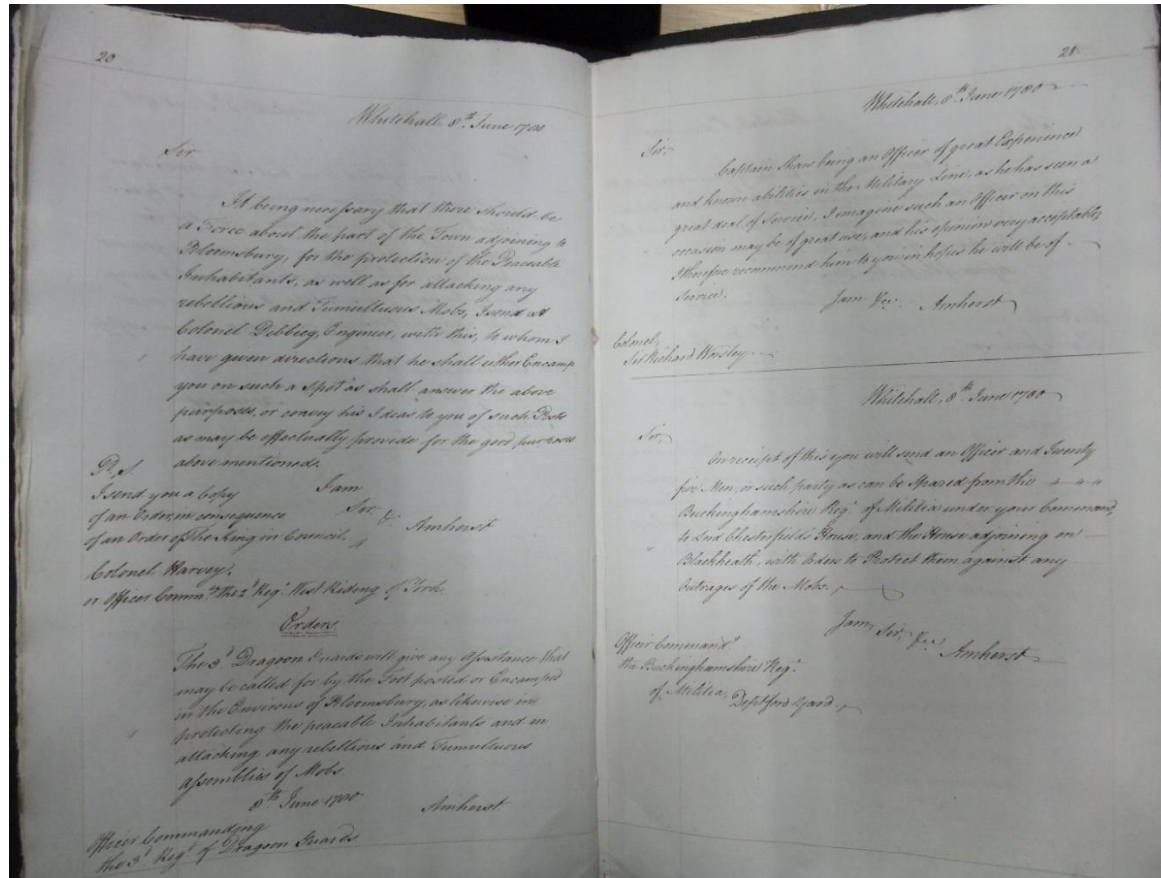


Figure 2: An example of a photographed source held at the National Archives. Source: National Archives WO 34/234 Letters to military officers and government officials concerning the Gordon Riots, Summer 1780. Image reproduced courtesy of The National Archives, ref. WO34/234.


The final type of official source I consulted were trial transcripts of individuals charged with participating in the Gordon Riots. They are one of the few sources that contain accounts of the riots from the perspective of the working classes. It is necessary, of course, to consider that witnesses may have been lying or altering their testimony in order to incriminate or exonerate the defendant, but trial transcripts are nevertheless an important source of detailed eyewitness accounts of the riots. The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online is a project which has digitised all surviving editions of the Old Bailey Proceedings between 1674 and 1913, and the Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts between 1676 and 1772.²⁹⁵ The sources have been photographed and transcribed, and can be searched according to a number of criteria including keyword, surname, offence, verdict, and punishment (see Figure 3).²⁹⁶ It is free to use for non-commercial purposes. Whilst researching the Gordon Riots I downloaded the transcripts of sixty-nine trials for the offence of breaking the peace and riot. As the archive is digital, I took into account all of the considerations already discussed in relation to newspapers.

²⁹⁵ The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online, "About this Project," no date, accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Project.jsp>.

²⁹⁶ The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online, "Search Home," no date, accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/forms/formMain.jsp>.

Search Home

The boxes below allow you to search the whole of the **Proceedings** and all published **Ordinary's Accounts** (for the period 1679 to 1772). You may combine keyword searches with queries on tagged information including **surname**, **crime**, and **punishment**. The default setting allows you to search the full text of all the documents available on this website. This page should be used for basic and general searches. Please refer to the other pages listed to your left for more search options. If you are new to this site, you may find the [Getting Started](#) and [Guide to Searching](#) tutorials helpful.



Keyword(s) ?

And Or Phrase

Surname ?

Given Name ?

Alias ?

Offence ?

Verdict ?

Punishment ?

Search In ?

Time Period

From (month/year) To (month/year)

Any Any Any Any ?

Reference Number ?

SEARCH

Figure 3: The 'Search Home' of the Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online allows the user to search court records according to different criteria, in a similar manner to digital newspaper archives. Source: Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online, "Search Home," no date, accessed June 3, 2014, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/forms/formMain.jsp>. Image reproduced courtesy of www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0.

3.3.3 Unpublished Sources

As well as published sources and official, bureaucratic papers, there are a whole range of other types of sources which I consulted during the research for this thesis, including some that were never meant to be public, and some that were never meant to be preserved. These include diaries, recorded interviews, ephemera, and the London landscape.

Diaries are an important source for social historians, partially because they can contain details about everyday life which do not tend to be preserved in other types of sources.²⁹⁷ As with all types of sources, it is important to consider the provenance of diaries; in this case why the author kept a diary, who their intended audience was, and how the diary

²⁹⁷ Heather Beattie, "Where Narratives Meet: Archival Description, Provenance, and Women's Diaries," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009): 82–100.

came to be in the archive are of particular significance.²⁹⁸ During the course of my research on the Gordon Riots, I consulted the diary of John Wilkes, a well-known radical politician, who was a Justice of the Peace by 1780. He did not support the rioters, instead making multiple arrests and helping to defend the Bank of England on the night of 7 June.²⁹⁹ Wilkes' diary is brief, containing short descriptions of his activities on each day and lacking in opinion or exposition. Heather Beattie argues that diaries in this style are meant to be private, written as a personal reminder to the author of their own activities.³⁰⁰ As a result, it is unlikely for Wilkes' diary to be deliberately inaccurate, as he had no reason to falsify information he did not intend others to see.

I used recorded interviews, in the form of pre-existing oral history recordings, on two occasions whilst conducting research for this project. The first were interviews with veterans of the Spanish Civil War, conducted by the Imperial War Museum in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of the interviews contained descriptions of the Battle of Cable Street. In the second case, I used interviews which I had conducted and transcribed during a previous research project on the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. Oral histories are a popular research methodology for historians working on the recent past, although it is most common to conduct the interviews for a specific project, as opposed to using interviews conducted by someone else, or for a different research project.³⁰¹ Nevertheless, this is arguably a valid research approach. One of the key characteristics of archival research is finding, rather than creating, sources that can help answer your research questions; no archival sources are created with a particular research project in mind. Using interviews conducted for a different purpose is arguably no different.

²⁹⁸ Beattie, "Where Narratives Meet."

²⁹⁹ British Library [hereafter BL] Add MS 30866. John Wilkes' Diaries.

³⁰⁰ Beattie, "Where Narratives Meet."

³⁰¹ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

Ephemera is another type of source that historians find particularly useful when researching marginal groups or activities. Defined as “primarily paper-based materials designed by their creators for short-term use,” Richard Kolbert poetically describes ephemera as “the bits and scraps of ages-gone-by.”³⁰² The term covers a wide range of materials, including posters, handbills, flyers, missives, calendars, programmes, catalogues, and playbills.³⁰³ They are particularly useful to researchers working on topics that tend otherwise to leave little trace in more ‘official’ archival sources, such as protest.³⁰⁴ I consulted ephemera for all four of the case studies in this thesis. Where possible, I photographed them so I would have a record of their layout; aesthetics is often just as significant as text when it comes to ephemera (see Figure 4).³⁰⁵ Objects such as handbills, posters, and flyers can demonstrate how a protest group represent themselves and their cause, or illustrate what events were being organised and how they were publicised.³⁰⁶ However, ephemera can be difficult to work with; provenance can be difficult, if not impossible, to establish, and they are rarely collected in a systematic way, resulting in partial collections surviving.³⁰⁷

³⁰² David A Reichard, “Animating Ephemera through Oral History: Interpreting Visual Traces of California Gay College Student Organizing from the 1970s,” *The Oral History Review* 39, no. 1 (2012): 37–60; 38; Richard M. Kolbert, “Publish and Perish: Printed Ephemera and Social History,” *Books at Iowa* 55 (1991): 25–36; 27.

³⁰³ Kolbert, “Publish and Perish.”

³⁰⁴ Laura Lyons, “Hand-to-Hand History: Ephemera and Irish Republicanism,” *Interventions* 5, no. 3 (2003): 407–25; Reichard, “Animating Ephemera through Oral History.”

³⁰⁵ Kolbert, “Publish and Perish;” Lyons, “Hand-to-Hand History;” Reichard, “Animating Ephemera through Oral History.”

³⁰⁶ Lyons, “Hand-to-Hand History;” Reichard, “Animating Ephemera through Oral History.”

³⁰⁷ Lyons, “Hand-to-Hand History;” Reichard, “Animating Ephemera through Oral History.”

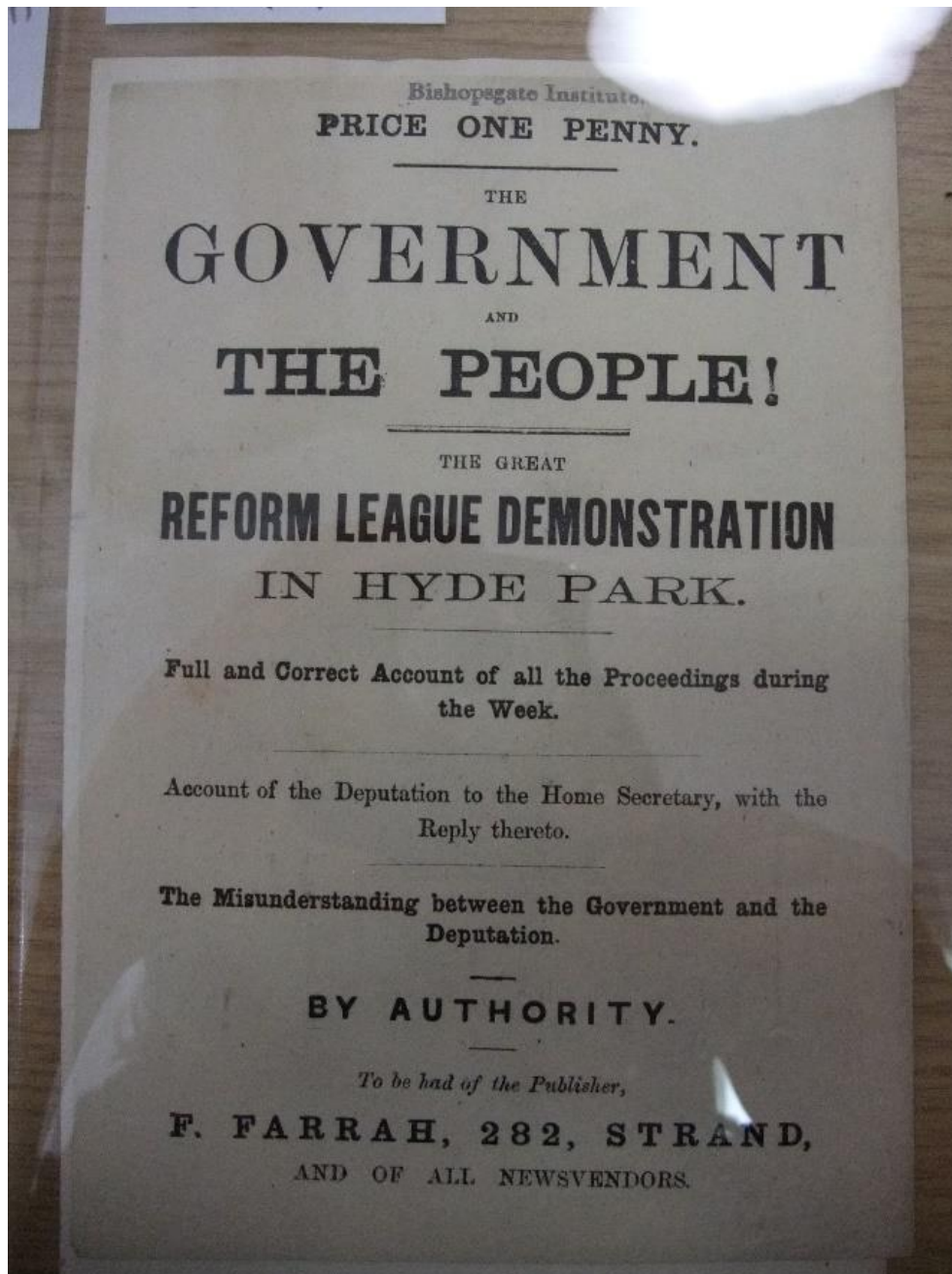


Figure 4: A photograph taken by the author of a handbill advertising a pamphlet about the Hyde Park Railings Affair. Source: Bishopsgate Library, Holyoake-3-3 Part 2 Item 51. Image reproduced courtesy of the Bishopsgate Library.

The final type of unpublished source that I used during my research is London itself. All of the locations in which the four case studies took place still exist, and I visited them all. Landscape history is a well-established historical research method, particularly when textual sources

are limited.³⁰⁸ Landscape historians make use of the fact that “any landscape that can be observed today is a composite of myriad decisions and uses of the past.”³⁰⁹ Through careful observation of visible features, historians can draw conclusions about social, economic, political, and cultural elements of the past. Marina Moskowitz has identified seven attributes which anyone studying a landscape should consider: “edges, pathways, structures, reserves [open spaces], geography [the ‘natural’ features on which the landscape was constructed], economy and community.”³¹⁰ By observing the landscapes in which the four case studies took place, I was able to get a better sense of how events unfolded. Landscape history is a flawed methodology, however, as landscapes are dynamic, constantly being altered, built over, and erased in a way that cannot be traced as easily as layers of archaeology.³¹¹ The locations of all the case studies apart from the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations have changed dramatically in the intervening years, so it was not always a useful method. These challenges are why landscape history is frequently used in collaboration with other historical sources, which was the case in this research project; I used my observations of the London landscape to inform my analysis, not as a key element of it.³¹²

3.3.4 Images

Although most of the sources I encountered during the research process were texts, a few were images, which also presented a unique set of challenges when it came to interpreting them. As with text-based sources, the range of visual sources in the archive has proliferated as technology

³⁰⁸ Jo Guldi, “Landscape and Place,” in *Research Methods for History*, eds. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011): 66–80; Marina Moskowitz, “Back Yards and Beyond: Landscapes and History,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009): 67–84; Tom Williamson, “Landscape: The Configured Space,” in *History Beyond the Text: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Sarah Barber and C.M. Peniston-Bird (London: Routledge, 2009): 136–54.

³⁰⁹ Moskowitz, “Back Yards and Beyond;” 69.

³¹⁰ Moskowitz, “Back Yards and Beyond;” 73.

³¹¹ Moskowitz, “Back Yards and Beyond.”

³¹² Guldi, “Landscape and Place;” and Moskowitz, “Back Yards and Beyond.”

has developed; drawings and paintings have been joined by prints, etchings, photographs, and films. Over the course of my research, I consulted a wide variety of images, including paintings, etchings, maps, photographs, and a mural.

One form of visual imagery that I used quite extensively during this project was newspaper images, particularly in relation to the Hyde Park Railings Affair. There is a body of work within the field of critical geopolitics that analyses visual images' role in the production of discourses by news media that can be used to consider the methodological implications of utilising such a source.³¹³ As with other sources, the context of newspaper images is significant. Gillian Rose argues that where images are displayed, as well as how they are encountered, have an impact on how they are interpreted by a viewer.³¹⁴ In the case of a newspaper image, this necessitates taking into consideration the surrounding texts and images, and the rest of the paper, as well as where the viewer might have read the paper; at home, on the daily commute, or elsewhere.³¹⁵ The images are altered by the contexts in which they are placed and consumed.

Another consideration which applies to all sources, but is arguably particularly relevant to newspaper images, is the fact that they are not 'authentic' reproductions of reality. They are representations which reflect and reinforce dominant discourses and narratives, and which only tell parts of the story.³¹⁶ This is perhaps easier to overlook in relation to visual images in newspapers, because the newspapers themselves treat them as

³¹³ See, for example David Campbell, "Cultural Governance and Pictorial Resistance: Reflections on the Imaging of War," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. S1 (2003): 57–73; David Campbell, "Horrible Blindness, Images of Death in Contemporary Media," *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, no. 1 (2004): 55–74; David Campbell, "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict," *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): 357–82; Gillian Rose, "Who Cares for the Dead and How? British Newspaper Reporting of the Bombings in London, July 2005," *Geoforum* 40, no. 1 (2009): 46–54; Karen Wells, "Narratives of Liberation and Narratives of Innocent Suffering: The Rhetorical Uses of Iraqi Children in the British Press," *Visual Communication* 6, no. 1 (2007): 55–71; Barbie Zelizer, "Death in Wartime: Photographs and the 'Other War' in Afghanistan," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, no. 3 (2005): 26–55.

³¹⁴ Rose, "Who Cares for Which Dead and How?"

³¹⁵ Rose, "Who Cares for Which Dead and How?"

³¹⁶ Campbell, "Geopolitics and Visuality;" Rose, "Who Cares for Which Dead and How?"

“transparent windows onto the world;” it is one of the reasons they are so powerful.³¹⁷ As such, researchers must be particularly vigilant when using newspaper visuals as a source.

The final thing which I bore in mind whilst conducting my analysis of visual images in newspapers is that they do not necessarily tell the same narrative as the accompanying text. In her analysis of British newspaper coverage in the wake of the 7/7 bombings in London in July 2005, Gillian Rose argues that there was a gendering of witnesses and survivors in the images that was not present in the text.³¹⁸ Women were depicted as more emotional than men, whilst in the text men *were* described as having emotional responses to what happened.³¹⁹ Therefore, whilst newspaper visuals must be considered in relation to their various contexts, they must also be considered as individual artefacts. It cannot be taken for granted that images are promoting the same discourse as the associated text.

Visual sources cannot be transcribed like a text-based source. If a researcher wants to have a personal record of the source for later analysis, then it must either be photographed, or a copy (usually in the form of a scanned digital image) must be obtained from the archive. There are also different analytical techniques available for visual sources, discussed below.

3.3.5 Social Media

In many respects, the internet itself can be seen as an archive, albeit an “ephemeral, fragile and poorly controlled” one.³²⁰ For the Battle of Cable Street and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations case studies, the internet was a data source in itself, not just a means of accessing digitised sources. Sources that were created on and for computers, rather than being converted to digital from a different medium, are known as ‘born-digital.’ As a relatively new area of research, there are still many debates to

³¹⁷ Rose, “Who Cares for Which Dead and How?,” 52.

³¹⁸ Rose, “Who Cares for Which Dead and How?”

³¹⁹ Rose, “Who Cares for Which Dead and How?”

³²⁰ Dean, “Digitising the Modern Archive;” 172.

be settled about digital research methods.³²¹ Born-digital sources, particularly the social media website Twitter, are a significant source for my analysis of the Student Demonstrations but their use was experimental, both for myself as a researcher, and for the field.

As a relatively recent medium, methodologies for researching Twitter are still being established and developed. There are a number of programs that collect tweets in real time, as they are published, several of which are open access. However, this is only helpful when researching an ongoing or future event. There are some programs that harvest pre-existing tweets, but they are aimed at a commercial rather than academic market, and their cost puts them beyond the scope of a PhD research budget. Therefore, I had to develop a research methodology for the purposes of this project, in order to investigate how the protesters used Twitter during the four fees protests in London, and how other Twitter users discussed the protests.

Twitter's Advanced Search function allows a researcher to search as far back as March 2006, when Twitter was created. In Advanced Search a researcher can combine a wide range of search parameters, including date, location, hashtags, Twitter accounts, keywords and sentiment (whether a tweet is positive or negative) (see Figure 5). Hashtags are a "user-generated mechanism for tagging and collating those messages—tweets—which are related to a specific topic."³²² They are keywords, acronyms, or abbreviations, prefixed with the hash symbol, and they make it possible to create communities of interest outside of the follower/followee dynamic.³²³

³²¹ Richard Rogers, *Digital Methods* (London: The MIT Press, 2013).

³²² Axel Bruns and Jean Burgess, "The Use of Twitter Hashtags in the Formation of *Ad Hoc* Publics," (paper presented at The Future of Journalism 2011, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK, September 8–9, 2011) accessed July 10, 2016, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/46330/>; 2.

³²³ Bruns and Burgess, "The Use of Twitter Hashtags in the Formation of *Ad Hoc* Publics."

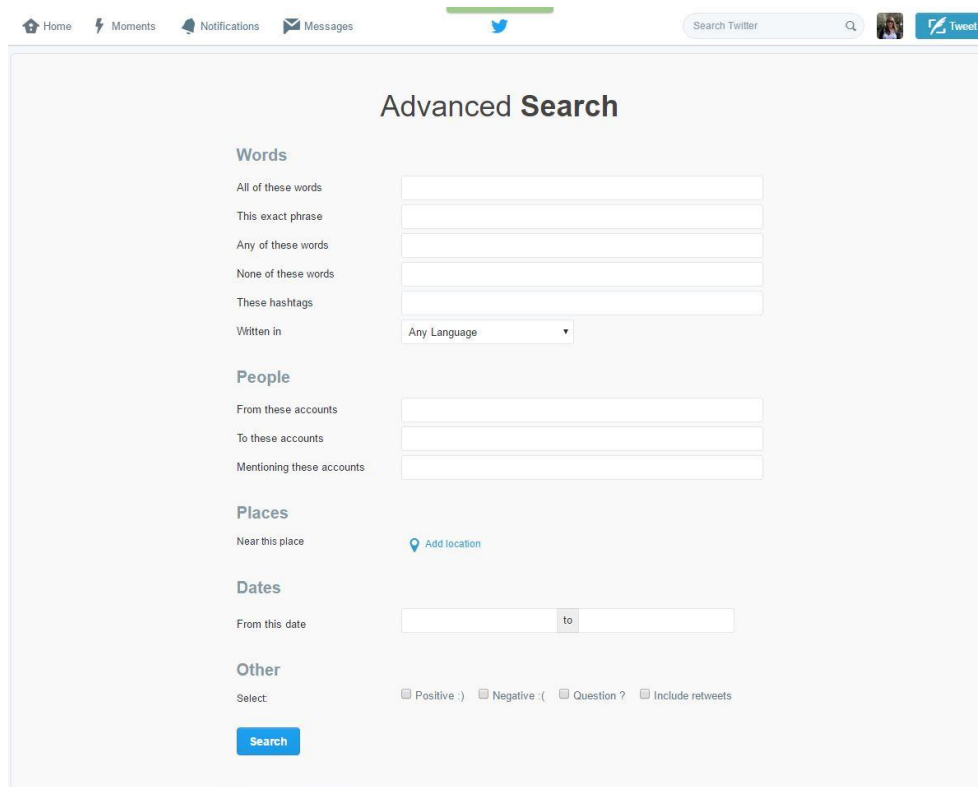


Figure 5: The Advanced Search function on Twitter allows searches that cross-reference multiple parameters. Source: Twitter, “Advanced Search,” no date, accessed February 15, 2015, <https://twitter.com/search-advanced?lang=en-gb>.

I selected my search parameters by conducting a search for all tweets geo-tagged in London on the relevant days. Most tweets do not contain location data, but the search provided an idea of the hashtags and keywords that were being used in relation to the protests. The results of the geo-tagged search were then used to conduct a search that was not limited by location, but was constrained by hashtags and keywords. For example, for the demonstration on 9 December 2010, the search parameters were ‘Any of these words: protester, protesters, students, tuition, fees, protests’ and ‘These hashtags: #demo2010 #dayx3 #fees #solidarity #studentprotest #ukuncut’. For each of the four protests, the search parameters included a different range of keywords and hashtags, based on initial geo-tag searches.

Processing the search results was time-consuming. The only way to download multiple tweets is to save the search results webpage as a PDF

file, but this does not show what time Tweets were published, and the PDF cannot easily be manipulated for analysis. As a result, each tweet had to be read and analysed on the search results webpage. I used coding to identify key themes and issues, and a few examples of each code were downloaded individually for further analysis and to use as evidence of my arguments in this thesis. I also manually counted the tweets, to establish how many tweets were published relating to the protests on the days that they took place. I do not consider the results to be entirely comprehensive, as keyword searches do not guarantee that every relevant source is found; there may have been some tweets about the protests that were missed by the search parameters.³²⁴ In addition, there may have been some errors in the manual counting process. Nonetheless, the count provides a general idea of tweet numbers that is still helpful.

There are some limitations to this methodology. For example, it provides very few clues as to how the tweets were read, interpreted, and used by their audience. Yannis Theocharis identified the same limitation in his research on the Twitter accounts of the student occupations during the 2010 protest.³²⁵ Axel Bruns and Jean Burgess suggest a solution, arguing that the number and content of retweets and direct replies provides some indication of how people respond to a tweet.³²⁶ It is only a *partial* solution however, and it is therefore difficult to make arguments based on how the tweets were used and interpreted by their audience.

In addition, there is no guarantee that I interpreted the tweets in the way their authors intended. Tweets are often topical, and rely on an understanding of current events to decode them (this is an issue for all the case studies, of course). For example, during the student protests there was a recurring joke about “Gazza” being on his way “with some chicken

³²⁴ Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives.”

³²⁵ Yannis Theocharis, “Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation: How the Internet Shaped the Student Occupations,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2012): 162–94.

³²⁶ Bruns and Burgess, “The Use of Twitter Hashtags in the Formation of *Ad Hoc* Publics.” Retweets are when a Twitter user publishes someone else’s tweet through their own account. Direct replies are when a user directs a response to a specific Twitter user by beginning the tweet with ‘@Username’.

and a fishing rod.”³²⁷ The jokes were referring to a news story relating to footballer Paul Gascoigne, who arrived intoxicated at a standoff between police and gunman Raoul Moat in Rothbury on 9 July 2010. Gascoigne, also known as Gazza, brought a fishing rod, lager, and a cooked chicken with him, and tried to persuade police to allow him to talk Moat into surrendering.³²⁸ This was a minor, if bizarre, news story that has largely been forgotten now. However, knowledge of it is required to interpret some of the tweets that were published in relation to the student protests, which highlights the importance of familiarity with cultural, economic, political, and social contexts when studying a past event. This example demonstrates the potential for researchers to interpret the meaning of a source inaccurately.

Aside from the specific difficulties of this methodology, there are also some issues to consider about Twitter as an object of research more generally. The ethics of researching Twitter are still being debated amongst scholars.³²⁹ Most Twitter accounts are public—it is possible to restrict those who can view an account—so there is no legal requirement to acquire permission to use, analyse, or reproduce tweets. However, some scholars argue that consent should be obtained, or tweets should be anonymized, before they are reproduced. The main argument for this position is that consenting for one’s tweets to be public is not the same as consenting to have one’s “tweet stream systematically followed, harvested, archived, and mined by researchers (no matter the positive

³²⁷ Adam Banks, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (2:54 p.m.) accessed April 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/adambanksdotcom>; SafeSport, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (11:26 p.m.) accessed April 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/SafeSport>; SocialMediaJon, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (4:31 p.m.) accessed April 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/SocialMediaJon>.

³²⁸ Nick Collins, “Raoul Moat: Gazza Arrives in Rothbury to ‘offer his support’,” *The Telegraph*, July 9, 2010, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/7882762/Raoul-Moat-Gazza-arrives-in-Rothbury-to-offer-his-support.html>.

³²⁹ Michael Zimmer and Nicholas John Proferes, “A Topology of Twitter Research: Disciplines, methods, and Ethics,” *Aslib Journal of Information Management* 66, no. 3 (2014): 250–61.

intent of such research).”³³⁰ It may be some time until the research community can reach a consensus, and until then it remains the responsibility of individual researchers and institutions to make decisions. I feel that if something is made public by the author, then the author has no right to control how it is used, providing they are properly credited.

Source criticism is an integral part of conducting successful archival research. Some issues, such as the bias of source creators and the partial nature of sources, are universal. In addition, every type of source presents unique challenges for the researcher. Arguably, the majority of these challenges can be overcome by a diligent researcher who has invested the time to establish what these challenges might be and how they might be countered. If they cannot be countered, then they can at least be acknowledged. Source triangulation is a key method of dealing with the imperfections of source material; if multiple sources say the same thing, then a researcher can be more confident in the claims they then make. The wide variety of sources which I have consulted during this research is partially a product of the long time-frame of this project, but it is also the result of an attempt to make my arguments as resilient as possible. Source collection is only one part of the research process, however. Source analysis is an indispensable part of the process, and it is just as important for a researcher to adopt a critical analytical approach as it for source collection to be critical and reflexive.

3.4 Analysis

Analysis is an area that is often left unexplained in methodological discussion of archival research. Essentially, archival material can be analysed in much the same way as any other data, but content, textual,

³³⁰ Michael Zimmer, “It is Ethical to Harvest Public Twitter Accounts without Consent?” February 12, 2010, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www.michaelzimmer.org/2010/02/12/is-it-ethical-to-harvest-public-twitter-accounts-without-consent//>.

and discourse analysis are all common analytical approaches due to the largely text-based nature of most historical sources.³³¹ Due to the extended time-frame of this research project and the wide variety of sources used, I did not select a formal analytical approach, instead adapting my technique to suit the particular source and situation. Largely, my analysis took the form of informal but thorough coding, as well as deep and careful thought about each individual source and the way it correlated with the other sources consulted. I also composed first drafts of each case study as I progressed through data collection; writing itself was also a significant part of my analysis. It is now widely acknowledged that “writing up” is a more complex process than simply presenting the results of a project; it is also an integral part of analysis and the formation of arguments.³³²

The analytical method I employed most frequently is coding, which is “[t]he process of identifying, assigning, and analyzing codes based on inductive review of transcripts and other data for the purpose of revealing commonalities and disjunctures, investigating patterns and themes, and producing new knowledge and insight.”³³³ It proved a useful method over the course of this research project for identifying key themes both across different source materials and in between different case studies. I used open coding, which allowed me to derive key themes from the data itself (See Figure 6).³³⁴ I re-read each source several times, in order to ensure that I had identified as many appropriate themes, and as many examples of said themes, as possible. Sometimes I identified a new code partway through the source, in which case re-reading the sources allowed me to make sure I identified any examples of that code in earlier sections of the source.

³³¹ Kevin Hannam, “Coping with Archival and Textual Data,” in *Doing Cultural Geography*, ed. Pamela Shurmer-Smith (London: SAGE, 2002): 189–97.

³³² Dydia DeLyser, “Writing Qualitative Geography,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, ed. Dydia DeLyser et al. (London: SAGE, 2010): 341–58.

³³³ Meghan Cope, “Transcripts (Coding and Analysis),” in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (London: Elsevier, 2009): 350–54.

³³⁴ Cope, “Transcripts (Coding and Analysis).”

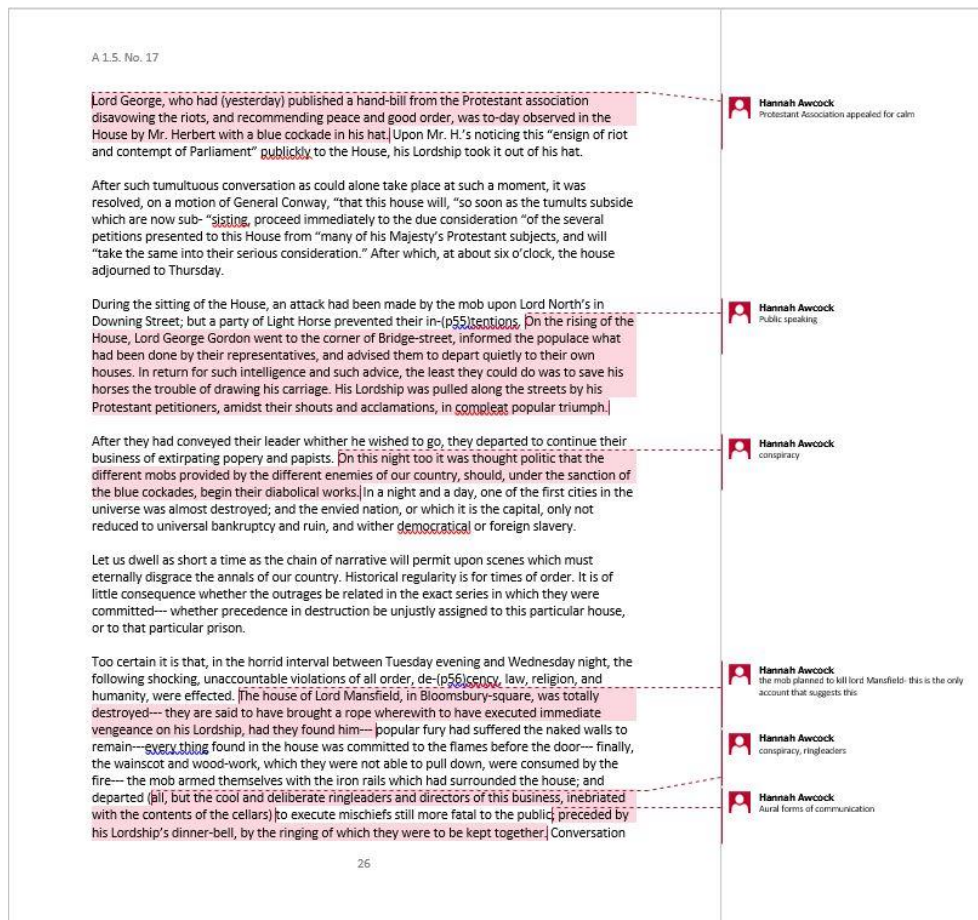


Figure 6: An example of my informal coding method. The source is a pamphlet describing the events of the Gordon Riots. Source: Guildhall Library A 1.5. No. 17.

Not every source I used was text-based, however, and for the analysis of images I employed the form of visual analysis exemplified by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2001).³³⁵ Rose advocates a ‘critical visual methodology,’ which aligns with my critical engagement with the archive by considering “the visual in terms of the cultural significance, social practices, and power relations in which it is embedded; and that means thinking about the power relations that produce, are articulated through, and can be challenged by, ways of seeing and imaging.”³³⁶ I have analysed visual materials of multiple forms in the process of this research project, including prints, a satirical map, and a mural. Rose’s methodology

³³⁵ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: SAGE, 2001).

³³⁶ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*; 3.

was applied to each of them, ensuring that they were analysed in a consistent manner. I used compositional analysis, which entails scrutinizing the content, colour, spatial organisation, and perspective of an image in order to consider the expressive content of the image.³³⁷ It is a subjective methodology, but this systematic approach allows the researcher to clearly justify the conclusions they draw.³³⁸ In addition, the content of an image is only one element worthy of analysis; who created an image, how, and why are also significant, as well as how the image is interpreted by various audiences.³³⁹ In some cases, I was able to consider the production of an image, although the conditions of production are not always known. Audience reception, however, would have required extensive further research, which would arguably not have contributed significantly to answering the research questions of this thesis.

Source analysis is frequently overlooked in methodological discussions, particularly in regards to archival research. Due to the wide range of sources I consulted during the research for this project, I did not choose to subscribe to any particular analytical method, instead selecting the most appropriate method of analysis in each case. For text-based sources, I frequently used an informal form of coding that allowed me to identify key elements of the source. For visual sources, I relied on Gillian Rose's critical visual methodology, which aids a systematic approach to a subjective action. I also argue that it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of writing to the analytical process; making decisions about how to structure a piece of writing, and what to include and what to leave out, was an important part of my analytical technique.

3.5 Conclusions

The scope of this thesis is unusual, and required a certain degree of methodological innovation. Not only is 230 years a long time-frame for a

³³⁷ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

³³⁸ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

³³⁹ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

piece of historical research, it is also unusual to combine a long time-frame with a small number of episodic case studies. I designed the project in this manner because I felt it was the best way of investigating the relationship between protest, space, and history in London. The wide-ranging scope of this project necessitated engagement with a variety of different types of sources, including published sources, official papers, unpublished sources, images, and social media. This breadth required a significant investment in source criticism, and an understanding of the complex power relations embedded in both archives and the sources they contain. It is not just the research design that contains a degree of innovation, but also some of the data collection itself. I developed my own experimental method of collecting tweets in order to research the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, which arguably has the potential for a range of other research projects. Due to the wide-ranging character of my data collection, the analytical approach I adopted was informal and situational. I adapted my technique to each source as it was applied.

The level of critical engagement with methodology is increasing in the fields of geography, history, and historical geography. Scholars now acknowledge that academic research is subjective, and attempt to explore and expose that subjectivity rather than remove it.³⁴⁰ A wide range of factors have influenced my research, including my positionality as well as archivists past and present, the collection policies of London's museums and archives, the privacy policies of Twitter, and the designers of various online search interfaces. I may well have failed to identify them all. I feel my research is, however, stronger because of my attempts to establish as many of these nuanced impacts as possible. Now that I have detailed my theoretical and methodological approach, I turn to my empirical research. In the next chapter, I analyse the various scholarship of the history of

³⁴⁰ Anoop Nayak and Alex Jeffrey, *Geographical Thought: An Introduction to Ideas in Human Geography* (Harlow, Essex: Prentice Hall, 2011); Keith Woodard and John Paul Jones III, "Post-Structuralism," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); 571–72.

dissent in London in order to contextualise the case studies in this thesis and evaluate the ways in which other scholars have approached the topic.

4

Communication and Organisation in the Gordon Riots

2 June 1780 saw the start of arguably the most serious rioting London has ever seen. For a week, buildings were gutted, politicians were intimidated, and prisons were burnt down. The riots were sparked by a campaign, led by Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association, to repeal the 1778 Catholic Relief Act, which removed some of the restrictions on English Catholics. This chapter focusses on the ways in which both the rioters and the authorities communicated and organised across the spaces of London. Whilst the Gordon Riots have been subject to scholarly analysis, this particular element of the riots has not thus far been explored, despite the potential contributions it can make to wider debates, such as those surrounding the character and behaviour of rioting crowds.³⁴¹ More often than not, riots are perceived in a negative light, with the actors involved being seen as part of a mindless mob, committing acts of violence and aggression simply because they can. Even a brief analysis of a riot, however, reveals that the reality is more complex. Participants in the Gordon Riots showed signs of organisation and restraint, contradicting the dominant stereotypes. An analysis of how the rioters, and those who sought to quell them, communicated and organised enables a contribution to the ongoing debate on the characteristics of rioting crowds. In addition,

³⁴¹ See, for example, John Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England 1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Anthony Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain: From the Gordon Riots to the Gibraltar Incident* (London: Routledge, 1990); Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010 [2003]); John Paul de Castro, *The Gordon Riots* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926); Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People's History of London* (London: Verso, 2012); Ian Haywood and John Seed, eds., *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Christopher Hibbert, *King Mob* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1958); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (London: Serif, 2005 [1964]).

by including non-verbal forms of communication, this chapter builds on existing scholarship that is expanding the study of practice and performance in historical geography.³⁴²

The chapter is split into four substantive sections. The first section provides a brief description of the Gordon Riots and the socio-political context of late-eighteenth-century London. The second section focusses on the rioters, exploring the ways in which they communicated and organised. The third section of this chapter looks at the methods of communication and organisation employed by the authorities during the Gordon Riots, and considers why they were so slow to respond to the riots. The fourth section draws on the work of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to compare and contrast the methods employed by the rioters and the authorities.³⁴³

4.1 The Gordon Riots: The Biggest Riots You Have Never Heard Of

The late eighteenth century was a turbulent time for Britain. The Gordon Riots took place in the context of the American War of Independence, war with France and Spain, and popular religious tension that elites did not comprehend. The riots themselves were arguably the most severe period of civil unrest that the country has seen, either before or since. There are several academic accounts of the riots, and the events they describe are largely undisputed. What is debated, however, are questions such as what caused the riots, why did they last so long, and what motivated the rioters?³⁴⁴

³⁴² Carl J. Griffin and Adrian B. Evans, "On Historical Geographies of Embodied Practice and Performance," *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 5–16; Miles Ogborn, "Francis Williams's Bad Language: Historical Geography in a World of Practice," *Historical Geography* 37 (2009): 5–21.

³⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: London: Athlone, 1987).

³⁴⁴ See, for example, Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain*; Bloom, *Violent London*; John Paul de Castro, *The Gordon Riots*; Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People's History of London*; Ian Haywood and John Seed, eds., *The Gordon Riots*; Christopher Hibbert, *King Mob*; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History*.

There have been tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Britain since Henry VIII split from the Roman Catholic Church and founded the Church of England in the sixteenth century.³⁴⁵ Colin Haydon argues that, during the eighteenth century, anti-Catholicism had three strands: political mistrust, theological disagreement, and popular fear.³⁴⁶ Catholics were not trusted to be loyal to a Protestant monarch over the Pope, and the Gunpowder Plot and plots against Elizabeth I were perceived as evidence of Catholic cunning and their willingness to stop at nothing, even regicide. The popular fears centred around the horrific stories of Catholic persecution of heretics.³⁴⁷ Between 1688 and 1746 this prejudice was focused around the possibility of Catholics joining an uprising led by the exiled Stuarts.³⁴⁸ By the 1770s however, this threat had dissipated and anti-Catholic sentiment had decreased, amongst elites at least.³⁴⁹

In 1778, the Catholic Relief Act was passed with little opposition. The Act lifted many, but not all, of the legal restrictions placed on Catholics. Many of the constraints were no longer observed in practice, and Parliament expected little resistance. The Act was strategic and pragmatic; it allowed Catholics to join the Army, which needed recruits to fight in Britain's foreign wars.³⁵⁰ The Protestant Association was formed in 1778 to campaign against the Act, but it made little progress until the following year.³⁵¹ In 1779 plans to extend the Catholic Relief Act to Scotland sparked rioting in Edinburgh and Glasgow, prompting the government to abandon their attempt. Buoyed by the success of the Association in Scotland, the London Protestant Association increased in size and activity, and recruited Lord George Gordon as their President.³⁵² Originally an officer in the Royal

³⁴⁵ Bloom, *Violent London*.

³⁴⁶ Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c.1714–80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

³⁴⁷ Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*.

³⁴⁸ Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*.

³⁴⁹ Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*; Bloom, *Violent London*.

³⁵⁰ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁵¹ Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary Political Organization 1769–1793* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

³⁵² Black, *The Association*.

Navy, Gordon became MP for Ludgershall, Wiltshire, in 1774.³⁵³ He was eccentric and unpopular in Parliament for his long-winded and outspoken oratory.³⁵⁴ Outside of Parliament, however, Gordon struck a chord, and the Protestant Association began to collect signatures from around the country for a mass petition. Whilst the petition itself has not survived, estimates of the number of signatories range from 40,000 to 100,000.³⁵⁵ Even the most conservative estimates show it to be the eighteenth century's biggest petition.³⁵⁶ Against the better judgement of the Protestant Association's committee, Gordon announced that the petitions would be presented to Parliament on 2 June 1780 after a rally on St. George's Fields—a large area of scrubland on the south bank of the Thames stretching roughly from modern-day Waterloo to Elephant and Castle—and a march to the Houses of Parliament.³⁵⁷

Friday 2 June was a very hot day.³⁵⁸ Despite this, a large number of demonstrators gathered in St. George's Fields. Again, it is difficult to estimate numbers with any accuracy, but suffice it to say that attendance was significant: "[a] crowd of this size assembling behind a political cause was unprecedented in eighteenth-century England."³⁵⁹ The crowd was split into four divisions, representing London, Westminster, Southwark, and Scotland, and Gordon ordered that all supporters of the Protestant

³⁵³ Colin Haydon, "Gordon, Lord George," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last modified January 2008, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11040?docPos=13>.

³⁵⁴ Bloom, *Violent London*; J.A. Cannon, "Gordon, Lord George (1751–93)," *The History of Parliament*, no date, accessed January 7, 2016. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/gordon-george-1751-93>; German and Rees, *A People's History of London*.

³⁵⁵ Bloom, *Violent London*; Ian Haywood and John Seed, "Introduction," in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth Century Britain*, eds. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1–18; Mark Knights, "The 1780 Protestant Petitions and the Culture of Petitioning," in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth Century Britain*, eds. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012):46–68; Rudé, *The Crowd in History*.

³⁵⁶ Knights, "The 1780 Protest Petition and the Culture of Petitioning."

³⁵⁷ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁵⁸ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁵⁹ Haywood and Seed, "Introduction;" 1.

Association wear blue cockades.³⁶⁰ Overwhelmed by the numbers present, Gordon tried to travel to Parliament to present the petition alone, but the crowd followed. Once at Parliament, Gordon moved back and forth between the chamber and the crowd outside, relaying news on how the debate was proceeding.³⁶¹ The crowd became increasingly agitated, harassing the carriages of MPs and Lords as they tried to get through to Parliament.³⁶² Despite the House of Commons voting to postpone their decision on the petition, the crowd dispersed in the evening after only minor disturbances.³⁶³

The events outside Parliament were not, however, the end of the protests. That evening a week of rioting started with the looting and burning of the Catholic chapels of the Bavarian and Sardinian embassies. Over the next few days, chapels, and the houses of Catholics and those perceived to oppose the rioters, were also targeted. The rioters were measured in their destruction and “a familiar pattern soon established itself of well-planned demolition, plunder, and ritualistic arson.”³⁶⁴ In order to avoid damage to nearby buildings, those properties unfortunate enough to be targeted were ‘guttled’. Everything flammable, including furniture, wall cladding, and staircases, was removed to a safe distance and burnt.³⁶⁵ At this early stage the authorities did little to intervene, due to a combination of sympathy for the rioters; magistrates’ fear that they would be targeted if seen to intercede; and misconceptions about the law dealing with riots.³⁶⁶ During the night of 6 June the riots took a turn that was more threatening to the authorities. The rioters destroyed Newgate prison and released all the prisoners, including those arrested earlier in the riots. This was repeated at several other prisons in the capital over the next few

³⁶⁰ Bloom, *Violent London*.

³⁶¹ Bloom, *Violent London*.

³⁶² German and Rees, *A People’s History of London*.

³⁶³ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁶⁴ Haywood and Seed, “Introduction;” 4.

³⁶⁵ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁶⁶ W. Nippel, “‘Reading the Riot Act’: The Discourse of Law Enforcement in 18th Century England,” *History and Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (1985); 399–426.

nights.³⁶⁷ The next day an unsuccessful attack was launched on the Bank of England, and the Langdale distillery in Holborn was destroyed, leading to streams of spirits running through the streets.³⁶⁸ Finally, the King ordered soldiers to restore order under any circumstances, and by 10 June order had returned to the streets of London.

As the above description of their tactics suggest, the rioters appeared organised, and were restrained and discriminate in their activities. They achieved this by utilizing a range of types of organisation and communication, which I shall discuss in the next section. I will also consider the implications of such behavior on our understanding of the characteristics of riotous crowds.

4.2 The Rioters: Organised Chaos

It is notoriously difficult to conduct historical research on crowds. Those who participate in mass protest are, generally speaking, not those who are documented in, or who authored, the material which is preserved in archives.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, with careful interrogation of sources—such as court records, home office papers, eye-witness accounts, and Treasury Solicitor’s reports—it is possible to shed light on the participants of historical protests, such as the Gordon Riots, so that they “appear not as an abstract formula but as a living and many-sided historical phenomenon.”³⁷⁰ Of the questions we might ask about the nature of historical protest, arguably one of the most pressing is what methods did protesters use to communicate and organise. The actions of the Gordon rioters demonstrate a level of organisation that would have required a significant degree of communication. In fact, the London mob is perceived to be effective at spreading information, being described as “a means of communication

³⁶⁷ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁶⁸ Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain*.

³⁶⁹ Carl Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early Nineteenth-Century English Popular Protest,’ *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 139–62; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History*; Roger Wells, ‘Counting Riots in Eighteenth Century England,’ *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 37 (1978): 68–72.

³⁷⁰ Rudé, *The Crowd in History*; 15.

where news and information seem to spread like wildfire.”³⁷¹ This section will explore how the Gordon rioters organised themselves and their protest activities, and which methods they employed to communicate with each other.

Gustave le Bon was one of the first scholars to develop theories about the psychology of crowds (see 2.3.4). His work was influential, and gave rise to the pervasive idea that crowds are mindless ‘mobs,’ incapable of making rational decisions.³⁷² Although there are still some who adhere to this theory, other scholars have since developed a more nuanced understanding of crowds.³⁷³ Stephen Reicher and Clifford Stott, for example, “find social actors knowingly, purposefully, and creatively enacting collective world-views and doing what *they* see as right.”³⁷⁴ When a person joins a crowd, their individual personality, motivations, and ability to make decisions are not subsumed into a larger whole; a protest crowd remains a collection of individuals. The Gordon Riots supports this more recent understanding of crowd psychology.

4.2.1 Organisation

At some points during the events of June 1780, the rioters appear to have been well organised. For example, lookouts stood on approach roads during the destruction of Newgate, to prevent released prisoners being captured by the authorities.³⁷⁵ Messages were sent to other prisons, notifying them that they would also be targeted, although the form which

³⁷¹ Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People’s History of London*; 8.

³⁷² Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2002 [1896]).

³⁷³ Academics who take a le Bonian approach to the Gordon Riots include Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England 1780–1840*; Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain*; and de Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

³⁷⁴ Stephen Reicher and Clifford Stott, “Becoming Subjects of History: An Outline of the Psychology of Crowds,” in *The Street as Stage: Protest Marches and Public Rallies since the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Matthias Reiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); 30 (italics in original).

³⁷⁵ William Vincent (pseudonym for Thomas Holcroft), *A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances in the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark* (London: Fielding and Walker, 1780).

these messages took is not recorded.³⁷⁶ As well as these examples, the most common tactic employed by the rioters suggests organisation and restraint. Targeted buildings were 'gutted' in acts of "well-planned demolition, plunder, and ritualistic arson."³⁷⁷ Rioters also took steps to actively prevent buildings on either side catching fire, sometimes allowing firefighters to tackle blazes that had spread, but preventing them from putting out the original fire.³⁷⁸ The sources suggest that, at least in certain respects, the rioters were a well-organised, coherent force. It is important to remember, however, that the rioters were not a single, unified group, nor did they have one leader to unite and direct them, notwithstanding the symbolic significance of Lord Gordon.

One element that hints at the complexity of the crowd during the riots was the variety of motivations involved. Whilst it is difficult to find direct evidence of why rioters participated, there are some sources which suggest a range of motivations at play. For example, several of those arrested for participating in the riots were Catholic; it seems unlikely they would have been taking part because of anti-Catholic sentiment.³⁷⁹ Alexander Frazer, one of the witnesses at the trial of George Gordon, claimed to have spoken to a man in the crowd outside Parliament on 2 June: "I spoke to one man, and asked him, if he was of the [Protestant] association? His answer was 'No, by God, this is my association,' shewing a great club."³⁸⁰ The man was not a member or supporter of the Protestant Association, but he was there nonetheless. The Gordon rioters were not amalgamated into a 'collective mind,' their actions organised by a single consciousness.

³⁷⁶ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason: or, a Dispassionate History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Religious Insurrections in June, 1780* (London: G. Kearsly, 1780).

³⁷⁷ Ian Haywood and John Seed, "Introduction;" 4.

³⁷⁸ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon, and the Persons Assembled under the Denomination of the Protestant Association, from their last Meeting at Coach-Maker's Hall, to the Final Commitment of Lordship to the Tower*. (London: J. Wallis, 1780).

³⁷⁹ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*.

³⁸⁰ Anon. *The Trial of the Honourable George Gordon, Commonly Called Lord George Gordon, for High Treason at the Bar of the Court of King's Bench*. (Rochester: T. Fisher, 1781).

Many observers at the time believed that the riots must have been organised by a single individual or group. Contemporary theories from 1780 provide two possibilities: Lord George Gordon, or a foreign country attempting to stage an elaborate political sabotage. In the aftermath of the riots, Gordon was arrested and charged with high treason, accused of co-ordinating the riots. He was acquitted and always maintained his innocence.³⁸¹ Even Gordon, however, believed that somebody must have been orchestrating the riots; his own account of what happens declared that “it was Natural enough for persons, in a passion, to lay the Blame on the Protestant Association, ’til the real Authors of the Riots were detected.”³⁸² Apart from Gordon, the most likely candidate for leadership of the rioters was a foreign power, perhaps France, Spain, or the United States, all of whom would have benefitted from a Britain weakened or distracted by civil turmoil. *Fanaticism and Treason* (1780), an anonymous contemporary account of the Gordon Riots, exemplified these suspicions:

No less, certainly, have men of another description inflamed the minds of people at these meetings— miscreants, either procured by opposition, who saw that, when Lord George’s frenzy should be at the highest, it might be the moment to overthrow ministry; or inspired by the treason or the money of the Americans, or hired by France or by Spain, to all of whom it must have been manifest, that Lord George, whatever were his own views, might become an instrument which would, more than possibly, enable them to overthrow this country... These traitors, without feeling far, saw plainly that a man who would voluntarily expose himself by language and by conduct so daring and so

³⁸¹ For a transcript of the trial see Anon. *The Trial of the Honourable George Gordon*. For Gordon’s own account of the riots and his arrest, see British Library [hereafter BL] Add MS 42129 *Lord Geo. Gordon’s Narrative in Three Parts*.

³⁸² BL Add MS 42129 *Lord Geo. Gordon’s Narrative in Three Parts*.

ridiculous, who seemed to have put away from him all sense of shame, and all fear of danger, was the man to heat the iron of insurrection for those who wished no more than the ruin of the ministry, and the iron of rebellion for those who desired the ruin of the nation; and that they had, none of them, any thing more to do, than to take care their different adherents and hirelings stood ready and properly to hammer the irons, before they should cool, into the wished-for shapes.³⁸³

There is little evidence to support these conspiracy theories, however, and recent scholarship has suggested that they may be little more the product of the political culture at the time. For example, Pablo Sánchez León argues that in the late eighteenth century the dominant understanding of crowds was similar to that of le Bon—they were seen as irrational masses, made up of lower social classes who were easily influenced and quick to resort to violence. This fact made “conspiracy a necessary ingredient in any assessment of civil disorder,” as crowds were perceived to be incapable of organising or leading themselves.³⁸⁴ This argument is supported by Timothy Tackett, who suggests that Anglophone political culture was prone to conspiracy theories.³⁸⁵ Due to the lack of evidence, it seems likely that the conspiracy theories surrounding the Gordon Riots were nothing more than rumour and conjecture—a product of the paranoid political culture.

The rioters may not have been controlled by a single leader, but neither were they leaderless. Leaders can emerge spontaneously from a crowd for any number of reasons, including being the first to act, being the first or loudest speaker, being known to some of the crowd, or wearing a

³⁸³ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason*; 29.

³⁸⁴ Pablo Sánchez León, “Conceiving the Multitude: Eighteenth-Century Popular Riots and the Modern Language of Social Disorder,” *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 511–33; 516.

³⁸⁵ Timothy Tackett, “Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror 1789–1792,” *The American Historical Review*, 105, no. 3 (2000): 691–713.

uniform.³⁸⁶ Once established, leaders help to define the situation and unify the crowd, causing them to resolve on one course of action or idea.³⁸⁷ There are multiple examples of individuals leading groups of rioters during the Gordon Riots.³⁸⁸ For example, James Jackson, a sailor, was put on trial at the Old Bailey for breaking the peace. One witness, John Lucy, described Jackson leading the rioters with a black-and-red flag on 6 June:

the prisoner hoisted a black and red flag, which was upon a pole; he stood the next man to me, or next but one. He cried Hyde's house, a-boy; he was seconded by several of the mob. They proceeded immediately there;...the mob followed him, and I followed him at a distance. I saw the flag at Charing-Cross; I followed into St. Martin's-street, where I understood Justice Hyde's house was, and the mob followed the flag to Mr. Hyde's house. I do not lay any thing to the prisoner's charge that he did there, only walking through the mob; they staid there near an hour, as near as I can recollect; the prisoner still had the flag. Then he cried out Newgate, a-boy; that was about six o'clock, as near as I can recollect; he went down Orange-street coming towards Newgate; great numbers of the mob followed him.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behaviour*, 2nd edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972 [1957]).

³⁸⁷ Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.

³⁸⁸ See, for example, Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 01 September 2013) [hereafter OBPO] t17800628-1 Trial of William Laurence and Richard Roberts; OBPO t17800628-34 Trial of Thomas Haycock; OBPO t17800628-52 Trial of William Pateman; OBPO t17800628-68 Trial of Thomas Mooney and Thomas Tipson; OBPO t17800628-76 Trial of Susannah, the wife of Edward Clark; OBPO t17800628-90 Trial of John White and Peter Drew; OBPO t17800628-112 Trial of James Jackson; OBPO t17800628-117 Trial of Luke Hand; OBPO t17800913-103 Trial of Michael Martin.

³⁸⁹ OBPO t17800628-112 Trial of James Jackson. John Lucy also gave evidence relating to James Jackson in the trial of Lord George Gordon: Anon. *The Trial of the Honourable George Gordon*.

Hyde was a Justice of the Peace who had confronted rioters earlier in the day; his house was destroyed as punishment. Lucy claimed to have seen Jackson later on in the destroyed house of Mr. Akerman, the gatekeeper of Newgate prison.³⁹⁰ Several other witnesses also saw Jackson leading rioters with the flag, which was described as being “about a yard square,” and attached to a pole “about two feet above [the rioters’] heads.”³⁹¹ Jackson was found guilty, and sentenced to death. He was just one of many who led rioters during that week in June. Leadership roles during riots are informal, and ephemeral—they are not absolute.³⁹² Members of a group will only conform to suggestions if they align with the group ideology; they cannot be led to do something out of character.³⁹³ The Gordon Riots did have leadership, but not one based on a traditional hierarchy.

Ephemeral leaders based on group consensus were one method by which the rioters organised. Another was what Charles Tilly calls ‘repertoires of collective action,’ or, to use my preferred terminology, ‘repertoires of protest.’³⁹⁴ This is the idea that protesters have “a limited number of well-known performances repeated with relatively minor variations.”³⁹⁵ Everyone knows how to perform these protest tactics, even if they have never done so themselves. This fact means “that an action can be ‘spontaneous’ in the sense of not having been planned in advance by any of the participants, and yet be highly organized, even ritualized.”³⁹⁶ Repertoires of collective action, or protest, gradually change over time; whilst a modern repertoire might include occupations and Twitter storms, the repertoire in eighteenth-century Britain included the sacking of houses

³⁹⁰ OBPO t17800628-112 Trial of James Jackson.

³⁹¹ OBPO t17800628-112 Trial of James Jackson.

³⁹² Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.

³⁹³ Reicher and Stott, “Becoming the Subject of History.”

³⁹⁴ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Center for Research on Social Organization Working Paper No. 156 (1977); Tilly, Charles. *Britain Creates the Social Movement*, Centre for Research on Social Organization Working Paper No. 232 (1981).

³⁹⁵ Tilly, *Britain Creates the Social Movement*; 9.

³⁹⁶ Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; 5–25.

and illuminations, both of which occurred during the Gordon Riots.³⁹⁷ It is possible to trace how protest practices developed. For example, we have already seen that a common tactic of the rioters was ‘pulling down’ or ‘gutting’ houses. This practice can be traced to the early seventeenth-century, when London apprentices would ‘pull down’ brothels and playhouses on Shrove Tuesday to ‘cleanse’ London.³⁹⁸ In addition, the government had the power to destroy buildings, a power which they used on buildings in which dissenters worshipped until the mid-seventeenth century.³⁹⁹ Over time, ‘pulling down’ houses became an accepted tactic in the repertoires of protest.

The mimicking of official practices links to another characteristic of the eighteenth-century ‘mob.’ The crowd frequently felt a sense of legitimacy because they were doing what they believed the authorities should be. The Gordon rioters “assumed the place of authority. In their own eyes they did what the Anglican establishment should have done, immobilize the Catholic foe in their midst.”⁴⁰⁰ The rioters’ repertoires of protest reflect this sense of legitimacy. As well as gutting buildings, other tactics such as bonfires, illuminations, and the use of flags also mimicked official practices. Repertoires of protest allowed the rioters to organise without a formal leadership structure, as each individual knew what action was required without being told.

Based on evidence from the historical record, I argue that the rioters were organised, but not in a hierarchical fashion with a fixed leadership structure and assigned roles. The rioters’ organisation was ephemeral and transient, based on temporary, conditional leadership and collective knowledge of expected behaviour. The rioters did not share a

³⁹⁷ Tilly, *Britain Creates the Social Movement*. Illumination was the practice of placing lit candles in windows or doorways to celebrate good news or demonstrate support of a cause.

³⁹⁸ Robert B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England*. (London: Hambledon and London, 2004).

³⁹⁹ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴⁰⁰ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); 165.

single goal, nor were they unified by a single leader. This organisational system is in sharp contrast to that employed by the authorities, which I discuss later in this chapter. Now, however, I turn my attention to how the rioters communicated in order to achieve this unusual form of organisation.

4.2.2 Communication

In order to organise, people need to communicate, and the rioters used a variety of methods to communicate with each other during the Gordon Riots. Information could be transmitted at high speed amongst the London crowd, and during the riots it was also transmitted over large distances. The rioters used three types of communication to achieve this: written and printed, verbal, and non-verbal. The written methods of communication took the form of handwritten missives and printed handbills.

As communication technology has developed, it has presented both opportunities and challenges to social movements and protesters. The impacts of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phones, on activists has been an established area of research since the 1990s.⁴⁰¹ Whilst there has been comparatively less research on the impacts of the printing press on protest, parallels can be drawn between it and ICTs.⁴⁰² The invention and dissemination of printed media had significant impacts on society generally, and social movements in particular. The spread of print across the world contributed to new understandings and ways of thinking, and helped pave the way for the development of nationalism.⁴⁰³ Print's impact on protest was equally significant:

⁴⁰¹ R. Kelly Garrett, "Protest in an Information Society: A Review of Literature on Social Movements and New ICTs," *Information, Communication and Society* 9, no. 2 (2006): 202–24.

⁴⁰² Roberta T. Garner, "Virtual Social Movements," Paper presented at the Zaldfest: A Conference in Honour of Mayer Zald. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1999.

⁴⁰³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

Print was part of the process in which collective action in Western Europe shifted from local, corporate-based, brief bursts of direct action to a repertoire that was modular, national, flexible, sustained, and autonomous. Print made possible national-level associations, turned local passions into coherent, self-conscious, and sustained ideologies, and created a sense of possibilities for redirecting the state.⁴⁰⁴

During the Gordon Riots, the printing press was the most sophisticated communication technology in existence. Printed literature was increasingly popular in London during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; by 1700 there were 62 printers, 188 bookshops and numerous bookstalls in London.⁴⁰⁵ Smaller items were hawked or given out in the streets, or posted on walls and doors.⁴⁰⁶ Since the Restoration, most Londoners could either read, or knew someone who did.⁴⁰⁷ Reading was a sociable activity, and literate Londoners would often read out loud to less well-educated citizens.⁴⁰⁸ As a result, publications like pamphlets had significant influence over the formation of public opinion.⁴⁰⁹ Printed handbills became a common sight in protests, as a method of soliciting support and encouraging action.⁴¹⁰

Handbills are ephemeral, meant to be used and discarded, not preserved in the archives. However, one handbill that was disseminated during the Gordon Riots has survived, and is also referenced in another contemporary source. *England in Blood* was circulated from a house in Fleet Street. It advertised a pro-riot pamphlet called *The Thunderer*, which

⁴⁰⁴ Garner, "Virtual Social Movements;" 12.

⁴⁰⁵ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴⁰⁶ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴⁰⁷ Carl F. Kaestle, *Literacy in the United States—Readers and Reading Since 1880* (New Haven: Yale University, 1991); Roger F. Schofield, "Dimensions of Illiteracy in England in 1750–1850," in *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader*, ed. Harvey J. Graff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 201–13; Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴⁰⁸ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴⁰⁹ A. Aspinall, "Statistical Accounts of the London Newspapers in the Eighteenth Century," *English Historical Review* 63, no. 247 (1948): 201–30.

⁴¹⁰ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

was to be published on 8 June.⁴¹¹ The authorities were aware of the potential of handbills like *England in Blood*; magistrate John Wilkes issued warrants for several publishers in the latter stages of the Gordon Riots, including William Moore, who published *The Thunderer*.⁴¹² At the time, warrants forced the named party to appear before the magistrate to answer a complaint or accusation.⁴¹³ Wilkes' actions suggest he was aware of the power which handbills and pamphlets had to influence opinion, otherwise he would not attempt to suppress them.

Another written form of communication which the rioters used was handwritten missives; short notes meant to be passed amongst the crowd. Missives are also ephemeral, but one that was discovered during the Gordon Riots has been preserved. It was found by a Sergeant on the artillery parade grounds to the north-east of London on 12 June (See Figure 7).

⁴¹¹ Anon., *A Plain and Succinct Narrative*.

⁴¹² BL, ADD MS 30866. *The Diaries of John Wilkes*.

⁴¹³ Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, "The Magistrate, the Community and the Maintenance of an Orderly Society in Eighteenth-Century England," *Historical Research* 76, no. 191 (2003): 54–77.

Image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 7: A photograph of a photocopy of a missive found during the Gordon Riots made during the 1960s. See Appendix 2 for a transcription of the text. Source: Guildhall Library 941 JAC.

Along with print, word-of-mouth was the key means of spreading news in the eighteenth century.⁴¹⁴ The past can sometimes feel very quiet during archival research, especially when studying periods before the invention of technology capable of recording sound. However, eighteenth-century London was crowded and chaotic, and would have been full of the sound of noises and voices, particularly so during riots.⁴¹⁵ Evidence of conversations rioters had, and word-of-mouth rumours that spread through the crowd, has been captured in the historical record. Rioters had conversations with each other and observers, for a whole range of reasons. Whilst giving evidence at the trial of Henry John Maskall, Richard Ingram describes the following exchange that allegedly took place between him, the accused, and some others:

I took particular notice of some books that were then burning; I made the observation, that the books could have done no harm, the mob carried their resentment too far. Upon that a man on my left hand said, What, Sir! in a menacing tone. I thought myself in some danger; I corrected myself immediately, and said, Lord George Gordon will get this bill repealed, it is a pity things are going so far. Mr. Maskall stood upon my right hand within one; he looked over that man's shoulder and said, It is a d - d lie, the bill will not be repealed. The man that said, What, Sir! was on my left hand, Mr. Maskall was next but one to me on my right.

What happened upon that? - A person upon my right hand, who stood even with me, said, Maskall, you are always in sedition, or you are a seditious person, I cannot say which,

⁴¹⁴ Adrian Randall *et al.*, "Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland" in *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, eds. Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 1–24.

⁴¹⁵ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

but words to that effect; I looked Maskall full in the face; he put his hand upon the man's shoulder that stood on my right hand between him and me, and said, That man in the black cockade (meaning me) is a spy; I had a black cockade in my hat.⁴¹⁶

Maskall was acquitted, a fact which highlights the potential difficulties of working with court transcripts as a historical source. Like most archival sources, legal documents and records “cannot be seen only as reflections of the past, as witnesses to history, but must also be understood as agents in the historical process.”⁴¹⁷ They were created to serve a purpose, which means they cannot be accepted as containing the ‘truth.’ In addition, witnesses at the trial may have lied, which is another reason why court records should not be trusted implicitly. As the concern here is whether or not conversations happened, not whether Henry Maskall conducted the exact conversation he was accused of, it is arguably still a useful example of the types of verbal exchanges that were taking place. The rioters used conversation to transmit information and make decisions.

One form in which information was transmitted through verbal exchanges was rumour. Without direct personal experience to confirm that an event had happened, the rioters often had to rely on the word of others for their news and information. When giving evidence against Abraham Danson, accused of taking part in the destruction of Earl Mansfield’s house on 6 June, Susannah Moore explained how she came to be at Mansfield’s house in Bloomsbury:

⁴¹⁶ OBPO t17800628-10 Trial of Henry John Maskall. For more evidence of verbal exchanges between rioters, see OBPO t17800628-1 Trial of William Laurence and Richard Roberts; OBPO t17800628-15 Trial of Thomas Chambers; OBPO t17800628-21 James Henry.

⁴¹⁷ Shannon McSheffrey, “Detective Fiction in the Archives: Court Records and the Uses of Law in Late Medieval England,” *History Workshop Journal* 65, no. 1 (2008): 65–78; 66.

when they first set out she did not know they had any intention of going to Bloomsbury, but hearing there was a fire they went to see it as innocent spectators.⁴¹⁸

Moore and her companions were not planning to go to Mansfield's house, but when they heard about what was happening there, they went. They altered their plans according to a rumour. In Lord Gordon's account of what happened during the riots, he describes how he heard about the attacks on the chapels at the Bavarian and Sardinian embassies on 2 June:

Before Lord George arose in the Morning MacQueen told him that he heard some of the Popish Chapels had been pulled down last night. Lord George asked MacQueen What Chapels? Who had pulled them down? Who told him so? — MacQueen said the maids told him, and they had it from the Milk people.⁴¹⁹

John MacQueen was Gordon's butler. This quote illustrates how information spread through rumours in eighteenth-century London; the information passed through at least three people before it reached Gordon. Rumours allow information to travel large distances as they are passed from person to person. They also have the advantage of being very difficult for the authorities to be aware of and control.⁴²⁰

The above two examples were accurate, but not all the rumours that circulated through London during the Gordon Riots were. On 3 June, Gordon's family "had been alarmed by Neighbours, as well as Strangers, knocking at the Door, and acquainting them that Lord George was to be murdered that Night, his House burnt, and Doctor Trotter's Presbyterian

⁴¹⁸ OBPO t17800628-128 Trial of Abraham Danson.

⁴¹⁹ BL Add MS 42129 *Lord Geo Gordon's Narrative*; 26.

⁴²⁰ Stephen Young, Alasdair Pinkerton, and Klaus Dodds, "The Word on the Streets: Rumor, 'Race' and the Anticipation of Urban Unrest," *Political Geography* 38 (2014): 57–67.

Meeting house in Swallow Street destroyed, by the papists.”⁴²¹ The vengeful Catholic crowd never appeared, demonstrating that rumours are not always accurate. This fact does not make rumours a poor method of communication, however, as transmitting information is not the only purpose they serve. They are a mechanism through which crowds attempt to come to a consensus.⁴²² The rumours of a vindictive Catholic mob would have helped to unify and rally the rioters, confirming their beliefs about Catholics. A crowd that is in agreement can organise, coordinate, and act more efficiently; in this way communication helped facilitate the rioters’ organisation.⁴²³

Non-verbal methods, the third type of communication the rioters used, were even less tangible. The rioters used noises and sounds, as well as visual symbols, to transmit ideas and emotions. Non-representational theory has had a significant impact on human geography in recent years, and there have been tentative steps towards engaging with praxis and the performative in the field of historical geography.⁴²⁴ Symbolic behaviour and objects were an important part of the way that rioters communicated with each other, with observers, and with the authorities in the eighteenth century. It has been argued that “[a]ny assessment of the impact of the Gordon riots must take into account their sheer presence as a spectacular visual event.”⁴²⁵ The blue cockades worn by members of the Protestant Association and the rioters are perhaps the best example of the use of visual symbolism during the Gordon Riots. It was a well-established tradition in eighteenth-century Britain to wear coloured adornments, such as ribbons, sashes, or cockades, to demonstrate allegiance to a political

⁴²¹ BL Add MS 42129 *Lord Geo Gordon’s Narrative*; 28.

⁴²² Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.

⁴²³ Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.

⁴²⁴ Griffin and Evans, “On Historical Geographies of Embodied Practice and Performance;” Ogborn, “Francis Williams’s Bad Language.”

⁴²⁵ Ian Haywood, “‘A Metropolis in Flames and a Nation in Ruins’: The Gordon Riots as Sublime Spectacle,” in *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection on Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, eds. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 117–43; 117.

party or a cause.⁴²⁶ The Protestant Association adopted blue cockades as their symbol, in an attempt to distinguish ‘true’ Protestants from troublemakers at the rally on St. George’s Fields on 2 June.⁴²⁷ Symbols can unify disparate sections of a crowd, and the cockades probably would have contributed to individuals feeling like part of a unified whole.⁴²⁸

However, as with other forms of symbolism, political clothing has “mutable semiotics.”⁴²⁹ The meanings associated with clothing can shift and change, in ways that can be difficult to predict and control. As the riots progressed, the Protestant Association attempted to distance itself from the blue cockades, which were still being worn both by rioters and those attempting to escape their wrath.⁴³⁰ Even the Jewish communities in Houndsditch and Duke’s Place wore the cockades to avoid the displeasure of the rioters.⁴³¹ On 7 June, the Protestant Association circulated a notice requesting that ‘true’ Protestants not wear the cockades.⁴³² This example demonstrates both the power of visual symbols and the transience of their meanings. The messages they communicate are both temporary and subjective; they are open to interpretation and alteration by their audience.

Along with visual indicators, sounds are an important form of non-verbal communication. A riot is a noisy event. One witness to the gutting of John Lebarty’s house on 7 June described “a great noise.”⁴³³ Some sources were more specific; for example, William Pateman was accused of “ringing a bell and collecting money” on 7 June.⁴³⁴ Collecting money was a common

⁴²⁶ Katrina Navickas, “‘That Sash Will Hang You:’ Political Clothing and Adornment in England, 1780–1840,” *The Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 3 (2010): 540–65; Paul A. Pickering, “Class without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement,” *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 144–62.

⁴²⁷ BL Add Ms 42129 *The Narrative of Lord Geo. Gordon*; Anon. *The Trial of the Honourable George Gordon*.

⁴²⁸ Pickering, “Class Without Words;” Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.

⁴²⁹ Navickas, “‘That Sash Will Hang You;’” 564.

⁴³⁰ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason*; TNA KB 33/5/12 *Treason: The Gordon Riots, with Earlier Precedents*; OBPO t17800628-52 Trial of William Pateman.

⁴³¹ De Castro, *The Gordon Riots*.

⁴³² Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*.

⁴³³ OBPO t17800628-38 Trial of William Macdonald.

⁴³⁴ OBPO t17800628-52 Trial of William Pateman.

activity for the rioters; Pateman may have been using the bell to get attention or to signify his purpose. There were also vocal noises other than words. For example, there are multiple mentions in the sources of rioters giving a “huzza,” which is a form of cheer or shout.⁴³⁵ In the eighteenth century, Londoners were drawn towards loud noises or the sight of a gathering crowd; making noise was an important part of drawing together a crowd of rioters and observers.⁴³⁶ The noises made by the Gordon Rioters, both intentional and unintentional, would have been heard and interpreted by other Londoners, who would have then acted accordingly.

These visual and aural methods of communication are not necessarily transmitting messages or information in the manner traditionally associated with communication. They also transmit feelings and atmospheres, which can send a powerful message in their own way. Affect has become a topic of interest for geographers in recent years, as have affective atmospheres, or atmospheres that can affect an individual, and cause them to feel a particular emotion.⁴³⁷ Protesters have to tread a fine line between utilising the fear of chaos to get what they want, and alienating support by going ‘too far.’ One of the ways historical protesters did this was to threaten violence through “language, gesture and the performing of (disembodied) pain.”⁴³⁸ Whilst the Gordon rioters did commit acts of violence, it was controlled; it was only against objects, not people. The rioters tried to achieve their goals through “affecting a psychosomatic response through inflicting ‘pain’ on embodied proxies.”⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ OBPO t17800628-10 Trial of Henry John Maskall; OBPO t17800628-15 Trial of Thomas Chambers; OBPO t17800628-26 Trial of Edward Dennis; t17800628-37 Trial of George Staples; OBPO t17800628-38 Trial of William Macdonald; OBPO t17800628-39 Trial of Benjamin Waters; OBPO t17800628-57 Trial of George Kennedy; OBPO t17800628-65 Trial of Mary Roberts and Charlotte Gardiner; OBPO t17800628-76 Trial of Susannah the wife of Edward Clark; OBPO t17800628-82 Trial of Timothy Avory; OBPO t17800628-90 Trial of John White and Peter Drew; OBPO t17800628-92 Trial of Francis Mockford; OBPO t17800628-115 Trial of Thomas Price, James Burn and John Thompson; OBPO t17800628-117 Trial of Luke Hand; OBPO t17800913-16 Trial of Mary Gardiner.

⁴³⁶ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

⁴³⁷ Ben Anderson, “Affective Atmospheres,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 2 (2009) 77–81.

⁴³⁸ Griffin, “Affecting Violence;” 144.

⁴³⁹ Griffin, “Affecting Violence;” 144.

In other words, they created an atmosphere in which London's elites feared for their safety, without actually injuring anyone. I have already discussed the rioters' tactic of destroying houses, but Andreas Fahrmeir provides another example in the form of attacks on luxury coaches.⁴⁴⁰ Protesters in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries regularly targeted the coaches of the wealthy, damaging them but rarely hurting the occupants.⁴⁴¹ This tactic was employed by the Gordon rioters outside Parliament on 2 June. Fahrmeir views this restraint as a form of 'civility' on the part of the rioters. This moderation is an example of repertoires of protest at work, as demonstrators repeated the same tactic in different contexts over several decades. The visual and aural methods of communication contributed to the affective atmosphere that tactics such as this created.

An example in which visual and aural methods of communication come together with affective atmospheres is fire. Gutting a building and burning the contents was one of the most common tactics employed by the Gordon Rioters. Eighteenth-century Londoners feared fire, and for good reason; it regularly destroyed large areas of the city.⁴⁴² On the worst nights of rioting, fires could be seen from all over the city, as one contemporary account describes:

The burning of the Fleet Prison, the King's-Bench Prison, the Prison called the Borough Clink, in Tooley-Street, the New Bridewell, in St. George's Fields, on Wednesday evening, all being on fire at the same time, together with the other conflagrations, afforded from every point of view one of the

⁴⁴⁰ Andreas Fahrmeir, "Civil Rioters? Citizens' Restrained Violence in Britain around 1800," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 18, no. 3 (2011): 359–71.

⁴⁴¹ Fahrmeir, "Civil Rioters?"

⁴⁴² Jerry White, *London in the 18th Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Vintage, 2013).

most dismal and painful spectacles ever exhibited in or near this metropolis.⁴⁴³

This sense of fear was widespread across the capital; by 7 June “those Londoners as were not cowed were unnerved.”⁴⁴⁴ The rioters used carefully controlled fires to create an atmosphere of threat and fear. Fires have an obvious visual impact, but they also impact the other senses too; they can be heard, smelt, and even tasted. All five of a Londoner’s senses would have been affected by fire during the Gordon Riots. Fires were just one way in which the rioters used visual and aural methods to communicate an unspoken threat through affective atmospheres.

The rioters employed methods of communication which reflected their organisational structures. They used a combination of written and printed, verbal, and non-verbal methods to transmit information effectively and quickly. However, their methods of communication also served other purposes as well, such as unifying a group, and creating affective atmospheres. In contrast, the authorities used different forms of organisation and a different combination of methods of communication during the Gordon Riots. I discuss these in the next section.

4.3 The Authorities: Structured Inefficiency

The ‘authorities’—those charged by statute with restoring order during the Gordon Riots—employed organisational structures and methods of communication that were distinct from those of the rioters. The rigid, hierarchical organisational structure within which the authorities operated arguably made it *more* difficult for them to quell the riots than it otherwise might have been had they been able to operate in a more responsive manner. It may be assumed that the organisational structures and methods of communication employed by the authorities during the

⁴⁴³ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 37–8.

⁴⁴⁴ de Castro, *The Gordon Riots*; 140.

Gordon Riots are easier to recover from the historical record than those used by the rioters because information about powerful groups is more likely to be preserved in the archive.⁴⁴⁵ There are, however, challenges in so doing. Communication and organisation are quotidian activities and not, therefore, the kind of things which tend to be recorded for posterity. Some contemporary accounts are, for example, frustratingly vague about how information and orders were passed between the different individuals and groups involved in trying to suppress the riots. For example, when giving evidence during the trial of Lord Gordon, William Hyde, a Justice of the Peace, recalled that:

Information came to me, on Monday, that the mob was going to destroy Sir George Savile's house, in Leicester's-fields; upon this I immediately sent for the military; some of the horse came, and they, under my direction, dispersed the mob.⁴⁴⁶

Hyde did not detail how, precisely, "information came" to him, nor by what mechanism he "sent for the military," because, we might assume, such details would have seemed obvious to a contemporary audience. This assumption is, however, precisely why it can be difficult to research everyday activities like communication and organisation in archives, even when researching elites and those in positions of power. As I shall show in what follows, however, doing so is possible to a certain extent.

So, who were the 'authorities' in late eighteenth-century London? The Metropolitan Police was not established until 1829, and the justice system previous to that was antiquated and ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of policing such a large city.⁴⁴⁷ As with other aspects of the

⁴⁴⁵ Randall C. Jimerson, "Archives and Memory," *OCLC Systems and Services* 19, no. 3 (2003): 89–95.

⁴⁴⁶ Anon. *The Trial of the Honourable George Gordon*; 17.

⁴⁴⁷ David Ascoli, *The Queen's Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829–1979* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979).

Georgian state, such as government and administration, policing relied heavily on propertied men acting in an amateur capacity; many duties were supposed to be carried out by volunteers.⁴⁴⁸ Constables and night watchmen were responsible for maintaining order the majority of the time, but they were not equipped to deal with riots. Watchmen were paid using local taxes, and constables were elected from the local ratepayers to serve one-year terms.⁴⁴⁹ Those elected chose frequently to employ a 'deputy' to perform the duties on their behalf, resulting in the semi-professionalisation of policing.⁴⁵⁰ The system of watchmen and constables was not sufficient, however, to cope with civil unrest. Quelling such unrest was the responsibility of Justices of the Peace, or Magistrates.⁴⁵¹ They were supposed to do this with the aid of private citizens, who were incentivised by the fact that local taxpayers were responsible for the cost of any damage done during riots.⁴⁵²

When civil power proved insufficient to deal with unrest, which was frequently the case, the military could be called upon for aid.⁴⁵³ The military constituted the regular army, small in size due to a general hostility towards standing armies; the militia, made up of civilians serving part-time in peacetime and full-time during times of conflict; and other trained groups of civilians, such as the London Military Foot Association and the Honourable Artillery Company.⁴⁵⁴ To complicate matters further, the City of London was outside of the jurisdiction of Westminster and Middlesex magistrates. The City was governed entirely separately, with its own system of magistrates, Court of Aldermen, and Lord Mayor.⁴⁵⁵ Individuals in the top positions of authority during the Gordon Riots were Lord Stormont and Lord Hillsborough, the Secretaries of State; Baron Jeffrey

⁴⁴⁸ Matthew McCormack, "Supporting the Civil Power: Citizen Soldiers and the Gordon Riots," *The London Journal* 37, no. 1 (2012) 27–41.

⁴⁴⁹ McCormack, "Supporting the Civil Power."

⁴⁵⁰ White, *London in the 18th Century*.

⁴⁵¹ Nippel, "Reading the Riot Act".

⁴⁵² Nippel, "Reading the Riot Act."

⁴⁵³ McCormack, "Supporting the Civil Power."

⁴⁵⁴ McCormack, "Supporting the Civil Power."

⁴⁵⁵ White, *London in the 18th Century*.

Amherst, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army; and Brackley Kennet, the Lord Mayor of London and, therefore, the City's chief magistrate.

The key law governing the suppression of riots was the 1715 Riot Act. The Act was part of the general trend towards increasingly harsh laws in the eighteenth century; it changed the crime of rioting from a misdemeanour—punishable by imprisonment, whipping, or a fine—to a felony, punishable by death.⁴⁵⁶ Before 1715, a riot was defined by common law as “a joint action of a private nature committed by three or more persons which amounted to an actual breach of the King's Peace or at least to the manifest terror of the people.”⁴⁵⁷ Under the Riot Act, twelve or more people were guilty of a felony if they had not dispersed within an hour of a proclamation being read by a Justice of the Peace. After that hour had passed, anyone helping the magistrate to apprehend rioters had indemnity if a rioter was hurt or killed.⁴⁵⁸ Rioters were also committing a felony if they started to damage or destroy property, regardless of whether or not the proclamation had been read.⁴⁵⁹ The Act was designed to supplement the power of magistrates and the military to intervene in civil unrest, but it led to confusion with respect to rights, responsibilities, and jurisdiction which occasionally hampered efforts to suppress riots.⁴⁶⁰ It was a misconception, widely held by the military and the general populace, that soldiers could not intervene in civil disorder unless a magistrate had read the proclamation. In fact, it remained the duty of *all* citizens to prevent riotous behaviour if it was occurring, whether or not the proclamation had been read.⁴⁶¹ In addition, the Riot Act did not clarify whether the military could use force to suppress riots; soldiers and magistrates faced criminal prosecution if it was decided that excessive force had been used.⁴⁶² The misconceptions and ambiguities of the Riot Act, I argue, hampered the

⁴⁵⁶ Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act.”

⁴⁵⁷ Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act;” 402.

⁴⁵⁸ Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act.”

⁴⁵⁹ Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act.”

⁴⁶⁰ Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain*.

⁴⁶¹ Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain*.

⁴⁶² Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act.”

efforts of authorities to restore order during the Gordon Riots. In what follows, I elaborate on this assessment by exploring how the authorities organised.

4.3.1 Organisation

The authorities' organisational structure during the Gordon Riots was rigid and hierarchical, in almost complete opposition to the structure employed by the rioters. For the authorities to act to prevent a group of rioters from looting and burning a building, several people were required to be in the right place at the right time. Crucially, they also had to be willing to do their jobs; some, for a variety of reasons, were not. Many magistrates, whether out of sympathy for the rioters' cause, fear of their property being targeted by the rioters, or the concern of being prosecuted if someone was killed, were reluctant to do their duty and read the Riot Act's proclamation.⁴⁶³ A number of contemporary accounts of the riots illustrate the difficulties resulting from this formal hierarchical structure. The first example refers to the chapels of the Bavarian and Sardinian embassies, the first casualties of the riots on the evening of 2 June:

Both the chapels were, in great measure, destroyed, and the furniture taken out and burnt, before the military could arrive. Thirteen of the rioters were taken, and secured in the Savoy.⁴⁶⁴

The authorities were frequently one step behind the rioters, arriving too late to prevent damage to buildings. One contemporary observer describes how the military behaved when they were called to the location of a disturbance, but did not intervene because they believed they needed to be ordered to do so by a magistrate:

⁴⁶³ McCormack, "Supporting the Civil Power."

⁴⁶⁴ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason*; 48.

The military, after the civil power had called them in, were not used by them. The mob knew the military did not dare to fire without the command of the civil power. The military, seeing they were not to be used effectually, endeavoured to keep upon good terms with those, who might, with impunity, as they did in many places, pull their noses and spit in their faces. — Hence reports, at the time as if the soldiery had, in some measure, joined in with the mob.⁴⁶⁵

During the trial of Henry John Maskall for contributing to the destruction of the Earl of Mansfield's house on the night of 6–7 June, Sir Thomas Mills describes his attempts to encourage a detachment of guards to intervene and save the house. Mansfield was Lord Chief Justice of the Court of the King's Bench, and unpopular with many. Mills was unsuccessful, because the commanding officer refused to act without a magistrate present:

I instantly returned, knowing there was a detachment of the Guards in the square in order to make them act and save the house. I found the officer at the head of his detachment in the square at his lordship's house. I applied to him to enter the house with his men; he told me that the justices of the peace had all run away, and that he would not and could not act without the civil magistrate. I had some warm words with him, pretty high, but he insisted upon not acting without the civil magistrate.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason*; 51.

⁴⁶⁶ OBPO t17800628-10. The trial of Henry John Maskall.

Another account of the sacking of Earl Mansfield's house by the rioters describes how troops eventually did intervene, but only on the orders of a magistrate:

About eleven o'clock, a very large body attacked Earl Mansfield's house in Bloomsbury-Square, the furniture of which took them a long time destroying. In this employment they were sometimes disturbed by a detachment of horse and foot soldiers, who appeared and retired again, till another party came to the spot, attended by a justice, who ordered the men to fire.⁴⁶⁷

Soldiers believed they could not act without a magistrate, and a magistrate was unlikely to confront a group of rioters without soldiers. Soldiers had to be 'sent for,' or ordered to go somewhere by a magistrate or superior—they could not just decide to go somewhere, like the rioters could. This made them slow to respond to reports of rioting. State power is not distributed evenly across geographical space, which creates different opportunities for unrest in different locations.⁴⁶⁸ In this case, the particular reluctance of London's magistrates meant that the rioters faced less resistance than they would in a location where the magistrates were willing to carry out their responsibilities. London's specific socio-political contexts impacted how the riots progressed.

The authorities did not become an adequate force for responding to the riots until King George III issued a proclamation on 8 June, almost a week after the rioting had begun, stating:

it is necessary, from the circumstances before mentioned,
to employ the military force, with which we are by law

⁴⁶⁷ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 19.

⁴⁶⁸ Walter J. Nicholls, "The Geographies of Social Movements," *Geography Compass* 1, no. 3 (2007): 607–22.

entrusted, for the immediate suppression of such Rebellious and Traitorous Attempts, now making against the Peace and Dignity of our Crown, and the safety of the lives and properties of our Subjects, we have therefore issued the most direct and effectual orders to all our Officers, by an immediate exertion of their utmost force to repress the same, of which all persons are to take Notice.⁴⁶⁹

The proclamation allowed the military to intervene without the presence of a magistrate, removing any ambiguity and effectively ‘cutting out the middle man,’ who had so far proved reluctant. From his position at the top of the socio-judicial hierarchy, the King was able to simplify the organisational structure of the authorities, making them more effective at suppressing the riots. As with the rioters, the authorities had to communicate with each other in order for their organisational structure to function. I shall now turn to the methods of communication which the authorities employed.

4.3.2 Communication

As with the rioters, the methods of communication which the authorities used during the Gordon Riots can be split into three categories: written, verbal, and non-verbal. The written and printed communication took the form of proclamations, letters, and notes. The King’s proclamation reproduced above is one of several that were published during the riots. For example, on the evening of Tuesday 6 June, a proclamation was published offering a reward of £500 for information that would lead to the successful conviction of anyone involved in the destruction of the chapels at the Bavarian and Sardinian embassies.⁴⁷⁰ Another proclamation was published on 10 June offering a reward of £50 for evidence that led to the

⁴⁶⁹ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 34–36.

⁴⁷⁰ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 24–26.

conviction of any rioters.⁴⁷¹ Letters and written notes were also a common method of communication between those in authority; the letters which Baron Jeffrey Amherst wrote during the riots are preserved in the National Archives. Mainly about the deployment of troops, he wrote dozens of letters, many of which were replies to correspondence he had received.⁴⁷² Some were written as late as two o'clock in the morning, suggesting Amherst spent a significant portion of his time during the riots writing letters.

One of the most common forms of verbal communication was public speaking; where people in positions of authority would address the rioters. There are numerous examples of this happening at various points during the riots. For example, on Wednesday 7 June "[t]he Lord Mayor and Sheriffs kept continually patrolling the streets of this city, and wherever they found any number of persons assembled, talked and reasoned with them, and they very peaceably dispersed."⁴⁷³ Two days later, on 9 June:

Sir Watkin Lewis has taken a most active part in suppressing the riots and disturbances in the City of London, and has been up three nights: he prevailed twice on the populace, though it has since been burnt down, to quit Mr. Langdale's the distiller's, by representing to them the dreadful consequence of their proceeding, and the disgrace it would be to their cause.⁴⁷⁴

As these examples demonstrate, on some occasions public speaking was a more successful preventative than on others. Studies in crowd psychology have suggested that talking to the crowd can be an effective method of averting violence. However, the likelihood of success is increased if the

⁴⁷¹ Anon. *Fanaticism and Treason*.

⁴⁷² The National Archives [hereafter TNA] WO 34/234 Letters to Military Officers and Government Officials concerning the Gordon Riots, Summer 1780.

⁴⁷³ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 33.

⁴⁷⁴ Anon. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of Lord Geo. Gordon*; 53.

crowd members trust and respect the person talking to them; the optimal situation would be if they viewed the speaker as ‘one of them.’⁴⁷⁵ It seems unlikely that the Gordon Rioters would have viewed the Lord Mayor, the City of London Sheriffs, or Sir Watkin Lewis as ‘one of them.’

The authorities must also have used speech as a method of communication between themselves. Traces of these conversations can be found in the archive, although many surely went unrecorded. John Wilkes, an Alderman of the City of London, wrote about the riots in his diary. On Wednesday 7 June, he “[a]ttended the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House at one, and desired his Lordship to direct the sheriff to raise the posse comitatus.”⁴⁷⁶ ‘Posse comitatus’ is the common-law right of a sheriff, or other law officer, to call upon able-bodied men to help them keep the peace or arrest a criminal. Like the rioters, the authorities must have conversed when they were face-to-face, using other methods when they were further apart.

Non-verbal forms of communication used by the authorities included visual and aural communication and the threat of violence, much like the rioters. There were multiple occasions during the Gordon Riots where troops were sent to protect a location that was not attacked.⁴⁷⁷ It is difficult to say whether this is due to the troops acting as a deterrent or because the locations were never targeted in the first place. However, it is arguable that the armed troops would have made an effective implied threat of violence, in a similar manner to the fires of the rioters. A major difference between the rioters and the troops, however, is that the soldiers followed through on the threat. Several hundred people were killed during the riots, and there is no evidence that any of these deaths were caused by the rioters.⁴⁷⁸ Whilst the rioters restrained their actions to

⁴⁷⁵ Stephen Reicher *et al.*, “An Integrated Approach to Crowd Psychology and Public Order Policing,” *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 27, no. 4 (2004): 558–72.

⁴⁷⁶ BL Add MS 30866. John Wilkes’ Diaries; 241.

⁴⁷⁷ For details of where some troops were dispatched to, see TNA WO 34/234 Letters to Military Officers and Government Officials concerning the Gordon Riots, Summer 1780.

⁴⁷⁸ Christopher Hibbert, *King Mob*.

violence against objects, the authorities were more willing to commit violence against people.

For both the authorities and the rioters, different methods of communication were better suited to different spatial scales. A handwritten or printed message could travel long distances, but verbal communication was only suitable for short distances. However, transmitted through a chain of talkative Londoners, rumours could spread throughout the entire city. Non-verbal methods operated on a variety of scales, depending on how far their impacts reached. Visual symbols were only effective as long as they could be seen, but a well-placed fire could be seen from quite a distance. Different methods of communication may be selected for a variety of reasons, including how far the information is required to travel.

It is clear to see that the rioters and the authorities employed different organisational structures during the Gordon Riots. The rioters organised along informal and transient lines, which allowed them to respond quickly to the changing situation. The authorities had a more fixed hierarchical structure, which proved to be inefficient. The rioters and the authorities employed similar methods of communication, although in different proportions. The authorities relied heavily on written letters and notes, whilst the rioters mainly used conversation, rumour, and word-of-mouth. Further comparisons will be made in the next section, which analyses communication and organisation during the Gordon Riots from a more general viewpoint.

4.4 Rhizomatic Rioters: Applying Deleuze and Guattari to the Gordon Riots

On the basis of the available historical resources, I have argued that the rioters and the authorities employed different organisational structures and combined different methods of communication. The concept of the

rhizome, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, can be used can be used to draw comparisons between the two disparate groups.⁴⁷⁹ Borrowing the term from biology, rhizomes are, for Deleuze and Guattari, “comprised of non-hierarchical networks within which there are many ways to proceed from one point to another.”⁴⁸⁰ They contrast with arboreal systems, which are “centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths.”⁴⁸¹ The rhizome has been applied to a range of protests and social movements in academic literature, including the 1990 revolution in Nepal, rural protest in Britain, fascist groups post-1945, the Global Social Forum, and community radio in apartheid South Africa.⁴⁸² Building on these existing examples, it can, I suggest, be helpful to think of the rioters as rhizomatic, and the authorities as arborescent.

The rioters embodied most of the six defining principles of the rhizome: connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography, and decalcomania.⁴⁸³ As has already been demonstrated, the rioters were constantly forming new connections with each other, communicating with both pre-existing acquaintances and strangers to pass on information. They were also heterogenous and multiple; we have already seen that the rioters were not united in their motivations for

⁴⁷⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

⁴⁸⁰ Anna Secor, “Rhizome,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 655–56; 655.

⁴⁸¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; 21.

⁴⁸² Tanja E. Bosch, “Radio as the Instrument of Protest: The History of Busch Radio,” *Journal of Radio Studies* 13, no. 2 (2006): 249–65; Peter Nikolaus Funke, “The Global Social Forum Rhizome: A Theoretical Framework,” *Globalizations* 9, no. 3 (2012): 351–64; Roger Griffin, “From Slime Mould to Rhizome: An Introduction to the Groupscular Right,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 37, no. 1 (2003): 27–50; Paul Routledge, “A Spatiality of Resistances: Theory and Practice in Nepal’s Revolution of 1990,” in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997): 68–86; Michael Woods, Jon Anderson, Steven Guilbert, and Suzie Watkin, “Rhizomic Radicalism and Arborescent Advocacy: A Deleuzo-Guattarian Reading of Rural Protest,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31, no. 3 (2013): 434–50.

⁴⁸³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Not all of the defining principles of the rhizome are clear. Asignifying rupture means that the rhizome can be broken, but it will recover, or start anew from another branch. Cartography is the idea that rhizomes cannot be fixed by a tracing or model. A rhizome is a map, constantly open to new formations and connections. Decalcomania is an artistic technique where ink or paint is spread onto one surface, then pressed onto another.

participating in the riots, and they came from a variety of social backgrounds. Using the transcripts of the trials of those accused of rioting, George Rudé was able to determine the occupations of 110 of the accused. These individuals ranged from an apothecary and a public executioner, through small employers and shopkeepers, to sailors, soldiers, journeymen, apprentices, and labourers.⁴⁸⁴ The rioters were a heterogeneous collection of people, each with their own motives and goals. The fourth principle of the rhizome is asignifying rupture, which means that a “rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.”⁴⁸⁵ Groups of rioters were frequently broken up or scattered by the authorities, or because they had achieved their immediate goals. However, because of their ephemeral leadership structures and repertoires of protest, rioters could reform elsewhere and continue with their activities much as they had before.

If the rioters were rhizomatic, then the authorities were arborescent. I have already argued that the authorities used a rigid, formal, and hierarchical organisational structure—elements that are also characteristic of arboreal systems. The authorities’ arboreal system was not well equipped to deal with the rioters; it could not adapt and respond to the rapid pace at which the rioters made decisions and carried out actions. Arguably, the authorities were held back during the Gordon Riots by their arborescent structure; it prevented them from responding quickly and efficiently to the rapidly changing situation.

Deleuze and Guattari reject dichotomies in their writing; I would like to do the same and use the concept of the rhizome to reject two dichotomies.⁴⁸⁶ First, the tendency to fall into one of two camps when thinking about riotous crowds; either the crowd as Le Bonian mob, or the crowd as a collection of rational individuals. The second dichotomy is that

⁴⁸⁴ George Rudé, “The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1956): 93–114; 106.

⁴⁸⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; 9.

⁴⁸⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

of rioters and authorities; there were more similarities between the two groups than one might expect.

I have already discussed the two main schools of thought within crowd psychology. The Le Bonian school views the crowds as a mindless mob, devoid of direction, purpose, and the ability to make rational decisions. Most scholars have rejected this view, arguing that individuals within crowds retain their own personality and decision-making processes. I am suggesting here that the reality is actually somewhere in between. As I have demonstrated, the rioters were capable of making rational decisions that helped them to achieve their goals, such as posting sentries on approach roads during the burning of Newgate Prison. They also took steps to confirm that their targets were actually Catholics. Cornelius Murphy had a public house in Golden Lane. On 7 June, a group of rioters appeared, but “[t]hey examined [Murphy’s] books and were going off satisfied.”⁴⁸⁷ They did not find any books that suggested Murphy was a Catholic, and were about to leave the public house unmolested before they were called back by Mr and Mrs Clark, who declared that Murphy was a “Papist.”⁴⁸⁸ This reversal was unfortunate for Cornelius Murphy, but demonstrates that the rioters did attempt to base their decisions on evidence, even if they were not exactly thorough in their investigations. These examples are not the behaviour of a mindless, unreasonable mob.

The Gordon Rioters were not an irrational mob, but neither were they their normal selves. As is common in many areas of research, “in correcting flawed depictions of rioters as frenzied and irrational, there is a danger of swinging too far in the opposite direction.”⁴⁸⁹ Individuals do things when part of a crowd that they would not necessarily do under other circumstances. It is now widely acknowledged that an individual does not have a single identity, rather one that adapts to the social contexts in

⁴⁸⁷ OBPO t17800628-15. Trial of Thomas Chambers.

⁴⁸⁸ OBPO t17800628-15. Trial of Thomas Chambers.

⁴⁸⁹ Hugo Gorringer and Michael Rosie, “King Mob: Perceptions, Prescriptions and Presumptions about the Policing of England’s Riots,” *Sociological Research Online* 16, no. 4 (2011): accessed December 2, 2011, <http://socresonline.org.uk/16/4/17.html>; 3.

which they are positioned.⁴⁹⁰ When an individual joins a crowd, they do not lose their personal identity, but arguably adapt it to more closely match the group identity. Their values and standards also shift, meaning that they might do something which they would not in other circumstances, such as participating in the sacking of a house or the burning of a prison.⁴⁹¹

Emotions also play a role. Most studies about protest tend to assume that emotion and rationality are mutually exclusive, but this is not the case.⁴⁹² Emotions are important at every stage of a protest movement, from recruitment to carrying out actions.⁴⁹³ It is difficult to determine how the Gordon Rioters were feeling from the historical record alone, as very little has survived from the perspective of the rioters themselves. However, there is evidence that points to the rioters' emotions from the accounts of observers; and research on the importance of emotion to modern protests suggests it is safe to assume that the rioters were feeling emotions.⁴⁹⁴

James Henry was witnessed swearing a "vehement oath" whilst at Langdale's Brewery during its destruction on the night of 7 June.⁴⁹⁵ Edward Dennis, accused of being involved in the destruction of the house of Edward Boggis on 7 June, also claims to have heard members of the crowd swear a "bitter oath."⁴⁹⁶ Others accused of rioting were also said to have been witnessed swearing, particularly variations of 'damn.'⁴⁹⁷ Swearing is

⁴⁹⁰ Jessica Dubow, "Identity," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 364–66.

⁴⁹¹ Reicher *et al.*, "An Integrated Approach to Crowd Psychology and Public Order Policing."

⁴⁹² Ron Amizade and Doug McAdam, "Emotions and Contentious Politics," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2002): 107–9.

⁴⁹³ Nathan L. Clough, "Emotions at the Centre of Radical Politics: On the Affective Structures of Rebellion and Control," *Antipode* 44, no. 5 (2012): 1667–86.

⁴⁹⁴ Amizade and McAdam, "Emotions and Contentious Politics;" Clough, "Emotions at the Centre of Radical Politics."

⁴⁹⁵ OBPO t17800628-21 Trial of James Henry.

⁴⁹⁶ OBPO t17800628-26 Trial of Edward Dennis.

⁴⁹⁷ See, for example, OBPO t17800628-1 Trial of William Laurence and Richard Roberts; OBPO t17800628-10 Trial of Henry John Maskall; OBPO t17800628-24 Trial of James Bulkley; OBPO t17800628-30 Trial of Stephen Titcombe; OBPO t17800628-34 Trial of Thomas Haycock; OBPO t17800628-92 Trial of Francis Mockford; OBPO t17800628-93 Trial of George Sims.

one way in which people express strong emotions, and it is more likely to be recorded in the archive than other signs of emotion, such as facial expressions or gestures. Strong emotions can also impact the way people act. Marcus Doel describes the smooth space inhabited by rhizomes as “a *composed* chaos.”⁴⁹⁸ This is arguably a good descriptor for the riotous crowd too; neither completely chaotic, nor completely rational, it is somewhere in between.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that “arborescent structures, which resemble a ‘tree’, are only a temporary crystallization of an ongoing rhizomatic process.”⁴⁹⁹ If we accept this, then the authorities during the Gordon Riots were not arborescent after all, but a rhizome that had been ‘frozen;’ slowed down to the point that it appears fixed. In fact, the rigid, hierarchical structure of the authorities did change during the Gordon Riots, when the King ordered the military to suppress the riots by whatever means necessary. If we accept that the authorities as well as the rioters were, in fact, rhizomatic, then we can draw out some of the similarities between the two groups, and complicate the rioter/authority dichotomy.

A common assumption made in situations such as riots is that the rioters are on one ‘side,’ and the authorities on the other. Irreconcilable differences of opinion make conflict appear almost inevitable. Things are rarely so clear-cut, however, and there is evidence to suggest this was the case during the Gordon Riots. Many of those in authority were sympathetic to the anti-Catholic cause.⁵⁰⁰ Brackley Kennet, the Lord Mayor of London, refused to act to suppress the riots, to the extent that he had to answer for his inactivity to the Privy Council in the aftermath of the riots.⁵⁰¹ Kennet

⁴⁹⁸ Marcus A. Doel, “A Hundred Thousand Lines of Flight: A Machinic Introduction to the Nomad Thought and Scrumpled Geography of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 4 (1996): 421–39; 431 (italics in original).

⁴⁹⁹ Maria Daskalaki and Oli Mould, “Beyond Urban Subcultures: Urban Subversions as Rhizomatic Social Formations,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no.1 (2013): 1–18; 7.

⁵⁰⁰ Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act.”

⁵⁰¹ Vincent, *A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances in the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark*; Anon, *Fanaticism and Treason*.

claimed he did not attempt to suppress the riots because he feared reprisals, but it could also have been because he supported the anti-Catholic cause.⁵⁰² On 31 May, the Common Council of the City of London resolved to request that the city's MPs support any attempts to repeal the Catholic Relief Act in Parliament.⁵⁰³ The City of London had a tense relationship with the national government in Westminster, and frequently took an oppositional stance to whomever happened to be in government at the time.⁵⁰⁴ The Common Council may have been using the chaos caused by the Gordon Riots to strengthen the City's political position. Rioters had a complicated relationship with those in authority during the eighteenth-century. Riots were often used as a tool by politicians; such prominent shows of popular support were effective in progressing towards certain political goals.⁵⁰⁵ Regardless of his exact motives, Kennet's reluctance demonstrates that rioters and authorities are not always as oppositional as they may appear.

The rhizome provides a useful metaphor through which to think about the different methods of organisation and communication during the Gordon Riots. The rioters' rhizomatic structure helped them to act at a speed that the authorities were not equipped to deal with. The authorities were also restricted by their own rigid organisational structure; one level of the hierarchy, the magistrates, were inefficient, which limited the operation of the entire system until King George III circumvented them. The rhizome is also useful for deconstructing dichotomies. The rioters represent some form of middle ground between two schools of academic thought; they were neither a mindless mob, nor a rational collection of individuals. In addition, the rioters and the authorities were not as oppositional as they first appear. The metaphor of the rhizome could be usefully applied to other historical protests, in order to better understand

⁵⁰² Vincent, *A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots and Disturbances in the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark*.

⁵⁰³ BL Add MS 30866 John Wilkes' Diaries.

⁵⁰⁴ Jerry White, *London in the 18th Century*.

⁵⁰⁵ Shoemaker, *The London Mob*.

both their organisational structures and methods of communication, and their nuances.

4.5 Conclusions

Organisation and communication are integral to any protest, for both participants and authorities. Even during riots, commonly thought of as disorganised and chaotic, there are forms of organisation, which are achieved through communication. Focusing on the ways in which the Gordon Rioters and the authorities communicated and organised allows a more nuanced understanding of the riotous crowd, and of the relationship between the various groups involved in protest.

The rioters and the authorities employed different organisational methods during the Gordon Riots, which can be described as rhizomatic and arborescent respectively. The rioters used informal, networked organisational methods such as ephemeral leaders and repertoires of protest. This networked structure allowed groups of rioters to form, spread, and dissipate across London rapidly and without an overall leader to coordinate them. In contrast, the authorities had a rigid, hierarchical organisational structure which prevented them from efficiently adapting to the rapidly changing situation as the riots progressed.

The methods of communication used during the riots can be placed into three categories: written or printed, verbal, and non-verbal. Both the rioters and authorities used a combination of these techniques, although the proportion of different techniques employed varied. The printing press, the most advanced communication technology available at the time, was utilised by both groups. The evolution of communication technology is an important element in the history of protest, as this thesis will demonstrate. Different methods of communication were suitable for different spatial scales. In addition, different methods of communication served different purposes. As well as conveying messages and information, they could also

help unify a group of rioters, or create an affective atmosphere of fear without the use of violence against human bodies.

The Gordon Riots were arguably the most significant episode of unrest in British history. They took place during a key period in the history of protest, when elite attitudes towards dissent were hardening and the social movement as we know it today was beginning to develop. Although not well known, the Gordon Riots have been the subject of multiple academic studies. None, however, have focused on the methods of organisation and communication utilised by the rioters and authorities. Taking this approach suggests a more nuanced conclusion than the usual dichotomy of mindless mob or rational collection of individuals. The rioters were individuals, but they were also influenced by the collective identity of the crowd and the powerful emotions that derive from taking part in a protest. The Gordon rioters were able to move around the spaces of London unchallenged for almost a week. This freedom of movement was not, however, a common situation for protesters in the capital, as the next chapter demonstrates.

5

The Hyde Park Railings Affair: Access, Use, and Control of the ‘People’s Park’

Writer and historian David Horspool argues that the Gordon Riots put the cause of electoral reform back two decades.⁵⁰⁶ In the midst of the Riots, the Duke of Richmond introduced a motion for manhood suffrage which was rejected the next day. For those in parliament, the riots were a perfect demonstration of why ‘the people’ should not be given more power; “[t]he Gordon riots gave the people a bad name.”⁵⁰⁷ Whatever the truth of this argument, campaigns for enfranchisement continued for more than a century after the Gordon Riots. The Hyde Park Railings Affair was one event in hundreds in this long struggle for universal male (and eventually female) suffrage. On 23 July 1866 a demonstration organised by the Reform League arrived at Hyde Park, in defiance of an order given by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner banning the protest in the park. Demonstrators forced their way into the park and clashed with police. The Reform League’s decision to attempt to defy the ban transformed the protest from one about electoral reform to a struggle over Hyde Park itself, and the right of the citizens of London to use it as they saw fit.

Having a space in which to protest is vital to demonstrators and social movements. It is not always easy to find, however, as governments and elites attempt to repress dissent by restricting access to space in which to protest. A public space is one to which everyone has a right of access.⁵⁰⁸ As such, it is an ideal space for protest, as demonstrators have a right to be there, and there is the potential to attract an audience. As the Hyde Park

⁵⁰⁶ David Horspool, *The English Rebel: One Thousand Years of Trouble-making from the Normans to the Nineties* (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁵⁰⁷ Horspool, *The English Rebel*; 322.

⁵⁰⁸ Nick Blomley, “Public Space,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

Railings Affair will demonstrate, however, there are few spaces which are truly public. Authorities and the owners of privately-owned public spaces impose rules and employ other more subtle measures to restrict who is allowed in public spaces and what they are allowed to do. In addition, the rights of demonstrators to protest often clash with the rights and desires of others to have, for example, a peaceful stroll in the park. When rights conflict, it tends to be those with the most power who win.⁵⁰⁹

By looking at the events of the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and the debates surrounding those events, I can explore the contested nature of public space in London, and how protest contributes to the production of public space. The chapter is divided into four substantive sections. The first section narrates the events of 23 July 1866, and contextualises it in the longer campaign for suffrage and parliamentary reform. The second section explores the academic literature on public space and two related concepts, the public sphere and the right to the city. The third section explores the ways that the Affair interacted with physical space, and the fourth examines the relationship between the Hyde Park Railings Affair and place, with a focus on the role of the protest in debates over the nature of Hyde Park as a public space.

5.1 The Hyde Park Railings Affair: A Struggle for Access to London's Public Space

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of extensive political unrest in Europe. 1848 saw protests, riots, and rebellions across the continent, extracting concessions from authoritarian governments, and even replacing the monarchy with a republic in France.⁵¹⁰ In Britain, which already had a constitutional monarchy, the unrest did not get any more severe than the campaigning of the Chartists, who demanded reform to the electoral system through the six points of the People's Charter, which included

⁵⁰⁹ Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (London: The Guildford Press, 2003).

⁵¹⁰ Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (London: Abacus, 2009).

universal male suffrage, annual parliamentary elections by secret ballot, constituency boundary reform, and the payment of MPs.⁵¹¹ Their demands were not met, however, and after a disappointing demonstration on Kennington Common in south London in April 1848, the campaign suffered a fatal loss of momentum.⁵¹² Campaigns for reform continued in various manifestations, however, throughout the following few decades. The Reform League was one of these manifestations. It was set up in 1865 to campaign for all-male suffrage, although it was not as radical nor as extensive in its aims as the Chartists. As well as the Reform League, there were other regional organisations such as the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Reform Association, the Northern Reform Union and the Bristol Reform Union.⁵¹³ The barrister Edmond Beales was elected President of the Reform League, who was supported by an Executive Committee.⁵¹⁴

The League supported both the aborted Reform Bill in 1866, and the more successful Reform Act of 1867. MPs had a difficult relationship with electoral reform for much of the nineteenth century; most were torn between a reluctance to make any changes that might affect their grip on power, and appeasing sections of society that they perceived as threatening. The 1832 Reform Act had reduced the number of rotten boroughs and introduced a £10 property qualification, which meant that men who owned or rented property worth more than £10 could vote.⁵¹⁵ The Act only enfranchised around 8% of the male population, but it was still a struggle to get it through both Houses of Parliament.⁵¹⁶ After the Chartists, conservative reform bills were attempted by both Whigs and Tories in 1852, 1854, 1859, and 1860. In 1866, the recently-elected Liberal

⁵¹¹ Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1986).

⁵¹² Thompson, *The Chartists*.

⁵¹³ S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism 1853–1886* (Woking: Unwin Brothers, 1938).

⁵¹⁴ Aldon D. Bell, "Administration and Finance of the Reform League, 1865–1867," *International Review of Social History* 10, no. 3 (1965): 385–409.

⁵¹⁵ Paul Foot. *The Vote: How it Was Won and How it was Undermined* (London: Bookmarks, 2012 [2005]).

⁵¹⁶ Foot, *The Vote*.

government proposed a bill that reduced the property qualification to £7.⁵¹⁷ It fell far short of the Reform League's hopes, but they supported it anyway.⁵¹⁸ The bill failed, bringing down the government with it. The following year the new Tory government introduced a very similar bill. This time, the Reform League decided not to support the bill, holding out instead for universal male suffrage.⁵¹⁹ Fearing that the failure of this bill would ultimately lead to universal suffrage, the Liberals reluctantly supported it, and it was eventually passed in a more radical form than anyone had expected.⁵²⁰ The vote was extended to all householders, and property qualifications were reduced in rural areas, doubling the number of voters from one to two million.⁵²¹

After the failure of the Reform Bill in early 1866, the Reform League organised a series of demonstrations throughout the country. One such demonstration was a march through the streets of London towards a rally in Hyde Park on 23 July, which was to become known as the Hyde Park Railings Affair. Hyde Park is made up of over 350 acres of land in Westminster.⁵²² Henry VIII confiscated the land for the park from the monks of Westminster Abbey in 1536, and it was first opened to the general public in 1637.⁵²³ Since then it has become a key part of central London, and is now visited by millions of Londoners and tourists every year.⁵²⁴ It remained in the possession of the royal family, however, and was altered through the centuries according to various members' tastes and

⁵¹⁷ Foot, *The Vote*.

⁵¹⁸ Foot, *The Vote*.

⁵¹⁹ Foot, *The Vote*.

⁵²⁰ Foot, *The Vote*; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Politics of Democracy: The English Reform Act of 1867," *Journal of British Studies* 6, no. 1 (1966): 97–138.

⁵²¹ Parliament, "Second Reform Act 1867," no date, accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/furtherreformacts/>

⁵²² Anon., "History and Architecture," accessed September 28, 2014, <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/about-hyde-park/history-and-architecture>.

⁵²³ Anon., "History and Architecture."

⁵²⁴ Anon., "Hyde Park- A Royal Park," accessed September 28 2014, <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park>,

interests.⁵²⁵ Rotten Row was built by William and Mary of Orange after they came to the throne in 1689, and the Serpentine was created by the damming of a stream by Queen Caroline in the early eighteenth century.⁵²⁶ In the 1820s, George VI ordered a makeover of the park, which included replacing the boundary wall with the railings that would cause so much trouble four decades later.⁵²⁷ By 1866, the park was much the same as it is now (see Figures 8 and 9).

⁵²⁵ Anon., "Hyde Park- Park of Pleasure," accessed September 28 2014, <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/about-hyde-park/landscape-history>.

⁵²⁶ Anon., "Hyde Park- Park of Pleasure," <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/about-hyde-park/landscape-history>.

⁵²⁷ Anon., "Hyde Park- Park of Pleasure."

Image has been removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 8: A map of Hyde Park and the surrounding area from 1868. Very little has changed in the park between then and the present day. Source: Edward Weller, London (London: G. W Bacon and Co., 1868).

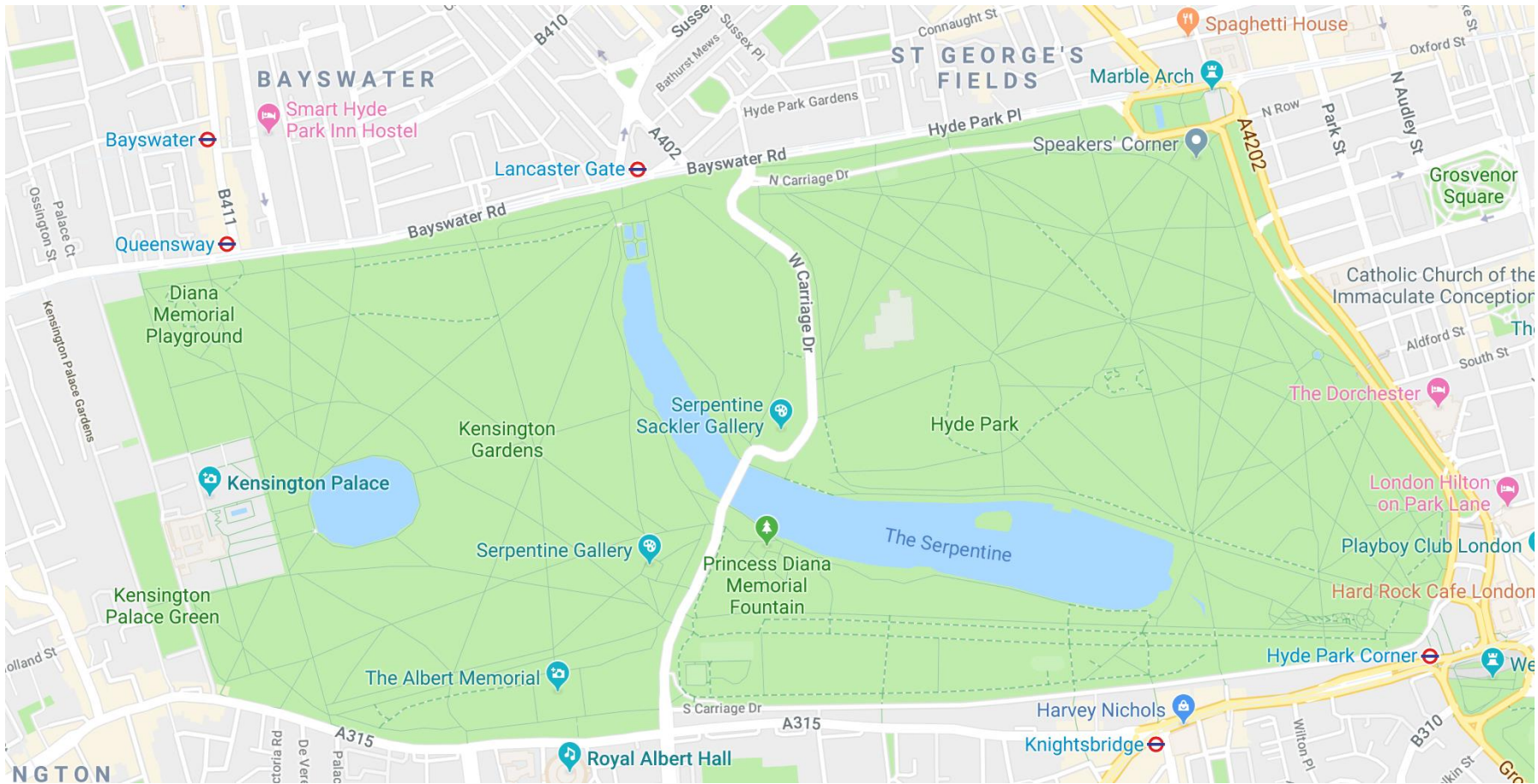


Figure 9: Hyde Park in 2017. Source: Map data: Google, 2018.

On 17 July 1866, Richard Mayne, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, published a proclamation banning the Reform League's rally, arguing that the meeting was "inconsistent with the purposes for which the park is thrown open to and used by the public" and that "such an assemblage there of large numbers of persons is calculated to lead to riotous and disorderly conduct, and to endanger the public peace."⁵²⁸ The Reform League immediately questioned the legality of this ban. Edmond Beales wrote an open letter in reply, arguing that Hyde Park belonged either to the people or to the crown. If the people owned it, they could do as they liked with it, and if it was the property of the crown, then only the crown could ban the demonstration. Either way, Beales argued, Mayne had no right to ban it.⁵²⁹ The Executive Committee of the League decided to challenge the ban by attempting to continue with the demonstration as planned, marching to Hyde Park to see how the police would respond, although they planned to leave peacefully if they were denied entry to the park.⁵³⁰ Ironically, the ban only increased the numbers and the determination of the marchers, heightening tensions and increasing the chances of violence.⁵³¹ As is frequently the case, heavy-handed policing tactics increased the possibility of civil disorder rather than preventing it.

On the day of the demonstration, the gates of Hyde Park were closed at 5 o'clock in the evening.⁵³² Upon arriving at Marble Arch Beales and other leading members of the Reform League advanced towards the lines of police guarding the gates, requesting that they be allowed into the

⁵²⁸ The ban was published in several newspapers, but, for an example, see Richard Mayne, "Notice-Meeting in Hyde Park," *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 19, 1866, accessed April 11, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

⁵²⁹ Anon., "Summary of this Morning's News," *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 10, 1866, accessed March 29, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

⁵³⁰ British Library, [hereafter BL], 8138bbb45 Anon. *The Government and the People! The Great Reform League Demonstration in Hyde Park*. London: F. Farrah, 1866.

⁵³¹ S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism*; BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵³² BL, 8138bbb45.

park. When this request was refused, they retreated.⁵³³ After being denied entry, the Executive Committee of the League and some of the marchers continued to Trafalgar Square where they held a peaceful rally.⁵³⁴ Not everything progressed as planned, however. Despite the Reform League distributing leaflets urging protesters to proceed to Trafalgar Square and not to attempt to break into the park if they were denied entry, a large number of people remained behind, and discovered that with relatively little effort the cast iron railings surrounding the park could be pulled down.⁵³⁵ As Jay Bedford Leno, a prominent radical present at the demonstration, noted; “my friend Humphreys notices the rails would stand no pressure, and, forthwith commenced to sway them backwards and forwards, assisted by crowds of persons in attendance. The result was as might have been expected, they fell.”⁵³⁶ In this way protesters broke through the boundaries of the park at several different locations.⁵³⁷ The police were unable to prevent protesters from entering the park from multiple directions. In the resulting clashes, protesters used stones, palings, and other materials found within the park as weapons against the police. There were injuries on both sides, but no deaths, and between forty and seventy protesters were arrested.⁵³⁸

Trouble continued in the park for several days, despite attempts by various parties, including prominent members of the Reform League, to persuade protesters to withdraw.⁵³⁹ Over the whole period of unrest, considerable damage was done to the physical fabric of the park, including the railings, flowerbeds, and trees.⁵⁴⁰ One large oak tree near Marble Arch

⁵³³ Senate House Library [hereafter SHL], [G.L.] 1866 Anon. *A Full and Interesting Account of the Meetings held in Hyde Park in Favour of Parliamentary Reform...* London: Butland and Co., 1866.

⁵³⁴ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵³⁵ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵³⁶ BL, MFR1187 John Bedford Reno. *The Aftermath: With Autobiography of the Author.* London: Reeves and Turner, 1892.

⁵³⁷ Locations mentioned include Marble Arch, Knightsbridge, Park Lane, and Bayswater-road. BL, MFR1187; BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵³⁸ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵³⁹ BL, MFR1187; SHL, [G.L.]1866.

⁵⁴⁰ BL, 8138bbb45; SHL, [G.L.]1866.

that was burnt down in the days after the demonstration is particularly noteworthy; the stump became known as the Reformers' Tree, an informal memorial to the Railings Affair and a focal point for radical activity in Hyde Park.⁵⁴¹ The events of the demonstration and the following days raised the profile and prestige of the Reform League, and sparked intensive public debate about the role of the Metropolitan Police, the purpose of Hyde Park, and the actions of the government.

The actions of the Reform League and the other protesters on 23 July 1866 demonstrated a concern that London's public spaces be accessible for the purposes of protest. In the next section, I use scholarly literature to explore the relationship between public space, protest, and democracy.

5.2 Public Space, the Public Sphere, and the Right to the City

Public space is a ubiquitous concept that has nevertheless been the topic of extensive study and debate by scholars, particularly regarding its health and role in society.⁵⁴² Public space can be defined as "[s]pace to which all citizens have a right of access," although this definition does require some caveats.⁵⁴³ It excludes non-citizens, such as non-naturalised migrants, which is concerning. In addition, few spaces are truly public in this sense, as many individuals are excluded, through either legal or moral and social force, according to a range of socio-economic characteristics such as age, income, race, or gender. In this section I discuss the literature on public space as well as two related concepts, the public sphere and the right to the city.

⁵⁴¹ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵⁴² See, for example: Feyzan Erkip, "The Shopping Mall as an Emergent Public Space in Turkey," *Environment and Planning A* 35, no. 6 (2003): 1073–93; Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *People Make Places: Growing the Life of Public Cities* (London: Demos, 2005); Don Mitchell, "People's Park Again: On the End and Ends of Public Space," *Environment and Planning A* 49, no. 3 (2015): 1–16; Ken Worpole and Katharine Knox, *The Social Value of Public Spaces* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007).

⁵⁴³ Blomley, "Public Space;" 602.

The amount of scholarship on public space has increased dramatically over the last twenty-five years.⁵⁴⁴ Don Mitchell attributes this increase to a trend of escalating struggle over public space:

at the beginning of the 1990s, public space simultaneously seemed to be being closed down—brought to an end—through the pressurizing forces of order, quality-of-life and protest policing, and privatization (in its many guises) *and* opened up anew through the concerted struggles of ‘new social movements’ and the invention of new modes of urban sociability.⁵⁴⁵

The Hyde Park Railings Affair demonstrates that this struggle has a much longer history than the late-twentieth century; the authorities and social elites wanted to restrict the park’s use, whilst the Reform League wanted to establish it as a location of working- and middle-class dissent. This lends credence, however, to another of Don Mitchell’s arguments, that “public space was produced through struggle, around two contrasting ideals of public space: public space as a space of politics and struggle, and public space as a space of retreat and leisure.”⁵⁴⁶ As I demonstrate in what follows, this is a struggle which has been going on since at least the mid-nineteenth century.

For many commentators, accessible public space is significant for the successful functioning of citizenship and democracy.⁵⁴⁷ As a result of this assessment, public space is frequently connected to the concept of the public sphere. Developed by Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s, the term refers

⁵⁴⁴ Mitchell, “People’s Park Again.”

⁵⁴⁵ Mitchell, “People’s Park Again;” 5.

⁵⁴⁶ Don Mitchell, “The End of Public Space? People’s Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 1 (1995): 108–33; Mitchell, “People’s Park Again;” 5.

⁵⁴⁷ See, for example, John R. Parkinson, *Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

to the realm in which public opinion is formed through the expression and debate of opinions on topics in which the public have an interest.⁵⁴⁸

Although his conception has been strongly criticised as gendered, racialized and exclusionary, the term is still widely used (see, for example, my discussion of Christina Parolin's use of the concept in 2.3.2).⁵⁴⁹ For Habermas, the public sphere is epitomised by the eighteenth-century European coffee house; modern examples include newspapers, television news, and the internet.⁵⁵⁰ Whilst the public sphere is not entirely dependent on public space, the health of the two are linked, as "[t]he regulation of public space is instrumental in regulating public debate and excluding some groups from public life."⁵⁵¹ The Hyde Park Railings Affair was an attempt by the authorities to limit the Reform League's access to public space, and, by extension, to the public sphere.

The right to the city is another concept related to, but not interchangeable with, public space and the public sphere. The concept is most commonly associated with the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who argued that the city is an *oeuvre*; "a work in which all its citizens participate."⁵⁵² In cities, different people with different goals struggle with one another over various factors, such what the city looks like, and how the public sphere is accessed. Out of these struggles develops the city as an *oeuvre*.⁵⁵³ Lefebvre argued that in modern cities, however, most people are alienated from this formative process; the *oeuvre* is controlled by a dominant class who shape the city in ways that best suit them.⁵⁵⁴ For Lefebvre, it was imperative that everyone who inhabits the city participates in this *oeuvre*—in other words, everyone should have a

⁵⁴⁸ Ian Buchanan, "Public Sphere (Öffentlichkeit)," *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-567>; Geraldine Pratt, "Private and Public Spheres," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 583–4.

⁵⁴⁹ Pratt, "Private and Public Spheres."

⁵⁵⁰ Buchanan, "Public Sphere (Öffentlichkeit);" Pratt, "Private and Public Spheres."

⁵⁵¹ Pratt, "Private and Public Spheres;" 584.

⁵⁵² Mitchell, *The Right to the City*; 17.

⁵⁵³ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

⁵⁵⁴ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

right to the city.⁵⁵⁵ David Harvey is another scholar who is frequently associated with the right to the city, and summarises the concept thus: “[t]he right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart’s desire.”⁵⁵⁶ Whilst the concept has often been criticised for being vague, the right to the city is useful for understanding the significance of accessible public space.⁵⁵⁷ For Don Mitchell, groups and individuals need to be able to make their needs and desires known to others and the state.⁵⁵⁸ Mitchell argues that public space is integral to this representation: “it is [in public space] that the desires and needs of individuals and groups can be *seen*, and therefore recognized, resisted, or...wiped out.”⁵⁵⁹ Therefore, for Mitchell, public space is “the means through which the cry and demand of the right to the city is made possible.”⁵⁶⁰

The public sphere and the right to the city are two useful concepts for exploring the relationship between public space and protest. In the following two sections, I turn to the example of the Hyde Park Railings Affair to consider how this relationship played out in a real event. The next section focuses on the ways that the protest and the physical space of Hyde Park impacted each other.

5.3 Space: The Microgeographies of Hyde Park

5.3.1 The Impact of Space on Protest

The physical features of spaces are closely related to any dissent that occurs within them in multiple ways. Some connections are more obvious than others, and several different examples relating to the Hyde Park

⁵⁵⁵ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

⁵⁵⁶ David Harvey, “The Right to the City,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (2003): 939–41; 939.

⁵⁵⁷ Kafui A. Attoh, “What Kind of Right is the Right to the City?” *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 5 (2011): 669–85; Peter Marcuse, “From Critical Urban Theory to the Right to the City.” *City* 13, no. 2–3 (2009): 185–96.

⁵⁵⁸ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

⁵⁵⁹ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*; 33.

⁵⁶⁰ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*; 35–6.

Railings Affair are discussed in this section. When discussing space, I refer to the specific physical features of a location, the details of which, such as size and shape, as well as factors such as building materials and exact positioning, can be significant. One of the most obvious interrelations between space and protest is the use of architecture and design to discourage protest. Design is one of the more subtle methods employed to control public space. For example, the fountains in Trafalgar Square in London were designed to limit the number of people that could gather there, restricting the size of any potential protest (see 2.2.1).⁵⁶¹ During the Second World War, plans were put forward to construct temporary buildings on the square, to prevent protests taking place that were potentially harmful to the war effort and morale.⁵⁶² Although this plan to effectively remove the public space of Trafalgar Square was not carried out, it demonstrates just how significant the physical characteristics of a location can be. This example demonstrates how space and protest affect each other; the changes and plans were made because Trafalgar Square quickly became a popular space for protest, and the changes in turn impacted future protests that made use of the square.

More specifically, the events of the Hyde Park Railings Affair also demonstrate the interdependent relationship between space and protest. The physical characteristics of Hyde Park and the surrounding areas affected how events unfolded, and the protest altered the physical features of the park in turn. As already mentioned, Hyde Park was opened to the public in 1637. Whilst some major alterations have been made to the park since then, most of them were made before the mid-nineteenth century. As such, a modern visitor would be able to get a good idea of what the park was like in 1866; a large space, crisscrossed with paths and dotted with trees in the middle, with thicker growths of trees around the edge. The space is, and was, largely open, however, so would have made an ideal

⁵⁶¹ Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*, 2nd edition (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2005 [1976]).

⁵⁶² Mace, *Trafalgar Square*.

location for large public meetings and demonstrations. The tradition of protest in Hyde Park is something which developed over time, and is discussed in more detail at a later point in this chapter, but “[b]y 1855 Hyde Park had grown into a distinct moral and political space for public meetings,” so the Reform League were making use of and building on this tradition when they chose it as the location for their demonstration in 1866.⁵⁶³

The location and physical features of the park may well have played a role in the decision to hold the meeting in Hyde Park in the first place. Protest groups require large spaces to hold big meetings and rallies. The British government in the mid-nineteenth century understood this, and tried to restrict access to assembly spaces as a way of repressing dissent; this strategy is a practical example of authorities attempting to control protest by impeding access to public space.⁵⁶⁴ Cost was also a factor; all the buildings in London in the mid-nineteenth century with suitable spaces cost money to use, and groups often could not afford them. A study of the finances of the Reform League has shown that they often struggled financially, so a cost-free space such as Hyde Park would have appealed to them.⁵⁶⁵ Another factor that can be involved in the use of buildings is the popularity of a group’s political leanings. If the owner of a building disapproves of your politics, or feels that it might lead to physical conflict, they might not allow you to hire the space. The East London Federation of Suffragettes resorted to building their own meeting hall in 1914, because they were denied access to all pre-existing buildings, and the British Union of Fascists complained of the difficulty of finding a building in which to meet in the late 1930s.⁵⁶⁶ Open spaces such as parks and areas of

⁵⁶³ John Michael Roberts, “Spatial Governance and Working Class Public Spheres: The Case of a Chartist Demonstration at Hyde Park,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 308–36; 324.

⁵⁶⁴ Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c.1845* (Canberra: The Australian National University E Press, 2010).

⁵⁶⁵ Aldon D. Bell, “Administration and Finance of the Reform League.”

⁵⁶⁶ Sarah Jackson and Rosemary Taylor, *Voices from History: East London Suffragettes* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014); The Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2011).

scrubland were not limited in this way. There are, therefore, several reasons why outdoor spaces were an attractive option for political groups planning to hold a demonstration or meeting.

As well as Hyde Park, there were other open outdoor spaces in London at the time that were free to use, such as Primrose Hill, Trafalgar Square, and Spa Fields. The park was, however, one of the nearest to the centre of political power in Westminster. Admittedly Trafalgar Square was closer still, and the protesters that accepted that they would not be allowed into the park held a rally there instead. However, Trafalgar Square is smaller than Hyde Park and cannot accommodate the same number of people, which may have influenced the original decision to use the park. This demonstrates how the physical features of a location can begin to affect a protest before it even occurs. The location chosen for a protest is seldom a random act, and many factors such as practicality and symbolism play a role in the decision process.

In terms of the demonstration itself, the space of Hyde Park was integral to how events unfolded. The protesters were able to pull down the railings surrounding the park by pushing and pulling them repeatedly, working them free of their foundations, which several accounts document was a relatively easy process.⁵⁶⁷ This is a clear example of how the physical infrastructure of Hyde Park affected the course of events. Of course, it is impossible to say for certain what would have happened if the circumstances were different, but if the railings were more secure then it seems unlikely that protesters would have clashed with police. Alternatively, if the perimeter of Hyde Park was not protected by a physical barrier it would have been impossible to deny the marchers access, and violent confrontation may have also been avoided. This kind of microgeography illustrates just how important it is to consider every single aspect of a protest's spatiality, and to think through how each may have interacted with the location in which the protest occurred.

⁵⁶⁷ British Library [hereafter BL], 8138bbb45; BL, MFR1187; Senate House Library [hereafter SHL], [G.L.] 1866.

In addition, the size of the park worked against the Metropolitan Police Force's attempts to keep the demonstrators out. Several sources document that the railings were breached in multiple locations around the perimeter of the park, including Marble Arch, Knightsbridge, Park Lane, and Bayswater Road, and the police were not able to prevent protesters from entering at all of them.⁵⁶⁸ At over 350 acres, the park is a substantial area of space, and the police could not protect the entire perimeter, or quickly get from one breach to another.⁵⁶⁹ If the park had been smaller, or the police presence had been larger, this may not have been the case, and the clashes between protesters and police may not have been so extensive. Although speculative, these possibilities illustrate the agency that the physical features of an area can have, impacting the way that events play out within the space. William Sewell argues that many scholars of politics theorise space as a big empty stage on which politics happens, but these examples demonstrate that the stage is by no means flat, empty, and featureless; it plays a role of its own.⁵⁷⁰

5.3.2 The Impact of Protest on Space

Having looked at how space altered the protest, I now turn to the ways in which the protest altered the physical features of Hyde Park. The railings were one of the most obvious changes; “[t]he railings lie in all directions, mingled with broken stones, for, as a rule, the wall itself appears to have given way, the railings in many instances, though overthrown, still being connected for yards.”⁵⁷¹ An image from the *Illustrated London News* shows the toppled railings in the days after 23 July, with the caption describing a “scene of destruction” (see Figure 10). The *Illustrated London News* was a

⁵⁶⁸ BL, MFR1187; BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵⁶⁹ Anon., “History and Architecture,” <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/about-hyde-park/history-and-architecture>.

⁵⁷⁰ William H. Sewell, Jr., “Space in Contentious Politics,” in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, ed. Ronald R. Aminzade *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51–88.

⁵⁷¹ BL, 8138bbb45.

successful weekly paper, with a circulation of over 300,000 by 1863—in comparison, *The Times* had a circulation of 70,000 in 1861.⁵⁷² The influence of the *Illustrated London News* on public opinion would, therefore, have been significant. It was a conservative-leaning paper, so could be expected to be critical of the protesters.⁵⁷³ Nevertheless, its images are a valuable record of what happened.

⁵⁷² Christopher Hibbert, *The Illustrated London News: Social History of Victorian Britain* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1975).

⁵⁷³ The British Newspaper Archive, “Illustrated London News,” no date, accessed January 21, 2014, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/illustrated-london-news>



Figure 10: The damage done during the protests as depicted in the Illustrated London News. Source: Anon., "The Riot in Hyde Park," Illustrated London News, August 4, 1866, accessed March 24, 2014. © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.

Most of the physical changes which resulted from the demonstration were aesthetic and temporary. In the pamphlets that described the events, considerable attention was paid to the damage done to the park. Multiple trees were destroyed, their branches pulled off and trunks set alight.⁵⁷⁴ The destruction of flowerbeds was mentioned repeatedly. Some commentators took a more balanced view of the damage than others, with one pamphlet acknowledging that the damage to the flowerbeds was as much the fault of the police as of protestors.⁵⁷⁵ Others were not so fair, such as this tirade against the protestors from an anonymous pamphlet describing what happened:

With that disregard of property which always characterises the most worthless classes of society, the “people” having done some hundreds of pounds worth of damage to the railings which enclosed the “people's park,” trampled down the flowers, and destroyed the smaller trees and shrubs with an utter disregard of the fact that in the property they were destroying they, in common with the rest of the public, have an interest and concern. They, however, had not come so far west to improve a park any more than they had to urge the amendment of the constitution, and destruction in any form was welcome enough to them.⁵⁷⁶

Damage to the physical fabric of a space is one of the most obvious and immediate impacts of protest on a space. This damage is often used to discredit the aims of protestors and depoliticise the event, portraying demonstrators as mindless thugs rather than as possessing a genuine political perspective, as in the above quote. The anonymous author used the damage to discredit the protestors and their aims, suggesting that the

⁵⁷⁴ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵⁷⁵ SHL, [G.L.] 1866.

⁵⁷⁶ BL, 8138bbb45.

damage was evidence that demonstrators had no interest in electoral reform, only mindless destruction. This fact is another example of the importance of microgeographies; changes as small as some trampled flowerbeds can have significant political impacts. Not only is this an example of how protest alters space, it also illustrates how space can continue to influence protest even after it has occurred, impacting how an event is received, and its ultimate success in changing the opinions and perspectives of others. This argument also demonstrates how closely space and protest are related. The two are intertwined, constantly affecting each other in a way that is difficult to pull apart into a coherent chronological narrative. The physical features of the park impacted how the Hyde Park Railings Affair unfolded, which changed the physical appearance of the park, and these changes in turn influenced how the protest was perceived and interpreted. The connections between a protest and the space in which it occurs are multiple and manifold, and deserve thorough and considered attention.

On some occasions, protest can also trigger debates about the physical features of a space. One letter from a reader to *The Pall Mall Gazette* suggested that the damage to the railings was an opportunity to alter the boundaries of the park, widening an adjacent road. The reader, one T.A. Britton, surveyor in the Metropolitan Board of Works, makes what the *Gazette* calls “a laudable attempt to educe good from evil” by proposing that the replacement rails should be put up ten or fifteen feet into the park, widening Park Lane between Stanhope Street and Oxford Street.⁵⁷⁷ Although this suggestion was not taken up, it demonstrates how protests can lead to the negotiation of physical spaces. As an atypical and often destructive event, protest opens up space to debates about its form which are unlikely to have happened otherwise, highlighting the temporality and transience of physical features which are often thought of as permanent. Returning to Lefebvre’s arguments about the city, this

⁵⁷⁷ Anon., “Occasional Notes,” *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 26, 1866, accessed April 11, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

example is also a practical demonstration of the city as an *oeuvre* in action; the *Gazette's* reader is advocating the widening of a road, presumably to ease traffic, at the expense of the size of the park. They are proposing a re-shaping of London to better suit what can be assumed are their own interests.

Hyde Park's potential for change can be interpreted through Doreen Massey's theories about space.⁵⁷⁸ Massey advocates a conception of space which embraces, amongst other things, the fact that space is constantly being produced. It is never complete, and it will never be permanently fixed. For Massey, this potential for the development of new and unknown relationships, forms, and structures is what makes space political.⁵⁷⁹ Protests can emphasise this potential by leading to dramatic changes to space within a short period of time. It is worth noting at this point that the changes caused by protests are not always destructive, although this was the case in the Hyde Park Railings Affair. They can also be constructive; barricades can be built, or an abandoned building occupied and restored. In either case, by altering space, protest highlights its political possibilities, supporting Massey's arguments.

There were also more permanent physical changes because of the Hyde Park Railings Affair. As previously noted, the stump of a large oak tree that was burnt down to the west of the Parade Ground became known as the Reformers' Tree, and was a focus for radical meetings and a noticeboard for radical posters and announcements in the years after the protest.⁵⁸⁰ In 1977 Prime Minister Callaghan planted a new oak tree on the spot where it is believed the original tree stood, and a memorial to the tree was erected in the park in 2002 (see Figure 11).⁵⁸¹ This is an example of how protest can impact the physical fabric of a place, even more than a

⁵⁷⁸ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).

⁵⁷⁹ Massey, *For Space*.

⁵⁸⁰ Duncan Mills, "The Reformer's Tree," *One Year in Hyde Park*, June 29, 2012, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://oneyearinhydepark.wordpress.com/2012/06/29/the-reformers-tree/>.

⁵⁸¹ Mills, "The Reformer's Tree."

century after the event. The memorial is not a change that was made directly by the protesters, but it is nonetheless a physical change as a result of the protest. This example highlights the complicated temporalities involved in the relationship between space, place and protest. An event can echo in a location for a long time, in the form of permanent changes, or in future changes that occur decades or even centuries after the fact. Memorials are a common example of this future change, as are changes to a location's design or security features intended to deter future protest.



Figure 11: The memorial to the Reformers' Tree in Hyde Park, installed in 2000. Source: The Royal Parks, "The Reformers' Tree," no date, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/things-to-see-and-do/memorials,-fountains-and-statues/the-reformers-tree>. Image reproduced courtesy of the Royal Parks.

As has been shown, the Hyde Park Railings Affair is an illustrative example of how a protest is intertwined with the physical characteristics of the space in which it occurs. Space and protest impact, alter, and influence each other in a variety of ways and across a variety of timescales. They are linked from before the protest even occurs, as the physical fabric of a location can influence whether it is chosen as a protest location. They continue to influence each other during the protest and its immediate

aftermath, as is shown in the debate about the flowerbeds and the aims of the demonstrators. The relationship between protest and space continues beyond that, however, lasting into long-term changes, such as memorials or improved security. The next section of the chapter will focus on the relationship between protest and place. The division between space and place is an artificial one. As we have already seen from the impact that the destruction caused during the Hyde Park Railings Affair had on how the event was interpreted, the tangible and intangible elements of a geographical area are difficult to separate from protest, let alone each other. Nevertheless, looking at the two separately does aid analysis, and allows the simplest and clearest presentation of arguments.

5.4 Place: Struggles Over the Production of Hyde Park

As well as the physical features of a location, protest also interacts with the intangible characteristics of an area. This section of the chapter analyses the relationship between protest and *place*, arguing that the meanings, connotations, and emotions which make a space into a place are mutually constitutive with protest. An example of this relationship is Fran Tonkiss' argument that buildings and monuments often act as symbols for intangible power structures.⁵⁸² During the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations in 2010, the building that housed the Conservative Party headquarters bore the brunt of the aggression towards the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government over their policy of raising the cap on university tuition fees, despite the fact that there were no members of the government in the building at the time. The building became an embodiment of the government for protesters, something on which they could take out their anger and frustration. This example demonstrates just how significant symbolism and other non-physical features of a location can be to protest.

⁵⁸² Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

The Hyde Park Railings Affair provides several examples of this relationship between place and protest. The history of Hyde Park, and the events and meanings that were associated with it, made the park a symbolic location for protest. Until 1783, public executions in London took place at Tyburn, at the corner of Hyde Park where Marble Arch now stands.⁵⁸³ Hangings were incredibly popular during the eighteenth century; public holidays were declared, and executions drew a huge crowd.⁵⁸⁴ The condemned were entitled to make a speech to the crowd before their execution; some of them used the opportunity to express a political opinion. Intended as a sombre warning and deterrent against future crimes, the hangings were actually carnivalesque in nature, a spectacle that entertained and fascinated the watching crowds.⁵⁸⁵ In an attempt to change this, executions were moved to Newgate Prison, but John Michael Roberts argues that 'scaffold culture' left its mark on Hyde Park, creating a lasting association between the park and moral, emotional, and public speech.⁵⁸⁶ The "traces of the 'last dying speeches' had inscribed a form of platform politics in the urban fabric of Hyde Park."⁵⁸⁷ Roberts argues that political groups that used Hyde Park during the nineteenth century, including the Reform League, implicitly built upon these 'traces.'⁵⁸⁸ The condemned criminals and their final words became part of Hyde Park as a place; it became associated with free and moral public speech, a characteristic which was later used by groups such as the Reform League. This fact demonstrates the mutually constitutive relationship between place and protest, as past events produce places which are associated with

⁵⁸³ Catharine Arnold, *Underworld London: Crime and Punishment in the Capital City* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

⁵⁸⁴ John Michael Roberts. "The Enigma of Free Speech: Speakers' Corner, The Geography of Governance and a Crisis of Rationality." *Social and Legal Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 271–92.

⁵⁸⁵ Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech."

⁵⁸⁶ Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech;" see also Davina Cooper, "'Sometimes a Community and Sometimes a Battlefield:' From the Comedic Public Sphere to the Commons of Speakers Corner," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, no. 5 (2006): 753–75.

⁵⁸⁷ Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech;" 283.

⁵⁸⁸ Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech."

protest in general or a particular cause, and are then chosen as a location for future protests, which continues to reinforce the connection.

5.4.1 Debating Public Space: Who, and What, is it for?

The banning of the Reform League's demonstration sparked extensive debate in the newspapers about the nature of Hyde Park, and who had a right to take part in which activities there (see Figure 12). This debate arguably stemmed from fundamentally different understandings about what Hyde Park was. In other words, the debates were caused by contradictory interpretations of Hyde Park as a place, or different claims on Hyde Park as a public space. Therefore, these debates demonstrate how place can influence protest. *Reynold's Newspaper* called the prohibition "despotic," claiming there was no legal basis to "prevent the people of London from assembling, for a lawful purpose, in one of their own places of public resort."⁵⁸⁹ In contrast, *The Times* called the ban "a wise decision" as the demonstration, which would achieve nothing anyway, "would make the park intolerable for persons seeking recreation," which is the purpose that the park is "devoted" to.⁵⁹⁰ *Reynold's Newspaper* was a weekly, published on Sundays. Founded by radical journalist George William MacArthur Reynolds, it combined sensationalism with a radical working-class approach, so its attitude towards the ban is unsurprising.⁵⁹¹ In contrast, *The Times* was a more sober, conservative-leaning daily, which could be expected to be critical of such a protest.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ Anon., "Police Prohibition of the Right of Public Meeting," *Reynold's Newspaper* (London) July 22, 1866, accessed March 31, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

⁵⁹⁰ Anon., "The HOME SECRETARY has exercised a wise dis-." *Times* (London) July 21, 1866, accessed April 1, 2014, The Times Digital Archive.

⁵⁹¹ University of Bradford, "Reynolds News," no date, accessed January 21, 2017. <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/special-collections/collections/reynolds-news/>

⁵⁹² Hibbert, *The Illustrated London News*.

NOTICE.—MEETING in HYDE-PARK.

Whereas, information has been received, and it is publicly announced in various printed notices, that it is the intention of certain persons to assemble in the open air at several places in various parts of the metropolis on the evening of Monday, July 23, and to walk from thence through the streets in procession with banners, and preceded by bands of music to Hyde-park, to hold a meeting there for the purposes of political demonstration and discussion:

And whereas such a meeting—being inconsistent with the purposes for which the park is thrown open to and used by the public—is illegal, and cannot be permitted, and such an assemblage there of large numbers of persons is calculated to lead to riotous and disorderly conduct, and to endanger the public peace:

And whereas it is necessary to prevent such proceedings, and to preserve the public peace:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That NO such MEETING or ASSEMBLAGE of persons in large numbers will be ALLOWED to TAKE PLACE in Hyde-park, and all well-disposed persons are hereby cautioned and requested to abstain from joining or attending any such meeting or assemblage. And Notice Is Further Given, That all necessary measures will be adopted to prevent any such meeting or assemblage, and effectually to preserve the public peace, and to suppress any attempt at the disturbance thereof.

RICHARD MAYNE,
The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.
Metropolitan Police-office, 4, Whitehall-place, July 17.

DISPERI. Photographer Inventor of the Camera

Figure 12: A copy of the notice banning the Reform League's demonstration published in the newspapers and posted around London. Source: Sir Richard Mayne, "Notice—Meeting in Hyde Park," *Morning Post* (London) July 19, 1866, accessed March 28, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive. © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Public parks are the subject of almost continuous conflict over their purpose and uses, and Hyde Park is no exception.⁵⁹³ As the Railings Affair highlighted the transient nature of the physical features of the park, it also demonstrated that the social conventions of behaviour in the park were not fixed, and were instead open to negotiation and change. The debate is also another example of the city as an *oeuvre*—different claims over what kinds of behaviour was appropriate in Hyde Park were competing to shape the form of nineteenth century London.

⁵⁹³ Roy Rosenweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991).

These debates can be thought through in terms of Tim Cresswell's ideas about 'in place/out of place.'⁵⁹⁴ He argues that there is a strong connection between place and assumptions about normative behaviour. Place is used to produce order, which simultaneously creates the possibility for disorder, as behaviour that does not fit within the prescribed social norms is perceived as disruptive and transgressive. As Cresswell argues, "[t]he use of place to produce order leads to the unintended consequence of places becoming an object and tool of resistance to that order."⁵⁹⁵ Protest is almost always 'out of place' in this way, because it does not conform to the usual social norms of the location. In this case the rules of normative behaviour for Hyde Park had not been universally agreed. The announcement of the protest by the Reform League cast this ambiguity into stark relief, as it became clear that there was no consensus on the issue of whether or not the park was a suitable location for the protest.

The debate in the newspapers about the demonstration also revealed different understandings about who should be allowed to make use of Hyde Park. One article in *The Times* suggests that Hyde Park is 'for' the wealthier residents of West London, whilst there are other parks in other parts of the city for the working and lower classes:

Parliament has endowed London with a number of these pleasure-grounds; there is Hyde Park for the West-end, St. James's Park for Westminster, Victoria and Greenwich Parks for the east and south-east of the metropolis, Regent's Park for the north, and Battersea for the south. If political agitators did really wish to harangue in Parks, one would think they might be content to use those which are nearer to them. But here we have the extremest regions of London placarded with invitations to the lowest class of their inhabitants to occupy a Park which is the ordinary place of

⁵⁹⁴ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁵⁹⁵ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*; 103.

recreation for the people living in the west of London. It is against all reason and all justice that motley crowds from all parts of the metropolis should take possession of Hyde Park, and interfere with the enjoyments of those to whom the Park more particularly belongs.⁵⁹⁶

Another disapproving commentator, already quoted in this chapter, assumed that the demonstrators were not local to the area around Hyde Park; “[t]hey, however, had not come so far west to improve a park any more than they had to urge the amendment of the constitution, and destruction in any form was welcome enough to them.”⁵⁹⁷ West London was, and still is, one of the wealthiest areas of the city, and both commentators were assuming that the demonstrators came from elsewhere in the capital, although they draw different conclusions about what this means. The second is using the assumed origins of the protestors to cast doubt on their motives. The first goes further, arguing that the demonstrators do not belong in Hyde Park, because they come from the wrong parts of the city. Both, however, express particular understandings of who Hyde Park ‘belongs’ to, and who has a right to use it; the Reform League and the protestors are not part of that group. This kind of understanding, normally unspoken, about who belongs in a particular place is another way in which public space is policed. Mike Davis decries public spaces as being “full of invisible signs warning off the underclass ‘Other.’”⁵⁹⁸ Davis is referring to 1990s Los Angeles, but he could just as easily have been talking about London, at any point in history. Subtle cues and indications, normally in the form of design features, can be very effective at making certain groups feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in a ‘public’ space. Again, the Hyde Park Railings Affair revealed understandings

⁵⁹⁶ Anon., “We Trust that Mr. BEALES and his friends are...” *The Times* (London) July 24, 1866, accessed April 2, 2014, The Times Archive.

⁵⁹⁷ BL, 8138bbb45.

⁵⁹⁸ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 2006 [1990]); 226.

about the unwritten social norms governing the control and use of the park, and allowed them to be debated by the public, potentially leading to a refinement or development of these social norms, and, therefore, developing Hyde Park as a place.

It was not only in the newspapers that the debate over access to Hyde Park was played out. The mid-nineteenth century saw a struggle between authorities and political groups over access to civic space.⁵⁹⁹ In London there were several elements that made this struggle unique, including the shortage of space in the capital, the presence of the government in Whitehall, and the fact that the Metropolitan Police were under the direct control of the Home Office.⁶⁰⁰ Social movements in London confronted the apparatus of central government when they made a claim on space, not just local authorities.⁶⁰¹ Both sides were determined to use space in London in the ways that they wanted, and protests over unrelated issues often developed into disputes with police over rights of access, including the Hyde Park Railings Affair.⁶⁰² These conflicts were seen as tests of strength, and the inability of the government to control the space of Hyde Park was a humiliating defeat.⁶⁰³ Several sources mention the Home Secretary, Spencer Walpole, breaking down in tears in the days after 23 July.⁶⁰⁴ Whether or not this is true, it nevertheless demonstrates that the Affair was an embarrassment for the government, as stories of a high-ranking minister acting in such a humiliating fashion spread amongst the public. When the Reform League chose Hyde Park as a location for their demonstration, they also became engaged in this broader struggle over the ability to demonstrate in the capital. The government was trying

⁵⁹⁹ Anthony Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders”: Space, Popular Radicalism and the Politics of Public Access in London, 1848–1880,” *International Review of Social History* 40, no. 3 (1995): 383–407.

⁶⁰⁰ Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders.”

⁶⁰¹ Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders.”

⁶⁰² Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders.”

⁶⁰³ Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders.”

⁶⁰⁴ Anon., “Mr. Walpole and the Rioters,” *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 26, 1866, accessed March 31, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive; BL 8138bbb45.

to redefine public spaces, and remove their association with protest. This goal likely affected their response to the planned demonstration, which shows that place, and debates and negotiations around what a place is, impacts protest.

The cast iron railings surrounding Hyde Park were symbolic of the social exclusion operating within the park, examples of what Mike Davis calls “architectural policing of social boundaries.”⁶⁰⁵ Railings have a long association with being an exclusionary object:

Railings (meaning, by the nineteenth century, both the rails—the horizontal bars—and the posts—the upright supports) by their very nature are never neutral. They serve as boundaries, usually demarcating some hierarchical form of ‘in’ and ‘out’, or they act as lines of defence: in other words, they define spaces or guard places. In appearance the posts resemble rows of spears or arrows, whose spikes serve as a visible deterrent. However well disguised as ornament, their function was to exclude and they could only provoke hostility. The strength of feeling against them has a long tradition.⁶⁰⁶

Due to such associations, Paul Dobraszczyk argues that railings were a logical target of resentment and violence in times of civil disorder as stand-ins for the prevailing social order.⁶⁰⁷ The railings surrounding Hyde Park were tangible symbols of the authorities’ attempts to prevent the demonstrators from accessing this supposedly public space.

In addition, the debate surrounding the place of Hyde Park impacted the protest in other ways. After the ban was published, most of

⁶⁰⁵ Davis, *City of Quartz*; 223.

⁶⁰⁶ Celina Fox, “The Battle of the Railings,” *AA Files* 29 (1995): 50–60; 51.

⁶⁰⁷ Paul Dobraszczyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture in Victorian Britain: Myth and Modernity, Excess and Enchantment* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

the coverage in the newspapers was about the issue of access to Hyde Park, rather than electoral reform. The publicity was undoubtedly good for the Reform League, but it may also have been a disadvantage, as universal male suffrage became a secondary concern. The Reform League was receiving attention, but not in relation to the cause they were trying to promote. If the rally had been arranged in a less-contentious location, things might have happened differently, although again it is impossible to say conclusively what these differences would have been. Social movements and protest groups must attempt to strike a fine balance between taking action dramatic enough to attract attention and publicity, but not so controversial that they alienate support. In this case the decision of the Reform League's Executive Committee to challenge the ban demonstrates that they were willing to engage in this debate over access to public space, whether or not it negatively affected their campaign for universal male suffrage.⁶⁰⁸

Another way in which people can be excluded from public space is through law or rules.⁶⁰⁹ During the nineteenth century, attempts to control the open spaces of London were hampered by inadequate legislation: “[t]he legislation governing the control of the capital’s open spaces was outdated, *ad hoc*, and above all as a consequence of its improvised nature, capable of almost infinite interpretation.”⁶¹⁰ The status of Hyde Park was even more ambiguous than the rest of the city because it belongs to the royal family, and the Metropolitan Police had no legal precedent to support the ban of the Reform League’s demonstration.⁶¹¹ The issue proved complicated for the government, and was debated several times in Parliament, until the 1872 Royal Parks and Gardens Regulation Act finally formalised a space for public speech within the park, in the form of

⁶⁰⁸ Anon., “Summary of this Morning’s News,” *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 10, 1866, accessed March 29, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

⁶⁰⁹ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

⁶¹⁰ Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders,” 388 (italics in original).

⁶¹¹ Taylor, ““Commons-Stealers”, “Land-Grabbers” and “Jerry-Builders.”

Speaker's Corner.⁶¹² Even this did not end negotiations about what constituted 'normal' behaviour within the park, however, as the authorities had to keep altering the regulations as radical traditions and practices continued to develop.⁶¹³ These nuances demonstrate just how complicated the negotiations about Hyde Park as a place were.

5.4.2 Representations of the Protest

As I have shown, the spatial politics surrounding both Hyde Park and London itself quite clearly impacted upon, and was impacted by, the way that the Hyde Park Railings Affair unfolded. The relationship between place and protest can also be analysed through representations of the demonstration. The Reform League held another demonstration in Hyde Park on 6 May 1867, a year after the first. The choice of the location was unlikely to have been a coincidence; it would have served as a reminder of the events the previous year. Again, the police attempted to ban the demonstration. They were again defied, but in a more peaceful manner than the previous year. The rally was held without incident, although 3,500 police and some soldiers were stationed within and near the park in case of any trouble.⁶¹⁴ The fact that in the year between the two demonstrations the government had been unable to pass a law giving them a sounder legal platform from which to ban the demonstration hints at the complicated legal and moral debates surrounding the use and control of Hyde Park.

After this second major demonstration in Hyde Park in 1867, a satirical map of the park was published. It ridiculed both the Reform League and the government's attempts to restrict protest in Hyde Park, as well as warning of the potential dangers of universal male suffrage (see Figure 13). The map envisions an alternative future where the Reform

⁶¹² Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech."

⁶¹³ Roberts, John Michael. "Expressive Free Speech, the State and the Public Sphere: A Bakhtinian-Deleuzian Analysis of 'Public Address' at Hyde Park." *Social Movement Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 101–19.

⁶¹⁴ Anon, "The Reform Meeting in Hyde Park," *Illustrated London News*, May 18, 1867, accessed March 24, 2014, Illustrated London News Historical Archive.

League has been successful in its aims. Society has been upturned and is now run by the dictator Emperor Bealesibub, a play on the similarity between Beelzebub, another name for the devil, and Beales, the President of the Reform League. In this alternative future, Hyde Park has been transformed, with the addition of new features such as a windmill for “grinding Logic and Political Economy for the Million” and a “Great Hall of the Reform League” which would be used for the coronation of “Emperor Bealesibub.”⁶¹⁵ Renamed streets include the “Boulevard de Cheap and Nasty” and “Foreign-gain Street.”⁶¹⁶ The mansions along Park Lane have been emptied, and the building materials from them are to be sold. Much of the park has been given over to use by the “intelligent classes” as a kitchen garden, a gymnasium, and an “asylum for decayed independent British workmen.”⁶¹⁷ This links back to the debates about who the park is for. The representation of the park, the demonstrations and the Reform League implies that the author dislikes the working classes, and views their use of the park as an unwelcome intrusion. The map is a vision of a public space which does not fit with the cartographer’s perception of what that space should be.

⁶¹⁵ London Metropolitan Archive [hereafter LMA], SC/GL/SAT/027/1867/Q607407X Anon. *Plan Showing the Intended Alterations in “The People’s” (Formerly “Hyde”) Park*. Printed satirical map.

⁶¹⁶ LMA, SC/GL/SAT/027/1867/Q607407X.

⁶¹⁷ LMA, SC/GL/SAT/027/1867/Q607407X.

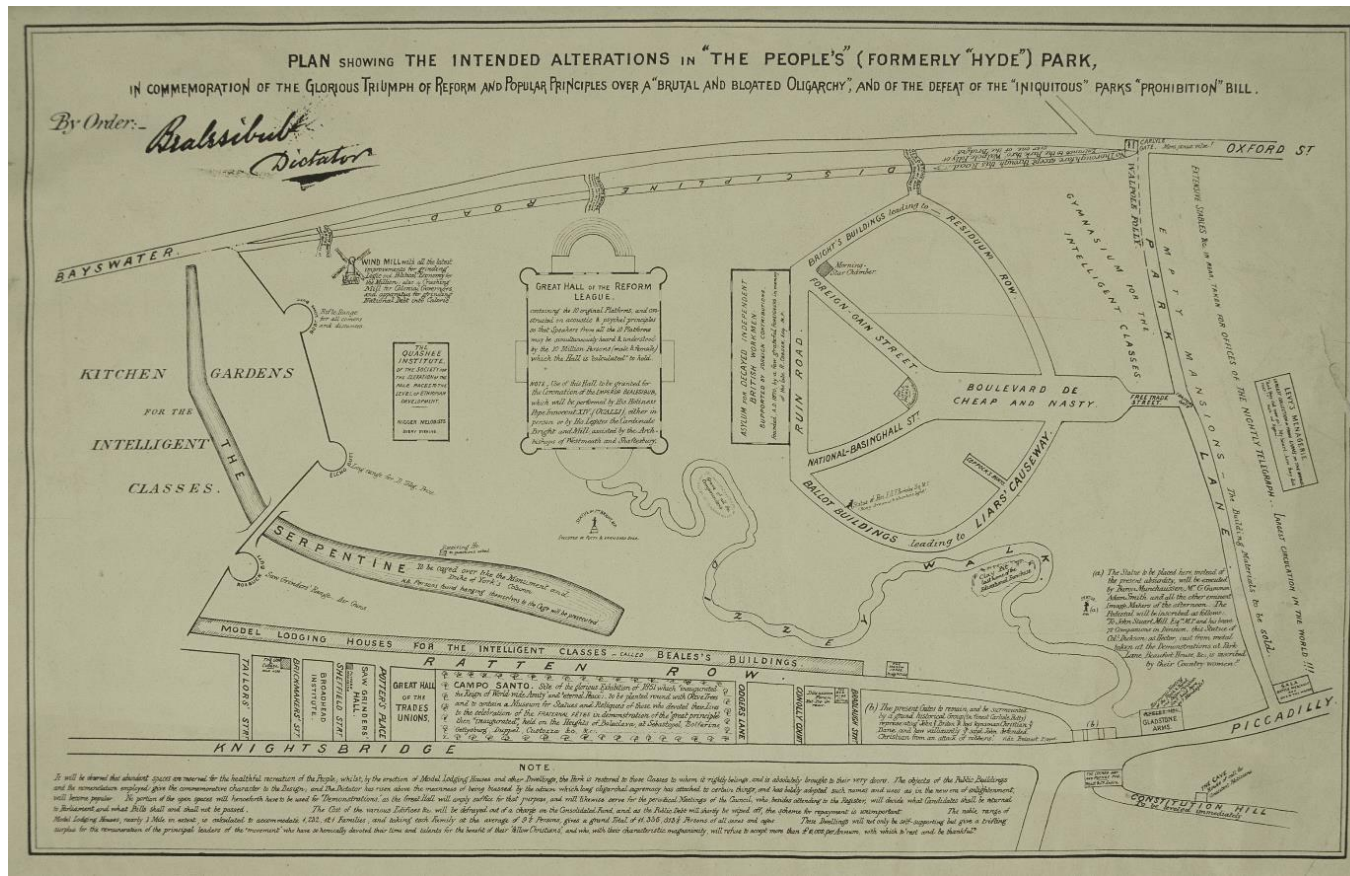


Figure 13: A satirical map of Hyde Park from 1867. Source: London Metropolitan Archive, SC/GL/SAT/027/1867/Q607407X. Image reproduced courtesy of the London Metropolitan Archives, City of London (Collage: the London Picture Archive, ref 20468).

The anonymous cartographer views the potential entry of the working classes into electoral politics with similar distaste. The map is used to make a scathing critique of the Reform League's demand for universal male suffrage. Constitution Hill is to be demolished, suggesting that if the working classes were permitted to vote they would overturn all the morals and codes on which Britain was run.⁶¹⁸ In this way the map is an example of how Hyde Park as a place became intertwined with the Reform League and debates surrounding the extension of the franchise and access to public space. The Hyde Park Railings Affair opened up the park to negotiation about what the park means to people, and who it is for. Hyde Park, like any other place, is constantly being contested and renegotiated, but an event such as the Railings Affair crystallises and highlights this process, bringing it to the fore.⁶¹⁹ The meanings and emotions with which the park was associated were altered and added to by the Reform League's protest, and the satirical map is just one of the ways that this occurred.

The Reformers' Tree mentioned previously is illustrative of how these meanings and connotations can shift and change over time. After the large oak tree was burnt down during the Hyde Park Railings Affair, its stump became a focus for radical meetings, as well as a noticeboard for political posters and advertisements.⁶²⁰ The protest created a lasting focus for political dissent in Hyde Park, considered significant enough to be memorialised a century later in the 1970s and 2000s. The memorial built in 2002, seen above in Figure 12, is another representation of the demonstration. It celebrates the tree and the park as a site of radical politics. This stance is a very different interpretation of the Hyde Park Railings Affair to those already discussed in this chapter. Rather than decrying the mindless violence of thugs or the subversive threat to the stability of the country, the memorial celebrates the efforts of the Reform League and the radical traditions of the park. This change demonstrates

⁶¹⁸ LMA, SC/GL/SAT/027/1867/Q607407X.

⁶¹⁹ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*.

⁶²⁰ Mills, "The Reformer's Tree."

how perceptions of protest can alter over time. It also demonstrates that public space can change too; it is constantly being (re)produced, and as different groups and attitudes become dominant, it develops.⁶²¹

The significance of the Reformers' Tree has also changed over time however; the spot is no longer one of the most famous features of the park, and has been supplanted by Speaker's Corner as the key space of political action within the park. This suggests that, as with physical changes to the location of a protest, changes to the meaning of a place because of protest can last for different amounts of time. The Reformers' Tree and the Hyde Park Railings Affair have now largely disappeared from the popular imagination of Hyde Park, and the park is a much less common choice for rallies and demonstrations than the nearby Trafalgar Square. It is possible to argue that over the past century and a half Hyde Park has been de-politicised, its radical connotations being limited to, and territorialised by, Speaker's Corner. This example highlights the temporality of changes to both space and place because of protest; they are not total, and they are not permanent.

Neither place, nor public space, can be disentangled from the social relations which produce them, and which they, in turn, produce. The Hyde Park Railings Affair crystallised, and became wrapped up in, the various understandings of how Hyde Park was defined as a place, revealing contested social norms about who, and what, the park as a public space was for. The government, the Reform League, and others used the protest as a chance to enhance their power and prestige by demonstrating their control of the use and definition of Hyde Park. Representations of the demonstration and the park are also revealing about the relationship between place and protest, particularly the way in which the relationship changes and develops over time.

⁶²¹ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.

5.5 Conclusions

The Hyde Park Railings Affair began as a demand for access to the political system, but became a demand for access to London itself. As an event, it illustrates how space, place, and protest interact in the context of public space, an important resource for the healthy functioning of the public sphere. The Affair demonstrates the mutual constitution of space, place, and protest. The events and outcomes of the protest, and the physical and intangible features of the location, are altered by each other before, during, and after the protest. The Reformers' Tree is a good example for illustrating this argument. The tree was burnt down during the protest, which is an example of protest altering space. The stump of the tree then became a radical notice board and meeting point, impacting on the ways in which future dissent was expressed in the park, which is an example of the physical features of space influencing protest. It also demonstrates place influencing protest, as the stump was doubtless used because of its association with the protest, due to the meanings and connotations that people associated with the tree. Then, one hundred and thirty-eight years after the Hyde Park Railings Affair took place, a memorial to the Reformers' Tree was built, demonstrating that the protest has become part of the park as a place; it is one of the many layers of meaning that define Hyde Park.

Protest opens up possibilities for change by highlighting the transience of space and place, as well as of society and politics. One of the main objectives of protest is to bring about change of some sort. Protests act as a reminder that nothing is permanent, a fact which can spark debate about how society should be run, what a space should look like and how it should be used, or what it should mean. The Hyde Park Railings Affair led to debates about what and who Hyde Park was for, how wide the roads surrounding it should be, and the wisdom of giving those who took part in the protest the right to vote. In the spirit of Massey's arguments about the political potential of space, by emphasising the possibility that things could

be different, protest provokes discussion and sometimes leads to changes being made.

Public space is integral to the healthy functioning of the public sphere and the possibility of claiming the right to the city; it is a forum of political potential. It is constantly being (re)produced by struggles over what it should look like, how it should be used, and who should be allowed to access it. I will not go as far as to argue that open and accessible public spaces are *necessary* for a healthy culture of protest in a city, but I will say that it is very important. The participants in the Hyde Park Railings Affair recognised this, and were willing to fight to preserve Hyde Park as a public space in which future protests could take place.

The Hyde Park Railings Affair started as a demonstration on behalf of universal male suffrage, but quickly developed to test the very meaning of Hyde Park as a public space, its social norms, meanings, and relationship with the people of London. Hyde Park also left its mark on the Affair, however, affecting how it unfolded and was perceived. The park and the protest are inextricably linked, and this relationship cannot be ignored. In this chapter I began to explore the ways in which protest are memorialised and preserved in collective memory. In the next, I develop this analysis using one of the best-known protests in London's history: the Battle of Cable Street.

6

The 'Myth' of the Battle of Cable Street: The Politics of Commemoration and Collective Memory

I was at a demonstration against the English Defence League in London in September 2013. The police responded to the protest by detaining hundreds of activists in “kettles” for several hours, and then arresting all 286 people present. Whilst we were detained and awaiting transportation to various prisons around London, several people pointed out that the place we had been detained was very close to Cable Street, the setting of the famous anti-fascist protest in 1936. There was a sense that our protest against modern-day fascists followed in the tradition of the Battle of Cable Street and that we were therefore part of something much bigger, which made it feel a bit more like the traumatic event of getting arrested was worth it!⁶²²

On 4 October 1936, up to a quarter of a million anti-fascist demonstrators prevented the British Union of Fascists (BUF) from marching through the East End of London. The event, known as the Battle of Cable Street, is arguably one of the best-known protests in London’s history. By tracing the ways that the Battle has been remembered and commemorated since 1936 it is possible to gain a broader insight into the legacies that protests leave behind. Through a mural, a plaque, anniversary celebrations, and cultural representations the Battle has been mythologised in collective memory, becoming a symbolic victory of anti-fascism and the ‘cockney

⁶²² Anonymous, personal correspondence, 10 May 2015.

spirit' over the forces of fascism and xenophobia. The reality is, of course, more complicated, but the myth of Cable Street remains powerful, as the above quote demonstrates. In this chapter, I shall argue that it can be just as valuable, if not more so, to understand how such a myth is (re)constructed and used than it is to establish how accurate the public perception of an event is.

This chapter will use Pierre Nora's writings on *les lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory—to analyse the ways in which the Battle of Cable Street has been perceived, represented and used since 1936 in order to better understand the ways in which historical protests have legacies whose impact can be seen in the modern city. The chapter is divided into seven substantive sections. The first provides contextual information on the East End of London as a both a physical space and imaginative place; and the second delivers a brief description of what happened during the Battle. The third section looks at the literature on collective memory and memorials that underpins the analysis of this chapter, with a focus on the work of Pierre Nora. The fourth section explores the impact of protest names, evaluating how the phrase 'Battle of Cable Street' has contributed to the myth that has developed surrounding the events of that day. In the fifth section, I look at how the Battle of Cable Street has been memorialised and represented over the last eight decades. I conduct a visual analysis of two incarnations of the Cable Street mural in order to better understand how the myth of Cable Street has been constructed. The sixth section turns to how the myth has been used by activist groups as a source of inspiration and new tactics, and by local communities as part of the process of identity formation. In the final section, I look at how the myth of Cable Street has shifted and changed, thinking about how it has been adapted to serve new purposes as time has gone on. I shall begin, however, by providing some context about the imaginative space of the East End, and the events that became known as the Battle of Cable Street.

6.1 The East End and the British Union of Fascists

The Battle of Cable Street took place in the East End of London, an area that has a diverse and complex history. For centuries, the East End has housed much of London's industrial sector, with factories and the docks providing employment for the city's working classes. The poorly paid, physically demanding, and frequently irregular work characterised by these industries meant that East London was also inhabited by some of the poorest and most deprived communities in the city.⁶²³ Over the centuries, East London has also provided a home to a variety of immigrant communities. From the French Huguenots fleeing persecution in the eighteenth century, through large-scale migration from eastern Europe and Russia in the late nineteenth century, to more recent migration from Africa, the Caribbean, and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), East London has played host to millions of adopted Londoners. This period has also seen a large number of Jewish migrants. By the 1930s, there had been several waves of Jewish migration from different parts of Europe into Britain, and British Jews represented a wide range of economic and cultural backgrounds. Jews in Britain mainly lived in Manchester, Leeds, and London. 60% of London's 183,000-strong Jewish population lived in the East End, and 52% of those lived in Stepney, where the Battle of Cable Street took place.⁶²⁴

This combination of poverty and immigration has frequently proved volatile; there have been several periods of xenophobia and racial violence in the areas to the east of the City of London. The 1930s were one those periods. As economic depression and then fascism spread across Europe, the charismatic aristocrat Oswald Mosley founded the British Union of Fascists in 1932. Mussolini had proved in Italy that Fascists could take power, and Mosley believed that he alone could solve the economic

⁶²³ Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage Books, 2001); Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, Penguin, 2000).

⁶²⁴ David Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End: Jewish Responses to Fascism in the 1930s* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2011); The Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2011).

problems facing Britain.⁶²⁵ Largely due to a relatively stable parliamentary monarchy and an economy that did not suffer as severely as elsewhere during the Great Depression, fascism did not attract the same following in Britain as it did in other European countries.⁶²⁶ From 1934, anti-Semitism became an increasingly significant feature of BUF speeches and literature, suggesting its use was political rather than ideological; an opportunistic attempt to bolster the BUF's popularity.⁶²⁷ Mosley's rhetoric found support in the East End, and the area became one of the BUF's strongholds. Around half of the BUF's membership was concentrated in London during the 1930s, and the East End continued to be a source of support, even when membership was declining in other localities.⁶²⁸

Alongside the Battle of Cable Street, the East End has a mythology in its own right. Paul Newland argues that “[c]ities essentially develop in two ways—materially and imaginatively.”⁶²⁹ The East End is a potent imaginative space; long viewed with fear and suspicion by wealthy Londoners, it still is associated with poverty, dirt, and criminality, despite large-scale redevelopment and gentrification in recent years.⁶³⁰ The imaginative space of East London is also home to the stereotypical East Londoner—the Cockney. A mythology of ‘Cockneys’ has developed in which they are perceived as loud, jovial, working-class people, friendly but fiercely defensive of themselves, their families and their community.⁶³¹ The stereotype was not only significant to outsiders; several of the characteristics of the Cockney were also important to local identity. Gillian Rose argues that in the 1920s neighbourliness was a valued trait amongst

⁶²⁵ Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶²⁶ John Stevenson, “Conservatism and the Failure of Fascism in Interwar Britain,” in *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. Martin Blinkhorn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003 [1990]): 264–82.

⁶²⁷ Stevenson, “Conservatism and the Failure of Fascism in Interwar Britain.”

⁶²⁸ G.C. Webber, “Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 4 (1984): 575–606.

⁶²⁹ Paul Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008); 28.

⁶³⁰ Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End*.

⁶³¹ Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End*.

the people of Poplar, one of the East End boroughs.⁶³² Residents of Poplar valued the concept of a close-knit local community that supported each other in times of need. Often more ideal than reality, it was a powerful association that affected local culture and politics in the first half of the twentieth century.⁶³³ This stereotype ties into the myth that has developed around the Battle of Cable Street, which is often perceived as a diverse community uniting to defend itself from outsiders. Gareth Stedman Jones has traced the myth of the Cockney from the 1780s to the 1980s, arguing that the stereotype has shifted over time to reflect changing relationships between political elites and the rest of the population.⁶³⁴ He contends that since the 1950s the Cockney has been a nostalgic figure, associated with a London that is perceived to no longer exist. As I shall argue here, the Battle of Cable Street also evokes a sense of nostalgia, frequently being remembered as an undeniable victory over fascism in Britain.

Another element of the East End myth that connects to the Battle of Cable Street is that “it has, at various historical moments, operated as a spatialized manifestation of fears concerning popular unrest and political resistance.”⁶³⁵ These historical moments include the development of New Unionism in the 1880s and 90s, the Siege of Sidney Street in 1911, Poplarism in the 1920s, and the Battle of Cable Street. One of the enduring characteristics of the Cockney stereotype is an automatic mistrust of authority, reinforcing the association between the East End and dissent.⁶³⁶ The strong sense of community identified by Gillian Rose also resulted in a mistrust of outsiders, and fierce resistance to outside interference in local affairs.⁶³⁷ This led to difficult relationships between local political groups

⁶³² Gillian Rose, “Locality, Politics, and Culture: Poplar in the 1920s,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6, no. 2 (1988): 151–68; Gillian Rose “Imagining Poplar in the 1920s: Concepts of Community,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 16, no. 4 (1990): 425–37.

⁶³³ Rose, “Locality, Politics, and Culture;” and Rose, “Imagining Poplar in the 1920s.”

⁶³⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Cockney and the Nation, 1780–1988,” in *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800*, ed. David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge, 1989): 272–324.

⁶³⁵ Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London’s East End*; 26.

⁶³⁶ Stedman Jones, “The Cockney and the Nation, 1780–1988.”

⁶³⁷ Rose, “Imaging Poplar in the 1920s.”

and national organisations. In 1921, thirty local councillors were sent to jail for spending all of the local rates on poor relief, a policy of the Poplar Labour Party known as Poplarism.⁶³⁸ The national Labour Party disapproved of such radical actions.⁶³⁹ For Charlie Goodman, one of the best-known veterans of the Battle, Cable Street was part of a proud tradition of such resistance in the area: “[t]he East End of London has a history of fighting against fascism and the fight on behalf of the people. You go all the way through from the match girls in the 1880s to the *Jolly George* to the great rent strikes.”⁶⁴⁰ In this way the myth of Cable Street is inextricably linked to the myth of the East End; both feed off and reinforce one another.

This, then, is the demographic, economic, political, and imaginative context in which the Battle of Cable Street took place. In 1936, the BUF began planning a march celebrating their fourth anniversary. The plans were announced in the *Blackshirt*, the BUF’s weekly paper (See Figure 14). According to the plan, members of the BUF would assemble in Royal Mint Street in the City to be inspected by Mosley, then march to four mass meetings across the East End: Aske Street in Shoreditch, Salmon Lane in Limehouse, Stafford Road in Bow and Victoria Park in Bethnal Green. Mosley planned to speak at all four.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁸ Rose, “Imaging Poplar in the 1920s.”

⁶³⁹ Rose, “Imaging Poplar in the 1920s.”

⁶⁴⁰ Peter Catterall, “The Battle of Cable Street,” *Contemporary Record* 8, no. 1 (1994): 105–32; 120. The *Jolly George* was a ship bound for Russia with munitions for the Polish army. Workers at the East India docks refused to load the cargo onto the ship in protest against government plans to invade Russia.

⁶⁴¹ “Mosely Speaks in East London,” *Blackshirt*, October 3, 1936; 6.

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GREAT ANNIVERSARY DEMONSTRATION

SUNDAY
OCT. 4th

MOSLEY

SPEAKS AT
FOUR GREAT
LONDON
MEETINGS

*Full Information
Next Week*

All members of British Union of Fascists and
National Socialists should report to their
District Officer as soon as possible for details.

Figure 14: The announcement of the BUF's anniversary demonstration on 26 September in the Blackshirt. Source: Blackshirt, "Great Anniversary Demonstration," September 26, 1936; 2. © British Library Board (PENP.NT123, September 26, 1936; 2).

6.2 The Battle of Cable Street

The response to the BUF's plans by the Jewish community demonstrates its incoherence. The Board of Deputies was an organisation run by Jewish elites designed to represent Jewish people in Britain, but many felt that the Board did not represent their interests and that their response to the BUF was inadequate. In 1936 an alternative organisation, the Jewish People's Council Against Fascism (JPC), was set up with a stronger awareness of the threat faced by Jews. The different attitudes of these two groups are illustrated by their responses to the announcement of the BUF's plans for 4 October. The Board of Deputies urged people to stay away from the march and allow it to go ahead unchallenged. The JPC, however, campaigned for the march to be banned by the Home Secretary, collecting signatures for a petition. The petition was refused on the grounds that the BUF should be allowed to exercise its right to freedom of speech. Alongside the JPC, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain also encouraged and organised resistance to the BUF's march.

On Sunday, 4 October protesters assembled on the four main routes into the East End: Leaman Street, Gardiners Corner (Aldgate), Cable Street, and St. George's Street (now The Highway) (See Figure 15). By 1.30pm the junction of Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Street at Aldgate was blocked by a mass of people. Sympathetic tram drivers had abandoned their vehicles on the Commercial Road at Gardiner's Corner, increasing the chaos (see Figure 16). Realising they were unlikely to be able to force a route through, the police turned their attention to Cable Street, another route into the East End to the south of Aldgate. It proved no more accessible as protesters had erected barricades to impede police progress. Police were pelted with missiles from windows as well as from street level, and by late afternoon the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Philip Game, had decided they would not be able to get through.

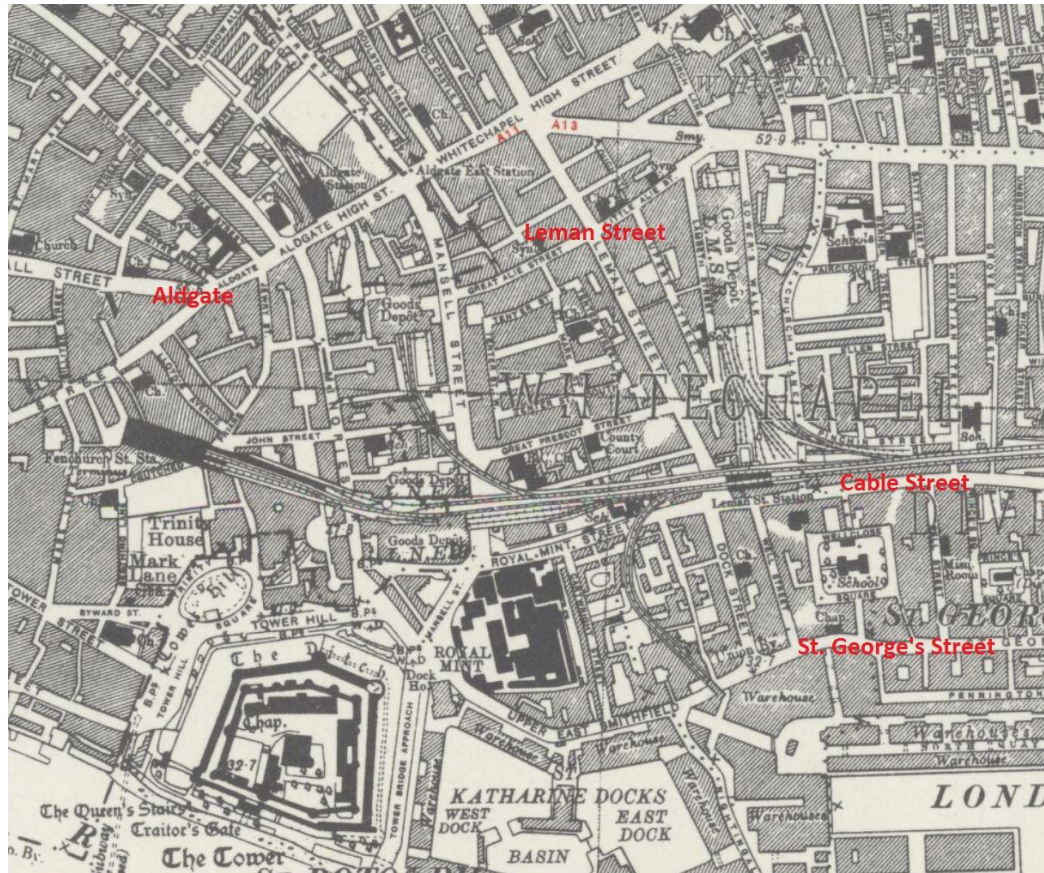


Figure 15: The four streets in which protesters assembled to try and prevent the BUF entering the East End of London. Source: Ordnance Survey "Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952: London Sheet K," revised 1938, published c.1946. Image reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, with alterations by the author.



Figure 16: The area where protestors and police first clashed, at the junctions of Commercial Street and Commercial Road with Aldgate. Source: Ordnance Survey "Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952: London Sheet K," revised 1938, published c.1946. Image reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, with alterations by the author.

Throughout this time, the BUF had been waiting at Royal Mint Street (see Figure 15) to be given permission to march by the police. Philip Game told Mosley they would be unable to march through the East End, and would have to pass through the West End of London, and disperse on the Embankment instead. The BUF claimed to be outraged at the Government's surrender to "insensate mobs of Red terrorists," but Mosley yielded without resistance.⁶⁴²

Accounts of what happened next vary depending on the source. For some, the Battle of Cable Street was a great "victory of 'people's power' over Mosley's fascists."⁶⁴³ The BUF never recovered from this show of force, which brought it face-to-face with the fact that more than just a small minority opposed them.⁶⁴⁴ Others, including the BUF, argued that the event won it much-needed support and publicity, and only increased tension within the East End.⁶⁴⁵ The Public Order Act was passed in November, which restricted public processions and banned political uniforms, but there is evidence to suggest that it did not quell BUF activity in the East End as much as some claim.⁶⁴⁶ This debate continues to the present day, and is played out through the various representations and commemorations of the Battle of Cable Street. The following quotes illustrate some of the more positive interpretations of the Battle:

That was, I think, the biggest turning point in the whole struggle against fascism because thousands, hundreds of thousands of people became involved and aware. We played a major role in alerting the people of this country to what fascism was.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² A. K. Chesterton, "Britons! The Mensheviks are in Command!" *Blackshirt*, October 10, 1936; 5.

⁶⁴³ Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End*; 208.

⁶⁴⁴ Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End*; The Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁶⁴⁵ John Beckett, "For Alien or for Briton? Real East London Gives a Smashing Reply," *Blackshirt*, October 10, 1936; Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street."

⁶⁴⁶ The Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁶⁴⁷ Imperial War Museum [hereafter IWM 9374]. Recorded interview with Lou Kenton.

The demonstration has come to be seen, particularly by those on the political left, as the moment London's working class united en masse to reject fascism's hateful ideology once and for all.⁶⁴⁸

For some academics, this perception is an inaccurate 'myth' to be corrected. Historian Daniel Tilles is one of those eager to dispel the myth of the Battle of Cable Street. He argues that, far from marking the beginning of the end for the BUF, the events of 4 October 1936 provided a boost for British fascism. Over two thousand people joined the BUF in London following the Battle, almost doubling the organisation's membership in the capital.⁶⁴⁹ Under pressure from the government, the national media generally avoided reporting on the activities of the BUF apart from when disorder was involved. The events in Aldgate and Cable Street could not be ignored, and the BUF capitalised on the resulting publicity.⁶⁵⁰ The Battle of Cable Street also failed to put a stop to anti-Semitic violence in the East End, which actually increased in intensity after October 1936. Tilles argues that:

However laudable the motivation of the Jewish participants that day, the primary consequence of their actions was to make life significantly worse for their fellow Jews in the East End, with their involvement used to justify the commencement of the most intensive phase of anti-Semitic activity in modern British history.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ Daniel Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street," *History Today* 61, no. 10 (2011): 41–7.

⁶⁴⁹ Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street."

⁶⁵⁰ Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street."

⁶⁵¹ Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street": 47.

There is no reason to dispute Tilles' arguments. The records of the Metropolitan Police held in the National Archive show that between 5 October and 8 November 1936, an average of 291 extra policemen had to be deployed in the area every day to control fascist and anti-fascist demonstrations.⁶⁵² These measures would not be required in an area where fascism had been quelled. However, proving that the popular conceptions of the Battle of Cable Street are inaccurate is no reason to dismiss them. A myth is a widely-held belief that is false, altered or romanticised, often with a purpose, such as the reinforcement of socio-cultural norms.⁶⁵³ Although popular understandings of myths assume that all myths are untrue, this is not actually the case.⁶⁵⁴ They are malleable, but can be partial truth as well as complete falsehood.⁶⁵⁵ Myths arise in specific forms for particular reasons, and this process is arguably just as worthy of study as how accurate the myth is. As such, I have studied the myth of Cable Street, thinking through how it developed, what it means, and how it is used in a range of ways including activism and local identity. As historian Harold Rosen argues, "mythical versions have their own kind of truth."⁶⁵⁶ For Rosen, the myth of Cable Street provides a moment of victory for a movement that is short of such outright triumphs.⁶⁵⁷ As I shall explore, the myth of Cable Street is utilised by a variety of communities such as the British radical left and local East End communities in a number of ways such as constructing identity, marshalling support, and justifying action. In the next section, I shall consider the literature which facilitates an analysis

⁶⁵² National Archives [hereafter NA] MEPO 2/3098 Documents relating to the policing of fascist and anti-fascist marches and rallies in the East End of London.

⁶⁵³ Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, 'Myth,' in *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, eds. Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-1814>.

⁶⁵⁴ Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁵⁵ Segal, *Myth*.

⁶⁵⁶ Harold Rosen, "A Necessary Myth: Cable Street Revisited," *Changing English* 5, no. 1 (1998): 27–34.

⁶⁵⁷ Rosen, "A Necessary Myth."

of the ways in which the Battle has been remembered and commemorated.

6.3 The Politics of Commemoration and Collective Memory

The ways in which the Battle of Cable Street has been perceived, used, and represented since 1936 can be related to literature about commemoration and collective memory. Both topics have been extensively studied by geographers and others, and the literature highlights the politics which underpin these processes. A consensus is rarely reached as to how an event or person should be commemorated, represented, or remembered, resulting in a constant process of (re)negotiation. The Battle of Cable Street is no exception. Memory and commemoration has been the recent focus of much academic study, considering “how the past is constructed socially—and expressed materially in landscape, public space, art, popular media, and architecture.”⁶⁵⁸ Whilst there is little specific literature on murals as a form of memorial, academic studies of other forms of memorial can be applied to the case of the Battle of Cable Street.⁶⁵⁹ Several key themes can be identified within the literature on the geographies of commemoration. The ones most relevant here are power, geography, identity, and temporality. These themes will now be discussed, after a consideration of an overarching theoretical framework that can be applied to memory and commemoration; Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*.

The work of Pierre Nora on *lieux de mémoire*—‘sites of memory,’ or objects, places or events “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself,”—is helpful when considering commemoration spatially.⁶⁶⁰ Nora argues that

⁶⁵⁸ Kenneth E Foote and Maoz Azaryahu, “Toward a Geography of Memory: Geographical Dimensions of Public Memory and Commemoration,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 35, no. 1 (2007): 125–44; 126.

⁶⁵⁹ See, for example, Bill Rolston, “Politics, Painting and Popular Culture: The Political Wall Murals of Northern Ireland,” *Media, Culture, and Society* 9, no.1 (1987): 5–28.

⁶⁶⁰ Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,’ *Representations* no. 26 (1989): 7–24; 7

the modern way of thinking about the past—history—is different from, and worse than, the way in which previous societies have related to the past—memory. *Lieux de mémoire* are part of how modern societies relate to history; they help us to remember the past, but they also have “the capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.”⁶⁶¹ Despite being criticised for succumbing to the very nostalgia he attempts to deconstruct, Nora’s idea are, I argue, applicable to the Battle of Cable Street, as many of the objects that now serve to represent it are constantly being redefined.⁶⁶²

Nora’s *Lieux de Mémoire* project consists of seven edited volumes published in French between 1984 and 1992. Between 1996 and 1998, some of the essays were translated into English and published in three volumes.⁶⁶³ The project has been hugely influential, becoming the subject of much academic debate, and being included in the 1993 *Grand Robert*, a respected French language dictionary.⁶⁶⁴ Nora defines a *lieu de mémoire* as a “meaningful entity of a real or imagined kind, which has become a symbolic element of a given community as a result of human will or the

⁶⁶¹ Nora, “Between Memory and History;” 19

⁶⁶² Stephen Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory: Space, Nation and Nostalgia in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 4 (2005): 481–504.

⁶⁶³ Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 1, Conflicts and Divisions*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 2, Traditions*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume 3, Symbols*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁶⁶⁴ See, for example: John Bodnar, “Pierre Nora, National Memory, and Democracy: A Review,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 3 (2000): 951–63; Steven Englund, “The Ghost of Nation Past,” *The Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 2 (1992): 299–320; Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory;” Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): 906–22; Kenan van de Mierop, “The ‘Age of Commemoration’ as a Narrative Construct: A Critique of the Discourse on the Contemporary Crisis of Memory in France,” *Rethinking History* 20, no. 2 (2016): 172–91; Nancy Wood, “Memory’s Remains: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *History and Memory* 6, no. 1 (1994): 123–49.

effect of time.”⁶⁶⁵ For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* are a product of the way in which modern societies remember; the ‘acceleration of history’ means that we have to make a conscious effort to remember the past.⁶⁶⁶ In contrast, pre-modern societies remembered the past in a subconscious manner, existing in a ‘*milieu de mémoire*’—an ‘environment of memory’—where memory is embodied in customs, traditions, and rituals.⁶⁶⁷

Critiques of Nora’s work generally relate to two issues; his nationalism, and his dichotomic understanding of memory and history. Nora’s writing reveals a nostalgia for a coherent national identity, defined by Republicanism.⁶⁶⁸ His focus on Republicanism leads Nora to ignore other influences on French national identity, such as imperialism.⁶⁶⁹ Perhaps more significantly, Nora’s desire for coherence leaves little room for pluralism, resulting in a number of problems with his understanding of *les lieux de mémoire*; Nora ignores the fact the sites of memory can be interpreted differently by different groups, and overlooks and even marginalises local, community, and minority memory in favour of the national.⁶⁷⁰ This leads to a theoretical framework that ignores the power relations, conflict, and positionality that frequently underlie sites of memory.⁶⁷¹ Nora’s positioning of history and memory as antithetical has also attracted some criticism. Hue-Tam Ho Tai argues that history and memory cannot be separated in the way that Nora does, and Stephen Legg argues that Nora sees memory as passive and history as dominant; for Legg, this is a false dichotomy.⁶⁷² These criticisms are significant, but it is possible to use the concept of sites of memory without succumbing to the same shortfalls as Nora, particularly if the concept is utilised in conjunction with work by other scholars on memory.

⁶⁶⁵ Pierre Nora (1992), translated by Wood, “Memory’s Remains;” 123–4.

⁶⁶⁶ Nora, “Between Memory and History.”

⁶⁶⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History;” Wood, “Memory’s Remains.”

⁶⁶⁸ Englund, “The Ghost of Nation Past;” Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory.”

⁶⁶⁹ Englund, “The Ghost of Nation Past;” and Tai, “Remembered Realms.”

⁶⁷⁰ Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory;” Tai, “Remembered Realms;” van de Mierop, “The ‘Age of Commemoration’ as a Narrative Construct.”

⁶⁷¹ Englund, “The Ghost of Nation Past;” Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory.”

⁶⁷² Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory;” Tai, “Remembered Realms.”

The work of Shaunna L. Scott is underpinned by a more nuanced understanding of how collective memory is constructed. Scott combines two dominant schools of thought in the sociology of commemoration to develop an understanding of commemorative processes that allows for both conflict and consensus.⁶⁷³ The Durkheimian perspective views commemoration as “an expression of and reinforcement for group solidarity.”⁶⁷⁴ This is a useful perspective, but Durkheim neglects social conflict in his model. In contrast, a Marxist perspective views conflict as fundamental. For Marxists, society is built upon conflict between groups and individuals attempting to advance their own interests. This understanding means it becomes necessary to consider the ideological construction of commemoration; who controls the process, and whose interests it serves, for example.⁶⁷⁵ Scott argues that both approaches are required for an improved understanding of the commemorative process, noting that “conflict and consensus are dialectically connected in a relationship that is more subtle and complex than either the orthodox Durkheimian or Marxian position suggests.”⁶⁷⁶ As in the case of public space in the Hyde Park Railings Affair, the meanings of historic events are the result of different interpretations of said events, coalescing through processes of both conflict and consensus.

There are four themes drawn from the literature that I argue are particularly relevant to understanding how the Battle of Cable Street has been commemorated and remembered; power, geography, identity, and temporality. The interplay of various power relationships through the processes of memory and commemoration is significant in terms of Scott’s processes of conflict and consensus. The powerful within society use memory to naturalise their authority, legitimising their power by linking

⁶⁷³ Shaunna Scott, “Dead Work: The Construction and Reconstruction of the Harlan Miners Memorial,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 3 (1996): 365–93.

⁶⁷⁴ Scott, “Dead Work;” 367; Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Swain (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1912).

⁶⁷⁵ Scott, “Dead Work;” 367–68.

⁶⁷⁶ Scott, “Dead Work;” 368.

themselves with the past.⁶⁷⁷ However, the very fact that memorials are used in this way opens them up to resistance and contention by minority groups and “contestation over the possession and interpretation of memories means that there are multifarious ways in which remembrance is practised in situ.”⁶⁷⁸ Tracing the power relationships surrounding a specific memorial can be complex; there are often a large number of groups involved in the process of conceiving of, constructing, and maintaining a commemorative space.⁶⁷⁹ As I shall demonstrate later, there were a number of different groups involved in the development and installation of the Cable Street mural, including local government, the artists, local charities, and community groups. Tim Edensor also argues that the recent growth of the heritage industry has transferred a certain amount of control over such spaces from local elites to commercial interests.⁶⁸⁰ Whilst the Cable Street mural has not been directly commercialised, it does attract visitors to the area, and is therefore of economic interest to the locality.⁶⁸¹ These arguments are why this chapter refers to the *politics* of commemoration and representation; these are not simple, uncontentious processes but are subject to much debate.

Memory and commemoration also interact with geographical factors. Several academics argue that the location of a memorial is significant. For example, Nuala Johnson argues that “[t]he space which...monuments occupy is not just an incidental material backdrop but in fact inscribes the statues with meaning.”⁶⁸² Kenneth Foote and Moaz Azaryahu provide an example of this inscription, arguing that “[t]he

⁶⁷⁷ Foote and Azaryahu, “Toward a Geography of Memory.”

⁶⁷⁸ Tim Edensor, “National Identity and the Politics of Memory: Remembering Bruce and Wallace in Symbolic Space,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15, no. 2 (1997): 175–94; 176.

⁶⁷⁹ Foote and Azaryahu, “Toward a Geography of Memory.”

⁶⁸⁰ Edensor, “National Identity and the Politics of Memory”; 176.

⁶⁸¹ As of February 2017, the Cable Street Mural is ranked 905 out of 1,543 things to do in London on the tourism website TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor, “Cable Street Mural,” no date, accessed February 6, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186338-d187715-Reviews-Cable_Street_Mural-London_England.html.

⁶⁸² Nuala Johnson, “Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography and Nationalism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13, no.1 (1995): 51–65.

location itself, as the scene of past events, together with any available physical remains, can be used to create a sense of authenticity.”⁶⁸³ Owen Dwyer and Derek Alderman contend that locating memorials in ‘everyday’ spaces such as streets or squares bestows orthodoxy on what is being commemorated.⁶⁸⁴ Both of these arguments illustrate how the location of a memorial is used to bestow credibility upon the memorial as a representation of a particular person, place, or event. Not only do these arguments justify the study of memorials by geographers, they also illustrate how alterations, such as a change of location, can influence how a memorial is interpreted.

The significant role of memory in the construction of a shared identity, particularly national identities, is another key idea which can be identified from the existing scholarship. I have already discussed how important the French nation was to Pierre Nora’s work, and he is not the only one to make to connection between national identity and collective memory. Tim Edensor argues that “symbolic sites are centres for the social and political organisation of national memory.”⁶⁸⁵ Johnson uses memorials to think through the material and symbolic elements of nationalist discourses, particularly in relation to Ireland.⁶⁸⁶ As with elite groups, nationalist narratives use memory to imply continuity between the past and the present, naturalising the nation as something that has ‘always been.’⁶⁸⁷ The literature tends to overlook the ways in which communal identity has been constructed on scales smaller than the nation. The Battle of Cable Street is frequently used in the construction of the ‘East Ender’ identity, but it does not necessarily play a role in wider understandings of British or English identity. However, many of the arguments made about

⁶⁸³ Foote and Azaryahu, “Toward a Geography of Memory;” 128.

⁶⁸⁴ Owen J. Dwyer, and Derek H. Alderman, *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory* (Chicago: The Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2008).

⁶⁸⁵ Edensor, “National Identity and the Politics of Memory;” 194.

⁶⁸⁶ Johnson, “Cast in Stone.”

⁶⁸⁷ Edensor, “National Identity and the Politics of Memory.”

the national scale can be applied to other types of communities, such as ethnic or political groups, as well as smaller geographical communities.

The final relevant theme is temporality. As has already been touched on in relation to Nora's work, and as I have explored in relation to the Reformers' Tree memorial in Chapter 5, memorials and their meanings are not fixed. For Pierre Nora, this mutability is a defining characteristic of a site of memory; "*lieux de mémoire* thrive only because of their capacity for change, their ability to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections."⁶⁸⁸ Individual memorials can be relocated or removed entirely, and they are "reinterpreted and their social and political relevance is reformulated according to contemporary priorities and sensitivities."⁶⁸⁹ For example, Tim Edensor explains how the Bannockburn Heritage Centre and the Wallace Monument in Scotland were built during the Victorian era to celebrate the qualities that Scotland brought to the United Kingdom. Since then, both sites have been used for advocating a separatist Scottish nationalism.⁶⁹⁰ This example also highlights the point that memorials are particular interpretations from the beginning; at no point are they truthful reproductions of an event or person.⁶⁹¹ Memorials are representations of a particular event, person, or place, which means they are also infused with the politics of representation as well as the politics of commemoration and collective memory.

I have chosen the work of Pierre Nora on *les lieux de mémoires* as the theoretical framework for my analysis on the ways the Battle of Cable Street has been commemorated and remembered because of its centralisation of the spatial. Nora's work has been criticised, but its weaknesses can be addressed through the use of the work of other

⁶⁸⁸ Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.) *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Volume 1, Conflicts and Divisions*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 1–21; 15.

⁶⁸⁹ Foote and Azaryahu, "Toward a Geography of Memory;" 130.

⁶⁹⁰ Edensor, "National Identity and the Politics of Memory."

⁶⁹¹ Johnson, "Cast in Stone."

scholars, such as Shaunna L. Scott, Nuala Johnson, and Tim Edensor. These scholars contribute to an understanding of the commemorative process as unequal, geographical, intertwined with identity, and mutable. In the next section, I shall begin to think about how the commemorative process has operated in the case of the Battle of Cable Street, by discussing the history and implications of its name.

6.4 What's in a Name?

Protests that become part of the popular memory are frequently known by one name. The Gordon Riots, Bloody Sunday, and the Notting Hill Riots are all examples of historical London protests that have come to be remembered by a single name. Sometimes, the names are all that many people can recall about an event, and as such they shape how protests are perceived and understood. In her book about the strike at the Bryant and May match factory in Bow in 1888, Louise Raw argues that referring to the strikers as 'matchgirls' rather than 'matchwomen' portrayed them as innocent, inexperienced, and vulnerable.⁶⁹² This image served the purposes of both supporters and critics of the strike, but it has also contributed to an inaccuracy in the way that history views the strike. The agency of the women has been removed, resulting in the popular understanding that the strike was provoked and led by outsiders, such as the middle-class socialist Annie Besant.⁶⁹³ This example demonstrates the importance of considering the providence, purpose, and impacts of the popular names for protests, and the Battle of Cable Street is no exception.

The term 'Battle of Cable Street' was coined on the day itself, but it took several decades for it to become popularly accepted. On 4 October 1936, after the BUF had moved off on their alternative route towards the Embankment, Pat Devine, leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, made a speech during which he predicted that "[t]oday will

⁶⁹²Louise Raw, *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

⁶⁹³ Raw, *Striking a Light*.

go down in history as the Battle of Cable Street in the war against Fascism.” Historian Tony Kushner has identified this as the first time that the term was used to describe the events of the day.⁶⁹⁴ Despite Pat Devine’s foresight, it would be at least twenty-five years before the term became popularly accepted. The term is misleading in two respects. First, the events of 4 October 1936 do not fit the military connotations of a ‘battle.’ Second, Cable Street was not the only location involved in events that day. A significant proportion of the events took place in nearby Aldgate. These inaccuracies have undoubtedly had an impact on the way in which the day has been remembered. Both the mural and plaque commemorating the events of that day are in or near Cable Street, there is no memorial at Aldgate. As previously discussed, the location of a memorial is significant, contributing to the symbolism and meaning of the memorial.⁶⁹⁵ In this case, the location of the mural and plaque in and near Cable Street perpetuate the misconception that Cable Street was the most significant, or even the only, location involved in the events of 4 October 1936.

In his 1961 history of fascism in Britain, Colin Cross describes “the so-called Battle of Cable Street.”⁶⁹⁶ Kushner has established that this was the first printed version of events to use the title, and argues that it proves the name “had gained a degree of popular recognition” by that date.⁶⁹⁷ Colin Cross had not accepted the name however; his use of the phrase ‘so-called’ a clear indication that he did not think it commonly accepted. The events of 4 October 1936 are still frequently mentioned in history books, and they tend to describe the day in one of three ways. The authors of some recent publications, such as David Rosenberg and the Cable Street Group, do use the Battle of Cable Street, without any qualification or clarification.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁴ Tony Kushner, “‘Long Live its Memory!’: Writing and Rewriting ‘the Battle of Cable Street,’” in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 109–80.

⁶⁹⁵ Johnson, “Cast in Stone,” and Scott, “Dead Work.”

⁶⁹⁶ Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (Tiptree, Essex, Barrie and Rockcliff, 1961); 159

⁶⁹⁷ Kushner, “‘Long Live its Memory!’;” 148.

⁶⁹⁸ Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End* and The Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

These authors tend to view the Battle uncritically, portraying it as an unqualified victory. It is more common for authors to use scare quotes, referring to the 'Battle of Cable Street.'⁶⁹⁹ The use of scare quotes has a similar impact to Cross' use of the phrase "so-called," indicating that the term is not universally accepted.⁷⁰⁰

Some modern books do not refer to 4 October 1936 by any name at all.⁷⁰¹ For example, Peter Ackroyd describes the Battle thus:

Yet the city itself is curiously unmoved by its crowds. One of the reasons for civic peace in London, as opposed to other capitals, lies directly in its size. Its very scale determines its quietness. It is at once too large and too complex to react to any local outbreaks of passionate feeling, and in the twentieth century the most marked characteristic of riots and demonstrations was their failure to make any real impression upon the stony-hearted and unyielding city. The disappointment of the Chartist uprising, preceded by a large meeting on Kennington Common, anticipated the inability of Oswald Mosley to proceed down Cable Street with thousands of fascist sympathisers. It was if the city itself rebuked them and held them back.⁷⁰²

Ackroyd's problematic personification of London aside, a protest without a name feels less significant. Protests take place in London every day, and relatively few remain in the collective consciousness long enough to take

⁶⁹⁹ For example: Jon E. Lewis, *London: The Autobiography* (London: Robinson, 2009); Porter, *London: A Social History*; and Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People* (Vintage: London, 2008)

⁷⁰⁰ Cross, *The Fascists in Britain*; 159

⁷⁰¹ Such as, Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*; Jeremy Black, *London: A History* (Lancaster, Carnegie, 2009); Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels, and Revolts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Lindsay German and John Rees, *A People's History of London* (London: Verso, 2012); and Richard Tames, *Political London: A Capital History* (London: Historical, 2007)

⁷⁰² Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*; 397.

on a name that is widely recognised. For Ackroyd, it is just one of many examples that proves London's relative lack of mass unrest. Not using any specific name has the effect of playing down the significance of 4 October. There were multiple demonstrations, meetings, and clashes involved in the conflict between the BUF and anti-fascists during the 1930s, and many of them are not known by a specific name. Choosing not to use the term 'Battle of Cable Street' reduces the significance of that particular event, making it part of an ongoing campaign to prevent fascism gaining popularity in Britain, which, in many ways, it was. As Daniel Tilles has proved, the Battle was not a decisive victory over the BUF.⁷⁰³ In fact, it may even have aided Mosley's organisation by giving it much-needed publicity. As Foote and Azaryahu highlight, the majority of events and people never achieve official or unofficial status.⁷⁰⁴ What this point does demonstrate is that even absences, the things that are left out, can influence how a reader interprets the Battle of Cable Street based on a cultural representation such as a popular history of London.

One of the reasons authors may feel uncomfortable using the phrase 'Battle of Cable Street' is the military connotations of the word 'battle.' 'Battle' is not the only military term that is regularly used in relation to that day. Those who participated are frequently referred to as 'veterans,' a word usually reserved for those who have performed military service.⁷⁰⁵ Tony Kushner argues that this military tone is due to the narrative of events constructed by the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Party quickly claimed responsibility for the bulk of organising for the event, despite not officially supporting the demonstration until the week before.⁷⁰⁶ The military connotations convey a sense of discipline, organisation, and co-ordination. The Communist Party tried to influence public perceptions of themselves by controlling the narrative of the Battle

⁷⁰³ Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street."

⁷⁰⁴ Foote and Azaryahu, "Toward a Geography of Memory."

⁷⁰⁵ See for example Jenny Knight, "Old Street Fighters Never Die," *Evening Standard*, October 5, 1978; 5.

⁷⁰⁶ Kushner, "Long May its Memory Live!"

of Cable Street. It is not uncommon for different groups to attempt to define and fix narratives of historical events, with varying degrees of success.⁷⁰⁷ In this case, the metaphor of 'Battle' has survived the years, but the Communist Party is no longer strongly associated with the events of 4 October 1936, demonstrating how difficult it can be for any one group to control collective memory.

Another noteworthy feature of the way the event is classified and described is that the Battle is very rarely referred to as a riot. In the popular histories, participants are called "demonstrators," "anti-fascists," and "opposing crowds" but the term "rioting" is used only once.⁷⁰⁸ The terms used to describe protest are inconsistent, and frequently carry connotations which are often negative.⁷⁰⁹ 'Riot' has negative connotations of violence and mindless anarchy, and Cable Street is rarely described as such. This was arguably part of the process by which the Battle became part of the socially acceptable official local history, something for local residents to be proud of, which can be celebrated on the side of the local Town Hall. 'Battle' is somehow more respectable, more legitimate. This demonstrates just how important a single word can be in altering the meaning of an event or a piece of text.⁷¹⁰

The different approaches again convey different impressions of what happened. Two of the popular histories neglect to mention the demonstrators at all, or explain how the BUF was stopped. Ackroyd simply describes "the inability of Oswald Mosley to proceed down Cable Street with thousands of fascist sympathisers," whilst Jeremy White merely says that "[t]he 'Battle of Cable Street' of 4 October 1936, when Mosley and his

⁷⁰⁷ Edensor, "National Identity and Politics of Memory."

⁷⁰⁸ "Demonstrators" - Black, *London: A History*; 339, Lewis, *London: The Autobiography*; 401; and Porter, *London: A Social History*; 412. "Anti-fascists" - Bloom, *Violent London*; 308, 309. "Protesters" - Bloom, *Violent London*; 311, 312; and German and Rees, *A People's History of London*; 199. "Opposing Crowds" - Tames, *Political London*; 147. "Rioting" - Bloom, *Violent London*; 313.

⁷⁰⁹ Sam Wright, *Crowds and Riots: A Study in Social Organisation* (London: SAGE, 1978).

⁷¹⁰ Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan, "Introduction: Writing Worlds," in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, ed. Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (London: Routledge, 1992): 1–17.

Blackshirts were prevented from marching through the East End, was a signal victory for a broad anti-fascist alliance.”⁷¹¹ Neither author explains exactly what stopped the Blackshirts, removing the protesters, and their tactics, from their narrative of events. This could be part of a sanitising process, glossing over the occasionally violent tactics of the demonstrators to make the Battle more palatable. Gary Alan Fine argues that this is a common tactic in the process of repositioning negative or controversial reputations.⁷¹² Removing the controversial elements from a demonstration increases the potential number of people it might appeal to, which increases its chances of being remembered.

One factor that must be taken into account when thinking about texts is the positionality of their author; in other words how the social and cultural positions and experiences of a person impact how they think and feel, and the arguments they make.⁷¹³ For example, David Rosenberg’s book focuses on the Jewish community in the East End, so it is logical that he would focus on the experiences of Jewish people in his writing about the Battle of Cable Street.⁷¹⁴ Robert Skidelsky is what D.S. Lewis describes as a Mosley “apologist;” in other words he attempts to justify Mosley’s actions and redeem his reputation.⁷¹⁵ This is bound to impact the way in which Skidelsky represents Mosley in his biography of this contentious figure.⁷¹⁶ One of Cable Street’s most notable absences could also be explained by positionality. David Ascoli’s *The Queen’s Peace* is a detailed historical account of the Metropolitan Police between its foundation in 1829 and 1979.⁷¹⁷ However, whilst the BUF is mentioned, the Battle of Cable Street is not. Arguably this is a glaring absence in an otherwise

⁷¹¹ Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*; 397; White, *London in the Twentieth Century*; 127.

⁷¹² Gary Alan Fine, *Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept and Controversial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁷¹³ Geraldine Pratt, ‘Positionality,’ in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory et al., (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009): 556–7.

⁷¹⁴ Rosenberg, *Battle for the East End*.

⁷¹⁵ D.S. Lewis, *Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism and British Society 1931–81* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); 98.

⁷¹⁶ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London: Macmillan, 1975).

⁷¹⁷ David Ascoli, *The Queen’s Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police 1829–1979* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979).

comprehensive account, which could be explained by Ascoli's positionality. It is clear from the book that Ascoli holds conservative views and is supportive of the attempts of the Metropolitan Police to control the streets of London, so it is likely that he would disapprove of the actions of the anti-fascists on 4 October 1936. However, there is a big difference between disapproving of the Battle and supporting fascism, and Ascoli may have left it out to avoid discussing complex issues such as free speech. These examples demonstrate how the political, social and cultural position of an author influences the text they produce, which in turn influences the perceptions of the audience.

Taken literally, 'The Battle of Cable Street' is about as inaccurate as it is possible for a name to be. The protest on 4 October 1936 was not a military battle, and Cable Street was not the only location involved. Nevertheless, this is the name that has come to reside in collective memory, and, as such, it is part of the 'myth' of Cable Street. In the next section, I shall discuss how the Battle has been commemorated, in order to delve further into the myth of the Battle of Cable Street.

6.5 The Battle of Cable Street Remembered

Since 1936, the Battle of Cable Street has been remembered, commemorated, and represented in a variety of different ways. Tony Kushner has traced how the Battle has been remembered and represented in popular culture up until the late 1990s.⁷¹⁸ Largely ignored by all except the Communist Party and radical Jewish groups initially, Kushner argues that three factors conspired to bring the Battle back to prominence in the late 1960s:

1. The rise of another large fascist, racist organisation, the National Front. Anti-fascist groups used the Battle of Cable

⁷¹⁸ Kushner, "“Long May its Memory Live!”"

Street as an example to prove that fascism could be defeated on Britain's streets.

2. The growth in interest and support for local history. It encouraged the study of everyday experiences and groups normally marginalised by professional historians.
3. The growth of British multiculturalism, as opposed to assimilation, on a national and local level.⁷¹⁹

During the 1970s and '80s, the Battle became associated with contemporary anti-fascist campaigns. For example, in 1975, the anti-fascist journal *Searchlight* was relaunched. The new cover and editorial made explicit links to the Battle. During the first run of *Searchlight* in the 1960s, the Battle was not referenced or mentioned; at that point, it was not considered an event that could be made strategic use of.⁷²⁰

It was also during this period that the first committees and groups were set up with the primary purpose of commemorating 4 October 1936.⁷²¹ The idea for a mural commemorating the Battle also emerged in the mid-1970s. In 1978, the Tower Hamlets Arts Committee commissioned the artist David Binnington to carry out the project on the side of St. George's Town Hall in Cable Street.⁷²² It was estimated that it would cost £30,000, and be finished by 4 October 1980.⁷²³ The planned completion date of the mural proved too ambitious, and due to a combination of logistical problems and vandalism that effectively destroyed the bottom two-thirds of the mural by daubing it with fascist slogans, Binnington resigned from the project in June 1982.⁷²⁴ He was replaced by Des Rochford, Ray Walker, and Paul Butler, and the mural was eventually

⁷¹⁹ Kushner, "“Long May its Memory Live!”"

⁷²⁰ Kushner, "“Long May its Memory Live!”"

⁷²¹ Kushner, "“Long May its Memory Live!”"

⁷²² See Appendix 2 for a history of St. George's Town Hall.

⁷²³ Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archive [hereafter THLHLA] S/THA/2/8/1 Tower Hamlets Arts Committee Documents Relating to the Cable Street Mural.

⁷²⁴ THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Tower Hamlets Arts Committee Documents Relating to the Cable Street Mural.

completed in March 1983 (see Table 2 for details of the mural’s history).⁷²⁵ From that point onwards, the mural became an established part of anniversary celebrations, which have become a regular occurrence. In conjunction with the seventy-fifth anniversary, the mural was restored by Paul Butler, and it remains a popular site of pilgrimage for anti-fascists. Its survival has not always been assured however. The mural has been vandalised several times since 1982, and in 1989 plans for the renovation of St. George’s Town Hall included a disabled entrance through the mural.⁷²⁶ The plans were dropped, and the mural remains a focus of the commemoration and memorialisation of the Battle of Cable Street.

Table 2: The history of the Cable Street Mural.

Date	Event
24 th April 1974	The area around St. George’s Town Hall is declared an outstanding conservation area by the Secretary of State.
1976/1977	The idea for a mural commemorating the Battle first emerges.
1978	Tower Hamlets Arts Committee commissions David Binnington to carry out the project.
March 1978	The BBC express an interest in making a documentary about the mural, including every stage of the production process.
30 th April 1978	Large anti-racism rally in Victoria Park.
May 1978	The Public Art Workshop estimates that the cost of the mural will be £30,000, and will be completed by the 4 th October 1980.

⁷²⁵ THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Tower Hamlets Arts Committee Documents Relating to the Cable Street Mural.

⁷²⁶ THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Tower Hamlets Arts Committee Documents Relating to the Cable Street Mural.

18 th October 1978	Public meeting for local residents to give feedback on the mural designs.
Autumn 1979	Work on the mural itself begins.
1979/80	The upper part of the mural began to be painted.
Late 1981	The project stalls because of design and other problems.
23 May 1982	The partially complete mural is vandalised, using a type of paint that made it very difficult to repair.
June 1982	The Arts and Recreation Committee of the GLC grants the Cable Street Mural Project £3000 to fund the murals' predella (an information board along the base of the mural 3x70 ft). Predella "sets the historical and political context of the main image." ⁷²⁷
June 1982	David Binnington resigns from the project.
17 th /18 th July 1982	Volunteers are organised to help scrub the graffiti off the mural.
February 1983	The plans for the predella are abandoned.
March 1983	Mural is completed.
7 th May 1983	Mural was officially opened by Paul Beasley, the leader of Tower Hamlets Council.
October 1986	50 th anniversary celebrations include a march from Aldgate to the mural.
January 1990	The mural risks partial destruction to make way for a disabled entrance to St. George's Town Hall. The plan is stopped.
June 1993	The mural was vandalised with paint bombs. Tower Hamlets Council and the Cable Street Group paid £19,000 for repairs. Both groups commit to repair

⁷²⁷ THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Tower Hamlets Arts Committee Documents Relating to the Cable Street Mural.

	the mural whenever it is damaged. Paul Butler carried out the repairs, despite intimidation from far-right activists (poured paint on his car and slashed his tyres).
October 1996	60 th anniversary sees another march to the mural, this time starting in Altab Ali Park on the Whitechapel Road.
October 2006	70 th anniversary.
Summer 2011	The mural was restored by Paul Butler in conjunction with 75 th anniversary celebrations.
October 2016	80 th anniversary.

The commemoration of the anniversary of the Battle became “ritualised” in the late 1970s because of the mural.⁷²⁸ In 1978, the Cable Street Mural Project organised a reunion on the Battle’s forty-second anniversary. The event was designed to both publicise the planned mural and record the memories of participants.⁷²⁹ It was the first time that an anniversary of the Battle had been publicly marked. A similar event was held the following year; since then events have been held regularly (see Figure 17). The Cable Street Group was formed after the fiftieth anniversary events with the aim of recording and preserving *all* the history of the street, but their focus has since remained on the Battle.⁷³⁰ Since the fiftieth anniversary in 1986, the commemorative events have followed the same formula. The central element is a march which ends at the Cable Street mural, whilst other events, such as plays and exhibitions, run alongside.⁷³¹ The marches are performative, with participants enacting a protest march whose primary purpose is commemorative, not political. For Foote and Azaryahu, celebrating the anniversary of an event links

⁷²⁸ Kushner, ““Long May its Memory Live!;”” 160.

⁷²⁹ Kushner, ““Long May its Memory Live!””

⁷³⁰ Kushner, ““Long May its Memory Live!;”” Roger Mills, *Everything Happens in Cable Street* (Nottingham: Five Leaves 2011).

⁷³¹ Kushner, ““Long May its Memory Live!.””

memories to the regularity of the calendar, maintaining the prominence of the event in collective memory.⁷³² The fiftieth anniversary of the Battle fell on Jewish New Year. In recognition of the fact that the clash meant Jewish people would not be able to participate in the anniversary celebrations, a Tower Hamlets Environment Trust plaque commemorating the Battle was unveiled later in the year (See Figure 18). The Tower Hamlets Environment Trust was a development trust and charity that ran a number of community development projects in the area, as well installing several plaques commemorating local history.⁷³³

⁷³² Foote and Azaryahu, "Toward a Geography of Memory."

⁷³³ Aaron Barbour, "Obituary: The Environment Trust (1979–2008)" *Community Links*, last modified December 2, 2008, accessed January 27, 2017. <http://www.community-links.org/linksuk/?p=108>; Open Plaques, "Tower Hamlets Environment Trust," no date, accessed January 27, 2017. http://openplaques.org/organisations/tower_hamlets_environment_trust.



Figure 17: Marchers and placards in front of the Cable Street mural at the eightieth anniversary celebrations of the Battle on 10th October 2016. Source: Photo by author, 2016.



Figure 18: This plaque, on the corner of Dock Street and Cable Street towards the eastern end of Cable Street, was installed in 1984. Source: Photo by author, 2015.

The mural, the plaque, and the commemorative events are all part of the way in which the myth of the Battle of Cable Street is constructed and maintained. I shall now conduct a visual analysis of two different forms of the mural in order to consider how the myth is constructed through representations of the event.

6.5.1 Capturing Chaos: The Cable Street Mural

This section will use a critical visual methodology to analyse two incarnations of the Cable Street Mural. The first is a drawing of the Cable Street mural when it was in its planning stages and the second is the completed mural (see Figures 19 and 20). Each image has been subjected to compositional analysis in order to evaluate how they represented the event. This form of analysis involves considering the content, colour, spatial organisation, and perspective of an image in order to draw conclusions about the expressive content, or the general 'feel' and impressions that an image conveys. It is a subjective methodology, but it does allow a form of systematic analysis.⁷³⁴ Although representations cannot control how the audience interprets something, they do influence it, and the content is a crucial part of that influence, which is why the details of an image merit in-depth analysis.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁴ Rose, Gillian. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: SAGE, 2001.

⁷³⁵ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.



Figure 19: A print of the Cable Street Mural sketch design, which was sold to raise money for the project. Source: Jewish Museum London, image reproduced with permission.



Figure 20: The completed mural in Cable Street. Source: David Hoffman, "Cable Street Mural," David Hoffman Photo Library, last modified July 2011, accessed June 5, 2015, <https://hoffman.photoshelter.com/gallery/Cable-Street-mural/G0000K7LMWd2q7MM>. © David Hoffman.

6.5.1.1 Cable Street Mural Sketch Design

As previously mentioned, the Cable Street mural is located on the side of St George's Town Hall in Cable Street. The project was initiated by the Tower Hamlets Arts Project in 1976, and the artists David Binnington and Desmond Rochfort were chosen to carry out the work.⁷³⁶ Binnington conducted extensive research into the Battle, and included much of what he discovered in the design for the mural.⁷³⁷ The print in Figure 19 is one of many that were sold to raise money for the project, showing a sketch by Binnington of his plans for the mural. It is somewhat different from the

⁷³⁶ Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁷³⁷ Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

final version of the mural, so is worthy of study as an independent representation of the Battle of Cable Street.

The content of the sketch includes Cable Street and the buildings that constitute it, police and police horses, protesters, barricades, the overturned lorry, flags and banners, journalists, Sir Philip Game and Oswald Mosley. In terms of colour, the sketch employs a wide range of hues, but it is dominated by browns. There is a relatively high level of saturation, producing vivid colours which are also quite bright. Binnington used colours that are relatively harmonious, and there is nothing about the colours used that makes any particular element of the image stand out. Spatial organisation is also important to the expressive content of an image. In the case of Binnington's sketch, almost no space is left empty, apart from some areas of cobblestone in the foreground which allows injured protesters to be seen lying on the floor. The rest of the space is completely filled with people, horses, objects, and buildings. Due to the fisheye perspective used, the buildings on either side of Cable Street dominate the top third of the picture. Almost every window has a person in it, either watching events unfold, or participating by emptying their chamber pot onto, or throwing something at, the police.

The lines in the image are dynamic and chaotic and go in almost every possible direction, so almost every area is connected to at least one other. The only isolated section is that which depicts Oswald Mosley and Philip Game, the Chief of Police, telling Mosley that the BUF will have to alter their route. They are isolated both by the umbrellas they hold up to protect themselves from the missiles from above, and by their location in the mural. The bottom right corner of the wall of St. George's Town Hall protrudes from the rest of the building, and Mosley and Game are isolated by Binnington's use of this protrusion. As previously mentioned, the image employs a fisheye perspective, which gives the impression that three-dimensional space has been projected onto the surface of a sphere. This perspective causes the buildings to arch towards each other at the top of the image. The vanishing point, which is where parallel lines would

converge if drawn onto the image towards the horizon, is towards the left-hand side of the image, about halfway up. It draws the eye towards a particularly triumphant-looking demonstrator standing on top of a barricade who has just launched a handful of papers into the air. In the foreground, the viewer's eye is level with the action, but it seems to fall as the action moves up, as if the viewer were standing at the bottom of a steep hill. This has the effect of making the barricades appear to tower over the viewer.

It is all very well to analyse these factors in isolation, but they all act in tandem to produce the effect of the image. All of these elements contribute to make up the expressive content, or the general impression that the image makes on the viewer.⁷³⁸ In this case of this sketch, the impression is one of chaos, action, conflict, and energy. The image appears full of movement, with defiant demonstrators, desperate policemen, and panicked police horses. The fish eye perspective and the number of people, animals, and objects creates a sense of a crowded and confined environment, a reminder of the large number of people present. The crowds were packed so tightly that a protester was pushed through a plate glass window in Aldgate by the weight of other people.⁷³⁹ The sketch creates a sense of this overcrowded environment. In addition, people in the sketch are drawn quite roughly; most only have basic facial features, if they have any at all. This gives the impression of the crowd as a single entity, rather than a collection of individuals.

In his analysis on political wall murals in Northern Ireland, Bill Rolston argues that having a pool of recognisable symbols to draw upon makes it much easier for the artist to convey an emotive message.⁷⁴⁰ There is no shortage of symbolism in the sketch of the Cable Street mural. Flags, shop signs, and even a pair of shoes in the foreground ensure that the

⁷³⁸ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

⁷³⁹ IWM 10210, recorded interview with Sherwood Philip Piratin.

⁷⁴⁰ Rolston, "Politics, Painting, and Popular Culture."

colour red, a well-known symbol of radicalism, is represented.⁷⁴¹ Oswald Mosley is carrying a swastika under his left arm, ensuring his fascism is recognisable. Symbolism can also be subtle; there are two overturned vehicles in the sketch, both of which have the letters 'OHM' on their number plates. The Ohm is a unit of resistance in a circuit, and Binnington may have made the decision to include it in the sketch for this reason. There is no way of knowing for certain if Binnington did intend the number plates to be a subtle nod to dissent, but it can be read that way.

6.5.1.2 Cable Street Mural

Once plans for the mural were complete, the design was projected onto the wall and drawn on.⁷⁴² The work made good progress until the mural was vandalised in 1980, when "British Nationalism not Communism — Rights for Whites — Stop the Race War" was daubed across the mural in six-foot-high letters, ruining the bottom two-thirds and causing Binnington to resign from the project.⁷⁴³ He was replaced by the artist Paul Walker, who changed the design before finally completing the mural in 1983.⁷⁴⁴ The mural continued to be targeted by vandals, and in the mid-1990s it was covered in a special varnish which made it easier to repair any further attempts to deface the image.⁷⁴⁵

The content of the mural is much the same as Binnington's sketched plan, with the addition of a police autogyro in the top right, an early form of helicopter which was used during the Battle for surveillance. Individual people are bigger and more detailed in the mural than in the sketch, and clear facial features make them look more like individuals. In terms of colour, the hue is dominated by reds and blues rather than browns, and the colours are vivid and bright. There are also similarities and

⁷⁴¹ Jennifer Harris, "The Red Cap of Liberty: A Study of Dress Worn by French Revolutionary Partisans 1789–94," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14, no. 3 (1981): 283–312.

⁷⁴² Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁷⁴³ Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁷⁴⁴ Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

⁷⁴⁵ Cable Street Group, *Battle of Cable Street 1936*.

differences within the spatial organisation of the two images. There is even less empty space in the mural than in the sketch, it is impossible to see the ground through the seething mass of people and animals. Nothing is isolated from the main action, even the protrusion in the bottom right corner of the wall is not used as a boundary. The lines in the image are short and chaotic, leading the eye abruptly from one detail to the next, but not in any particular order. Walker kept the fisheye perspective, but only in the top portion of the image, the part not damaged by the first episode of vandalism. The vanishing point and the sloping eye line are the same as the sketch. The symbolism is also similar; although the swastika is smaller, the radical symbols are more explicit, and the vehicles' number plates are not visible.

Many elements of the finished mural are similar to the sketch by David Binnington, but the overall impression it gives is quite different, not least because the mural is much bigger than the sketch, and is painted on a vertical surface, so towers above the viewer. The two images are also viewed in very different settings—the sketch in various situations, most of which are assumedly indoors, and the mural in a public street—which will affect how they are interpreted.⁷⁴⁶ However, in terms of the compositional analysis, the general impression given by the mural is similar to that of the sketch, but more extreme. There is a sense of chaotic, energetic action and conflict, but it feels more immediate in the mural than it does in the sketch. This is arguably because of the lack of empty space at the bottom of the picture and the larger scale of the image. Standing in front of the mural, it feels as though you could almost step forward into the action.

As this compositional analysis demonstrates, even small details of a representation of a protest contribute to an overall impression of the protest, which encourages the viewer to interpret it in a particular way. How the audience interprets the representation is significant, however,

⁷⁴⁶ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*; Johnson, "Cast in Stone."

and there are no guarantees that everybody will interpret in the same way, or in the way in which the producer of the representation intended.⁷⁴⁷

Denis Cosgrove summarises up the variability of texts thus; “Texts escape their authors, control the inscriptions of later writers and are open to the interpretative discourse of their readers.”⁷⁴⁸ Nevertheless, representations of the Battle of Cable Street such as the mural, the plaque, and commemorative events combine with other factors such as the name to construct a particular narrative, or a myth, of what happened on 4 October 1936. In the next section, I shall explore the various ways in which that myth has been used, both by local communities and activists.

6.6 Using the Myth of Cable Street: Inspiration and Identity

So far in this chapter I have looked at various factors that have contributed to the development of the myth of Cable Street. I will now turn to look at how activists and local communities use this myth in a variety of ways. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, the Battle is important to those engaged in radical left-wing politics. Activists feel a connection between their actions and those of the protesters in 1936: the activist quoted at the beginning of this chapter described “a sense that our protest against modern day fascists followed in the tradition of the Battle of Cable Street and that we were therefore part of something much bigger.”⁷⁴⁹ The Battle has been used by the left-wing as a source of encouragement and motivation:

If you are lucky, there are moments in your life that are especially and uniquely illuminated. They stand out from the rest of your life as bright icons, huge representative

⁷⁴⁷ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

⁷⁴⁸ Denis Cosgrove, “A Terrain of Metaphor: Cultural Geography 1988–9,” *Progress in Human Geography* 13, no. 4 (1989): 566–75; 568.

⁷⁴⁹ Anonymous, personal correspondence, 10 May 2015.

symbols, which give meaning to how you have lived. This is why we purify such moments, polish them and, in our heads, play them over again and again. Cable Street was one of those moments for the left in the 1930s. We gave it a mythological and heroic dimension. Because we are short of such out and out victories, we badly needed those dynamic images.⁷⁵⁰

Activists and campaigners look to these mythologised “dynamic images” for hope and inspiration in their own activism. When the National Front, another large racist organisation with fascist elements started to gain in popularity, the Battle of Cable Street was held up as an example proving that fascism could be defeated.⁷⁵¹ In a 1978 grant application for the mural, it was argued that it would be “a powerful reminder of the dangers of racism in Britain and an inspiration to those who today oppose the modern counterparts of Mosley’s British Union of Fascists.”⁷⁵² These are all examples of something common amongst social movements; telling stories about, and highlighting similarities with, historic political struggles. This “situates contemporary political struggles as part of ongoing engagement with spatially stretched and unequally constituted power relations.”⁷⁵³ By connecting themselves and their campaigns with the Battle, activists feel part of something bigger than themselves.

It is not just the memory of the Battle of Cable Street that is valued by the left, the space itself is important too. Protest stickers produced by groups such as the London Anti-Fascist Network and Dywizjon 161 can be found on Cable Street (see Figures 21–3). The sticker in Figure 21 makes use of the ‘¡No Pasaran!’ slogan from the protest. The one featured in

⁷⁵⁰ Rosen, “A Necessary Myth,” 29.

⁷⁵¹ Kushner, “Long May its Memory Live!”

⁷⁵² THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Documents relating to the Cable Street Mural. The Cable Street Mural Project Grant Application 1978–9.

⁷⁵³ David Featherstone, “Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: Or Why the Geographies of Past Struggles Matter for Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation,” *Antipode* 37, no. 2 (2005): 250–71.

Figure 22 proclaims the area to be an “Anti-fascist Zone,’ possibly in the style of more common Neighbourhood Watch signs. The sticker in Figure 23 makes a direct connection between the Battle of Cable Street and modern anti-fascist campaigns, another example of activists situating themselves within histories of radicalism. The stickers suggest a sense of ownership, or a feeling of connection with the space. This interpretation is supported by the work of Orla Vigsø, who argues that stickers act as a form of “tribal demarcation,” a method of signalling the presence of the group that produced them.⁷⁵⁴ In this way, modern anti-fascist groups are claiming Cable Street as their space, or their territory, because of its role as the location of the Battle of Cable Street. To use Nora’s terminology, the street has become a *lieu des mémoire* in the literal sense: a site which left-wing activists use to preserve the memory of their perceived great victory.⁷⁵⁵ Activists use Cable Street to focus their efforts and comfort themselves during times of difficulty, which is valuable in terms of increasing the likelihood of a successful campaign.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁴ Orla Vigsø, “Extremist Stickers: Epideictic Rhetoric, Political Marketing, and Tribal Demarcation,” *Journal of Visual Literacy* 29, no. 1 (2010): 28–46; 43.

⁷⁵⁵ Nora, ‘Between Memory and History.’”

⁷⁵⁶ Clough, “Emotions at the Centre of Radical Politics.”



Figure 21: A faded protest sticker photographed on Cable Street in February 2015. Source: Photo by author, 2015.



Figure 22: A protest sticker photographed on Cable Street in February 2015, declaring the area to be an anti-fascist zone. Source: Photo by author, 2015.



Figure 23: A protest sticker photographed on Cable Street in October 2016. It is making a connection between the Battle of Cable Street and modern anti-fascist campaigns, a common tactic of social movements. Source: Photo by author, 2016.

The Battle has also influenced activists in a more practical sense. Activists and protesters often adopt tactics used in past protest if they prove successful or become symbolic, it is one way through which repertoires of protest develop and grow. There are two elements from the Battle of Cable Street that were incorporated into repertoires of protest. The first is the protest's slogan, ¡No Pasaran!, taken from the Republicans fighting the Spanish Civil War. As illustrated by the protest sticker in Figure 21 and the placard in Figure 17, the phrase has become part of the lexicon of anti-fascist groups in London. The second element that was incorporated into local repertoires of protest is more complex. The barricade was first seen on the streets of Paris in 1588, and it has since become a powerful symbol of radical protest.⁷⁵⁷ The technique of blocking streets with furniture, paving stones, and other miscellaneous objects spread across Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, but the Battle of Cable Street is the first time that it was used in London.⁷⁵⁸ It was not the last time though: barricades were used to combat another BUF march through Bermondsey, south London, on 3 October 1937; and they were used again to prevent evictions during the St. Pancras Rent Strike in 1960.⁷⁵⁹ Whilst it is difficult to prove that barricades were used at these later protests *because* they were used during the Battle of Cable Street, their repeated use does suggest that the barricade had become part of repertoires of protest in London. These two examples demonstrate how historic protests like the Battle of Cable Street have a practical influence on protests that occur after them, as well as a symbolic one.

The Battle of Cable Street also plays a role in the construction of local identities. The Battle became part of the way in which people living in the East End of London defined themselves as East Enders. Joyce Goodman, who was just 12 years old when she took part in the protest,

⁷⁵⁷ Eric Hazan, *A History of the Barricade*. Trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2015).

⁷⁵⁸ Hazan, *A History of the Barricade*.

⁷⁵⁹ Dave Burn, *Rent Strike: St Pancras 1960* (London: Pluto, 1972); David Rosenberg, *Rebel Footprints: A Guide to Uncovering London's Radical History* (London: Pluto, 2015).

describes what happened when you met someone else from the East End in the years after Cable Street:

Now, a few years later I met Charlie [Goodman, Joyce's future husband], and one of the first questions he asked me, was "Where were you on October 4th?" and everyone laughs at that because it's not a very romantic thing to say but, this is what East Enders asked each other in those days, "Where were you on October 4th?" and I said I was at Gardiners and he said "I was there too."⁷⁶⁰

This quote demonstrates how the Battle of Cable Street became a part of how local identity was defined. Significant events and people are one of the key elements used in the construction and maintenance of national identities.⁷⁶¹ However, scholars have overlooked how myths about events influence community identities on other scales. Joyce's comments are evidence of a similar process occurring on a local scale. The Battle of Cable Street became part of the geographical imaginary of the East End, contributing to the perception of the Eastern section of London being dangerous and rebellious.⁷⁶² Within a few years, the Battle of Cable Street had become part of what it meant to be an East Ender for many people.

For some, the Battle remains a key part of how local identity is defined. In 2015, there was controversy about the opening of a museum dedicated to Jack the Ripper at 12 Cable Street. Many local residents felt misled, as the original planning application had claimed the museum would be dedicated to the social history of women in East London. However, the objections went further than that. One woman, described by the *East*

⁷⁶⁰ IWM, 16613 Mrs J. Goodman.

⁷⁶¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]). See also Johnson "Cast in Stone," and Edensor "National Identity and the Politics of Memory."

⁷⁶² Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End*.

London Advertiser as a “community campaigner,” was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the following:

“I feel offended by this museum of the macabre,” community campaigner Jemima Broadbridge told the *East London Advertiser*. “The sign outside suggested it would be a gruesome attraction. “But Cable Street had nothing to do with Jack the Ripper—that was in Whitechapel, not here. It’s misleading to tourists.” Cable Street has “a glorious history about resisting Mosley’s fascists in 1936,” Jemima points out. They don’t want that “muddled up by Ripper mythology.”⁷⁶³

Jemima is concerned that the new museum will pollute the local association with the Battle of Cable Street with something more sinister. For Jemima, Cable Street is still defined primarily by what happened there in October 1936, and it is important to her that that definition does not change. Jack the Ripper is not coherent with her imaginative space of Cable Street. This case is another example of the difficulty of controlling myths and collective memories. No matter how hard the Cable Street Group, Tower Hamlets Council, and other groups try, the myth of Cable Street will continue to shift and change. The *lieu de mémoire* of Cable Street continues to be subject to “an endless recycling of [its] meaning.”⁷⁶⁴

This process of identity construction is not uncontested however, and not everyone relates to the Battle of Cable Street in the same way. In a letter to the *East London Advertiser* in 1978, Carolyn Merion of the East London History Society expressed her concern about the proposed mural:

⁷⁶³ Mike Brooke, “Museum in Cable St about Women and Suffragettes turns out to be ‘Jack the Ripper’,” *Docklands and East London Advertiser*, July 28, 2015, accessed September 29, 2015, http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/heritage/museum_in_cable_st_about_women_and_suffragettes_turns_out_to_be_jack_the_ripper_1_4172863.

⁷⁶⁴ Nora, ‘Between Memory and History;’ 19.

The promoters [of the mural] sincerely believe that we need to be reminded forever and a day of the threat of fascist violence and the capability of the East End community to repel it. Maybe we do. But do we need a reminder in the form of a large picture of violence being perpetually re-enacted? Portrayals of violence have a way of turning sour and creating different effects from those intended.⁷⁶⁵

Merion was not necessarily disagreeing with the need to commemorate the Battle, although she does not sound convinced of the idea. She is objecting to the manner in which the anti-fascist struggle in the 1930s is being commemorated. Memorials are not faithful representations of events; they are deliberately designed to encourage events to be remembered in particular ways.⁷⁶⁶ The artists involved in the mural made deliberate decisions about what to include and what to leave out, and as Merion's letter demonstrates, these decisions were not universally popular. This is another example of Cable Street as a *lieu de mémoire*, constantly being reinterpreted and contested.

This section has considered the ways in which two different, but potentially overlapping, groups use the myth of the Battle of Cable Street: left-wing activists and the local community. Activists use the myth to situate their own campaigns in a historic tradition of activism, which helps to legitimise their campaign and provides them with inspiration and morale. Members of the local community use the Battle to reinforce a particular geographical imaginary of the East End. Although some elements of the imaginative East End have proved resilient, the East End itself, and the people that live there, is continually changing, and this is reflected in the commemoration of the Battle of Cable Street. In the next section, I shall look at how the myth of Cable Street has changed.

⁷⁶⁵ Carolyn Merion "'Violent' Painting Brush Off," *East London Advertiser* August 11, 1978.

⁷⁶⁶ Johnson, "Cast in Stone."

6.7 The Changing Myth of Cable Street

As the decades have passed and the demographics of the East End have changed, the myth of Cable Street has also shifted. Foote and Azaryahu point out that the original meaning of memorials can be altered, particularly in times of political upheaval, but in this case the change is largely due to the changing community in Tower Hamlets.⁷⁶⁷ “The East End of London...has been receiving wave after wave of new immigrants for centuries,” and this did not stop in the 1930s.⁷⁶⁸ The Battle of Cable Street was partially caused by the tensions surrounding the arrival of a large number of Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe and Russia. Since then, migrants into the East End have largely come from ex-British colonies, particularly Bangladesh, and more recently African countries like Somalia. There is now a thriving Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets, although like the earlier Jewish community, they too have faced discrimination and racism.

For artist David Binnington, it was just as important that the mural reflect the contemporary local community as it did the historic event:

Whilst [the mural] will be a clear and unequivocal anti-fascist mural and possibly a memorial to those who fought the “Battle of Cable Street” the basic human content of the mural lies elsewhere. My aim is to make this mural a portrait of the neighbourhood and in the coming winter months I shall be collecting a series of portraits of local people. People living in the immediate vicinity to the mural site, people who have helped or even hindered the project and people who played a part in the “Battle of Cable Street.”⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁷ Foote and Azaryahu, “Toward a Geography of Memory.”

⁷⁶⁸ Geoff Dench, Kate Gavron and Michael Young, *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict* (London: Young Foundation, 2006); 8.

⁷⁶⁹ THLHLA S/THA/2/4 Documents relating to the Basement Project. The Basement Community Workshop Grant Application 1981–2; 24

The portraits were included in the mural, the faces of the local community in the early 1980s taking on the role of participants in the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. The mural was the first time that black and Asian people were included in a representation of the Battle.⁷⁷⁰ John Urry has argued that the past is always viewed through the concerns and the priorities of the present, and Binnington's perspective is an example of this.⁷⁷¹ In all likelihood there were black and Asian individuals present on 4 October 1936, so their inclusion in the mural was not 'inaccurate,' but it does demonstrate a concern for the present as well as the past. Memorials reflect the period in which they were created as well as the period that they commemorate.

As a result of this tendency to view the past through the context of the present, the Cable Street mural, and the collective memory of the Battle of Cable Street, became tied up in new concerns. When it was featured in the popular oral history documentary series *Yesterday's Witness* in 1970, the Battle was linked to contemporary struggles against racism.⁷⁷² The local government saw the mural as a part of their strategy to tackle racism in the borough. In March 1978, Paul Beasley, leader of the Tower Hamlets Council, said that "[a]s part of the ongoing provision for murals, and the need to continue our anti-racist standard, a mural is being prepared depicting the battle of Cable Street on the side of St. George's Town Hall in Cable Street."⁷⁷³ This is another example of the way in which memorials connect the past to the present. Anti-racism was not the only, or even the most significant, motivation behind the plans to stop the BUF marching through the East End, but it was prioritised in the mural because it was one of the biggest issues facing Tower Hamlets when the

⁷⁷⁰ Kushner, "Long May its Memory Live!"

⁷⁷¹ John Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past," *The Sociological Review* 43, no. 1 (1995): 45–65.

⁷⁷² Kushner, "Long May its Memory Live!"

⁷⁷³ THLHLA S/THA/2/8/1 Documents relating to the Cable Street Mural. Letter to the Leader of the Greater London Council, 20/03/1978.

mural was being planned and produced. The myth of Cable Street was used to support a particular cause, and as a result the myth itself was also influenced, due to the mural's role in (re)producing the myth.

Anti-racism is not the only cause for which the memory of the Battle has been co-opted. In 2010 a campaign to stop a 'Fried and Fabulous' fast food outlet being opened next to a local secondary school near Cable Street was dubbed the "Takeaway Battle of Cable St." by the *East London Advertiser*.⁷⁷⁴ It is difficult to find a link between this episode and the events of 4 October 1936, apart from the fact that they are both contentious. This is an example of a trend Tony Kushner identifies of the Battle becoming "usable past for an ever-increasing range of contemporary issues, such as pensioners' rights and the abuse of prisoners and minorities in Turkey."⁷⁷⁵ The Battle has become a symbol of resistance of all kinds, in some cases stripped of all its context. This example supports Nuala Johnson's argument that memorials can act as a focus for collective participation in politics.⁷⁷⁶ The myth of the Battle of Cable Street, and by extension the Cable Street mural and anniversary events, became a lightning-rod for a whole range of causes, some of which have very little to do with the Battle itself. The myth of Cable Street facilitates a collective engagement with politics.

The anniversary celebrations of the Battle also reflect the changing nature and concerns of the local community. After the first reunion in 1978 on the forty-second anniversary of the Battle, commemorating the major anniversaries has become a well-established practice. On 4 May 1978 Altab Ali, a 25-year-old Bangladeshi garment worker, was murdered on his way home from work in a racially motivated attack near Brick Lane. In 1989 the nearby St. Mary's Gardens on Whitechapel Road was renamed Altab Ali

⁷⁷⁴ Mike Brooke, "Takeaway Battle of Cable St' goes to Ombudsman," *East London Advertiser*, 14 June, 2010, accessed 5 November 2015, http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/takeaway_battle_of_cable_st_goes_to_ombudsman_1_672328.

⁷⁷⁵ Kushner, "Long May its Memory Live!;" 164

⁷⁷⁶ Johnson, "Cast in Stone."

Park in his memory.⁷⁷⁷ In 1996, the sixtieth anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street was commemorated with a march from Altab Ali Park to the Cable Street mural. Since then, all the anniversary marches started at the park. The fiftieth anniversary celebrations had also included a march to the mural, but it had started at Aldgate. The commemorative events changed to reflect the changing priorities, and the recent history, of the local community.

In addition, the anniversaries also highlight the co-constitutive relationship between memorials and space. The importance of space to memorials has already been discussed; the location of a memorial contributes to its meaning and significance.⁷⁷⁸ However, it is also important to consider how memorials influence space. The Cable Street mural's prominence in the anniversary celebrations has strengthened the connection between the events of 4 October 1936 and Cable Street. As time has progressed, the anniversary events have come to neglect Aldgate altogether, further reducing its significance in the mythologised Battle of Cable Street. Foote and Azaryahu argue that the location of an event can be used to create a sense of authenticity for memorials.⁷⁷⁹ However in this case, Cable Street was not the only location involved in the Battle of Cable Street. The sense of authenticity provided by the mural being located there is misleading. In this way, the mural is reinforcing the myth that inspired its creation, and influencing the way both Cable Street and Aldgate are perceived. It is contributing to the sense of place associated with both spaces.

Almost nothing remains fixed, and although memorials are often constructed with the intention of fixing the meaning and interpretation of the past, they rarely achieve that goal. The Cable Street mural, the anniversary events that revolve around it, and the myth of the Battle of

⁷⁷⁷ "Altab Ali Park," *London Gardens Online*, last modified June 1, 2010, accessed November 4, 2015, <http://www.londongardensonline.org.uk/gardens-online-record.asp?ID=THM004>.

⁷⁷⁸ Foote and Azaryahu, "Toward a Geography of Memory;" Johnson, "Cast in Stone."

⁷⁷⁹ Foote and Azaryahu, "Towards a Geography of Memory."

Cable Street that both influenced, and is influenced by, the mural, have been constantly subjected to fresh interpretations.

6.8 Conclusions

The Battle of Cable Street is arguably the best-known protest in London's history. It has been represented many times in multiple formats, is memorialised by a mural and a plaque, and is commemorated with frequent anniversary celebrations. As such, it is an ideal case study for considering the relationships protests have with the spaces and places in which they occurred *after* the event has taken place. Collective memory and commemoration are both complex processes, imbued with power relations. What is remembered and the way it is remembered is decided through the interaction and negotiation of numerous actors with differing levels of power; there is a politics to it. Through this politics, the events of 4 October 1936 have been mythologised to the extent that there are inaccuracies in the popular narrative. I have argued that it is just as fruitful, if not more so, to research how that myth is (re)constructed and used, than it is to establish the accuracy of the myth.

The name 'Battle of Cable Street' influences the myth, encouraging neglect of the other locations involved and helping to ensure the Battle is not associated with other, more controversial terms such as 'riot.' Cable Street itself has become a *lieu de mémoire*; a site of memory which is integral to the myth of the Battle of Cable Street. Thinking about Cable Street as a *lieu de mémoire* allows an appreciation of how Cable Street as a place both shapes and is shaped by the memory of the Battle. The location of a large mural and a plaque commemorating the protest, as well as the focus of commemorative marches on anniversaries of the Battle, the street has become the geographical core of the myth. The chaotic and energetic impression conveyed by the mural helps the myth maintain a sense of vitality.

Activists, protesters, and local communities have employed the myth in a variety of ways since 1936. For left-wing and anti-fascist activists, the myth is a source of inspiration and hope; an example of the political left triumphing over the extreme right on the streets of London. Cable Street as a *lieu de mémoire* comes into play here, as London anti-fascist groups feel a sense of ownership over the street, expressed through protest stickers. The site is used by modern-day activists to interact with London's radical past. The Battle has also provided practical inspiration to activists, by influencing repertoires of protest. Local communities have used the Battle in the construction of their collective identity, although the process is contested. The East End has changed dramatically since 1936, and so too have the ways that the myth of the Battle has been used. Since the 1980s, the narrative of events has been co-opted to serve an increasing range of causes, from anti-racism to pensioners' rights.

The myth of Cable Street will continue to change, and eventually it may even fade from popular memory. For now, it demonstrates the power that protests can have to influence the city long after the last debris has been swept away. Through the processes of representation and commemoration, protests can continue to interact with the spaces and places in which they occurred in both tangible and intangible ways.

So far, I have looked at the relationship between space, place, and protest from three different angles. In the following chapter, I shall draw the three angles together through one case study, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations.

7

The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations: Evolving Repertoires of Protest

The destruction at Millbank on 10 November 2010 changed the shape of extra-Parliamentary politics. Here were young people who had taken their fight to the centre of power, who had shown no fear of authority and who had wrong-footed the police and, for a short moment, who had rekindled the energy of political struggle. It was in that respect defining.⁷⁸⁰

As the above quote demonstrates, the student tuition fee demonstrations in November and December 2010 took Britain by surprise with their ferocity and innovation. Students, and young people more generally, are considered by many to be apathetic and politically disengaged, so few expected a strong reaction to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government's proposals to cut funding for universities and increase the cap on annual tuition fees from £3,225 to £9,000.⁷⁸¹ Nevertheless, the British student population responded with "perhaps its most sustained, coordinated and widespread acts of protest for a generation."⁷⁸²

In the last three chapters, I have used one case study to look at each of the key themes of this thesis: organisation and communication,

⁷⁸⁰ Clive Bloom, *Riot City: Protest and Rebellion in the Capital* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); 18.

⁷⁸¹ Rowan Rheingans and Robert Hollands, "'There is no Alternative?': Challenging Dominant Understandings of Youth Politics in Late Modernity Through a Case Study of the 2010 UK Student Occupation Movement," *Journal of Youth Studies* 16, no. 4 (2013): 546–64.

⁷⁸² Alexander Hensby, "Networks, Counter-Networks and Political Socialisation: Paths and Barriers to High-cost/risk Activism in the 2010/2011 Student Protests against Fees and Cuts," *Contemporary Social Science* 9, no. 1 (2014): 92–105.

public space, and memory and commemoration. In this chapter, I shall bring all three themes together in the context of one case study: the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. The objective of this comparative exercise is to consider how repertoires of protest respond to, and are shaped by, the specific geographies of protest events. London has changed dramatically in the 230 years since the Gordon Riots, and so to have the protests that take place within the city. In this chapter I shall evaluate the impact of changes such as increasingly sophisticated communication technologies, developing legal and policing systems, and a changing popular memory of historic protest, as well as highlighting the continuities. There have been many changes to repertoires of protest in London since 1780, but much has also remained unaltered.

The rest of the chapter is divided into four substantive sections. The first details the causes and events of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. The second section considers methods of communication and organisation during the protests, with a focus on the social media platform Twitter. Comparisons will be drawn between the methods of communication and organisation used by protesters in 2010 and in 1780. The third section will turn to the ongoing struggle for access to public space in London, the legal framework of which has been clarified since the Hyde Park Railings Affair. Both protesters and the authorities used a combination of new and old techniques in the conflict over who controls, and who can access, public space. The fourth and final section looks at the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations' place in the popular memory of protest. The protests have not had the opportunity to attain the same commemorative resonance as the Battle of Cable Street, but observers of the protests used their collective memory of historic protests, riots, and events to justify, criticise, and make sense of what happened in late 2010. Before embarking on this analysis, however, I will discuss the context and key events of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations.

7.1 A Winter of Discontent: The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations

The 2010 Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations encompassed four protest events that took place in central London during November and December, in response to the coalition government's increase in the cap on tuition fees, and other related cuts to further and higher education. After the first demonstration on 10 November 2010, students occupied university buildings around the country, some occupations lasting for many weeks. It has been argued that these demonstrations and occupations were the trigger for the more concerted and organised anti-austerity movement that has, in recent years, been campaigning against government funding cuts across multiple arenas.⁷⁸³

Since the global financial crisis in 2008, the British government has been active in pursuing an austerity agenda, a policy that has included cutting funding to public services and local councils. In May 2010, a general election resulted in a coalition government comprised of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. In their election manifesto, the Liberal Democrats pledged to “scrap unfair university tuition fees so everyone has the chance to get a degree, regardless of their parents' income,” a promise that, when reneged on, generated significant anger towards the party and their leader, Nick Clegg.⁷⁸⁴ The changes to the funding of higher and further education were first proposed in an independent review entitled *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance*, colloquially known as the Browne Review after Lord John Browne, the Chairman of the review panel. The review was commissioned in November 2009, and published its

⁷⁸³ Nina Power, “Dangerous Subjects: UK Students and the Criminalization of Protest,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 2 (2012): 412–20.

⁷⁸⁴ Liberal Democrats, *Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010* (London: Chris Fox, 2010), accessed March 22, 2016, http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ge10/man/parties/libdem_manifesto_2010.pdf; 33.

findings in October 2010.⁷⁸⁵ The coalition government accepted most of the review's recommendations, and on 3 November David Willets, the Minister of State for Universities and Science, announced the following planned changes in a speech to the House of Commons:

- A rise in the cap on annual university tuition fees from £3,225 to £6,000–9,000.
- A rise in the annual earnings at which a student would start to pay back their student loan from £15,000 to £21,000.
- A requirement that universities that plan to charge more than £6,000 per annum make concrete efforts to widen participation, through mechanisms such as scholarships and outreach.
- An extension of the student loan system to part-time students.⁷⁸⁶

As well as raising students' tuition fees, the government also planned to cut the annual higher education budget from £7.1 billion to £4.2 billion, and scrap the Educational Maintenance Allowance, a weekly payment made to students enrolled in further education from low-income backgrounds to help them manage the costs of their education.⁷⁸⁷

Opposition to the Browne Review began to build long before its conclusions were published. For example, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), a "network of student and education worker activists," was formed after a convention at University College London in February 2010, eight months before the findings of the Browne Review

⁷⁸⁵ For a summary of the findings and recommendations of the Browne Review, see Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, last modified October 12, 2010, accessed March 22, 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf.

⁷⁸⁶ David Willets, "Statement on Higher Education Funding and Student Finance," *Gov.uk Announcements*, last modified November 3, 2010, accessed March 22, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-on-higher-education-funding-and-student-finance--2>.

⁷⁸⁷ Joseph Ibrahim, "The New Toll on Higher Education and the UK Student Revolts of 2010–2011," *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 4 (2011): 415–21.

were published.⁷⁸⁸ The first major protest event took place in central London on 10 November, and was organised by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the University and College Union (UCU). Called *Demo-lition*, its slogan was “Fund Our Future: Stop Education Cuts.”⁷⁸⁹ Around 50,000 people attended “a remarkable event, unanticipated both in its scale and its radicalism.”⁷⁹⁰ Feeder marches from around London met in Whitehall, then marched past the Houses of Parliament to a rally on Millbank (see Figure 24). Towards the end of the march, a group of between 1,500 and 2,000 demonstrators deviated from the official route and went to the Conservative Party campaign headquarters at 30 Millbank. The windows were smashed and the building occupied by around 200 protesters. This event has come to be widely known as ‘Millbank,’ and caused a divide within the student movement, with moderates, including the NUS, condemning what happened, and others supporting it. Aaron Porter, then President of the NUS, described events as “despicable,” whilst Sacha Ismail, an activist from the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, argued that the Millbank protesters should be “saluted, not condemned.”⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ “What is the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts?” *National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts*, no date, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://anticuts.com/what-is-the-national-campaign-against-fees-and-cuts/>.

⁷⁸⁹ “Homepage,” *Demo-lition*, no date, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.demo2010.org>.

⁷⁹⁰ Hensby, “Networks, Counter-Networks and Political Socialisation,” 93.

⁷⁹¹ NUS News, “NUS Condemns Violent Actions of ‘Rogue Protestors’ for Undermining the Message of 50,000,” last modified November 10, 2010, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-condemns-violent-actions-of-rogue-protestors-for-undermining-the-message-of-50000/>; Sacha Ismail, “The ‘Violent of a Minority’? We Should Celebrate the Millbank Protesters!” *Worker’s Liberty*, last modified November 11, 2010, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/11/11/violence-minority-we-should-celebrate-millbank-protesters>.

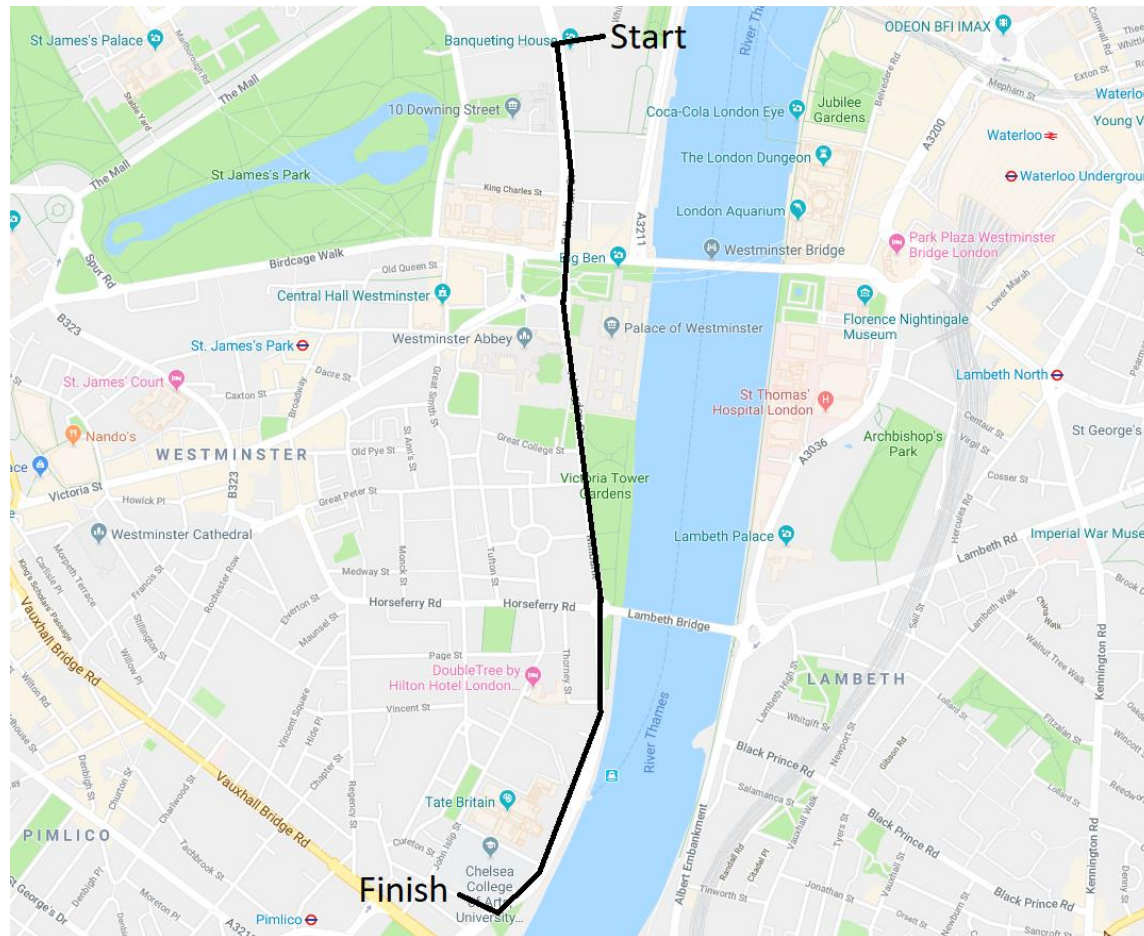


Figure 24: The route of Demo:Lition on 10 November 2010. Source: Map data: Google, 2018, with alterations by the author.

The second demonstration was organised by the NCAFC on 24 November. Events took place throughout the country, but in London around 10,000 protesters gathered in Trafalgar Square with the intention of marching to Parliament.⁷⁹² Many of the protesters were kettled by the Metropolitan Police—a containment practice whereby demonstrators are surrounded by police and not permitted to leave for several hours, often being denied access to food, water, and toilets. An empty police van was vandalised, notwithstanding the efforts of a group of schoolgirls to protect it.⁷⁹³ Some argued that the van was left there deliberately to entice vandalism and violence, providing an excuse for heavy-handed policing.⁷⁹⁴

The third demonstration, on 30 November, was also organised by the NCAFC. It was smaller, but it is difficult to estimate numbers because the protesters were so dispersed. Demonstrators formed small, mobile groups in an attempt to avoid being kettled. They roved around the city with no concrete aim, scattering at the sight of police. The fourth major London protest took place on 9 December: the day that MPs narrowly voted to raise the cap on annual university tuition fees.⁷⁹⁵ Two separate demonstrations took place on that day, illustrating the deep divides within the student movement. 40,000 demonstrators were expected, but it again proved difficult to estimate actual numbers.⁷⁹⁶ The NUS organised a candlelit vigil on Victoria Embankment near to the Houses of Parliament, whilst the University of London Union (ULU) and the NCAFC organised a

⁷⁹² Mirror.co.uk, “Student Protests: Police Van Damaged in London Tuition Fees Demonstration,” last modified November 24, 2010, accessed March 24, 2016. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/student-protests-police-van-damaged-264773>.

⁷⁹³ Johnathan Jones, “Student Protests: The Riot Girls,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 25, 2010, accessed March 24, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/25/student-protests-tuition-fees-schoolgirls-defiance>.

⁷⁹⁴ Jones, “Student Protests;” Power, “Dangerous Subjects.”

⁷⁹⁵ 323 MPs voted for the motion, 302 voted against it. “Votes and Proceedings: Thursday 9 December 2010,” *House of Commons*, last modified December 9, 2010, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmvote/vp101209.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁶ Peter Walker and Jonathan Paige, “Student Protests: As They Happened” *The Guardian*, last modified December 9, 2010, accessed May 26, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/blog/2010/dec/09/student-protests-live-coverage?INTCMP=SRCH>

rally in Parliament Square (see Figure 25).⁷⁹⁷ Police tactics were forceful, and protesters again roamed the streets of London in small groups to avoid being kettled. One such group came across Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, caught in traffic in Regent Street (see Figure 25). The group targeted the vehicle, cracking the windows and throwing paint on it in an episode that garnered significant attention from the media.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁷ Bart Cammaerts, "The Mediation of Insurrectionary Symbolic Damage: The 2010 U.K. Student Protests," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18, no. 4 (2013) 525–48.

⁷⁹⁸ Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt, "Prince Charles and Camilla Caught up in London Violence after Student Fees Vote," *The Guardian*, last modified December 10, 2010, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/dec/09/charles-camilla-car-attacked-fees-protest>.

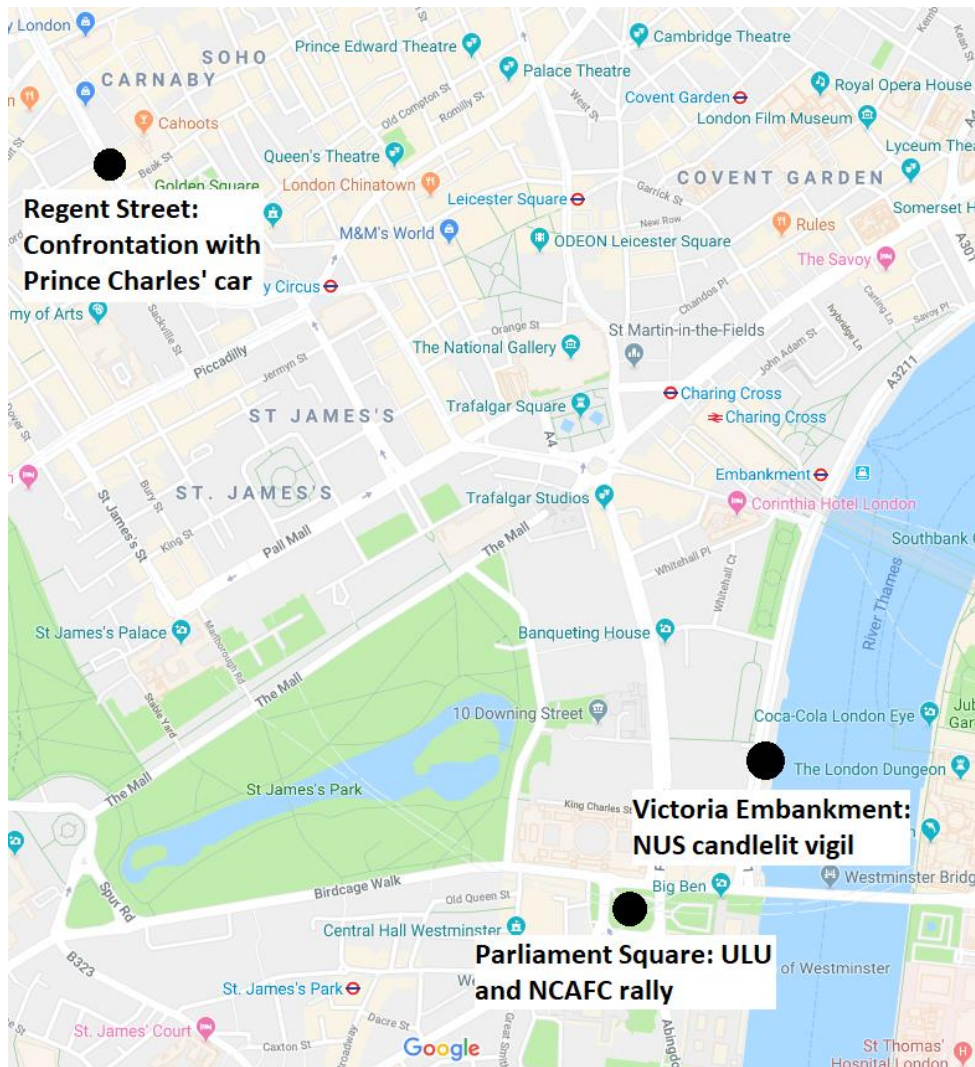


Figure 25: A map of central London showing the locations of the protest events that took place on 9 December 2010. Source: Map data: Google, 2018, with alterations by the author.

The events of these four days in late 2010 were part of a concerted, but ultimately unsuccessful, campaign to prevent the government making significant changes to the way further and higher education was funded in England. In addition to these demonstrations, there were protests around the country, including almost forty occupations of university buildings, twelve of which were in London.⁷⁹⁹ The Student Tuition Fee

⁷⁹⁹ The London occupations were: University College London (UCL), the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Goldsmiths, King's College London (KCL), the London School of Economics (LSE), London Metropolitan, the University of East London, Birkbeck, Camberwell College of Arts (University of Arts London), London Southbank University, Slade College of Fine Arts (part of UCL) and Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL).

Demonstrations were arguably one of the most concerted social movements London, and indeed Britain, had seen in several decades. As such, it is important to understand their significance in the tradition of protest in London. The demonstrations share many similarities with the three previous case studies in this thesis, but there are also significant differences. In what follows, I shall evaluate these similarities and differences, to consider how protest in London has changed over the last two and a half centuries. First, I turn to the way in which the protesters in 2010 communicated and organised, comparing it to the Gordon Riots.

7.2 Communication and Organisation during the Student Tuition Fee Protests

There have been significant changes in the cultures of social movements, the repertoires of protest, and technologies of communication in the two centuries since the Gordon Riots. Partially because of these changes, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations in 2010 unfolded quite differently to the Gordon Riots.⁸⁰⁰ In what follows, I consider how the demonstrations were organised, and how the various actors communicated, using the analysis from previous chapters to draw comparisons and make arguments about communication and organisation in the context of protest.

7.2.1 Communication

7.2.1.1 Modern Communication Technologies

Communication within and between the organisers, demonstrators, and authorities took a variety of forms, some of which were also used at the other protests studied in this thesis, others not. The biggest changes are due to developments in communication technology, which have enabled increasingly fast and cheap communication between protesters. The impact of various forms of communication technology on protest can be

⁸⁰⁰ The two events are also different because they had different socio-political contexts, involved different actors, and had different causes, amongst other factors.

traced throughout history; for example, Roscigno and Danaher make a persuasive argument for the importance of radio in the development of collective identity and perceptions of political opportunity amongst workers in textile mills in the southern United States between 1929 and 1934.⁸⁰¹

In the case of the student protests, the newest forms of communication technology were the internet and mobile phones (some of which were internet-enabled). There has been a significant amount of research on the impact of the internet on social movements.⁸⁰² Internet-based forms of communication, such as social media and websites, sometimes known in academic literature as computer-mediated communication, were used differently at different stages of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. I am going to use the phrase modern communication technologies instead of computer-mediated communication, as mobile phones were also an important method of communication for the protesters.

Websites and social media were used in advance of the protests to promote and publicise them, but their use was less common during the protests themselves. In a study of the blogs and websites run by the various occupations during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, Theocharis found that the websites were used for three purposes:

⁸⁰¹ Vincent J. Roscigno and William F. Danaher, "Media and Mobilization: The Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929 to 1934," *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 1 (2001): 21–48.

⁸⁰² See for example Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Kevin Gillan, "The UK Anti-War Movement Online: Use and Limitations of Internet Technologies for Community Activism," *Information, Communication, and Society* 12, no. 1 (2009): 25–43; Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, "New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging," *New Media and Society* 6, no. 1 (2004): 87–95; Axel Maireder and Christian Schwarzenegger, "A Movement of Connected Individuals: Social Media in the Austrian Student Protests 2009," *Information, Communication, and Society* 15, no. 2 (2012): 171–95; Jeroen van Laer and Perter van Aelst, "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires: Opportunities and Limitations," *Information, Communication, and Society* 13, no. 8 (2010): 1146–71.

information, interaction, and mobilisation.⁸⁰³ The websites were used to encourage attendance at 'offline' protest events by providing information about the events, and ways of getting in touch for more information.⁸⁰⁴ Both the Demo-lition and NCAFC websites were used in this way to mobilise participants for the national demonstrations (see Figure 26).⁸⁰⁵

Stop the tuition fee increase! Join the march on parliament 9 December

December 7, 2010 By Admin 8 Comments



This Thursday, 9 December, tens of thousands will come to London to march on parliament as the tuition fee increase is being discussed and voted on. School, college and university students will be joined by supporters from across the country to take a simple message to the government: "no to fees, save EMA". This protest will be massive – make sure you come along and join NCAFC and other student campaign groups in our opposition to the cuts agenda of the Condem cabinet.

The protest will be starting from University London Union (ULU) on Malet street, gathering at 12 and setting off shortly afterwards. Bring whistles, coats, food and gloves!

If you cannot come to London then organise protests in your local area. Go to town halls, target tax dodging shops on the high street (Vodafone, Topshop) and shut them down for the day.

Join the facebook group <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=136567579732280>

Filed Under: [Events](#) Tagged With: [9 December](#), [day of action](#), [Events](#), [fees](#), [free education](#), [protest](#), [protests](#)

Figure 26: A post on the NCAFC providing details about the demonstration on 9 December
Source: National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, "Stop the Tuition Fee Increase! Join the March on Parliament 9 December" last modified December 7, 2010, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://anticuts.com/2010/12/07/join-the-march-on-parliament-9-december/>.
Reproduced courtesy of NCAFC.

⁸⁰³ Yannis Theocharis, "The Contribution of Websites and Blogs to the Students' Protest Communication Tactics During the 2010 UK University Occupations," *Information, Communication, and Society* 16, no. 9 (2013): 1477–513.

⁸⁰⁴ Theocharis, "The Contribution of Websites and Blogs." See also Dan Mercea, "Digital Prefigurative Participation: The Entwinement of Online Communication and Offline Participation in Protest Events," *New Media and Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 153–69.

⁸⁰⁵ www.demo2010.org; anticuts.com.

During the protests themselves, a different combination of modern technologies was used by the protesters to communicate between themselves and with people not present; and by people not present to communicate with the protesters and each other about what was going on. Many of the protesters used mobile phones for non-internet based forms of communication, such as texting and making phone calls. Phone calls were somewhat impractical, however, as the background noise of a demonstration can make conducting a phone call difficult.⁸⁰⁶ Texting was used more frequently, as illustrated by the following quote from an individual who was present at the demonstration on 10 November 2010:

Q: Did you know what was happening in other places during the course of the protest?

A: I knew what was happening where the speeches were, whilst I was still going down [Whitehall]. Yeah, I knew what was going on where the speeches were to a certain extent.

Q: How did you know?

A: Because my friend was texting me.⁸⁰⁷

Texting was a quick and effective method of transmitting information during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. Mobile users have developed a new phonetic language for texting in order to save characters, which has the secondary effect of allowing messages to be typed quickly.⁸⁰⁸ The ability to send a message quickly is helpful in the fast-paced and chaotic environment of a protest. The mobile phone has enabled protesters to communicate with each other across large distances. It is an example of how communication technology, as it gets progressively

⁸⁰⁶ Interview no. 9, recorded September 21, 2011.

⁸⁰⁷ Interview no. 3, recorded September 4, 2011. Also Interview no. 2, recorded August 11, 2011; Interview no. 4, recorded September 4, 2011; Interview no. 7, recorded September 14, 2011.

⁸⁰⁸ Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernández-Ardèvol, Jack Linchuan Qiu and Araba Sey, *Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007).

cheaper, easy to use, and smaller, is increasingly enabling protesters to communicate and stay informed as they move around large and chaotic protest events. Modern communication technologies develop quickly and it is unlikely that texting would play such a prominent role in a modern protest; the number of texts sent began to decline in 2013, replaced by internet-based communication apps such as Whatsapp.⁸⁰⁹

Protesters also used their phones to engage with internet-based communication technologies. During the 2010 student demonstrations, Twitter was a key platform utilised for communication amongst, to, and about the protesters during the four main protest events. Twitter is a microblogging website that allows users to post updates of up to 140 characters. Launched in 2006, it had 105 million registered users in 2010.⁸¹⁰ It was used extensively over the period of the student protests, and is a key source of information regarding public opinion of the protests, as well as how the protesters communicated and organised. In order to get a better understanding of how Twitter was used as a modern communication technology during the student protests, an analysis was conducted of tweets published during the four main days of protest in London. During this research, almost 26,000 tweets published on 10, 24, and 30 November and 9 December 2010 were read and analysed.⁸¹¹ In what follows I will discuss the findings of the analysis by building on the ideas of Yannis Theocharis about how Twitter was used by the student occupations.

⁸⁰⁹ Matthew Higgs, "Texting is Bound to Decline but It Won't Die Out Just Yet," *The Conversation*, last modified January 15, 2014, accessed May 26, 2017. <http://theconversation.com/texting-is-bound-to-decline-but-it-wont-die-out-just-yet-22064>.

⁸¹⁰ Charles Arthur, "Twitter has 105m Registered Users, 600m Searches per day...and More Numbers from Chirp," *The Guardian*, last modified April 14, 2010, accessed February 6, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/blog/2010/apr/14/twitter-users-chirp-details>.

⁸¹¹ The breakdown by day is as follows: 10/11/10: 7,920; 24/11/10: 5,852; 30/11/10: 1,957; 09/12/10: 10,106.

A New Typology of Protest Tweets

In his analysis of the websites and Twitter accounts of more than thirty-five university occupations during the student tuition fee protests, Yannis Theocharis divides the tweets produced by the occupiers into two categories.⁸¹² He describes the first type as mobilising: i.e., tweets that attempt to inform and mobilise others. The second type is dynamic/demonstrational, which refers to tweeting carried out during demonstrations. These tweets “mainly included messages that were aimed at maintaining morale, urging the demonstrators to keep safe and disseminating crucial information from the field—such as police and troublemaker positions, trouble spots and areas where police implemented crowd control strategies.”⁸¹³ Whilst the focus of my analysis is different, tweets fitting Theocharis’ system can be identified. However, I would like to propose an expanded typology that is more appropriate in this circumstance.

There are several differences between the tweets collected by Theocharis and those analysed in this project. Theocharis monitored thirty-eight Twitter accounts created by student occupations for the time that the occupations were in existence. For this research, as many tweets as possible relating to the student protests that were published on the four days of major protest were collected. Relevant tweets were selected using hashtags and keywords, regardless of who tweeted them.⁸¹⁴ In effect, Theocharis limited his search by author, whilst for this project selection was limited by subject and time. These alternative parameters suggest a different typology consisting of five types of tweet: reaction, witness, information, mobilisation, and solidarity.

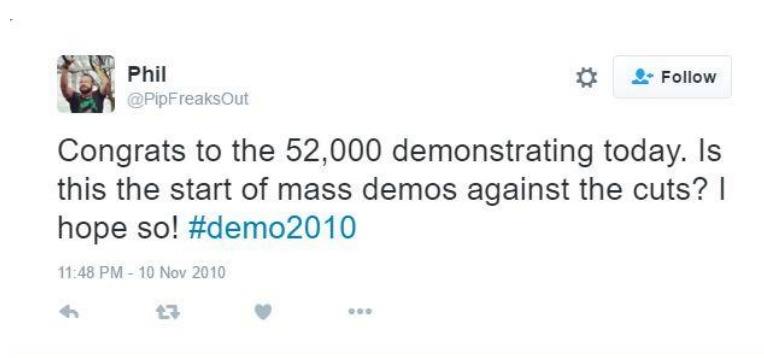
Reaction tweets were by far the most common type. These are tweets from those not present at, or involved in, the protests, voicing their

⁸¹² Yannis Theocharis, “Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation: How the Internet Shaped the Student Occupations,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2012): 162–94.

⁸¹³ Theocharis, “Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation;” 179.

⁸¹⁴ Hashtags, marked with a # symbol, identify a tweet with a particular topic. Twitter can be searched by Hashtag.

opinions on various elements of the protests (see Tweets 1 to 5). The topics include the proposed university funding changes, the protests themselves, the tactics of the protesters, the tactics of the police, whether or not the protests would be successful, and the media coverage of the protests. A wide range of opinions were expressed, both positive and negative, from mild to extreme.



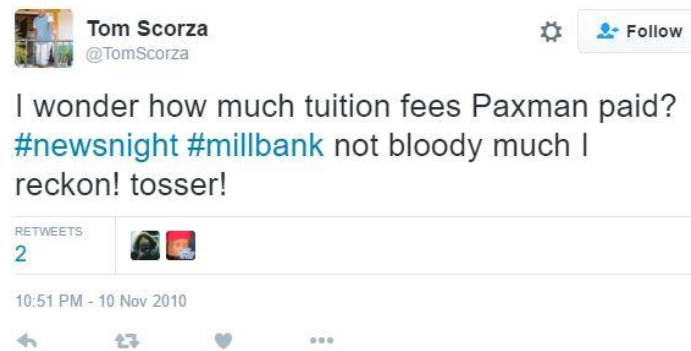
Tweet 1: Tweeted by PipFreaksOut at 11:48 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet congratulates protesters for what the author hopes is the start of a mass anti-austerity movement. It is an example of a reaction tweet, where the author expresses an opinion related to the protests.



Tweet 2: Tweeted by Taylor Robinson at 11:26 p.m. on 10 November 2010. Robinson is condemning the protesters' use of property damage.



Tweet 3: Tweeted by purpleline at 7:01 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author uses incendiary language in their condemnation of the protests.



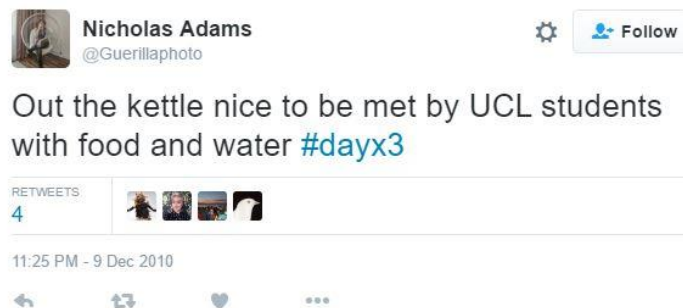
Tweet 4: Tweeted by Tom Scorza at 10:51 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is critical of journalist Jeremy Paxman's coverage of the protests, pointing out that Paxman would not have paid tuition fees to attend university.



Tweet 5: Tweeted by Mike Wooldridge at 7:20 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author thinks that the media was not reporting on the protests in a balanced way, focusing on the violence instead of the peaceful actions of the majority.

The second most common type of tweet was witness tweets; when protesters, journalists, or 'passers-by' tweeted about what they claimed to be seeing or experiencing at that moment (see Tweets, 6, 7, and 8). Under Theocharis' classification, these tweets would fall under the

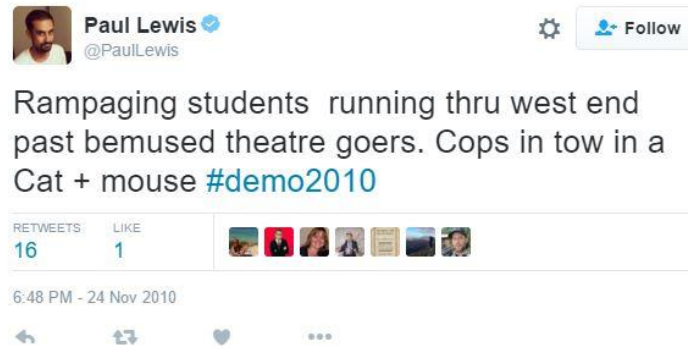
dynamic/demonstrational type. Some of the tweets appear to be attempting to warn others of trouble spots or the location of crowd-control measures, as Theocharis highlights, whereas others seem to simply be bearing witness to events.⁸¹⁵ In their study of YouTube videos of the Occupy movement, Kjerstin Thorson *et al.* found a similar witnessing process in the form of mobile phone footage of protests and demonstrations.⁸¹⁶ This kind of instantaneous update would have been impossible before internet-enabled phones, eyewitness accounts would have spread more slowly through mechanisms like print media and word-of-mouth. This type of tweet is useful for constructing a detailed narrative of what happened during the protests, although there is of course no guarantee as to their accuracy.



Tweet 6: Tweeted by Nicholas Adams at 11:53 p.m. on 9 December 2010. Witness tweets were the second most common type of tweets, in which authors described what was happening at that moment, or something that was happening to them.

⁸¹⁵ Theocharis, "Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation."

⁸¹⁶ Kjerstin Thorston et al., "YouTube, Twitter and the Occupy Movement: Connecting Content and Circulation Practices," *Information, Communication and Society* 16, no. 3 (2013): 421–51.



Tweet 7: Tweeted by Paul Lewis at 6:48 p.m. on 24 November 2010. Paul Lewis is a journalist who works for The Guardian. He attended several of the protests and documented them through Twitter.

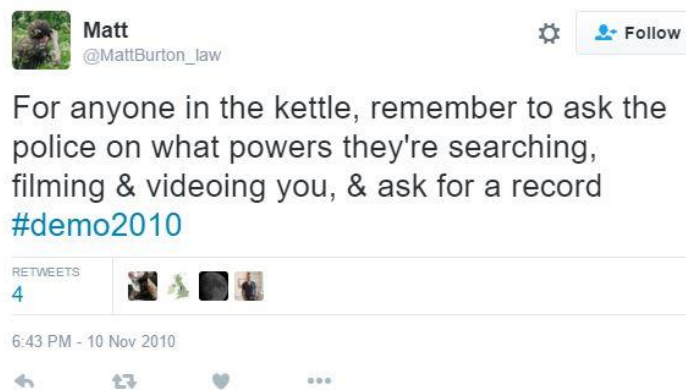


Tweet 8: Tweeted by SirenofBrixton at 4:02 p.m. on 10 November 2010. This employee in Millbank Tower seemed keen to combat narratives of violence and extreme behaviour.

The three other types of tweet identified here are much less common than the other two. Information tweets are those that provide protesters with information. Some of them come from the organisers of protests or the authorities, advising those present at the demonstration about the locations of rallying points or toilets and water supplies in a kettle (see Tweet 9). Other tweets come from individuals, not necessarily present at the demonstration, attempting to inform people about their legal rights, or perhaps warn them of an imminent kettle (see Tweets 10 and 11).



Tweet 9: Tweeted by the Metropolitan Police at 5:13 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The Metropolitan Police used social media to keep protesters in containment informed.



Tweet 10: Tweeted by Matt Burton at 6:43 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is advising those in containment of their rights.



Tweet 11: Tweeted by UK Uncut at 3:15 p.m. on 24 November 2010. This tweet is attempting to warn other protesters about imminent crowd control measures, although its description of the location is not very specific.

The fourth type of tweet, mobilisation, is used here in the same way as Theocharis, referring to tweets that contain details of future protest events in an attempt to encourage people to participate in them (see Tweet 12).⁸¹⁷ By tweeting during ongoing protest events, using common hashtags, organisers of future events can attempt to capitalise on the momentum built up by the current protest.



Tweet 12: Tweeted by userdeleted at 8:58 p.m. on 24 November 2010. It is advertising the next day of protest, called for the following week.

The final type of tweet, solidarity tweets, continue a long-standing protest tradition. Solidarity is an important part of social movements, activism, and campaigning; David Featherstone describes it as “a central practice of the political left.”⁸¹⁸ Featherstone defines solidarity as “a relation forged through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression.”⁸¹⁹ This ‘relation’ can take many forms, including public expressions of support, the exchange of ideas and expertise, and the donations of supplies and money. As with other aspects of protest, the role of the internet in fostering solidarity has been the subject of much debate in academia. Kevin Gillan and Jenny Pickerill argue that the internet is mainly used for sharing information and providing symbolic expressions of solidarity rather than more substantial forms of transnational action, an

⁸¹⁷ Theocharis, “Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation.”

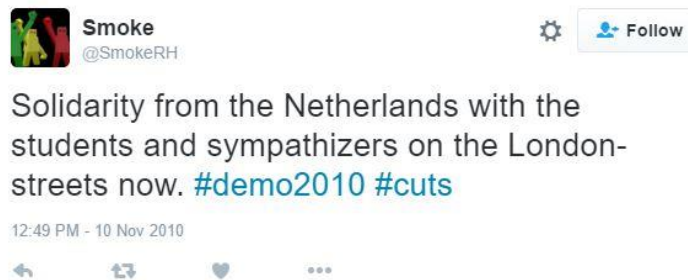
⁸¹⁸ David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*. (London: Zed Books, 2012); 5.

⁸¹⁹ Featherstone, *Solidarity*; 5.

argument which is supported by the evidence presented here.⁸²⁰ Solidarity tweets publicly express symbolic support, usually from a particular location or group (see Tweets 13 and 14). Tweet 13 is from a university occupation in Bern, Switzerland, part of a movement that started in Vienna in November 2009 and quickly spread to universities in Germany and Switzerland.⁸²¹



Tweet 13: Tweeted by unsereuni_bern at 6:40 p.m. on 10 November 2010. Symbolic gestures of support were sent to the protesters from across the world.



Tweet 14: Tweeted by SmokeRH at 12:49 p.m. on 10 November 2010. Another example of international solidarity.

As this typology demonstrates, Twitter serves multiple purposes during a large protest action. Reaction, witnessing, information, mobilising, and solidarity tweets were all published with different objectives and sometimes with different audiences in mind. As I have already mentioned, modern communication technology is developing quickly, and Twitter is

⁸²⁰ Kevin Gillan and Jenny Pickerill, "Transnational Anti-War Activism: Solidarity, Diversity and the Internet in Australia, Britain and the United States after 9/11," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 1 (2008): 59–78.

⁸²¹ Maireder and Schwarzenegger, "A Movement of Connected Individuals."

now facing competition from other internet-based communication and social media apps such as Whatsapp, Snapchat, and Instagram. If the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations took place in 2017, these other apps might also have played a role in how the protesters communicated. It is difficult to deny that modern communication technologies have had an impact on protest. However, scholars are cautious about claiming the internet is the 'perfect' tool for facilitating protest, with good reason. The next section will discuss some of the difficulties and disadvantages of modern communication technologies, through the lens of the student tuition fee protests.

On the Limits of Technology-mediated Protest

Academics are quick to point out the limitations of the internet as a tool for activists.⁸²² However, most scholars focus on the difficulties of using the internet for long-term organising and communicating. The tweets from the 2010 student protests highlight some of the difficulties of using the internet and other 'hi-tech' forms of communication, such as mobile phones, to communicate *during* protests, which do differ from the limitations which other scholars have discussed.

The first limitation to consider, which is relevant to all the ways that activists engage with modern communication technology, is what is known as the 'digital divide.' Access to the internet is not universal, and neither are the skills to use the internet confidently. Van Laer and van Aelst argue that if social movements rely too heavily on the internet they risk alienating some of the poorest sectors of society.⁸²³ In the UK in 2010, 30.1 million adults used the internet 'every day or nearly every day.'⁸²⁴ In 2016, this figure had gone up to 41.8 million adults, or 82% of the population,

⁸²² See, for example, van Laer and van Aelst, "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires."

⁸²³ van Laer and van Aelst, "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires."

⁸²⁴ Office for National Statistics, *Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access 2010*, last modified January 9, 2016, accessed May 26, 2017. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access---households-and-individuals/2010/index.html>.

demonstrating just how quickly modern communication technologies and their use can change.⁸²⁵ Just over half of Twitter users accessed the website using their phone in 2011, which indicates that many of the people who attended the 2010 demonstrations would not have accessed Twitter until they returned home.⁸²⁶ It is likely that only a minority of demonstrators had their experience of the protests augmented by computer-mediated communication. These statistics are also relevant to the tweets as an academic data source. Twitter's relative accessibility and the wealth of information it can provide make it a tempting data source for academics, but it is important to remember that not everyone uses the internet, and not all of those who do use Twitter. It would be difficult to find a source that is representative of the entirety of a population, but it is still important to bear in mind the limitations of the sources being used.

Even for those who could access the internet whilst on a demonstration, it was not a perfect medium for communication; neither was texting or making a phone call. Twitter users complained about numerous problems during the protests, including SMS messages not getting through, unreliable phone and internet signals, phone credit and batteries running out partway through the day, and tweets mysteriously not appearing on Twitter (see Tweets 15 and 16). These problems limited the effectiveness of the internet and mobile phones as tools of communication during a protest.

⁸²⁵ Office for National Statistics, *Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access—Households and Individuals, 2016*, last modified August 4, 2016, accessed May 26, 2017. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2016#toc>.

⁸²⁶ 55%, according to the CEO of Twitter at the time. This is higher than the percentage general internet users who surfed the internet on their mobiles, which was 31% in 2010. Cotton Delo, "Twitter now has 100 Million Active Monthly Users," *Advertising Age*, last modified September 8, 2010, accessed February 6, 2017, <http://adage.com/article/digital/twitter-100-million-active-monthly-users-ceo/229688/>; Office for National Statistics, *Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access 2010*.



Tweet 15: Tweeted by ar7w1n at 8:04 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is complaining about text messages not getting through.



Tweet 16: Tweeted by BrumBudgetCuts at 3:21 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author is complaining about problems with internet connection restricting the ability of protesters to communicate.

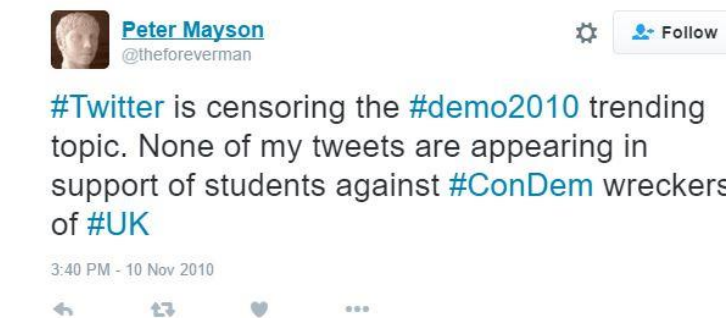
It may be that the connectivity problems being experienced by the protesters were the result of the network being overloaded by so many people trying to access the internet or use their phones at the same time or in the same place. However, some Twitter users suggested it was the result of the authorities, or even Twitter itself, attempting to suppress the demonstrators' ability to communicate (See Tweets 17 and 18). There were multiple accusations in November and December 2010 that Twitter was interfering with the proper running of its website, temporarily disabling accounts and suppressing the #demo2010 hashtag. Twitter strongly denied the claims, with a spokesperson for the company saying "We have not, and will not, do anything to stand in the way of people using Twitter for the open exchange of information. Period."⁸²⁷ Whether or not Twitter, or

⁸²⁷ Paul Lewis and Peter Walker, "Twitter 'Did Not Suppress Student Protesters' Accounts," *The Guardian*, last modified December 1, 2010, accessed June 1, 2016,

maybe the British government, did suppress certain online activities during the protest is perhaps less significant than the fact that it *is* possible. Authoritarian governments such as those in China and Iran tightly control internet access within their borders, censorship which can be intensified during times of civil unrest.⁸²⁸ Up until now, the British government has not chosen to use such extreme measures, but that does not guarantee that they never will. Modern protest, which relies so heavily on computer-mediated communication, particularly for organising events, remains vulnerable to suppression by national governments.



Tweet 17: Tweeted by sleepyfox at 3:54 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is suggesting that the phone signals were deliberately blocked.



Tweet 18: Tweeted by Peter Mayson at 3:40 p.m. on 10 November 2010. Some Twitter users suggested that Twitter was deliberately suppressing hashtags.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/dec/01/twitterstudentprotestersaccounts>

⁸²⁸ Ian Black, "How Iran is Filtering Out Dissent," *The Guardian*, last modified June 30, 2009, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2009/jun/30/internet-censorship-iran>; Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas, "The Internet and State Control in Authoritarian Regimes: China, Cuba, and the Counterrevolution," *First Monday* 6, no. 8 (2001) <http://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/876/785>.

Another way in which the authorities can exploit protesters' use of modern communication technologies is surveillance and evidence gathering. Authorities can see public information about what protesters plan to do next as easily as anyone else, and they can use surveillance techniques to track mobile phones and monitor mobile communications.⁸²⁹ They can also use videos and photos taken during the protest and posted publicly on platforms like YouTube and Twitter as evidence to identify and prosecute protesters.⁸³⁰ Some protesters can, and do, take precautions against such surveillance using a variety of tactics such as leaving their phones behind, removing their phones' batteries, and only using face-to-face communication, particularly when planning or carrying out illegal activities.⁸³¹ Similar advice was given to participants in the 2010 student protests after the first major demonstration on 10 November; protesters were told to cover their faces, not to take photographs, and not to talk about their activities on social media, as demonstrated by the leaflet in Figure 27. Although these tactics may prevent arrest or detainment, they also deny the protesters the benefits of modern communication technologies.

⁸²⁹ Christina Neumayer and Gitte Stald, "The Mobile Phone in Street Protest: Texting, Tweeting, Tracking and Tracing," *Mobile Media and Communication* 2, no. 2 (2014): 117–33.

⁸³⁰ Neumayer and Stald, "The Mobile Phone in Street Protest."

⁸³¹ Neumayer and Stald, "The Mobile Phone in Street Protest."

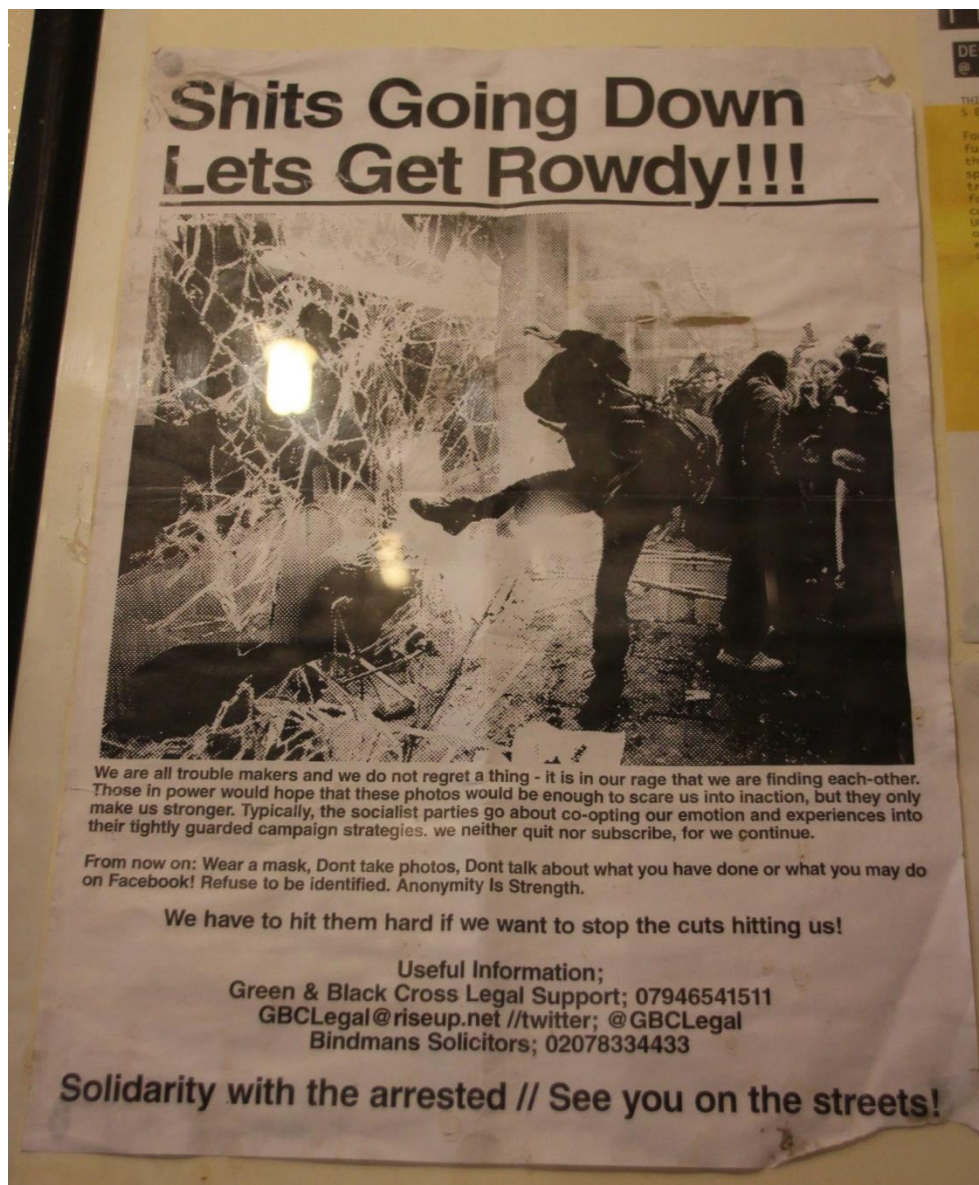


Figure 27: A leaflet collected during the student protests giving advice about how to avoid arrest or prosecution, and providing contact details in case of arrest. The advice relates to preventing evidence of one's actions becoming available on the internet. Source: Infoshop 56a, image reproduced with permission.

Another common problem which the 2010 student protests encountered was confusion over which hashtags to use. Hashtags allow Twitter users to identify tweets with particular topics or debates. Twitter can be searched by hashtag, and if a tweet is not marked with the 'right' hashtag it can be easily missed. In their study of the Austrian student protests in 2009, Axel Maireder and Christian Schwarzenegger argued that an inability to settle on one hashtag led to a proliferation of them, which

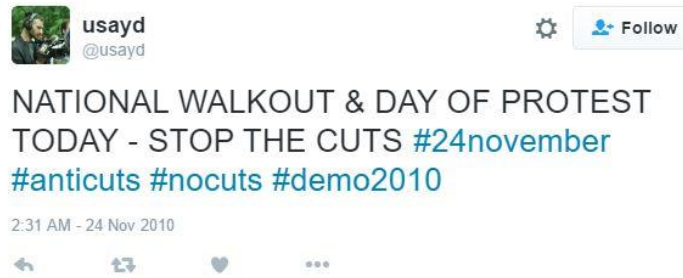
“made it more difficult for the users to follow the Twitter stream and shortened the space left for the actual messages.”⁸³² A similar process can be identified during the UK student protests in 2010. The ‘official’ hashtag of the demonstration organised on 10 November by the NUS and UCU was #demo2010. However, by the time of the fourth protest on 9 December, the number of hashtags associated with the protests had increased. #demo2010 was still in use, as was #fees, #dayX, and #dayX3, amongst others.⁸³³ This led to confusion over which was the best hashtag to use in order to connect with the discussion about the protests (see Tweet 19). It also shortened the number of characters available for the actual content of the tweet (see Tweet 20). This may seem insignificant, but when there are only 140 characters available to begin with, it is important to use them efficiently.



Tweet 19: Tweeted by Aidan Farrow at 11:40 a.m. on 24 November 2010. Confusion over the ‘correct’ hashtag can make it difficult to connect with other Twitter users who are discussing the same topic.

⁸³² Maireder and Schwarzenegger, “A Movement of Connected Individuals;” 187.

⁸³³ #dayX was first used on 24 November. 30 November was #dayX2, and 9 December was #dayX3. #dayX also remained in use throughout the following protests.



Tweet 20: Tweeted by usayd at 2:31 a.m. on 24 November 2010. Almost half the characters of this tweet are taken up with hashtags, restricting the number of characters available for what the user actually wanted to say.

Modern communication technologies such as Twitter are valuable toolsets for activists and protesters, but they are by no means perfect. Not everyone has access to the internet, and in 2010 only a third of internet users were accessing the internet on their phone.⁸³⁴ Some types of tweets identified above, particularly witnessing, information, and solidarity tweets, are most useful to protesters during the protest itself; for providing information and advice, and for boosting morale. Most protesters would not have had access to these tweets during the protests however, so would not have been able to benefit from them. Modern communication technologies are also vulnerable to interference or suppression from governments and police forces, although it is unlikely that this happened during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. Finally, and more specifically, a proliferation of Twitter hashtags can make it difficult to construct a coherent and unified discussion for protesters and observers to participate in. All of the methods of communication discussed so far would be entirely alien to the participants in the Gordon Riots. There are some that would be familiar, however, and it is to these that I turn next.

⁸³⁴ 31%, as stated above. Office for National Statistics, *Statistical Bulletin: Internet Access 2010*.

7.2.1.2 The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same
Modern communication technologies like mobile phones and the internet have presented activists with new opportunities, as well as new challenges. Some things have not changed, however, and many of the communication methods and processes found during the Gordon Riots can also be found operating during the 2010 demonstrations. In this section, several of these familiar processes will be discussed: word of mouth, rumours, and conspiracy theories.

One form of communication that student protesters used which the Gordon Rioters would be familiar with is word of mouth. News spread through the crowd by way of conversations and different groups overhearing each other. The following quotes from interviews with people who were present at the protest on 10 November 2010 illustrate this process:

it kind of spread “Oh, everyone’s smashing up Millbank”,
and we thought “What?!”⁸³⁵

it was just word of mouth, people were running around
saying like “this is happening and this is happening.”⁸³⁶

every now and again you’d just see someone shouting to
like, one of their friends or something, like “Oh there’s a riot
in Millbank,” and you’re like “right, ok,” so you kind of got a
sense of what was going on in other places, but it was sort
of like Chinese whispers.⁸³⁷

This ‘low-tech’ method of communication will have almost certainly been used at every protest in history, including the three others featured in this

⁸³⁵ Interview no. 1, recorded August 7, 2011.

⁸³⁶ Interview no. 1, recorded August 7, 2011.

⁸³⁷ Interview no. 2, recorded August 11, 2011. Also Interview no. 4, recorded September 4, 2011; Interview no. 8, recorded September 15, 2011.

thesis. It requires no equipment or resources, apart from the abilities to speak and hear, which, whilst not possessed by everyone, are almost universal. Rinke and Röder argue that oral communication was significant during the 2011 Arab Spring because of the cultural significance placed on oral forms of communication in the Arab world, but I would argue that oral communication is significant in multiple cultures, particularly when it comes to dissent.⁸³⁸ The quote above describes this process as “like Chinese whispers,” which highlights a key characteristic of word of mouth communication; it is liable to misinterpretation and miscommunication, it transforms as it travels. Simon Walker argues that rumours have a “quality of plasticity.”⁸³⁹ Walker contends that rumours circulating during the first decade of the fifteenth century that the deposed king Richard II was still alive “was less a static body of beliefs than a claim that was subject to constant, and sometimes competing, acts of appropriation and accommodation.”⁸⁴⁰ The rumour was altered to best suit the purpose it was being used for at different times. Information circulated through word of mouth is not immutable, it shifts and changes as it circulates. One form that these fluid entities can take is rumours.

Rumours were a common way in which information was transmitted during the Gordon Riots. Word-of-mouth was the fastest way for information to travel in the 1780s, and this information often took the form of rumours. During the 2010 Student Protests, rumours were transported through modern communication technology as well as by word-of-mouth. As always, some rumours were true, such as the one that Prince Charles had been caught up in rioting on 9 December (see Tweet 21). Others were not, such as the rumours that the police were using tear gas against protesters on the 10 and 24 of November (see Tweets 22 and

⁸³⁸ Eike M. Rinke and Maria Röder, “Media Ecologies, Communication Culture, and Temporal-Spatial Unfolding: Three Components in a Communication Model of the Egyptian Regime Change,” *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1273–85.

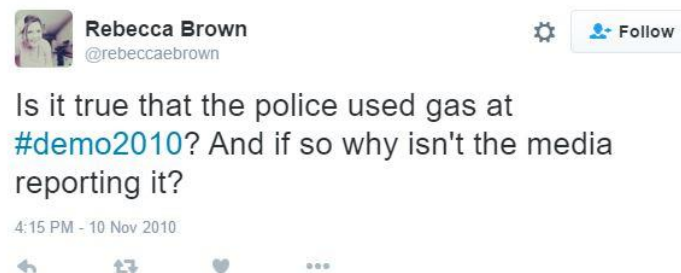
⁸³⁹ Simon Walker, “Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV,” *Past and Present* 166 (2000): 31–65; 63.

⁸⁴⁰ Walker, “Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV;” 63.

23), or the rumour that a police van abandoned amongst the protesters on the 24 November had been blown up (see Tweets 24 and 25). As already discussed in relation to the Gordon Riots, rumours serve another purpose beyond transmitting information. They are also a mechanism through which crowds come to a consensus.⁸⁴¹ A unified crowd is better able to organise and communicate.⁸⁴² For example, the rumour about the police using gas as a crowd-control measure may have angered the protesters who heard it, leading to them uniting in opposition to the police. Rumours, therefore, served the same purpose in 2010 as they did in 1780.



Tweet 21: Tweeted by Abbi Broadbent at 8:02 p.m. on 9 December 2010. Rumours spread quickly, and sometimes turn out to be truths that just have not been confirmed yet.



Tweet 22: Tweeted by Rebecca Brown at 4:15 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is trying to verify the truth of a rumour that the police used "gas" at the protest on 10 November.

⁸⁴¹ Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behaviour*, 2nd edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972 [1957]).

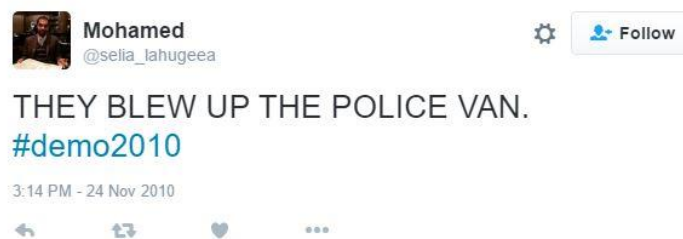
⁸⁴² Turner and Killian, *Collective Behaviour*.



Tweet 23: Tweeted by Gary Barratt at 2:48 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The same rumour, that the police were using tear gas, also circulated on 24 November. There is nothing to indicate any truth to the rumours on either occasion.



Tweet 24: Tweeted by lazaruerror at 3:14 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The tweet is referring to the police van that was abandoned in the kettle on 24 November.



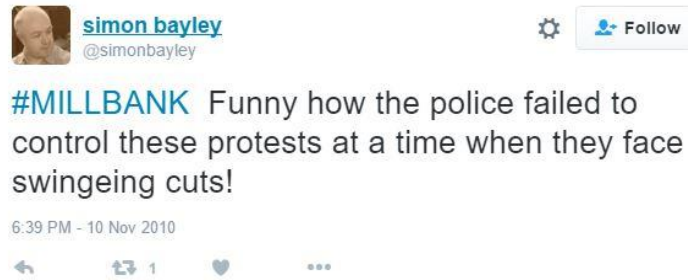
Tweet 25: Tweeted by selia_lahugeea at 3:14 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The police van in question was vandalised, but was not set on fire, and did not explode.

The conspiracy theories surrounding the Student Protests are slightly different to those found in the Gordon Riots. In 1780, most theories related to who was responsible for the riots. Scholars explain conspiracy theories about the organisers of historical protests such as the Gordon Riots by arguing that crowds were perceived to be incapable of organising themselves, therefore requiring someone to control and orchestrate

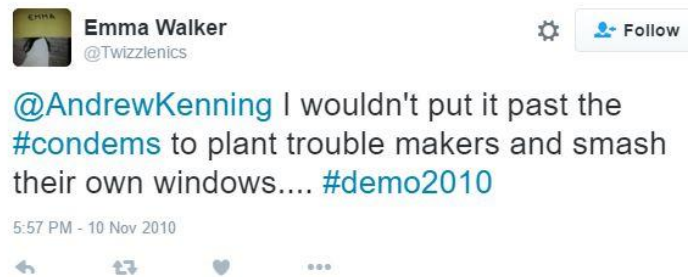
them.⁸⁴³ This explanation does not make as much sense in 2010, as protesters are arguably given more credit for their ability to organise themselves than protesters in the eighteenth century were. As demonstrated by the discussion of crowd psychology in Chapter 4, the general perception of crowds has changed over the last century. Whilst still popular with some, the le Bonian theory of crowds as mindless mobs has given way to a more nuanced understanding of crowds as collections of individuals (see 2.3.4 and 4.2).

During the student protests, more conspiracies related to those in authority and the behaviour of the Metropolitan Police than they did to the organisation of the protesters. For example, on 10 November it was suggested that the police were slow to respond to events at 30 Millbank because they too were facing budget cuts, and wanted to convince the government of their necessity (see Tweet 26). It was also suggested that the riot at 30 Millbank was orchestrated to discredit the demonstrators (see Tweets 27 and 28). The idea of agent provocateurs sparking violence in order to alienate the protesters' support was also suggested on 9 December (see Tweets 29 and 30). It was also claimed that the events involving Prince Charles and Camilla Duchess of Cornwall were set up, again to decrease the popularity of the protesters and their cause (see Tweets 31 and 32). The high number of conspiracy theories involving the government and Metropolitan Police suggest a deep level of mistrust amongst some sections of the population. The Metropolitan Police especially are not universally well thought of due to their handling of some events. Several of these events, such as the death of Ian Tomlinson during the G20 protests in 2009, and the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005, are mentioned in multiple tweets.

⁸⁴³ Pablo Sánchez León, "Conceiving the Multitude: Eighteenth-Century Popular Riots and the Modern Language of Social Disorder," *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 511–33; Timothy Tackett, "Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror 1789–1792," *The American Historical Review*, 105, no. 3 (2000): 691–713.



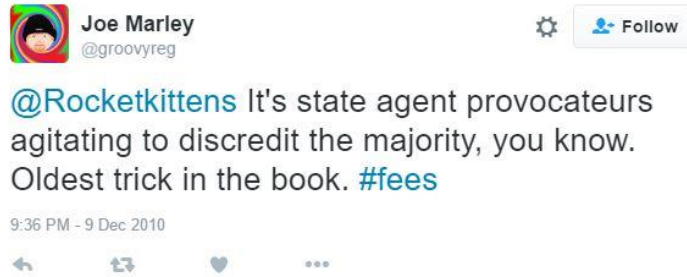
Tweet 26: Tweeted by Simon Bayley at 6:39 p.m. on 10 November 2010. This tweet suggests that the Metropolitan Police were deliberately slow to respond as events escalated at 30 Millbank because they too were facing budget cuts.



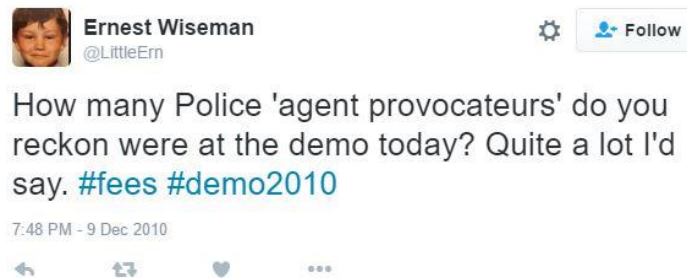
Tweet 27: Tweeted by Emma Walker at 5:57 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is suggesting that the government may have orchestrated the events at 30 Millbank.



Tweet 28: Tweeted by Mukund Sapre at 5:28 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is making a similar suggestion, that an unnamed party deliberately orchestrated the events at 30 Millbank in order to discredit the protesters' cause.



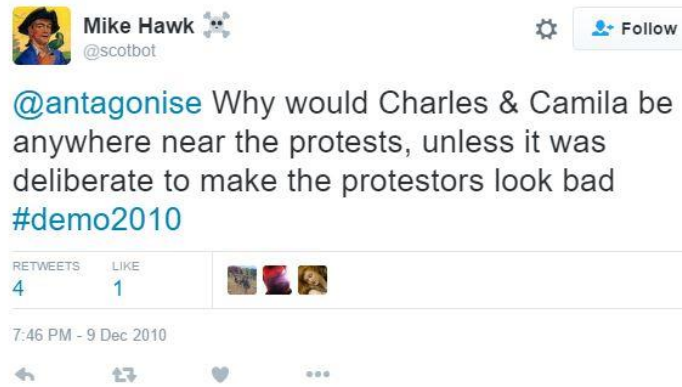
Tweet 29: Tweeted by Joe Marley at 9:36 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The tweet is suggesting that the state use agent provocateurs to start trouble in order to discredit the protests.



Tweet 30: Tweeted by Ernest Wiseman at 7:48 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author also thinks that the authorities made use of agent provocateurs.



Tweet 31: Tweeted by BreeBreeFrancis at 11:53 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author believes that Prince Charles was deliberately placed into the path of the protesters.



Tweet 32: Tweeted by Mike Hawk at 7:46 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author also thinks that the encounter between Prince Charles and some protesters was orchestrated.

No matter how much things change, it is possible to identify patterns, trends, and common factors. The protesters during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations had a much wider range of communication technologies available to them than the participants in the Gordon Riots; mobile phones and the internet enabled them to communicate at a much faster speed than would have been possible during the 1780s, despite the associated difficulties and risks. Processes of communication that would have been familiar during the Gordon Riots, such as words-of-mouth, rumours, and conspiracy theories, were frequently employed in 2010. They often were given a modern ‘twist’ however, such as the use of Twitter to spread rumours, and the different focus of conspiracy theories. In 2010 as in 1780, communication is a fundamental requirement of organisation. In the next section, I shall consider the ways in which the participants in the 2010 Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations organised, drawing comparisons with the Gordon Riots.

7.2.2 Organisation

Unlike the Gordon Riots, the four main events that constituted the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations in London were organised by clearly defined groups. There are differences in the history, structure, purpose, and resources of these groups. The NUS and UCU were, and remain, well-

established unions with considerable institutional campaigning experience and significant resources, in terms of both money and staff. The NCAFC, on the other hand, was less than a year old when the protests took place, and was funded by donations and run by volunteers; they had fewer resources than NUS and UCU. All three have a hierarchical structure, with a National Executive Committee elected by members.⁸⁴⁴ Further, Min and Kim argue that different organizations have different capacities to translate resources into action.⁸⁴⁵ Due to its inexperience, the NCAFC was probably less efficient than the NUS and UCU at translating its resources into successful protest actions.⁸⁴⁶ Therefore, the NCAFC's capacity to organise a protest was arguably less than that of the NUS or the UCU.

Not only do different groups have different organisational capacities, but there are also different levels to which a protest can be organised. It can be as simple as publicising a date, time, and location at which to meet, or it can be as complex as Demo-lition, on 10 November. As well as an official title, Demo-lition also had a slogan ("Fund Our Future: Stop Education Cuts"), and stewards spread out along the route of the march, a route that had been pre-approved by the Metropolitan Police.⁸⁴⁷ These nuances highlight the complexity of classifying a protest event as 'organised,' since there are different levels of preparation involved in arranging such a protest.

In addition, not every element of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations was organised. Large demonstrations are complex events,

⁸⁴⁴ NCAFC, "National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts Constitution," no date, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://anticuts.com/ncafc-constitution/>; NUS, "Leadership," no date, accessed May 26 2017, <https://www.nus.org.uk/en/who-we-are/leadership/>; UCU, "Structures and Decision Making," no date, accessed May 26 2017, <https://www.ucu.org.uk/structures>.

⁸⁴⁵ Seong-Jae Min and Young Mie Kim, "Choosing the Right Media for Mobilization: Issue Advocacy Groups' Media Niches in the Competitive Media Environment," *Mass Communication and Society* 15, No. 2 (2012): 225–44.

⁸⁴⁶ Min and Kim, "Choosing the Right Media for Mobilization."

⁸⁴⁷ NUS, "NUS Condemns Violent Actions of "Rogue Protesters" for Undermining the Message of 50,000," last modified November 10, 2010, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-condemns-violent-actions-of-rogue-protestors-for-undermining-the-message-of-50000/>.

and large groups of people are unpredictable, so it is difficult for organisers to foresee every possible eventuality. The larger the demonstration, the more difficult it is for organisers to control events and project a unified message.⁸⁴⁸ The more people that are present, the less likely it is that they will all obey the instructions of the protest organisers, as well as making it harder for the organisers to communicate the instructions in the first place. The events at Millbank Tower on 10 November were not planned by the organisers; in fact, they were strongly condemned by the NUS and its President, Aaron Porter.⁸⁴⁹ The Hyde Park Railings Affair was an earlier example of organisers losing control of a protest; the Reform League moved on to hold a rally in Trafalgar Square, but a significant number of protesters remained at Hyde Park. Like the Gordon Riots and the Hyde Park Railings Affair, the events at Millbank Tower had no clear leader, but protesters still managed to occupy the building for several hours. This example undermines the dichotomy that a protest is either organised or disorganised; there can be elements of both within the same event. Returning to the concept of the rhizome used in Chapter 4 to analyse how the Gordon rioters communicated and organised, it is possible to overcome that dichotomy. To Deleuze and Guatarri, everything is rhizomatic; even an arborescent structure is a “temporary crystallization” of a rhizome.⁸⁵⁰ Protests are organised in a variety of ways, some hierarchical and structured, some informal and ad hoc. Multiple organisational methods can be found in a single protest, particularly large ones like the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations and the Gordon Riots; their organisation is rhizomatic.

⁸⁴⁸ S J Wallace, C Zepeda-Millàn and M Correa-Jones, “Spatial and Temporal Proximity: Examining the Effects of Protests on Political Attitudes,” *American Journal of Political Attitudes* 58, no. 2 (2014): 433–48.

⁸⁴⁹ Paul Lewis, Jeevan Vasagar, Rachel Williams and Matthew Taylor, “Student Protest Over Fees Turns Violent,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 10, 2010, accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/nov/10/student-protest-fees-violent>.

⁸⁵⁰ Maria Daskalaki and Oli Mould, “Beyond Urban Subcultures: Urban Subversions as Rhizomatic Social Formations,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no.1 (2013): 1–18; 7.

As I have discussed in the context of the Gordon Riots, protesters do not need an individual, group, or organisation to coordinate their actions during a demonstration. For example, whilst the events at Millbank Tower were not planned, there were examples of the protesters organising themselves. During the occupation some protesters made their way onto the roof of the building. One of them, 18-year-old Edward Woollard, threw a fire extinguisher off the roof into the crowded courtyard.⁸⁵¹ This was considered unacceptable behaviour by most of the crowd, and they made their opinion clear, as demonstrated in this quote from an interview with an individual who was present at Millbank Tower:

I was at the back of the courtyard when the fire extinguisher went off the roof; that was an amazing incident, I've no idea how, but, within seconds, the whole crowd was chanting, in unison, "Stop throwing shit off the roof!" Honestly, it was miraculous that we all spoke with one voice, we must all have the same vocabulary, or think in the same way.⁸⁵²

Although ad hoc and informal, this form of self-policing is one mechanism through which the protesters were able to organise themselves as they deviated from the NUS and UCU's plan for the day, demonstrating their rhizomatic capabilities. I have already discussed repertoires of collective action in the context of the Gordon Riots (see 4.2.1). Protesters choose their protest action from a range of tactics they have heard, or seen, or participated in before. Repertoires of protest vary across time and space, depending on a wide range of factors such as political opportunity,

⁸⁵¹ In January 2011, Woollard was sentenced to 32 months imprisonment for violent disorder. Caroline Davies, "Student Protester Who Threw Fire Extinguisher from Roof Jailed," *The Guardian*, last modified January 11, 2011, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jan/11/student-fire-extinguisher-protests-jailed>.

⁸⁵² Interview no. 15, conducted September 8, 2011. See also Jenny Poole, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (8:17 p.m.) accessed April 23, 2016, <https://twitter.com/jennypoole>; Josh Kitto, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (6:40 p.m.) accessed April 23, 2016, <https://twitter.com/cromulentjosh>.

availability of resources, and radical history. Whilst the Gordon Rioters would have been mystified by a flash mob or a Google bomb, they would recognise some tactics in the student protesters' repertoires, such as marches, bonfires, and strategic destruction of property.⁸⁵³ The interviewee's conclusion that the demonstrators "ha[d] the same vocabulary" is a product of repertoires of protest; they knew how they were expected to behave in a protest situation without having to be told. This example demonstrates that crowd members will intervene to halt behaviour that is perceived to be inappropriate.⁸⁵⁴ Throwing heavy objects off a high roof, putting the people below in danger, was clearly not part of most of the protesters' repertoire.

Modern communication technologies can aid the kind of informal organisation that often occurs in protests. As Neumayer and Stald argue, "[a]ctivists can use the phone to coordinate action in real time. An important part of coordination is the provision of instantaneous and up-to-date information."⁸⁵⁵ The ability to share and act on real-time information about what is happening in other locations is valuable for protesters, as they can respond to events as they occur. As the 2010 student protests progressed, the demonstrators grew increasingly effective at harnessing modern communication technologies to organise themselves. For example, during the final protest on 9 December an interactive Google map was created allowing protesters to place markers indicating the location of police officers, helicopters, ambulances, containment areas and significant events like fires, and clashes between protesters and police (see Figure 28). Anyone could edit the map, adding markers and comments about what was happening, and anyone could access it. Protesters with smartphones

⁸⁵³ For an explanation of flash mobs and Google bombs, see Kahn and Kellner, "New Media and Internet Activism."

⁸⁵⁴ Stephen Reicher, Clifford Stott, Patrick Cronin and Otto Adang. "An Integrated Approach to Crowd Psychology and Public Order Policing." *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 27, no. 4 (2004): 558–72.

⁸⁵⁵ Neumayer and Stald, "The Mobile Phone in Street Protest;" 118.

would have been able to view the map, and adapt their plans according to what they saw.

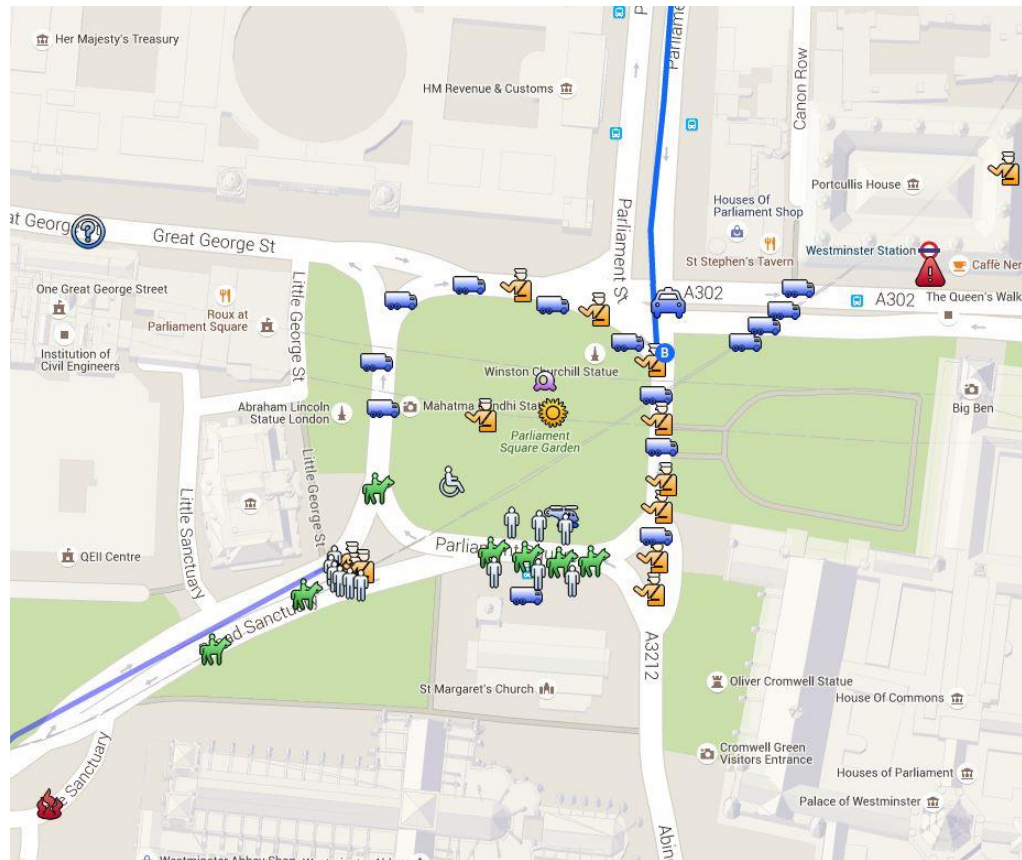


Figure 28: The interactive Google Map used by protesters to inform each other about what was going on in at the various locations of the protest on 9 December 2010.

Source: Anon., "Live Protest Map," no date, accessed July 1, 2015, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ll=51.506338%2C-0.126847&spn=0.003599%2C0.009645&hl=en&msa=0&z=17&ie=UTF8&mid=1vynzbdE7u-jknxBzfcn4FI29T0>. Map data: Google, 2018.

Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge argue that maps should be seen as processes rather than representations:

maps emerge in process through a diverse set of practices. Given that practices are an ongoing series of events, it follows that maps are in a constant state of becoming; they are ontogenetic (emergent) in nature.⁸⁵⁶

The protesters' Google map is an ideal example of maps as processes rather than products in a literal sense. During the protest on 9 December the map was constantly being added to and altered as the situation on the ground progressed, enabling the protesters to informally organise themselves around situations that they couldn't directly see for themselves.

Unlike the Gordon Riots, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations had organisational input from groups such as the NUS, UCU, and NCAFC. However, it is not easy to classify a protest as either organised or disorganised and the 2010 protesters utilised many of the same techniques to organise themselves as the 1780 rioters. As with methods of communication, some of these older techniques are now carried out with the aid of modern communication technologies, such as Google maps, but they remain otherwise the same.

In some ways, the methods that protesters use to communicate and organise have changed dramatically since the late-eighteenth century, and in other ways they have not. Modern communication technologies have opened up new opportunities for demonstrators, but they also present new challenges. Familiar tactics, such as word-of-mouth communication, rumours, conspiracy theories, and repertoires of protest played out during the student protests in similar ways to the Gordon Riots, 230 years before.

⁸⁵⁶ Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge, "Rethinking Maps," *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 3 (2007): 331–44; 340.

Another element of modern protests that the Gordon Rioters would recognise is the struggle with the authorities for control of public space, which is the second major theme of this thesis.

7.3 The Struggle for Public Space

We have already seen from the Hyde Park Railings Affair how protest brings to the fore questions about who has access to, and control over, public space. The Reform League's planned meeting in Hyde Park was banned by the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police because it was "inconsistent with the purposes for which the park is thrown open to and used by the public."⁸⁵⁷ Mayne's definition of these acceptable purposes was clearly different to that of the Reform League, who chose, despite the ban, to attempt to hold their rally in the park. These events highlight the fact that there were conflicting definitions of what kinds of people were welcome in the park, and what kinds of things they were permitted to do. The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations raised similar debates, and constituted a conflict for control of some of the most symbolic spaces in central London.

In theory, public space is that "to which all citizens have a right of access," but in practice, there are few spaces that are truly public.⁸⁵⁸ An increasing number of spaces are semi-public, for example privately owned spaces to which people are *permitted* access, rather than having the right to access, like shopping malls and private parks. In central London, the situation is complicated further by a series of laws that specifically govern protest, which I discuss in more detail later. In addition, public space is not politically neutral; it is designed and shaped to promote and naturalise particular ideologies and power structures.⁸⁵⁹ Most of the time, these

⁸⁵⁷ Richard Mayne, "Notice-Meeting in Hyde Park," *Pall Mall Gazette* (London) July 19, 1866, accessed April 11, 2014, 19th Century British Library Newspapers Online Archive.

⁸⁵⁸ Nick Blomley, "Public Space," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009 [1981]): 602; 602.

⁸⁵⁹ Tim Cresswell, "Place," in *Introducing Human Geographies*, 2nd edition, eds. Paul Cloke, Philip Crang, and Mark Goodwin (London: Hodder Educational, 2005): 485–94.

dominant orders are not questioned, nor even noticed.⁸⁶⁰ Tim Cresswell argues that when the established order is transgressed, such as during a protest, the invisible becomes visible and is opened up to discussion and critical engagement.⁸⁶¹ This process can be seen occurring before and after the Hyde Park Railings Affair, as a debate was conducted in the newspapers as to whether or not Hyde Park was a suitable location for protest meetings. The Battle of Cable Street also raised questions about who could access particular spaces. The British Union of Fascists were denied access to the East End of London by the protesters, a situation that allowed them to claim that their rights had been infringed.⁸⁶² The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations also exposed the underlying power relations that control access to, and acceptable behaviour in, public space. The laws that govern protest, police tactics, and the tactics employed by the protesters themselves all allow discussion about how *public* public space really is.

7.3.1 How the Authorities Control Public Space

The laws that govern protest in the United Kingdom limit the way people can use public space. They are complicated and change frequently, but in what follows I will summarise the key laws that were applicable during the Student Tuition Fee Protests. Under UK law, there was no legal right to protest until the Human Rights Act came into force in 2000, articles 10 and 11 of which protect the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.⁸⁶³ This freedom does not mean that protesters have *carte blanche*; there are other laws which restrict public dissent. The 1986 Public Order Act has sections that apply to ‘public processions’ and ‘public assemblies.’⁸⁶⁴ According to section 11, for example, organisers of a protest march are required to give the local police force written notice of the

⁸⁶⁰ Cresswell, “Place.”

⁸⁶¹ Cresswell, “Place.”

⁸⁶² A. K. Chesterton, “Britons! The Mensheviks are in Command!” *Blackshirt*, October 10, 1936; 5.

⁸⁶³ Human Rights Act, 1998, chapter 42.

⁸⁶⁴ Public Order Act, 1986, chapter 64.

march. This is not required for demonstrations, but many choose to notify the police anyway.⁸⁶⁵ The police can impose conditions and restrictions on both public processions and public assemblies under the following conditions:

- (a) It may result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community, or
- (b) The purpose of the persons organising it is the intimidation of others with a view to compelling them not to do an act they have a right to do, or to do an act they have a right not to do.⁸⁶⁶

A Chief Constable can also decide to ban a march outright, if they feel that conditions or restrictions will not be enough to preserve the peace.⁸⁶⁷

The above laws apply to public land and land owned by a council or similar public body. Private landowners, however, have no obligations under the Human Rights Act to facilitate protest, so they can refuse to allow a march or gathering to take place on their property.⁸⁶⁸ This is an increasing problem as more and more areas of cities are given over to private redevelopments. If you enter or stay on private land without permission you are trespassing—something which is not a criminal offence, but court proceedings can be brought by the landowner.⁸⁶⁹ As well as the restrictions placed on protests, individual protesters can be charged with criminal offences such as assault, criminal damage, or harassment.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁵ NUS and Liberty, *Protest: Your Rights*. No date, accessed April 7, 2016, <https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/sites/default/files/nusliberty-rights-document-a5.pdf>.

⁸⁶⁶ Public Order Act, 1986, chapter 64; section 14.

⁸⁶⁷ Public Order Act, 1986, chapter 64.

⁸⁶⁸ NUS and Liberty, *Protest: Your Rights*.

⁸⁶⁹ NUS and Liberty, *Protest: Your Rights*.

⁸⁷⁰ NUS and Liberty, *Protest: Your Rights*.

The legal situation becomes even more complicated if a protest takes place within one kilometre of Parliament Square. Part Four of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005) relates to 'Demonstrations in the Vicinity of Parliament.'⁸⁷¹ Under the Public Order Act, if a march goes ahead without first notifying the police, it is only the organisers that are guilty of an offence. Under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, anyone who takes part in an unauthorised demonstration within a kilometre of Parliament Square is also committing an offence, not just those who organised the protest.⁸⁷² The Act also bans loudspeakers within the one kilometre area.⁸⁷³

These laws protect a limited right to protest which gives the authorities a significant degree of spatial control over dissent. Put in terms of the right to the city and the public sphere, individuals and groups are able to represent their interests through protest in order to participate in the production of the city, but only to a certain extent (see 5.2). The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act created a zone of increased restriction around the Houses of Parliament, the symbolic centre of British democracy. The ability of the police to impose conditions upon protests means that they can control how a protest unfolds spatially; for example, the police can demand that organisers alter the route of a planned march. The route of Demo-lition on 9 November 2010 was pre-approved by the Metropolitan Police, and although this did not stop the events at Millbank Tower, the police could have altered the march route if they had foreseen that the building might be a target because of its connections to the Conservative Party. In this way, the authorities can assert a significant degree of control over dissent in public space before a protest has even occurred.

Through public order tactics, the authorities can also control public space *during* a protest. Kettling, or containment, is a tactic whereby police

⁸⁷¹ Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, 2005, chapter 15.

⁸⁷² Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, 2005, chapter 15; Part 4.

⁸⁷³ Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, 2005, chapter 15; Part 4.

surround a group of protesters, not allowing them to leave an area for up to several hours. It is a controversial tactic, the morality of which has been questioned.⁸⁷⁴ In 2011, the high court ruled that kettling was used unlawfully during the G20 protests in London in 2009. The following year, the ruling was overturned on appeal.⁸⁷⁵ Also in 2012, the European Court of Human Rights declared the tactic to be legal.⁸⁷⁶ Kettling was used at all four student demonstrations in 2010, along with a tactic known as ‘squeezing’—gradually reducing the size of a kettle until the movement of the demonstrators inside is restricted.⁸⁷⁷ Kettling was by no means a new tactic at that point, but the use of it during the Student Tuition Fee protests attracted criticism, largely because of the high number of young people and children who were subjected to containment.⁸⁷⁸ Demonstrators are released from a kettle gradually, often after they have been photographed and forced to provide personal details. The experience can be a stark reminder of how little power an individual has compared to the state. Kettling restricts the mobility of protesters, a clear demonstration of who has ultimate control over space.

7.3.2 How Protesters Contested the Authorities’ Control of Public Space

Protesters use a variety of tactics to try to access and gain control of public space. The participants in the student protests employed many of these

⁸⁷⁴ The Network for Police Monitoring, “Guide to ‘Kettles,’ no date, accessed June 29, 2016, <https://netpol.org/guide-to-kettles/#10>.

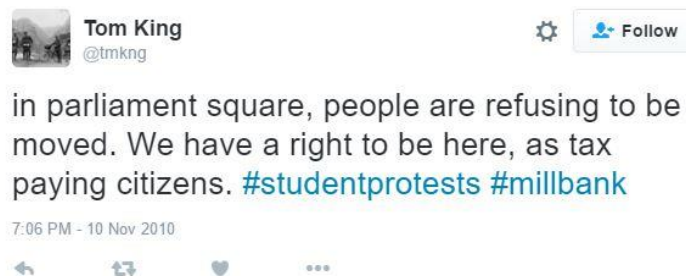
⁸⁷⁵ Owen Bowcott, “Kettling Protesters is Lawful, Appeal Court Rules,” *The Guardian*, last modified January 19, 2012, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jan/19/kettling-protesters-lawful-appeal-court>.

⁸⁷⁶ Louise Christian, “This Judgement in Favour of Kettling is a Missed Opportunity,” *The Guardian*, last modified March 15, 2012, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/15/judgment-in-favour-of-kettling>.

⁸⁷⁷ Musab Younis, “British Tuition Fee Protest, November 9, 2010, London,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 3, no. 1 (2011): 172–81.

⁸⁷⁸ Mark Townsend, “Metropolitan Police Face Legal Action for Kettling Children during Tuition Fee Protests,” *The Guardian*, last modified December 26, 2010, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/dec/26/metropolitan-police-lawsuit-student-protest>.

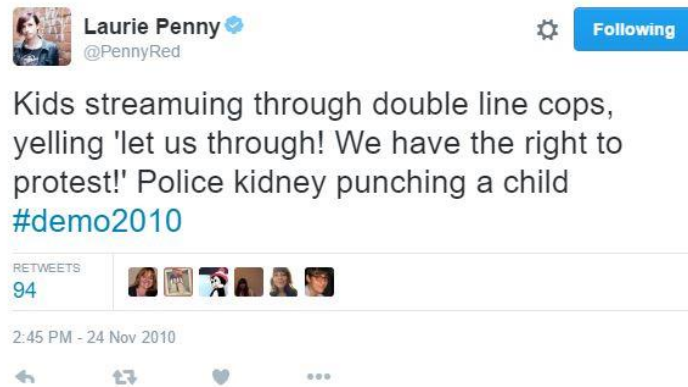
tactics, and even developed a new strategy for countering the spatial control of kettling in order to assert their right to the city and to the public sphere, both physically and symbolically. One of the simple methods of claiming space is vocally asserting your right to protest in said space. During the 2010 student protests, some used Twitter to declare their rights; Tweet 33 is an example of this claim. For the tweet's author, the right to access Parliament Square is available to him because he is a "tax paying citizen," implying that individuals who do not pay taxes, or who are not British citizens, do not have such rights. These qualifications have interesting implications, but what is pertinent here is that the author strongly believes that he has the right to be protesting in Parliament Square.



Tweet 33: Tweeted by Tom King at 7:06 p.m. on 10 November 2010. King is asserting his right to be present in Parliament Square as a tax-paying British citizen.

Twitter also provides evidence of protesters orally claiming the right to protest in central London (see Tweets 34 and 35). In both examples, the protesters are confronting the police, demanding that they be allowed to exercise their "democratic right to protest." Vocally and publicly claiming the right to protest implies that the Metropolitan Police are denying the demonstrators this right. In this way, the protesters are claiming the moral high ground, in the same way that the British Union of Fascists did after the Battle of Cable Street (see 6.2). Although the police can legally curtail protesters' movements if they fear "serious public disorder, serious

damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community,” the protesters still portrayed themselves as victims of oppressive behaviour.⁸⁷⁹



Tweet 34: Tweeted by Laurie Penny at 2:45 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The journalist Laurie Penny witnessed demonstrators demanding that their right to protest be respected.

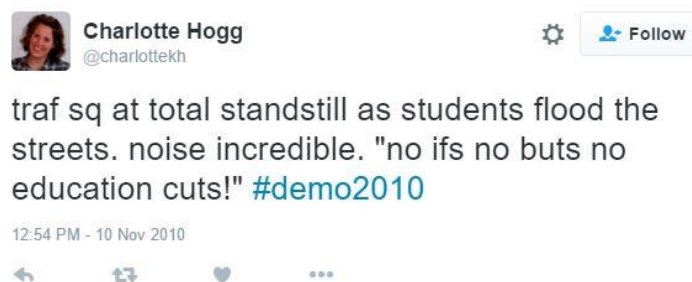


Tweet 35: Tweeted by Kevin Rawlinson at 4:02 p.m. on 9 December 2010. Rawlinson also witnessed a protester asserting their right to protest in public space.

Another way in which protests claim the right to public space is through weight of numbers. A large march or rally can fill public space to the extent that the protesters effectively have control over that space. The normal rhythms and activities which occur in that space are disrupted. In 1866 the Metropolitan Police were overwhelmed by the sheer number of protesters breaking into Hyde Park; the right to access the park was

⁸⁷⁹ Public Order Act, 1986, chapter 64; section 14.

asserted through force of numbers. Around 50,000 people attended Demonstration on 10 November, and whilst attendance at the other three demonstrations varied, all four commanded significant numbers, as illustrated by the various ways in which the protesters were described on Twitter. For example, in Tweet 36, Charlotte Hogg described the scene in Trafalgar Square at lunchtime on 10 November. Water-related metaphors were a common way of describing the protesters entering or passing through a space. In Tweet 37, they are described as “pouring onto” Parliament Square on 9 December. “Streaming” was also used on two separate occasions on 10 and 30 November.⁸⁸⁰ These metaphors suggest a force of movement that is powerful and difficult to restrain; such descriptions create a sense of something that cannot be stopped. In practice, the protesters were not unstoppable; kettling did prove to be a largely effective containment strategy. However, there were moments when the number of protesters created a momentum that was difficult to withstand, giving them control, however temporarily, over the space they occupied and granting them the right to the city.



Tweet 36: Tweeted by Charlotte Hogg at 12:54 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The language she uses creates a strong sense of the impact of so many people in one place.

⁸⁸⁰ Aaron Porter, Twitter Post, November 10, 2010 (9:15 a.m.), accessed April 28, 2016, <https://twitter.com/AaronPorter>; Matthew Taylor, Twitter post, November 30, 2010 (12:31 p.m.), accessed May 6, 2016, <https://twitter.com/mrmatthewtaylor>.



Tweet 37: Tweeted by edactivistnet at 2:06 p.m. on 9 December 2010. Water-related metaphors were a common way of describing the protesters.

Whilst kettling was effective at restricting the movement of demonstrators, the protesters did develop a method of counteracting it. Dubbed ‘cat-and-mouse,’ the tactic proved effective against the Metropolitan Police.⁸⁸¹ Whenever the protesters were threatened with kettling, they would split into smaller groups and disperse. These small groups moved around London rapidly and without an obvious overall direction, making it incredibly difficult for the police to contain them. This cat-and-mouse tactic was first used on 24 November, and by 30 November and 9 December they had perfected it, with protesters on 30 November “all over London running rings around police.”⁸⁸² It was one of these cat-and-mouse groups that confronted Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall in Regent Street on 9 December. It proved to be an effective protest tactic, and many Twitter users applauded the protesters for their ingenuity and for embarrassing the police (see Tweets 38 and 39). This new addition to the twenty-first century repertoire of protest meant protesters could access public space and even gain a certain amount of control over it, by humiliating the police. ‘New’ is perhaps not the best way to describe the

⁸⁸¹ The term was first used by Guardian reporter Paul Lewis; Paul Lewis, Twitter post, November 24, 2010 (6:48 p.m.) accessed May 2, 2016, <https://twitter.com/PaulLewis>. For another example see Matthew Taylor, Twitter post, November 30, 2010 (12:31 p.m.), accessed May 6, 2016, <https://twitter.com/mrmattthewtaylor>.

⁸⁸² Clare Solomon, Twitter post, 30 November 2010 (1:54 p.m.) accessed May 6, 2016, <https://twitter.com/claresolomon73>.

technique however, as participants in the Gordon Riots moved around London in a similar manner, separating and regrouping to avoid the authorities.



Tweet 38: Tweeted by John Turnbull at 2:26 p.m. on 30 November 2010. The tweet is applauding the protesters for outwitting the police.



Tweet 39: Tweeted by Mike Lovell at 2:22 p.m. on 30 November 2010. There was a sense on the day that the protesters were getting the better of the police.

The major difference between the student protesters and the Gordon Rioters was that the cat-and-mouse method frequently meant leaving the march route that the Metropolitan Police had pre-approved, which in itself is another way of claiming a right to the streets of London, unrestrained by the authorities. Like the participants in the Hyde Park Railings Affair, the Student Tuition Fee demonstrators disobeyed the orders of the authorities and their own leadership. The Gordon Rioters were not deviating from a pre-arranged route, which adds a further element of dissent. For some, a protest arranged in cooperation with the authorities is not a protest at all, the argument being that it is not really dissent if you

have been given permission (see Tweet 40). Nevertheless, it has become a common practice to involve the police in the planning of a protest.⁸⁸³ However, in the past few years protest groups have begun to reject this process, choosing not to involve the police in the planning of protests.⁸⁸⁴ The abandonment of official march routes during the student protests was an early example of this trend. Such practices reject conditional rights to public space, contingent on pre-approval by the authorities.



Tweet 40: Tweeted by Lee Griffin at 3:40 p.m. on 30 November 2010. The author is arguing that cooperating with the police and allowing them to pre-approve a march route is not really a protest at all.

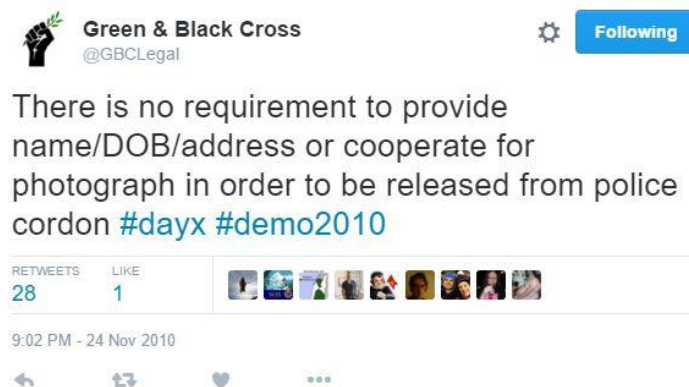
Even once kettled, some protesters continued to subvert the police's efforts to control space. There are two ways in which this was done. First, protesters complicated the police's efforts to identify 'troublemakers' within the crowd. On 24 November the police announced that the kettle would stay in place until they had identified 'suspects' that they wished to detain. In response to this, the kettled protesters began a mass clothing swap, in order to thwart attempts to find the 'suspects.'⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸³ Don Mitchell and Lynn A. Staeheli. "Permitting Protest: Parsing the Fine Geography of Dissent in America." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 4 (2005): 796–813.

⁸⁸⁴ Patrick F. Gillham, Bob Edwards and John A. Noakes. "Strategic Incapacitation and the Policing of Occupy Wall Street Protests in New York City, 2011." *Policing and Society* 23, no. 1 (2013): 81–102.

⁸⁸⁵ streets, Twitter post, November 24 (4:09 p.m.) accessed May 5, 2016, <https://twitter.com/streets>.

On other occasions, the police would only release kettled protesters on the condition that they have their personal details and photo taken. Twitter was used to publicise the fact that the police had no legal right to require this from protesters. Tweet 41 was published by Green and Black Cross, an organisation that provides legal advice and support to protesters.⁸⁸⁶ It was retweeted twenty-eight times, so probably reached a large audience. By refusing to cooperate with the police's efforts to control those within the spatial confines of the kettle, demonstrators were undermining the authorities' complete control over that space.



Tweet 41: Tweeted by Green and Black Cross at 9:02 p.m. on 24 November. By informing demonstrators that they have no obligation to provide personal information in order to leave a kettle, the Green and Black Cross is undermining the police's total control of the space within the kettle.

The second method of subverting the police's spatial control within a kettle was using social media and the internet to monitor police behaviour and publicise any misconduct, perceived or actual. Twitter users documented mistreatment at the hands of the police, particularly experiences from inside kettles. Tweet 42 is an example of this process, which was retweeted seventeen times. Anne Greensmith was able to reach a large audience, informing them about the conditions her son was being

⁸⁸⁶ See also coyotedialectic, Twitter post, November 24 (9:33 p.m.) accessed May 2, 2016, <https://twitter.com/coyotedialectic>; Riley Coles, Twitter post, November 24 (10:05 p.m.) accessed May 2, 2016, <https://twitter.com/RileyDylan>.

kept in, without having any connections to the mainstream media. On 24 November, some protesters directed the chant “You’re going on YouTube” at police officers, demonstrating an awareness of the power that being able to prove police misconduct can have.⁸⁸⁷ Partially due to the increasing availability of cameras and filming equipment, particularly in mobile phones, police do not have absolute power over a kettled space. Like the protesters themselves, police officers are bounded by laws and regulations, and it is becoming increasingly easy to hold them to these laws.



Tweet 42: Tweeted by Anne Greensmith at 9:16 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The author is using Twitter to publicise the treatment of her son.

Another method of claiming space employed by the student protesters contrasts sharply with the cat-and-mouse method. Whilst the cat-and-mouse method relies on mobility, sit-ins and occupations require the opposite: immobility. There were almost forty occupations of university buildings around the country during the student protests, twelve in London. In addition to the occupations, there was a sit-down outside the Houses of Parliament on 10 November, and a sit-in in the National Gallery on 9 December.⁸⁸⁸ The occupations served as organisational hubs for the

⁸⁸⁷ Socialist Worker, Twitter post, November 24 (3:22 p.m.) accessed February 9, 2017, <https://twitter.com/socialistworker>.

⁸⁸⁸ Sit-down outside Houses of Parliament: girlb, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (4:38 p.m.), accessed April 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/girlb>; JustMariyam, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (7:57 p.m.) accessed April 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/JustMariyam>; River Online, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (1:00 p.m.) accessed April 26, 2016,

protests, “providing stewards, printing leaflets, making banners, organizing flashmobs in the run-up and mobilizing students and staff across campuses.”⁸⁸⁹ They also represented an attempt by students to claim the space of the university for themselves. Alexander Vasudevan argues that occupations are physical expressions of alternative social orders; “a political process that *materializes* the social order which it seeks to enact.”⁸⁹⁰ Student occupations “re-imagine the space of the campus,” producing new forms of education, social networks, and communal spaces.⁸⁹¹ As the demonstrators involved in the Hyde Park Railings Affair claimed a right to the city through the occupation of Hyde Park, the students claimed a right to the city through the occupation of university campuses.⁸⁹²

The student occupations also fed off a long tradition of occupations in the student movement, particularly in London. The first student occupation took place at the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1967, in response to the appointment of Walter Adams as director.⁸⁹³ Adams had previously worked at a university in Rhodesia, and was opposed by some LSE students because of his support of the racist government there.⁸⁹⁴ The following year, students at the Hornsey College of Art occupied the College’s site in Crouch End in protest at the withdrawal of Student Union funds.⁸⁹⁵ The 2010 occupations were a reflection of a well-established tactic in the student repertoire of protest.

https://twitter.com/river_online. Sit-in in the National Gallery; pinkWatanabe, Twitter post, December 9, 2010 (7:10 p.m.) accessed May 9, 2016, <https://twitter.com/pinkWatanabe>; streets, Twitter post, December 9, 2010 (6:01 p.m.) accessed May 9, 2016, <https://twitter.com/streets>.

⁸⁸⁹ Feyzi Ismail, “The Politics of Occupation,” in *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance*, ed. Michael Bailey and Des Freedman (London: Pluto, 2011), 123–31.

⁸⁹⁰ Alexander Vasudevan, “The Autonomous City: Towards A Critical Geography of Occupation,” *Progress in Human Geography* 39, no. 3 (2015): 316–37; 318 (italics in original).

⁸⁹¹ Vasudevan, “The Autonomous City;” 329.

⁸⁹² Vasudevan, “The Autonomous City.”

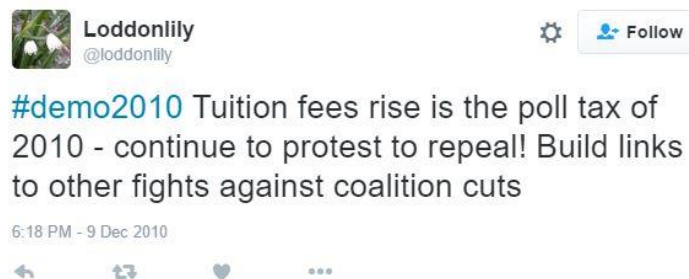
⁸⁹³ Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People’s History of London* (London: Verso, 2012).

⁸⁹⁴ German and Rees, *A People’s History of London*.

⁸⁹⁵ Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008).

Protest reveals the normally hidden power dynamics of public space and opens it up to contestation. It is also one of the most visible ways in which people can claim the right to the city, or the right to access the public sphere. In Britain, the authorities control dissent in public space through a series of laws and spatialized policing tactics. These controls are particularly strict within a one-mile radius of Parliament. During the Student Protests, the demonstrators used a variety of tactics to challenge the strict understanding of public space constructed by the authorities, a process which has been ongoing since long before the Hyde Park Railings Affair. By claiming the right to protest wherever and however they chose, the protesters undermined the authorities' control of the public spaces of central London and even gained temporary control themselves. This struggle for control of public space in the capital has a long history, as does protest in the city. This history is constantly re-told and re-interpreted, particularly during times of dissent. In the next section, I shall address some of the practices and processes involved in this constant re-imagining.

7.4 “Tuition Fees Rise is the Poll Tax of 2010”: Memory and Commemoration



Tweet 43: Tweeted by Loddonlily at 6:18 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author is comparing the tuition fees rise to the Poll Tax, an unpopular law that was passed in 1989, and replaced in 1993.

As I have demonstrated in the context of the Battle of Cable Street, the narrative of a protest, the ways in which it is remembered and commemorated, can be shaped and adapted to serve specific purposes.

Demonstrators and social movements make use of the memory of historic protests in a number of ways. As Tweet 43 above demonstrates, the student protests were no exception. In what follows, I shall analyse the various ways in which the memory of historical protests was used to interpret and understand the student protests, and discuss the legacies of the 2010 protests as they stand in 2017.

7.4.1 Using the Past to Make Sense of the Present

The collective memory of past events can be used in a number of ways by social movements, as I have discussed in the context of the Battle of Cable Street. A wide range of historic protests were referenced in relation to the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations on Twitter, for different purposes. It is worth noting that the majority of references to past protests on Twitter were made by observers, people following events through various media outlets, rather than protesters themselves. Therefore, the analysis that follows is not about how protesters use the memory of past protests to mobilise, inspire, and unite their movements. It is about how the public used collective, and occasionally individual, memories of past protest to interpret events, and applaud or condemn the protesters.

During the four days of protest in London, there were a number of references made to a whole range of historic protests on Twitter, including the London G20 protests (2009), pro-foxhunting demonstrations (2004), the 2003 Anti-Iraq War demonstration, the 2003 protest against 'Top Up' tuition fees, Reclaim the Streets (1990s), the Poll Tax Riots (1990), the Broadwater Farm Riots (1985), the Miner's Strike (1984–85), the 1968 student protests, the 1929 General Strike, the suffragettes (early twentieth century), Guy Fawkes (who attempted to blow up the houses of Parliament in 1605), the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536), and the Peasant's Revolt (1381). Some historic events not related to protest were also referenced, including the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by police officers in Stockwell in 2005, and the Second World War. Some events were referenced more often than others, for example the Poll Tax Riots were mentioned frequently, as were

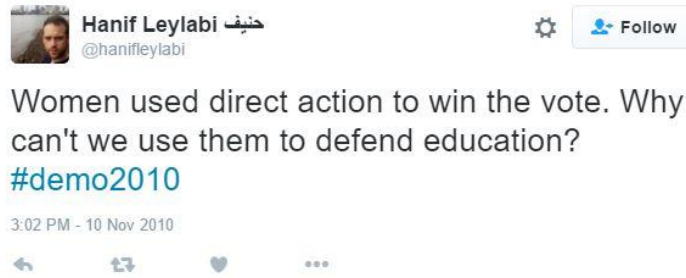
the London G20 protests in 2009. Others, such as the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Peasant's Revolt, were mentioned rarely.

References to historic protests were made to serve several different purposes both in support and opposition of the protesters and their actions. For instance, examples of past protest were used to justify direct action tactics and the property damage committed by the protesters. This justification was made in two ways; first, by referencing examples where direct action has worked, such as the suffragettes. Tweets 44 and 45 both take this approach. They both refer to the campaign for women's suffrage, which was employing direct action tactics such as breaking windows and arson by the early twentieth century. Tweet 45 also mentions the Poll Tax Riots. On 31 March 1990, a protest in central London against the Conservative government's policy of taxing individuals rather than properties became violent, resulting in 340 arrests and 113 injuries.⁸⁹⁶ The Riots are seen as a major contributing factor to the political downfall of prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who resigned in November 1990.⁸⁹⁷ One of the first acts of her successor, John Major, was to repeal the Community Charge (known as the Poll Tax) and replace it with the council tax system that is in place today.⁸⁹⁸ It is a well-known example of a protest that is perceived to be successful, as the Poll Tax was eventually repealed. By referring to such examples, Twitter users are arguing that direct action and property violence are justified tactics for social movements, as it has proved effective in the past.

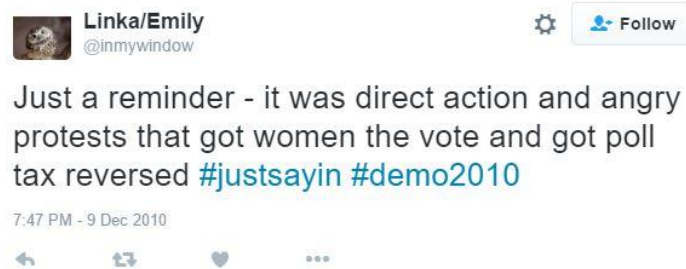
⁸⁹⁶ Andrew McFarlane and Alexis Akwagyiram, "Poll Tax Riots—20 Years after Violence Shook London," *BBC News*, last modified March 31, 2010, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8593158.stm>.

⁸⁹⁷ James Kirkup, "Margaret Thatcher: Refusal to Back Down on Poll Tax that Cost the Leader Dear," *The Telegraph*, last modified April 08, 2013, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/9980361/Margaret-Thatcher-Refusal-to-back-down-on-poll-tax-that-cost-the-leader-dear.html>.

⁸⁹⁸ Kirkup, "Margaret Thatcher."



Tweet 44: Tweeted by Hanif Leylabi at 3:02 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet uses the example of the campaign for women's suffrage to justify direct action.



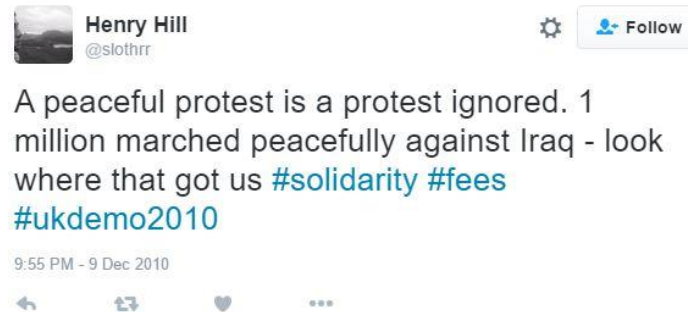
Tweet 45: Tweeted by inmywindow at 7:47 p.m. on 9 December 2010. This tweet also uses the campaign for female suffrage, as well as the Poll Tax Riots, to justify direct action.

The second way of justifying direct action is referencing cases where peaceful protests did not achieve their goals. Tweet 46 is referring to the anti-war demonstration in February 2003, when an estimated one million people took part in a march through central London during a weekend of global action opposing the military campaign against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.⁸⁹⁹ The invasion of Iraq began less than a month later, and as a result many view the protest as a failure.⁹⁰⁰ The tweet is using this example to argue that the direct action employed by protesters during the 2010 student demonstrations was justified, as peaceful protest has been ignored by the government in the past. In this context, past

⁸⁹⁹ BBC News, "'Million' March against Iraq War," last modified February 16, 2003, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2765041.stm>.

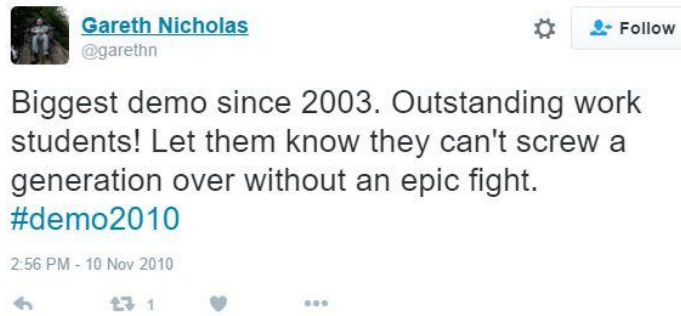
⁹⁰⁰ Patrick Barkham, "Iraq War 10 Years On: Mass Protest that Defined a Generation," *The Guardian*, last modified February 15, 2013, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/15/iraq-war-mass-protest>.

protests were used as evidence to support the protesters acting in a particular way; because direct action had succeeded in the past, and peaceful protest had failed, then the protesters were right to act in the way they did.



Tweet 46: Tweeted by Henry Hill at 9:55 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The author is arguing that peaceful protest is ignored by those in power, which implies that direct action is necessary.

Other Twitter users used historic protest to demonstrate their support for the protesters in a less evidential manner. Some merely mention a past protest event in the same tweet in which they express their support for the student protesters. For example, Tweet 47 describes the student protests as the “Biggest demo since 2003.” The author is probably referring to the anti-war demonstration, and is applauding the students for taking a stand on a scale that he feels has not been matched since the London anti-war demonstration. Some Twitter users emphasise memory in this context, either by stating that they remember a historic protest (see Tweet 47) or by asking the tweet’s reader if they remember the past example (see Tweet 48). As I have demonstrated in relation to the Battle of Cable Street, protesters and activists use narratives of past protest in a number of ways. Here, the Poll Tax Riots are being used to demonstrate that protest can be violent (Tweet 48), but also successful (Tweet 49). A past protest was being used to explain what was happening in a present protest.



Tweet 47: Tweeted by Gareth Nicholas at 2:56 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet applauds the demonstrators for the largest demonstration since 2003.

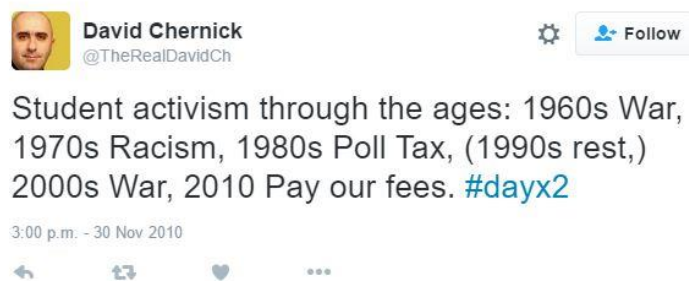


Tweet 48: Tweeted by Katy Evans-Bush at 4:12 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet's author is suggesting that it should not be surprising that the student protests turned violent, because the protests against the Poll Tax did.

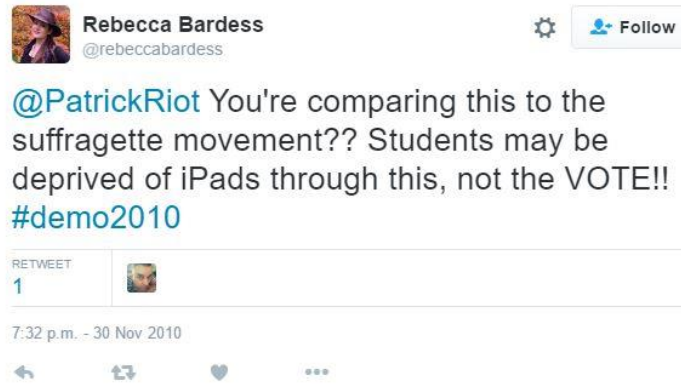


Tweet 49: Tweeted by Mungleberry at 6:59 p.m. on 24 November 2010. This tweet also compares the student protest to the Poll Tax Riots, but asks the reader to remember the Poll Tax Riots, rather than stating that the author remembers it.

Historic protests were also used to criticise the protesters and their tactics. Several Twitter users made comparisons between the student protests and others in order to belittle the student's cause. For example, David Chernick listed the major causes which students have championed over the last five decades, then concludes with "2010 Pay our fees" (see Tweet 50). The implication is that campaigning against the increase in tuition fees is not a 'worthy' cause, and is certainly not as justified as campaigning against war or racism. Rebecca Bardess is similarly dismissive of the student's cause, expressing outrage because another Twitter user compared them to the suffragettes, who had, in Bardess' opinion, a much worthier cause (see Tweet 51). Comparisons such as this imply that some protest tactics are only justified when they are used to campaign for significant causes. Which causes are 'worthy' of specific tactics is, presumably, decided by the author of the tweet. These tweets also imply that the protesters are acting selfishly. Whilst campaigning against racism or war benefits others, the implication is that the students were protesting for something that would only benefit themselves. This argument is easily refuted, as the increased tuition fees would not come into effect until 2012, and were not applied to current students. Nevertheless, self-interest was a common accusation levelled at the protesters on Twitter during the 2010 tuition fee demonstrations.



Tweet 50: Tweeted by David Chernick at 3:00 p.m. on 30 November 2010. The tweet implies that tuition fees are a selfish and insignificant issue to campaign on compared to past issues that students have championed.

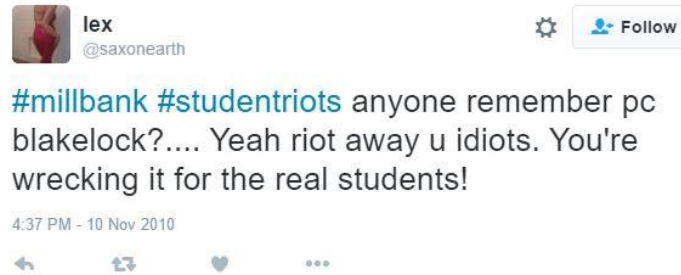


Tweet 51: Tweeted by Rebecca Bardess at 7:32 p.m. on 30 November 2010. The tweet implies that tuition fees is not a 'worthy' cause compared to female suffrage.

Other Twitter users referenced past protest in their criticism of the protesters' tactics. For example, one tweet warns of the danger of rioting by mentioning "pc blakelock" (see Tweet 52). PC Keith Blakelock was killed during the Broadwater Farm riots in October 1985. The first member of the Metropolitan Police to die in a riot in 150 years, Blakelock was killed by a large group of rioters after he fell over during a police retreat.⁹⁰¹ Blakelock's death alienated any supporters the rioters had, and triggered a ruthless police crackdown.⁹⁰² It is unclear whether the author of Tweet 52 is warning against killing someone, or against the possibility of creating a similar backlash. The ambiguity highlights the importance of audience when thinking about the impact of tweets. As with all forms of text, there are no guarantees that the reader will interpret the text in the way that the author intended. Either way, the tweet is critical of the students and their tactics, and uses the tragic outcome of a past protest to justify that perspective.

⁹⁰¹ Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁹⁰² Bloom, *Violent London*.

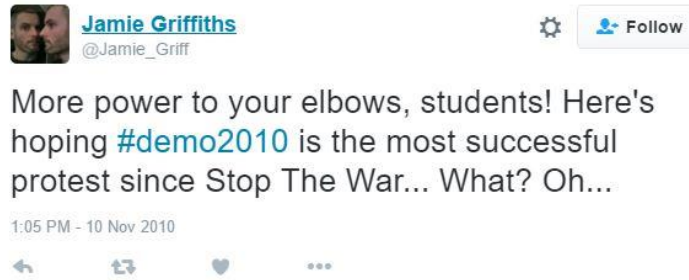


Tweet 52: Tweeted by saxonearth at 4:37 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet's author is using the 1985 Broadwater Farm Riots to criticise violence as a protest tactic.

Another form of criticism related to the effectiveness of protest more generally, rather than targeting the students specifically. Some tweets referred to past protests that did not achieve the change they demanded in order to argue that protest never works (see Tweets 53–5). As Tweets 53 and 54 demonstrate, sarcasm is a common tool of critical tweets. Herbert Colston argues that verbal irony is used to enhance criticism, indicating that the authors of Tweets 53 and 54 wanted their criticism to be particularly scathing.⁹⁰³ All three tweets refer to the anti-war demonstration in 2003. It is widely perceived that the failure of such a large demonstration to influence the government's decision caused widespread disillusionment with both parliamentary democracy and protest.⁹⁰⁴ Its use in this context, to imply that the 2010 protesters were doomed to fail, supports this analysis.

⁹⁰³ Herbert L. Colston, "Salting a Wound or Sugaring a Pill: The Pragmatic Functions of Ironic Criticism," *Discourse Processes* 23, no. 1 (1997): 25–45.

⁹⁰⁴ Barkham, "Iraq War 10 Years On."



Tweet 53: Tweeted by Jamie Griffiths at 1:05 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet uses sarcasm to imply that protest is not an effective method of achieving goals.



Tweet 54: Tweeted by Geolibertarian at 10:37 a.m. on 30 November 2010. This tweet takes a similar approach, suggesting that protest is pointless.



Tweet 55: Tweeted by hayley at 5:02 p.m. on 9 December 2010. Interestingly, the author of this tweet uses the Poll Tax as an example of protest that failed, whilst most consider it an example of success.

The protesters were not the only group that were criticised using past protest events as ammunition. The Metropolitan Police do not always enjoy the full support of Londoners, and the policing of protest is one area in which their approach has proved particularly controversial. Twitter users referenced well-known examples of excessive and violent behaviour by

police officers and unsafe and ineffective policing tactics. The most common example of police violence to be mentioned was the death of Ian Tomlinson, a newspaper vendor who was killed during the G20 protests in London in late March and early April 2009 (see Tweets 56 and 57). The protests were small and poorly attended, but the policing of them was brutal and violent. Tomlinson died after being struck on the leg and knocked over by a member of the Territorial Support Group (TSG).⁹⁰⁵ Despite the event being captured on multiple cameras, both the Metropolitan Police and the Independent Police Complaints Commission appeared reluctant to thoroughly investigate what happened, and no action was taken against any police officers.⁹⁰⁶ Just eighteen months later, Tomlinson's death was clearly still fresh in the minds of those watching the student protests unfold.



Tweet 56: Tweeted by Chris Horner at 8:03 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The tweet uses the example of Ian Tomlinson to criticise The Daily Mail for being dismissive about complaints of police violence.

⁹⁰⁵ Bloom, *Violent London*.

⁹⁰⁶ Bloom, *Violent London*.



Tweet 57: Tweeted by Gurminder Chera at 5:56 p.m. on 10 November 2010. This tweet is also referring to Ian Tomlinson, although it does not mention him by name.

Ian Tomlinson was not the only individual mistreated by police during the G20 protests. 282 complaints were made against the TSG as a result of their actions during the protests, and the tweets during the 2010 protests reflected a sense of general brutality.⁹⁰⁷ Whilst the violent actions of individual police officers can cause tragedy and controversy, more general police tactics during protests have also been condemned. I have already discussed the use of kettling at the 2010 protests; it was also employed at the G20 protests, as stated in Tweet 58.

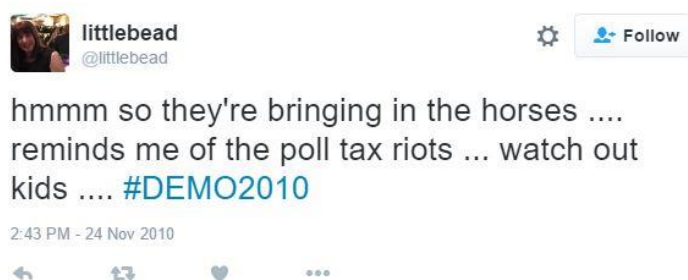


Tweet 58: Tweeted by Jon Reed at 7:06 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The tweet criticises the use of kettling, which the author believes has already been proved to be ineffective.

Another controversial policing tactic which was employed during the student protests was using police horses to charge at protesters. Whilst police horses are often present at protests, charging at protesters is not a

⁹⁰⁷ Bloom, *Violent London*.

common tactic. However, during the third London protest on 24 November, police horses were charged into a crowd of protesters around 7 p.m.⁹⁰⁸ Tweet 59 was published several hours before the charge occurred, but the mere sight of police horses was enough to remind the author of the Poll Tax Riots. One of the most well-known episodes of the riots was a charge across Trafalgar Square by twenty mounted police officers.⁹⁰⁹ Like Cable Street, Trafalgar Square is arguably a *lieu de mémoire*—it is commonly associated with both protest and the celebration of national events.⁹¹⁰ When protests take place in Trafalgar Square, they both draw on and feed a tradition of protest in the Square that means such connections between past and present protests are made frequently. By referencing past examples where such tactics failed or caused injury, the tweets are implying that the Metropolitan Police are either incompetent, or do not care if their tactics are dangerous.



Tweet 59: Tweeted by littlebead at 2:34 p.m. on 24 November 2010. The sight of police horses reminds the author of the Poll Tax Riots, when twenty mounted officers charged across Trafalgar Square.

Some Twitter users did not make connections between the 2010 student protests and historic protests in order to support or criticise the

⁹⁰⁸ Adam Gabbatt, Paul Lewis, Matthew Taylor and Rachel Williams. “Student Protests: Met under Fire for Charging at Demonstrators,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 26, 2010, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/26/student-protests-police-under-fire>.

⁹⁰⁹ McFarlane and Akwagyiram, “Poll Tax Riots.”

⁹¹⁰ Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2005 [1976]); Shanti Sumartojo, *Trafalgar Square and the Narration of Britishness: Imagining the Nation* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013).

protesters or the Metropolitan Police. In some tweets published during the protests, sharing personal memories seemed to be the primary purpose (see Tweets 60 and 61). In Tweet 60, the author points out the students were marching past a location in which she helped to campaign against the introduction of university tuition fees. The link to the student protests in Tweet 61 is more tenuous, only mentioning the protests in the hashtag #millbank. Nevertheless, the author is making a link between the events at 30 Millbank and a Reclaim the Streets protest that he attended. Protest has become increasingly socially acceptable over the last decade, to the extent that it is now 'cool.'⁹¹¹ Tweets 60 and 61 are arguably more about establishing the authors' radical credentials within their own social networks than the protests.



Tweet 60: Tweeted by Alison Gibbs at 2:19 p.m. on 9 December 2010. The tweet's author remembers the campaign to prevent tuition fees being introduced in the first place, during which she put up posters in a street where the 2010 protesters marched.

⁹¹¹ See, for example, Zoe Williams, "Reasons to be Cheerful in 2012: Protest is Cool," *The Guardian* last modified January 20, 2012, accessed February 9, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jan/20/cheerful-2012-protest-is-cool>.



Tweet 61: Tweeted by Simon Poole at 3:12 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is reminiscing about his own experiences of protest.

7.4.2 The Legacies of the 2010 Student Demonstrations

As the most recent of the case studies discussed in this thesis, it is difficult to evaluate the commemorative legacies of the Student Protests. No hegemonic narrative of events has developed, and there is no consensus amongst academics who study the protests on what to call them. As we have seen in relation to the Battle of Cable Street, it can take decades for a name to achieve popular recognition, or for a *lieu de mémoire* to form.⁹¹² It may be that the Student Demonstrations do not come to retain a place in the popular memory. In 2016, few archives or museums had collections relating to the protests. The Infoshop 56a in Elephant and Castle, London, has a small collection, but much of it remains uncatalogued. Although there is a lot of data on the protests that can be gathered from the internet, the lack of material preserved in archives and museums complicates academic research, and creates doubt as to whether scholars in the future will be able to conduct research on what happened.

There was some discussion at the time of the protests as to how the demonstrations would be remembered in the future, but it was minimal. One Twitter user stated that he hoped that the events at Millbank would become known as ‘the Siege of Millbank’, whilst another argued that history would reflect more kindly on the protests than the media at the

⁹¹² Tony Kushner, “‘Long May its Memory Live!’: Writing and Rewriting ‘the Battle of Cable Street,’ in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 109–80.

time (see Tweets 62 and 63). Modern social movements are frequently eager to have some say over how their actions are preserved and commemorated, for example Occupy Wall Street had an Archiving Working Group with the goal of preserving representations of the movement from their own perspective.⁹¹³ However there was no organisational attempt to document and preserve the student protests. This may be because there were multiple different groups involved in their organisation: the NUS, the UCU and the NCAFC organised the demonstrations, whilst the occupations were largely organised by on-campus anti-cuts groups, or developed spontaneously. In addition, the NUS and UCU, the most established and well-funded organisations involved in the demonstrations' organisation, disapproved of how the protests developed, so have no vested interest in ensuring they are remembered and commemorated. They may even prefer the protests be forgotten.



Tweet 62: Tweeted by Anton Howes at 2:54 p.m. on 10 November 2010. The author is speculating about what name the events at 30 Millbank would come to be known by. It is interesting that military language, so prominent in the way the Battle of Cable Street is remembered, is making an appearance here too.

⁹¹³ Anne Kaun, "Archiving Protest: Changing Temporal Regimes of the Archive" (paper presented at Times are a Changin': Temporality, Memory, and Social Movements, University of Westminster, London, June 2–3, 2016).



Gary Barratt
@snakesnakewhale



Follow

history will look more kindly on the student demonstrations than the media currently is - just like miners strikes of the 80s. #demo2010

2:41 PM - 24 Nov 2010



Tweet 63: Tweeted by Gary Barratt at 2:41 p.m. on 24 November 2010. Barratt argues that history views the 1984–85 Miner’s Strike more kindly than the media at the time did, and he hopes the same will be true of the student protests.

Nevertheless, the protests have arguably retained a place within the collective memory of the British student movement. There were anniversary marches on 9 November 2011 and 21 November 2012, both protesting the rising cost of university and further education.⁹¹⁴ November remains a significant time of year for student protests, with major demonstrations in London in 2014 and 2015. The 2015 demonstration, on 4 November, was organised by the NCAFC, and focused on government plans to abolish maintenance grants, and replace them with loans.⁹¹⁵ The NCAFC made no explicit links to the 2010 protests in their promotional materials or explanations for the 2015 protest.⁹¹⁶ However, the date selected for the 2015 demonstration could be interpreted as an implicit acknowledgement of the 2010 protests and their impact on the student movement.

⁹¹⁴ Shiv Malik, Patrick Kingsley, Alexandra Topping and agencies, “Student Tuition Fees Protest Passes off Peacefully,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 9, 2011, accessed June 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/nov/09/student-fees-protest-peacefully>; BBC News, “Students March in London Protest,” last modified November 21, 2012, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20412792>.

⁹¹⁵ Aftab Ali, “Thousands of Students Prepare to March through London in National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts’ Demonstration,” *Independent*, last modified November 3, 2015, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/thousands-of-students-prepare-to-march-through-london-in-national-campaign-against-fees-and-cuts-a6719631.html>.

⁹¹⁶ NCAFC, “Free Education and Living Grants for All: No Barriers// No Borders// No Business,” last modified July 8, 2015, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://anticuts.com/2015/07/08/free-education-living-grants-for-all-no-barriers-no-borders-no-business/>.

Whilst the 2010 Student Demonstrations are preserved in the collective memory of the British student movement, it is difficult to predict the lasting legacy of the protests, if any, in the collective memory of the general public. What can be considered, using tweets published during the four protests in London, is how that collective memory was utilised to begin interpreting the protests as they occurred. Twitter users made comparisons between them and historic protests, and used past protests as examples to support their arguments about the tactics and behaviour of both the students and the Metropolitan police. A wide range of historic protests were considered recognisable enough to be used as points of reference in tweets, but the most common were the Poll Tax Riots and the 2009 G20 protests. It is an illustrative example of how protests are retained in the collective memory, and how that memory is utilised in various ways.

7.5 Conclusions

The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations in 2010 are arguably one of the most significant examples of the anti-austerity resistance that has characterised protest in London for almost the last decade. Across four major days of protest, and twelve occupations in the capital, the student movement constructed a concerted campaign to prevent the changes to higher and further education funding. The campaign failed in its primary objective, but its achievements were still arguably significant, including the innovation of new protest techniques, such as cat-and-mouse evasions and the use of 'crowd-sourced' maps, which have since been included in the repertoires of protest used in London.

In this chapter, I have compared the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations to each of the previous three case studies; the Gordon Riots, the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and the Battle of Cable Street. Whilst each of the previous three chapters focussed on a different theme, there is one overarching argument that can be made from the comparisons: over the last 230 years, there have been significant changes to repertoires of

protest in London, but there are some elements that have remained more or less the same. Participants in the Gordon Riots, the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and the Battle of Cable Street wouldn't recognise crowd-sourced maps, occupations, or Twitter, but they would be familiar with marches, fires, and the strategic destruction of property. Other things, such as rumours, and expressions of solidarity, have remained much the same but their methods of transmission have evolved with the continual development of new communication technologies.

Modern communication technologies have allowed protesters to communicate and organise faster and across larger distances more reliably—although not infallibly—than was possible during the Gordon Riots in 1780. Websites, mobile phones, and communication apps like Twitter are used in a variety of ways in the run-up to protests, including sharing information and attempting to mobilise participants. *During* protests, however, their use changes. I have proposed a new typology for tweets published during protests: reaction, witness, information, mobilisation, and solidarity. There are limits to modern communication technologies however; they are not the panacea that some scholars seem to think they are. The digital divide, unreliable signal, low battery or phone credit, confusion over Twitter hashtags, government oppression, and the potential for surveillance can all hinder their use during protests. Modern communication technologies have had an undeniable impact on protest, but some elements, such as word of mouth, rumours, and conspiracy theories, are still recognisable.

Unlike the Gordon Riots, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations had several groups involved in their organisation; the NUS, UCU, and NCAFC. Using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, however, I argue that rather than classifying protests as *either* organised *or* disorganised, we should acknowledge the organisational complexity of protests. A number of different organisational methods can be utilised during a single protest, particularly if there is a large number of participants. As well as the organisational efforts of the NUS, UCU, and

NCAFC, the participants in the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations also employed a variety of other organisational methods, such as the crowd-sourced maps and repertoires of protest. Protests are not organised or disorganised, they are a rhizomatic combination of the two.

The Metropolitan Police was a relatively young body in 1866; 150 years later it has had significant experience of policing protest. It is also supported by clearer laws on what kind of protest is permitted, where. The police use laws such as the Public Order Act (1986) and the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005) and strategies such as kettling and squeezing to exert spatial control over protests. Nevertheless, protesters still struggle with London's authorities for the right to the city—for access to the public spaces that allow them to make their voices heard. The participants in the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations used tactics such as vocally asserting the right to protest, claiming space through weight of numbers, cat-and-mouse evasions, and leaving pre-approved protest routes to challenge and subvert the police's spatial control. The Hyde Park Railings Affair was part of an ongoing conflict for London's public spaces, as were the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. More than likely it is a conflict that will not see an end, as Londoners continue to demand the right to express themselves in their city.

The Battle of Cable Street has become one of the most well-known protests in London's history; a powerful symbol that is a significant part of London's radical identity. I will not attempt to predict whether the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations will be as famous in eighty years' time, but I have demonstrated how historic protests were used to support, criticise, and make sense of the protests. References to past protests were used to both support and criticise the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, criticise the Metropolitan Police, and make sense of what was happening. So far, the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations do not have a universally agreed name, nor is there any concerted attempt to preserve related materials in an archive. However, November is now a popular time for demonstrations related to the funding and condition of further and higher education, so

the Demonstrations arguably have left some mark on London's protest landscape. London has a rich history of protest to draw on, and past protests have a significant impact on modern protests, including influencing the ways that they are interpreted and discussed by observers.

The Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations were about the funding of further and higher education in England. However, they were also a struggle over space, both physically and symbolically. The demonstrators contested the authorities' control over London's space, and in so doing joined a long tradition of struggle that is as old as London itself.

8

Contesting the Capital: Conclusions

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out four research questions. Over the last seven chapters, I have attempted to answer these questions through the in-depth analysis and comparison of four case studies: the Gordon Riots (1780), the Hyde Park Railings Affair (1866), the Battle of Cable Street (1936), and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations (2010). In this concluding chapter, I summarise my responses to the research questions, consider the contribution that my work makes to scholarly debates, and discuss the implications of the research. Before addressing the research questions, however, I shall summarise my methodological approach.

The long scope of *Contesting the Capital* required some methodological creativity. I employed an informal, situational analytical approach in order to comprehend a wide range of different kinds of evidence that included published and unpublished sources, images, audio recordings, and social media. Collecting this evidence involved engaging with a wide range of archives and, in the case of social media, developing an original method of data collection. The breadth of sources with which I engaged meant devoting significant resources to source criticism; in each case I had to spend time understanding the context in which the source was produced to make my analysis as rigorous as possible. In addition, I also had to make a significant investment in understanding the social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances of each case study. There are, I believe, some important benefits to taking a broad approach, such as the ability to identify long-term trends, several of which I have discussed in this thesis. By combining the best elements of the *longue durée* and microhistory approaches, this thesis contributes to scholarly discussion on both changing trends in social movements and protest, and the case studies as individual events.

The source collection and analysis which I employed allowed me to respond to my four research questions:

1. By what means have protesters (and their opponents) communicated and organised their activities? In what ways has geography mattered to these processes?
2. What does the history of protest in London tell us about the contested nature of public space?
3. How have historic protests been memorialised, and commemorated? To what extent have these legacies shaped later protests?
4. How have repertoires of protest responded to, and been shaped by, the specific geographies of protest events?

8.1 By what means have protesters (and their opponents) communicated and organised their activities? In what ways has geography mattered to these processes?

The ways in which protesters communicate and organise is the focus of a significant amount of academic literature (see 2.2). Geography is important for a full understanding of how these processes operate for a number of reasons. For example, urban geography provides explanations for why cities such as London are so conducive for social movements and dissent; they contain pre-existing networks for mobilisation and the transmission of information, and they foster strong social networks capable of supporting dissent.⁹¹⁷ There has also been considerable research into the role of networks in social movements. Activists use networks of various types and strengths to communicate and organise protest actions.⁹¹⁸ Most scholars

⁹¹⁷ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City, and Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

⁹¹⁸ Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin M. Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, no. 2 (2008): 157–72; Walter Nicholls, "Place, Networks, Space: Theorising the Geographies of Social Movements," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34, no. 1 (2009): 78–93.

focus on how activists communicate and organise *between* protests, however. I argue that it is also important to understand how protesters communicate and organise *during* protests, in order to aid our understanding of how protests function.

I contend that the ways in which both protesters and the authorities communicate during a protest can be split into three categories:

1. **Written or printed:** Including missives, hand bills, pamphlets, proclamations, letters, notes, websites, texts, phone calls, phone-based communication apps (e.g., Whatsapp, BBM), and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat);
2. **Verbal:** Including conversations, word-of-mouth, and speeches;
3. **Non-verbal:** Including symbolism (e.g. cockades, badges, clothing, painted symbols), sounds (e.g. cheering, bells, fire), smells (e.g. fire), and the threat of violence.

As time has passed, the invention of new communication technologies has increased the range of methods of communication available to protesters, generally allowing them to communicate more quickly and cheaply across large distances. Not every method listed above has been available during every protest featured in this thesis, but the three categories remain consistent. One form of non-verbal communication, symbolism, connects to the mythology of historic protests. By connecting themselves to past protest events, demonstrators can associate themselves with historic symbolism, achieving a sense of legitimacy, morality, or inevitable victory. The Battle of Cable Street has been drawn on in such a way, for campaigns as diverse as anti-racism and the location of fast food restaurants (see 6.7). During the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, connections were made to a wide range of historic protests, including the Suffragettes and the Poll Tax Riots, in order to communicate that the protesters' cause was just, and

that they were taking the right approach (see 7.4.1). The symbolism of the past can be just as useful to protesters as colours, logos, or slogans.

Much has been made by academics of modern communication technologies and their role in social movements, but they are not the panacea that some perceive them to be.⁹¹⁹ Participants in the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations faced communication difficulties caused by modern communication technologies. These ranged from practical issues such as bad phone or internet signal, low phone battery, insufficient network credit, and the proliferation of Twitter hashtags, to more complicated issues such as the digital divide, the police's use of the internet to surveil and build legal cases against protesters, and the potential for governments to monitor and suppress internet communication. Modern communication technologies are not a silver bullet for protesters. Whilst some of the methods of communication used in modern protest would seem alien to the Gordon Rioters, much of the content that is communicated would seem familiar. Rumours, expressions of solidarity, and conspiracy theories have all remained much the same throughout London's history, even as the technologies used to communicate them have become more sophisticated. The development of new communication technologies has *shaped* protest over time, rather than *transforming* it.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome can aid our understanding of the organisational processes that occur during a protest.⁹²⁰ Rhizomes are "comprised of non-hierarchical networks within which there are many ways to proceed from one point to another."⁹²¹ The

⁹¹⁹ Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Yannis Theocharis, "The Wealth of (Occupation) Networks? Communication Patterns and Information Distribution in a Twitter Protest Network," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 10, no. 1 (2013): 35–56; Kjerstin Thorson *et al.*, "YouTube, Twitter and the Occupy Movement: Connecting Content and Circulation Practices," *Information, Communication and Society* 16, no. 3 (2013): 421–51.

⁹²⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: London: Athlone, 1987).

⁹²¹ Anna Secor, "Rhizome," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory *et al.* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 655–56; 655.

way that protesters organise themselves is rhizomatic. In contrast, authorities tend to employ organisational structures that are arboreal: “centred (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths.”⁹²² During both the Gordon Riots and the Hyde Park Railings Affair the authorities were hampered by ambiguous laws that left them unable or unwilling to act decisively to quell dissent. A rigid hierarchy can make decisions slow to implement, which meant that the authorities were often one step behind the rioters. In contrast, protesters use a wide variety of methods to organise, allowing them to respond flexibly to rapidly changing situations. Despite often being a disparate group with different or even conflicting goals, protesters use techniques such as repertoires of protest, ephemeral leaders, and, more recently, crowd-sourced maps to organise in a highly responsive and rhizomatic fashion.

Sometimes structured groups or institutions will play an organisational role, such as the Reform League in the case of the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and the UCU, NUS, and NCAFC during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. Events such as these, however, highlight a false dichotomy between ‘organised’ and ‘disorganised’ protests. A range of different organisational forms are frequently employed in a single protest; different groups organise protests to different extents; and protest organisers are not always able to maintain control of the protests they instigate. Both the Reform League and the UCU/NUS lost control of the demonstrations they organised—the events in Hyde Park and at Millbank were not part of the original plan. However, once demonstrators deviate from the official plan, they are still capable of organising themselves, as the response to the fire extinguisher thrown from the roof of 30 Millbank demonstrates. As such, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the organisational processes involved in a protest, and to understand that to describe a protest as (dis)organised is an oversimplification.

⁹²² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*; 21.

In order to provide a full response to this research question, it was necessary to engage with the historical geographies of practice and performance. Despite the inherent difficulties in researching such topics with archival sources, the majority of which are text-based, there is a growing body of scholarly work in the area (see 2.3.3). Historical geographers such as Miles Ogborn and Carl Griffin have explored the challenges and potential of researching practice in the archive both in general and in relation to protest respectively.⁹²³ This thesis builds on this body of work in two main ways: by applying the ideas to new case studies, namely the Gordon Riots and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations; and by connecting them to the concept of repertoires of protest, which I argue is one of the key concepts for understanding how protesters organise during the protest itself.

This thesis contributes to the geographies of protest by considering how protesters organise *during* protests, as well *between* them. As time has passed and technology has developed, modern communication networks have increased the speed and efficiency with which information can circulate, although modern communication technologies are not without their limitations. Organisation during protests has also developed with time and technology, but many techniques remain much the same.

⁹²³ Carl J. Griffin, "'Cut Down by some Cowardly Miscreants': Plant Maiming, or the Malicious Act of Cutting Flora, as an Act of Protest in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rural England." *Rural History* 19, no. 1 (2008): 29–54; Carl J. Griffin. "Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early Nineteenth-Century English Protest," *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 139–62; Carl Griffin, "Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict: Understanding the Spaces of 'Tree-maiming' in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (2008): 91–108; Carl J. Griffin and Adrian B. Evans, "On Historical Geographies of Embodied Practice and Performance," *Historical Geography* 36 (2008): 5–16; Carl J. Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014); Miles Ogborn, "Francis Williams's Bad Language: Historical Geography in a World of Practice," *Historical Geography* 37 (2009): 5–21.

8.2 What does the history of protest in London tell us about the contested nature of public space?

Public space is a vague and contested concept, in both academic and non-academic terms. A basic definition is “[s]pace to which all citizens have a right of access.”⁹²⁴ Cities provide the public space necessary for dissent, but they are not always easily accessible to protesters.⁹²⁵ Public space in cities such as London has decreased over time, as the size and density of urban areas has increased, and an increasing number of public spaces have become privately owned. Scholars who employ both the public sphere and right to the city concepts argue that public space is important for the healthy functioning of citizenship and democracy.⁹²⁶ The right to access and use public space, however, is not guaranteed, and conflict over who can do what in which space is common. When there is conflict between different groups about what kind of behaviour is—or even what kind of people are—tolerated in a public space, it is usually the most powerful groups who win out. Don Mitchell has argued that concerted conflict over access to public space began in the 1990s, but examples such as the Hyde Park Railings Affair show that the conflict actually goes back much further.⁹²⁷

Over the last 50 years, laws governing protest in England have become clearer and more defined. The advantage of this for protesters is that a (limited) right to protest in public spaces is now protected in law. The disadvantage is that there is now less room for debate about the nature and purpose of public space. The Hyde Park Railings Affair began as

⁹²⁴ Blomley, “Public Space;” 602.

⁹²⁵ Tonkiss, *Space, the City, and Social Theory*.

⁹²⁶ Kafui A. Attoh, “What Kind of Right is the Right to the City?” *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 5 (2011): 669–85; Peter Marcuse, “From Critical Urban Theory to the Right to the City.” *City* 13, no. 2–3 (2009): 185–96; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (London: The Guildford Press, 2003); Geraldine Pratt, “Private and Public Spheres,” in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th edition, eds. Derek Gregory et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 583–4.

⁹²⁷ Don Mitchell, “People’s Park Again: On the End and Ends of Public Space,” *Environment and Planning A* 49, no. 3 (2015): 1–16.

a demand for universal male suffrage, but became a demand that the people of London be able to access the city's public spaces for whatever purpose they choose. In 1866, there was a question over whether or not the Metropolitan Police had the right to ban the demonstrators from entering Hyde Park; there is no such question in 2018. This has not stopped twenty-first century protesters from demanding the right to protest in public space—cat-and-mouse evasions, deviating from the pre-agreed march route, and sit-ins and occupations are all methods employed during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations to defy authorities' control of public space. The conflict for the right to access, and protest in, public space continues, and is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, if ever. Drawing comparisons between the Hyde Park Railings Affair and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations contributes to geographic literature that seeks to understand that conflict (see 5.2).

As well as the ongoing conflict over access to public space, protest also highlights more subtle debates over the character and appearance of public space, illustrating the mutually constitutive relationship between space, place, and protest. Human behaviour in different places is governed by social conventions that dictate normative behaviour; in other words, different behaviours are 'in place,' or 'out of place.'⁹²⁸ Although powerful, such social conventions are not fixed, and protest can reveal their inherent changeability. The Hyde Park Railings Affair sparked extensive debates about which kinds of behaviour were acceptable in Hyde Park, demonstrating that there was not actually a consensus on the issue. There was also debate about who the park was for, illustrating that it is not just certain behaviours but whole groups of people that can be deemed 'out of place.' The satirical map of Hyde Park from 1867 reveals that class was a significant factor in the social conventions that governed the park.

Symbolism plays a significant role in the contestation of public space. Due to its proximity to Tyburn, the historic location of public

⁹²⁸ Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

executions, Hyde Park has an association with free speech that stems from the tradition of the condemned's final speech. The association was codified with the official creation of Speaker's Corner in 1872, but the Reform League would have been aware of the symbolism when choosing Hyde Park as the location for their protest.⁹²⁹ The cast-iron railings, too, were an exclusionary symbol, reinforcing the message that the demonstrators were not welcome in Hyde Park. Pulling down the railings was not just the removal of a physical obstruction, it was also the removal of a social barrier. For critics of the Reform League, the trampling of flowerbeds in the park was symbolic of the insincerity of the protesters; it was argued that they merely wanted chaos, not electoral reform.

The protesters' success in gaining control of space, although temporary, was also symbolic. Protests in London, particularly those close to the Houses of Parliament, Downing Street, and government buildings in Westminster, represent a challenge to the national government as well as the Metropolitan Police. When the protesters during the Gordon Riots, the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations won control of London's public spaces, it was a humiliation for the national government as well as local authorities. When a protest takes place in London, the stakes are higher than they would be elsewhere. All four of the case studies had national ramifications, and all were at least partially about national rather than local issues. The protesters were facing national as well as local authorities, resulting in higher risk for all parties involved. If the government could not control its own capital city, what implications might that have had in the aftermath of the Gordon Riots? The humiliation suffered by the BUF at the Battle of Cable Street reflected on the national organisation, not just the London branches. In addition, protests that take place in London are more likely to get media coverage than those that occur elsewhere, a fact that raises the stakes further still, giving protesters

⁹²⁹ John Michael Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech: Speakers' Corner, The Geography of Governance and a Crisis of Rationality," *Social and Legal Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 271–292.

the chance to disseminate their message and authorities the chance to be humiliated. News of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations was transmitted all around the world, and the student demonstrators received messages of solidarity from as far afield as Switzerland, America, and Australia.⁹³⁰ London's public spaces hold extensive opportunities for protest, but they also entail larger risk.

In most places, protest is an abnormal event. As such, it can cause us to question the implicit social conventions and rules governing public space, because it reveals them to not be as natural as they often seem. To paraphrase Doreen Massey, protest reveals the political potential of space.⁹³¹ The relationship between protest and public space is not merely one-way, however, public space also influences protest. Freely accessible public space is an important part of ensuring the successful functioning of a city's public life. Whether or not people have the right to protest in public space, the conditions placed on those rights, and how those rights are policed play a significant role in the healthy functioning of a city. It is a right that is not guaranteed, as the examples of the Reform League, the 2010 protesters and, in fact, the British Union of Fascists, can attest to. Protest can expose the contested nature of public space, but it is also part of that process of contestation, as demonstrators struggle with authorities for the right to spaces in which they can make their voices heard.

⁹³⁰ Ben Lyons, Twitter post, December 9, 2010 (10:56 p.m.) accessed June 2, 2017, https://twitter.com/Lyons_Ben/status/13004160936968192; R. Amiri Alexander, Twitter post, November 24, 2010 (3:08 p.m.) accessed June 2, 2017, <https://twitter.com/Top713Dawg/status/7450409585082368>; SmokeRh, Twitter post, November 10, 2010 (12:49 p.m.), accessed June 2, 2017, <https://twitter.com/SmokeRH/status/2342010761510912>.

⁹³¹ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).

8.3 How have historic protests been memorialised, and commemorated? To what extent have these legacies shaped later protests?

Throughout London's history, there have been thousands of protests. The majority of them fade from collective memory, perhaps only known about by historians of the city. A few, however, do become part of collective memory, and are memorialised and commemorated in a variety of ways. This process of memorialisation is varied, and different protests are remembered in different ways, through different events and representations. Some are mythologised, the narrative preserved in the collective memory quite differently from what 'actually' happened. Some are forgotten over time; the Gordon Riots were sufficiently well-known in the mid-nineteenth century to feature as the backdrop for Charles Dickens' novel *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), but they are now largely forgotten.⁹³² These memories, myths, and narratives impact modern protests in London in a number of ways, including the construction of activist identities, and influencing repertoires of protest. However, as with many things in this thesis, the relationship is reciprocal, and the myths of past protests are altered to fit the concerns and ideals of the present.

Les lieux de mémoire— 'sites of memory'—are objects, places or events "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself."⁹³³ Coined by Pierre Nora, the term allows us to think about why certain objects, places, and events are significant to the process of memory and commemoration. Perhaps the most obvious *lieux de mémoire* are memorials; works of public art that commemorate a past event or person. I have discussed several memorials in this thesis, such as the Reformer's Tree in Hyde Park and the Cable Street mural, and there are many more in the streets of London. Coloured plaques inscribed with brief details of an event or an individual's achievements are also common in London, installed on walls where an

⁹³² Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841).

⁹³³ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,' *Representations* no. 26 (1989): 7–24; 7

event took place or an individual lived. Dates can also become *lieux de mémoire*, as anniversaries, particularly those marking multiples of five, ten, and twenty-five years since an event, are celebrated. For example, marches are held on the anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street, and demonstrations relating to further and higher education frequently take place around the anniversary of the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations. Cultural representations, such as books, plays, art, and films, are another form of *lieux de mémoire*; I have already mentioned *Barnaby Rudge*, and the Battle of Cable Street has also been the inspiration for such representations.⁹³⁴ Sites of protest themselves can also become *lieux de mémoire*. William Sewell argues that spaces can be sacralised by a protest, increasing both the likelihood and the symbolism of future protests in that same space.⁹³⁵ I have already noted that Cable Street hosts demonstrations on the anniversary of the Battle. Another example is St. George's Fields, the location of the rally before the march to present the Protestant Association's petition to Parliament in June 1780. A dozen years before, in May 1768, a demonstration there in support of the radical politician John Wilkes ended badly when several people were shot by troops.⁹³⁶ St. George's Fields was a place with radical connotations.

Lieux de mémoire help shape the narrative, or myth, of historical protests. The Battle of Cable Street is remembered by many as a victory of anti-fascism and community over fascism and xenophobia. The reality was not so clear cut however, as historians such as Daniel Tilles are quick to point out.⁹³⁷ The Battle did not end acts of anti-Semitism in the East End, and the BUF actually enjoyed an increase in membership in the months afterwards. Whilst it is perfectly valid to point out the inaccuracies in such

⁹³⁴ Tony Kushner, "'Long May its Memory Live!': Writing and Rewriting the Battle of Cable Street," in *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, eds. Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000): 109–80.

⁹³⁵ William H. Sewell, Jr., "Space in Contentious Politics," in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, eds. Ronald R. Aminzade *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51–88.

⁹³⁶ Bloom, *Violent London*; German and Rees, *A People's History of London*.

⁹³⁷ Daniel Tilles, "The Myth of Cable Street," *History Today* 61, no. 10 (2011): 41–7.

a myth however, it is perhaps a more fruitful avenue of research to consider the purpose and use of such inaccuracies. Historic protests can exert a strong influence on the activists and social movements that follow them.

As with most historic events, protests can be used in the process of identity construction. For example, the East End of London is imagined as a space of radicalism and dissent, by both those who live there and those who do not. The Battle of Cable Street reinforces that narrative. The Battle is also an important part of anti-fascist identities in London, as evidenced by the presence of protest stickers on Cable Street (see 6.6). Historic protests also provide activists with inspiration, and a sense of continuity. The mythology of Cable Street portrays the Battle as an impressive, overwhelming victory. This allows activists to think that because it has happened before, it can happen again. Also, reference to historic protests places activists in an ongoing struggle; their actions feel significant beyond the immediate issue they are confronting. In addition, past protests also influence activists in a more practical sense, by affecting repertoires of protest. The Battle of Cable Street may have introduced the barricade to London radicals, for example.

The memory of historic protests is often altered to fit modern concerns. By the 1970s, the area around Cable Street had large African and Asian populations, and the myth of the Battle was used to combat racism against these communities. A protest originally about anti-Semitism became a symbol of anti-racism more generally. The myth of the Battle has also been utilised for multiple causes even less relevant to its original goal, including pensioners' and prisoners' rights, and even the placement of a fast food outlet near a school. As the memory of historic protest is used for present conflicts, it is gradually changed, altering the mythology.

Another way in which the myth of past protests shape later protests is in influencing how the later protests are interpreted. During the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations, events from London's history of protest were used in three main ways:

1. **Supporting protest:** Historic protests were used to argue for the necessity of direct action, through the use of historic examples where direct action was successful, and peaceful protest failed;
2. **Criticising protest:** Examples of historic protests were used to argue that protest did not work; violence was dangerous and unnecessary; and that the demonstrators' cause was 'not worthy,' considering what historic activists had fought for;
3. **Criticising the Metropolitan Police:** Past examples of excessive force were mentioned, as well as references to the past employment of tactics that were perceived to be dangerous, including kettling and horseback charges.

Protests that were frequently referenced include the Suffragettes (early twentieth century), the Broadwater Farm Riots (1985), the Poll Tax Riots (1991), and the G20 protests (2009). Historic protest events were used to frame, interpret, and judge the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations as they progressed. This is another example of the benefits of studying what happens *during* protest, as well as *between* them.

By analysing in-depth the relationship between protest, memory, and commemoration in London this thesis builds on geographic literature that aims to explore the functions and implications of the way we remember the past (see 6.3). There is a wealth of historic protests that Londoners can draw on for identity, inspiration, a sense of continuity, and as a way to make sense of the present. Many protests are never used in this way, but some become mythologised, memorialised and commemorated in *lieux de mémoire*. Through this process, however, the mythology is altered to fit present circumstances. In this way, historical and modern protests in London develop together, shaping and influencing each other.

8.4 How have repertoires of protest responded to, and been shaped by, the specific geographies of protest events?

Charles Tilly defines 'repertoires of contention' as "a limited number of well-known performances repeated with relatively minor variations."⁹³⁸

Whilst I have adapted the term to suit the terminology of this thesis, this is the definition that I have used. A repertoire of protest describes the range of tactics with which an individual or group are familiar. As such, they can be used in a range of situations with little or no prior organisation.

Repertoires of protest have been a constant recurring theme in this thesis; they are a way in which protesters organise, they respond to the developing conflict over public space, and they are shaped by the collective memory of past demonstrations.

Repertoires of protest are like a script; they provide individuals and groups with a series of actions that can be taken in a particular situation. The actions in a repertoire are well known, so an individual can often perform them without prior notice, even if they have never performed the action before. As a result, protesters can organise without a clear leader, as they already know what is expected of them. Whilst I have discussed this process specifically in relation to the Gordon Riots (see 4.2.1), it has occurred at all of the protests featured in this thesis. Different groups have slightly different repertoires. For example, occupations are an established part of the repertoire of the student movement (see 7.3.2), whilst workers are more likely to strike. It is important to note that repertoires of protest limit the actions of protesters as well as enabling them; they dictate what is *not* acceptable as well as what *is*. The instantaneous condemnation of the protester who threw the fire extinguisher off the roof of 30 Millbank is an example of this limitation. The individual was behaving in a way that did not fit the majority's repertoire of protest, and he was criticised for it.

⁹³⁸ Charles Tilly, *Britain Creates the Social Movement*, Centre for Research on Social Organization Working Paper No. 232 (1981); 9.

Ernst Breisach argues that, in both life and society, “the experience of change is counterbalanced by that of continuity.”⁹³⁹ It is the job of the historian to reconcile these two competing trends.⁹⁴⁰ With this in mind, I have identified a number of ways in which protest in the city both changed and stayed the same over the course of this thesis. Repertoires of protest are no exception. There are two sets of factors that drive change in repertoires of protest: external and internal. Political opportunity theory is a good framework for considering the external factors that influence repertoires of protest. As I noted in Chapter 2, political opportunity theory argues that protest is shaped by what is possible, such as what forms of resistance authorities will tolerate, and what technology is available (see 2.1.2). There are a number of ways in which the political opportunities available to Londoners changed between 1780 and 2010, and these changes have influenced repertoires of protest. A significant factor is the changes to the way in which protest is policed in London. The foundation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 dramatically altered policing in the city, transferring public order policing from Justices of the Peace and the military to a professional, specially trained force. The police’s approach to protest has changed over the years, generally oscillating between aggressive and militaristic, and cooperative and low-key.⁹⁴¹ Repertoires of protest have developed in response to these changes, as illustrated by the cat-and-mouse evasion tactic used by the student protesters to avoid being kettled.

The laws that underlie the policing of protest also changed dramatically between 1780 and 2010. The Riot Act was ambiguous and misunderstood, hampering the authorities in their attempts to quell the Gordon Riots. This is a situation that was not allowed to continue

⁹³⁹ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, 3rd edition (London: University of Chicago Press, 2007 [1983]); 3.

⁹⁴⁰ Breisach, *Historiography*.

⁹⁴¹ Robert Reiner, “Policing, Protest, and Disorder in Britain,” in *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*, eds. Donatella della Porta and Herbert Reiter (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 35–48.

indefinitely however, and many laws have since been passed which have placed limits on protest in London. In 1872 the Royal Parks and Gardens Regulation Act formalised the right to political public speech in Hyde Park, but restricted that right spatially, limiting it to Speaker's Corner.⁹⁴² This provided the legal backing which had been lacking when Sir Richard Mayne attempted to ban the Reform League's rally in Hyde Park in 1866. The 1936 Public Order Act banned political uniforms and paramilitary organisations and gave the police the power to temporarily ban protests in an area.⁹⁴³ The law went some way to defusing the conflict between the BUF and Jewish and left-wing groups in East London. The 1986 Public Order Act empowered the police to impose conditions and restrictions on marches and demonstrations, and the 2005 Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act placed further restrictions on protests taking place within a kilometre of Parliament Square. These laws, and others, have had implications for repertoires of protests in London. Criminalising an action does not necessarily prevent protesters from performing that action, but it does increase the risk involved, decreasing the likelihood that it will be performed. The less frequently an action is performed, the more likely it is to gradually disappear from a repertoire of protest. No political group in the city since the BUF has had a uniform, for example, and whilst it is probably not solely due to the 1936 Public Order Act, the law is arguably partially responsible. Examples such as this one demonstrate how laws related to dissent can shape repertoires of protest.

The final external influence on repertoires of protest that has been highlighted by this thesis is technology. I have already discussed the role of new technology in relation to communication and organisation in section 8.1 and in Chapter 7. Their impact goes further, however; technology affects more than communication media. For example, vehicles played a

⁹⁴² John Michael Roberts, "The Enigma of Free Speech: Speakers' Corner, The Geography of Governance and a Crisis of Rationality" *Social and Legal Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 271–292.

⁹⁴³ Public Order Act, 1936.

significant role in the Battle of Cable Street. Trams were immobilised and abandoned by their drivers, blocking Aldgate, and a lorry was overturned and used in the barricades on Cable Street. The Communist Party used motorcyclists to transport news and information.⁹⁴⁴ Motorised vehicles did not exist during the Gordon Riots or the Hyde Park Railings Affair, and they left their mark on repertoires of protest once they became commonly available. The Battle of Cable Street is an example of protesters embracing the technology available to them, but that is not always the case. Some protesters during the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations actively avoided modern technology, because of the potential mobile phones and digital cameras have for surveillance and evidence gathering by the authorities (see Figure 27). Some repertoires of protest are limited by new technology, rather than expanded by it.

When considering the internal factors that shape repertoires of protest, resource mobilisation theory is the most appropriate framework. In contrast to political opportunity theory, resource mobilisation argues that protest is shaped by the participants' access to financial, institutional, and cultural resources (see 2.1.2). Protesters in London can draw on the rich history of dissent in the city, and this extensive resource is reflected in repertoires of protest. If a new tactic is successful or symbolic then it can be absorbed into the repertoire of protest; it is how repertoires develop. In Chapter 4 I discussed the history of the practice of 'gutting' houses employed by the Gordon Rioters, which originated in the early seventeenth century (see 4.2.1). The absorption of barricades and the '¡No Pasaran!' slogan from the Battle of Cable Street into repertoires of protest in London is another example of this process (see Section 6.6). Protesters can mobilise their pasts to develop their repertoires.

In many ways, repertoires of protest connect all the other themes addressed in this thesis. They are one method that demonstrators use to organise; they provide protesters with the tools to contest the authorities'

⁹⁴⁴ Phil Piratin, *Our Flag Stays Red*, 3rd edition (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2006 [1948]).

control of public space, and they are shaped by the memory of past protest. As such, an understanding of repertoires of protest is essential for understanding the historical geographies of protest in London. I argue that this thesis has demonstrated how a focus on repertoires of protest can contribute to scholarly understandings of the historical geographies of protest. A geographical approach is also beneficial for understanding repertoires of protest themselves, as they vary spatially according to the conditions for, and histories of, protest in any one place.

8.5 London Calling: Protest and the Capital City

At its core, this thesis is an exploration of the relationship between space, place, and protest in London over the last two and a half centuries, as well as a demonstration of the significance of that relationship. Using this focus, it builds upon work by historians of protest who have embraced the ‘spatial turn,’ particularly Christina Parolin’s work on radical spaces in London between 1780 and c.1845.⁹⁴⁵ This thesis focuses on different events and elements of protest to Parolin and others, and therefore provides more evidence for the importance of space and place to understanding protest.⁹⁴⁶

I have approached the relationship between space, place, and protest from a unique combination of angles: communication and organisation; the contested nature of public space; the memorialisation and commemoration of protest; and repertoires of protest. However, it is this relationship that is central, and the key arguments of this thesis are about it. From a methodological perspective, the combination of *longue durée* and microhistory approaches allowed me to appreciate this relationship from both long term and in-depth perspectives, combining

⁹⁴⁵ Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c.1845* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010).

⁹⁴⁶ Other key researchers who have applied a spatial approach to the histories of protest, or who study the historical geographies of protest, include Andrew Charlesworth, David Featherstone, Diarmaid Kelliher, Carl Griffin, Paul Griffin, Briony McDonagh, Katrina Navickas, Ruth Percy, Iain Robertson, and Andy Wood (see 2.3).

breadth and depth in my analysis. Some elements of the relationship have remained much the same; for example, space and place were mutually constitutive with protest in each of the four case studies. In addition, the (re)production of space and place are ongoing processes that are often contested. These constant conflicts are shot through with uneven power relations, which also play out through space and place themselves. As I have demonstrated, typical conflicts include who can access a space, and how the memory of a protest is used in the construction of place. Other elements of the relationship between space, place, and protest in London changed significantly between the Gordon Riots and the Student Tuition Fee Demonstrations; for example, new technologies influenced the ways in which protesters communicated, organised, and performed dissent. Repertoires of protest have developed too, responding to a whole range of changes in London's history. I also argue that repertoires of protest as a concept is an invaluable tool for analysing protest, tying together seemingly disparate themes and issues.

I began this thesis by describing just one day in the life of London: 30 May 2015. London has had many days like this, and will undoubtedly have many more. Indeed, at the time of this writing this conclusion, in early 2018, protest is becoming an increasing part of everyday life. Events such as the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States are driving increasing numbers of individuals in London and elsewhere to protest. Every protest in the city, past and future, is connected by the geography of the city. London shapes the protests that occur within it, but protests also shape London, and so the process of contesting the capital goes on.

Appendices

1. A transcription of the missive found on 12 June 1780.

[*Enclosure*]

No Popery Down with it

Georg. The 3rd is a Roman Catholick

Dethrone him or else he will massacre you all. If your King is not

Dethrone'd he will be you utter ruin for he is a true Roman Catholick and it is Fit he should lose his Head.

A TRUE PROTESTANT

[*At back*]

No Popery

Down with them that is. Lord George Gordon for ever. Tho' he is in the Tower he will make them Rue for a Army of Scottish is coming 100,000 men in Arms for Georg will lose his Crown.

2. St. George's Town Hall Timeline⁹⁴⁷

Year	Event
1860-1	Built as the Vestry Hall for St. Georges-in-the-East
Late C19th	Enlarged to its present size
1900	Became the offices for Stepney Borough Council
1954	The Council Chamber and Committee Room was redeveloped
1966	The building was turned over to council departments in the new Tower Hamlets borough council
1960's	Used by the St Georges Amateur Boxing Club
1970	The Basement community arts project is founded in the Town Hall's basement.
1978-83	The Cable Street Mural is painted on the Town Hall's west wall
1989	The Basement Project closes down.
1991	The Town Hall reopens after a £1 million, year-long refurbishment. It houses the Neighbourhood Social Service Department, a committee room (available for hire), a First Stop Shop (a place for quickly accessing council services e.g. paying parking fines etc.) on the ground floor, and a 'special school' and Somali luncheon club in the basement. A disabled entrance is added at the back (at one point there were plans to put it through the mural wall)
May 2013	Unite's first Community Centre opens in the Town Hall

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