

REVIEWS

Memory and History in Northern Ireland

by *Stephen Howe*

Graham Dawson, *Making Peace with the Past? Memories, Trauma and the Irish Troubles*, Manchester University Press, 2007; 336 pp.; ISBN 9780719056710.

Susan McKay, *Bear in Mind these Dead*, Faber, London, 2008; 432 pp.; ISBN 9780571236985.

Ed Moloney, *Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland*, Faber London, 2010; 528 pp.; ISBN 9780571251698.

Kirk Simpson, *Truth Recovery in Northern Ireland: Critically Interpreting the Past*, Manchester University Press, 2009; ISBN 9780719078620, 192 pp.

In a bitterly ironic way, the events of 'Bloody Sunday' – 30 January 1972 in Derry city – demonstrate the founding premises of the History Workshop movement. These terrible occurrences were a striking instance of the historical agency of the obscure and ordinarily powerless. A handful of privates and junior NCOs transformed Irish history. Responsibility for the day's events, of course, goes much wider and higher up, extending to senior politicians and generals. Even so, these few humble men – almost none even a full Corporal, let alone anything grander in the military hierarchy – took an initiative which displayed to the full the relatively autonomous agency of the lowly. These men repeatedly took aim at unarmed, unoffending people and shot them dead, and in doing so they changed the course of British and Irish history.

Very few people in recent times can have been more completely anonymous than Lance Corporal F and Private G, who between them killed at least six of the day's victims. Usually nowadays, when a newspaper tells us 'a woman has been charged...' or TV news reports that 'a well-known public figure is...', a few minutes' search among blogs, websites and other arenas of cybergossip will (if one has enough prurient curiosity) reveal the person's name, or at least the name which some believe it to be. This does not seem to be the case for the initialled soldiers of Bloody Sunday, whose incognitos have been extraordinarily well preserved – for very obvious and understandable reasons, even though one of the main killers is believed now to be dead.

Bloody Sunday is at the heart of Graham Dawson's fine though inevitably contention-arousing book on memory and trauma in

contemporary Northern Ireland.¹ *Making Peace with the Past?* is just part – though perhaps the single most probing and intellectually sophisticated product – of a rapidly building wave of writing on, and of, memory and commemoration of Ulster's violence and its victims. This includes academic and journalistic works, official and quasi-official reports, local community publications and ones by lobby groups of various kinds, as well as a mass of vernacular forms from websites to mural paintings and songs – and, of course, the ever-swelling number of physical (as opposed to virtual) commemorative sites. Ruth MacKay recently asked in this journal, in relation to Spain: 'How does one write contemporary history while having to step around unmarked graves?'² In Northern Ireland there are very few unmarked graves – most notoriously, those of a handful of victims who were 'disappeared' by the IRA, allegedly under the direct orders of Gerry Adams. Indeed the culture of commemoration there has revolved to a great degree around very prominently marked graves, as well as memorial plaques, murals, books, songs, websites and much more.³

The wave of Northern Irish 'memory studies', and analyses of commemorative cultures relating to the recent Troubles, is in its turn part of the bigger tide of investigations of collective memory which has been washing over Irish intellectual life – as it has in so many other places – for several years. Irish historical, social and cultural studies were not in the global forefront of this trend (that pole position usually being accorded to the French, with such long-totemic figures as Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora) but have certainly contributed prolifically to it in the past decade or so. As elsewhere, writings on memory, commemoration and remembrance of war, disaster and trauma have commanded most attention; with an especially prominent place occupied by studies of the 1914-18 war. A particular Irish twist is, however, given to this theme with much discussion of how 'memory' – and forgetting – of the Great War has interacted with that of the 1916 Easter Rising, the 1919-21 war of independence and the immediately ensuing civil war. Edna Longley's 1991 essay on 'The Rising, the Somme and Irish Memory' was an early pioneer here, closely followed by Jane Leonard, George Boyce, Nuala Johnson, James Loughlin, Anne Dolan and more.⁴ As elsewhere, particular attention has often been given to the 'spaces of memory': war memorials, cemeteries and battlefields. The industrial-scale commemorative activities which, during the 1990s, marked the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine and the 200th of the 1798 uprising generated their own substantial secondary literatures of commentary and critique.⁵ Other, still earlier events are annually, widely and often contentiously commemorated – most famously, the seventeenth-century Siege of Derry and Battle of the Boyne – and these modes of remembering too have drawn substantial recent academic commentary.⁶

Numerous works have in various ways explored broader patterns of Irish collective memory and historical story-telling, sometimes emphasizing distinctiveness, sometimes instead criticizing the supposedly widespread

presumption that the Irish are unique, even pathological, in their obsession with a bloody past.⁷ There have been analyses of history teaching and school texts, including much on how ‘bad’ school history may have perpetuated conflict, and how better history lessons might reduce it.⁸ In-depth local studies too have proliferated, with the most important early instance being Henry Glassie’s investigation of ‘folk history’ in a rural Fermanagh community, and perhaps the most conceptually ambitious Guy Beiner’s work on local ‘memory’ of the 1798 revolt in the far west of Ireland.⁹ Here at least five streams come together – the contested historiography of Irish nationalism and more specifically of the 1798 Rising and the United Irishmen, oral history, folklore studies, the study of collective and official ‘memory’, and the politics of commemoration. Many of the same issues and the same disputes have emerged, a little more recently and still more contentiously, in relation to Beiner’s home country of Israel. There is no explicit reference to these in his book, but it doesn’t seem fanciful to think that not far beneath the surface of his text lie some specifically Middle Eastern concerns, both historiographical and political.

Beiner offers one of the most comprehensive and thoughtful discussions anywhere in the relevant international literature of the key concepts in play – social memory, public memory, folk history, commemoration, remembering (and forgetting), and more. Social memory, he suggests, is localized or non-official discursive reconstruction, or narration, of the past, shaped not by single individuals but via social interaction and negotiation. Constantly reconfigured by contemporary concerns, by ideas about the present and possible futures, social memory is also always selective, subject to inflection and even manipulation by particular present-day interests. But academic history is hardly free from these traits, either. Folk history can be genuinely democratic history. So too can be even the much derided ‘heritage industry’, as Raphael Samuel so notably and controversially insisted in his last work. Yet some historians of modern Ireland have been concerned, even bitterly angry, at how particular historical episodes have been as Tom Dunne complained ‘commodified and packaged for the usual queasy combination of commercial and educational motives that characterizes the “heritage” industry’.¹⁰ His protest was directed at 1798 bicentennial efforts, but as we shall see somewhat similar worries have been focused on commemoration of far more recent events, not least Bloody Sunday. Certainly it is hard to doubt that the extent to which ‘heritage management’ has become a major Irish industry – perhaps one better placed to survive the current economic crisis than most – can have deleterious effects on the critical practice of public history.

Commercialization of history and memory in Ireland is, however, far less often worried about than their politicization. All the periods and episodes so far mentioned, indeed almost every aspect of ‘the Irish story’, are notably *contested* histories. More, a great deal of Irish historical remembrance has been what critic Edna Longley calls ‘rhetorical history’, even ‘remembering

at' – leading to her famous suggestion (at a Bloody Sunday commemorative event) that Ireland's wisest kind of monumental memorialization would be to erect a statue of Amnesia 'and forget where we put it'.¹¹ Some commentators suggest that Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern were so successful in negotiating Northern Ireland's 1998 'Good Friday' agreement precisely because they had so little interest in or knowledge of Irish history. Freedom from that encumbering historical baggage was, so the claim goes, almost a precondition for planning a better future.

'Remembering at' can be very literal, direct and lethal in Northern Ireland. Just as there are few unmarked graves from the Troubles, there are not many entirely unsolved murders: at least, not in the public mind as opposed to the findings of law. In a high proportion of the large number of cases where no-one was ever convicted, many people still believe they know the identities of the killers. Not least, for paramilitary murders, the gunmen on the other side more often than not thought they knew. Many cycles of revenge and retaliation were thus engendered, sometimes across decades. When for instance former 'Shankill Butcher' Robert Bates was shot dead in 1997, soon after his release from prison, it was rapidly and generally 'known' that the killer was the son of a man Bates had helped murder twenty years earlier. Two of the most controversial, best-remembered deaths of the Troubles were those of solicitors Patrick Finucane and Rosemary Nelson. Both are the subjects of continuing investigation, at the time of writing – but this centres mainly on allegations of security-force collusion in their deaths, rather than the identities of the killers. One man was – long after the fact – convicted of Finucane's murder. The second, indeed principal gunman involved has never been charged, but as they say in Belfast, 'even the dogs in the street' think they know his name, and that he is guilty of several other killings too. Equally, very many people think (rightly or not) that they can name the man who planted a bomb under Nelson's car, the man who made it, and the one who ordered the murder. Such examples could be multiplied almost *ad nauseam*.

When Graham Dawson discusses, as he does in detail, the activities and perceptions of victims' groups in rural Irish border areas, he notes how a major source of their continuing pain and anger is that, for most of the killings of their families and friends, nobody was ever brought to justice. He does not add that in very many cases, they think (rightly or wrongly) that they can identify precisely who should have been charged. Such suspicions and accusations continue to circulate. Thus one of the most high-profile and controversial spokespeople for a victims' group, Willie Frazer of 'Families Acting for Innocent Relatives' (FAIR), a group to which Dawson gives considerable attention, has repeatedly accused another local man, Eugene Reavey, of having played a central role in the 1976 'Kingsmills massacre' when the IRA murdered ten Protestants. Conversely, Frazer has vigorously defended the reputation and upheld the innocence of James Mitchell, a farmer in the same area (who died, aged eighty-eight, in 2008) widely

suspected to have been at the heart of the Loyalist ‘Glenanne Gang’ responsible for many homicides including the 1974 Dublin and Monaghan bombings which killed thirty-three people. Most commentators – including police chiefs – insist there is no ground whatever for the claims about Reavey, three of whose brothers were themselves killed (probably by members of the ‘Glenanne Gang’) immediately before the Kingsmills slaughter. Many feel there are significant grounds for suspicion about Mitchell.

Willie Frazer is, perhaps, an extreme case in his partiality – or as he would no doubt say, his outspokenness – but in Northern Ireland today too many groups pursuing justice or remembrance have been overtly partisan. ‘Relatives for Justice’ should, critics say, most accurately be called ‘Relatives of Dead Republican...’. FAIR is in truth almost entirely ‘Protestant Families...’, as are several of the other border region groups Dawson discusses. And so on. Numerous commentators have written, with varying degrees of both insight and bitterness, about the ‘hierarchies of victimhood’ they discern – whether in terms of the amount of media and political attention particular kinds of death received at the time, or of the subsequent intensity of memorialization or indeed investigation. Sadly, the authors of most such analyses have all too evidently had their own axes to grind. Thus when veteran British journalist Roy Greenslade wrote trenchantly of such a hierarchy – with, he said, deaths in England at the top and the Catholic victims of Loyalist killers at the bottom – he made a powerful case.¹² But his article was inevitably read in the context of Greenslade’s own pro-Republican views. When a memorial volume for Ballymurphy’s dead – many of them killed by security forces – claimed the area and its victims were a much maligned and marginalized, indeed demonized, community, it too mounted a compelling argument – but one complicated or undermined by the sentiments of indulgence and support towards the IRA with which the book also abounded.¹³ When Democratic Unionist MP Jeffrey Donaldson contrasted the amount spent on the Saville enquiry with the meagre resources devoted to much other historical investigation, he also had a good point – but one hard to separate from his and some fellow party members’ earlier intimations that they felt most if not all Bloody Sunday’s dead were justifiably killed.¹⁴ Commemoration of institutions that have ‘died’ recently, like the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as well as of individuals or groups of people, has already often proved controversial and divisive.¹⁵

Less evidently partisan has been concern at the gendered dimensions of conflict and victims’ commemoration. Both Irish Nationalism/Republicanism and British Unionism/Loyalism are, as so many commentators have pointed out, intensely masculine ideologies. Memorials to the conflict and its victims – especially those associated with the (former) paramilitary groups, or indeed the security forces themselves – continue to reflect if not intensify that bias. Even the enhanced public role which, since the 1998 peace agreement, women have begun to have as spokespeople for

remembrance and reparation may seem to critical eyes to involve a reinscription of traditional gender roles: women as healers, or even simply as those who weep over their dead warrior menfolk and support their embattled living ones.¹⁶ It is, however, striking how high a proportion not only of the activists in commemoration projects but of the leading analysts of this subject are women: Jane Leonard, Edna Longley, Susan McKay, Sara McDowell, Marie Breen Smyth and many more. And it is arguable that even the intensely, and to outsiders often intimidatingly, masculinist and militaristic rituals and sites of commemoration in which the ‘old comrades’ associations’ of former paramilitaries indulge – with sometimes a major question mark remaining over that ‘former’ status – may gradually facilitate a demilitarization of minds. ‘Remember, avenge, fight on!’ may gradually fade into ‘Remember, mourn, and age as quietly as the guns rust’.

On the face of it, there may seem to be grounds for scepticism about claims of neglect from any Northern Irish conflict victims’ or memorialization groups, when the field is so heavily populated with both official and civil-society initiatives of multiple kinds. There are – by an imprecise count – at least ninety groups of various sorts for victims’ support or commemoration.¹⁷ State-sponsored efforts have included the Consultative Group on the Past (CGP),¹⁸ the Commission for Victims and Survivors (CVS),¹⁹ the appointment of a Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner,²⁰ of a Police Ombudsman and a Historical Enquiries Team within the police service,²¹ and a lengthening series of major enquiries into specific incidents like Bloody Sunday,²² or the murder in prison of Loyalist militant Billy Wright.²³ None, however, has been free from controversy, ranging from the anger or derision with which some greeted the CGP’s proposal for (rather small) cash payments to families of all victims, through disquiet at the enormous length and cost of the Saville enquiry, to the frank incredulity with which some greeted the Billy Wright investigation’s conclusion that there had been no official collusion in his death. More generally, there have been repeated arguments over such fundamental questions as who should ‘count’ as a victim – does the category include those who were, or may have been, perpetrators also? And there has been continuing disagreement whether, over and above the various existing bodies and processes, something like a national truth commission for Northern Ireland is needed. Perhaps the most basic, and most thoughtful, objection to the proposal is that for such processes to succeed, they require some minimal founding consensus – or at least the aspiration to one – on what the conflict was about, and also some broadly shared sense (or, again, the desire for one) of what kind of ‘united nation’ should eventuate from them. South Africa apparently had those preconditions, however precariously. Northern Ireland, it is said, does not. Even if the general presumption that a ‘nation’ may usefully be thought of as having a singular collective identity, and something like a psyche which experiences trauma and can undergo healing, is tenable under any circumstances, it is not so under those of

Northern Ireland. Truth commissions may create public space for victims and survivors to tell their stories, come to terms with their experiences and their losses – as clearly happened in South Africa or Argentina – but they cannot be expected to ‘heal the nation’, least of all when there remains fundamental divergence over national identification, British or Irish, itself. To make matters worse, in Northern Ireland calls for a truth commission have come, for a variety of reasons, to be associated mainly with people from the Nationalist/Republican side of the conflict.

There may, however, be means of truth recovery short of, but more efficacious than, a national truth commission. The group Healing Through Remembering offered perhaps the first major set of proposals in that direction in 2006.²⁴ Subsequently academic authors Marie Breen Smyth and, most recently, Kirk Simpson have explored related avenues.²⁵ Simpson’s premise that the victims of violence and their families are the forgotten citizens of Northern Ireland seems, as we have noted, surprising, even implausible. Yet he makes an eloquent and thoughtful case for it, and for arguing that ‘the construction of a universal, morally normative paradigm for dealing with the past in Northern Ireland is possible’ (p. 3). His conceptual framework for doing this is primarily Habermasian. His strictures against artificial and obstructive disciplinary barriers, distorting politicization of the past, and its instrumentalization in service of short-term policy objectives are all, naturally, unexceptionable – but he is unfortunately perhaps too reliant on the powers of reason and goodwill to overcome these. Even one who fully shares (as I do) his optimistic rationalism, and indeed his adherence to Habermas’s programme of communicative rationality, must doubt whether politicization and instrumentalization are really altogether avoidable or surmountable. It is an indication of this problem, and also perhaps of the excessive abstraction of much of his discussion, that the main paramilitary organizations involved in the conflict receive – at most, since some of the smaller ones are not even listed – only the briefest and most uninformative of mentions. The book’s index lists far more philosophers and social theorists than it does Irish or British political actors of any kind – and no individual victims or perpetrators except Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness.

Susan McKay’s *Bear in Mind These Dead* is a far less analytical work, indeed essentially a book of reportage, of interviews, encounters and impressions. It is devoted, in full and sometimes heartbreaking intensity, to hearing the individual voices of the bereaved and the maimed, of those whose pain will not ease so long as they live, of those who have rebuilt their lives, those who seek to forgive or to reconcile, and those who cannot do either. This is, apart perhaps from the elegies written by some Northern Irish poets, and together with David McKittrick and his colleagues’ monumental *Lost Lives*, which details every fatal casualty of the conflict, the finest and most moving work of remembrance Northern Ireland has produced.²⁶ Graham Dawson’s *Making Peace with the Past?* falls midway between the

analytical abstractions of Simpson's work and the personal intensity of McKay's, with many of the strengths of both. It builds on a number of major articles Dawson has previously published on this theme, in *History Workshop Journal* among other places.²⁷ Framed by extensive conceptual and historiographical discussion of the notions of cultural memory, tradition, remembrance, and trauma – which draw on extensive knowledge of the psychoanalytical as well as historical and social-science literatures – its core is a twin investigation of memory and commemoration of Bloody Sunday, and of the views of mostly Protestant victims' groups from the 'border country' of South Armagh, West Tyrone, and Fermanagh.

Dawson's predispositions were, as he openly avows and thoughtfully explores, not neutral. His own Catholic, part-Irish background and left-wing political views inclined him towards greater sympathy for Derry's Nationalist mourners and campaigners than for their Border Protestant equivalents. He had been active in the Labour Committee on Ireland, often seen as broadly supportive of the Republican cause. He worked hard at developing a fully dialogic approach, doing justice and showing respect and fairness to those whose views or values were sharply different from his own.²⁸ On the whole, he succeeds admirably: his account of the Unionist campaigners cannot be faulted for lack either of accuracy or of compassion, even if he is (rightly) sceptical about the language of 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing' which some of them use to describe their experiences.

Yet there remains a certain asymmetry between the two accounts. Dawson's Bloody Sunday chapters include a great deal of eyewitness testimony from civilian survivors,²⁹ accounts of their enduring trauma, and discussion of the human-rights issues, judicial processes, media treatment and questions of state secrecy and accountability which cluster around the 1972 outrage. No need is apparently felt either to explicate or to criticize the general (Irish nationalist) worldview shared by most of the survivors and victims, and by those who have campaigned for them. The converse is the case with Dawson's treatment of the Protestant victims' groups: here there is less direct testimony, far more critical analysis of the ideas about history and identity current among such groups. Again, that analysis is far from lacking in either nuance or sympathy, but in its stress on the (frankly clichéd) notion of a Unionist 'siege mentality' it surely oversimplifies the complexity – indeed, I have argued elsewhere, fragmentation – of unionism and Loyalism's distinctive historical visions.³⁰ And when Dawson compares the Unionist groups' rhetoric in describing experience of violence with that employed in mid-Victorian Britain about rebel atrocities during the 1857 Indian revolt, this choice of an 'imperial' analogy – albeit drawing on his own previous work in that sphere – is surely not neutral.³¹ Choosing to draw parallels with, say Armenian accounts of 1915 or (a comparison Ulster Unionists themselves have liked) British ones of the Blitz, would have produced very different historical and emotional connotations. To say this is

not to accuse Dawson of ‘vulgar’ prejudice – his work displays an analytical sophistication and compassionate sensibility far beyond that – but to suggest the possibly inescapable limits on any historian’s imaginative empathy.

Ed Moloney’s *Voices from the Grave* is not, like most other work discussed here, writing *about* the dead, but contains the words *of* the recently dead.³² Since 2001 a team based at Boston College has been compiling an Oral History Archive of the Northern Irish Troubles. Key actors in the conflict across a huge range have been interviewed, many of them at great length and depth, with the main focus on former members of the IRA and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). A crucial founding principle of the archive was that no material from it would be publicly available during the lifetimes of the interviewees. So it is only because of the sadly premature deaths of two former major players, Brendan Hughes and David Ervine, that this first volume of the Boston College material has now appeared. Senior IRA man Hughes died in February 2008, after long illness; Progressive Unionist Party leader and UVF veteran Ervine suddenly in January 2007, from a stroke. The publication of *Voices from the Grave* is the product of a remarkable team: Moloney himself as principal author, interviewers Anthony McIntyre and Wilson McArthur (themselves respectively former IRA and UVF members: it is not always clear how much of the text – other than direct quotations from Hughes and Ervine – is Moloney’s, how much McIntyre’s or McArthur’s), editor Neil Belton, and of course Hughes and Irvine themselves, long recognized as among the most thoughtful, principled and articulate, as well as influential, proponents of their respective causes.

The result is among the most revealing, often disturbing accounts of the secret worlds of Ulster paramilitarism ever yet to appear. The Hughes portion of the book especially holds little back, names many names, reveals many dark secrets, not least about the role of Sinn Féin leader, and Hughes’s former close comrade, Gerry Adams. Hughes’s bitterness against Adams is unconcealed, but few if any of his specific allegations have credibly been denied. The David Ervine section is by contrast a disappointment. It is shorter, and far less of it consists of direct speech from Ervine himself. Indeed a large part of it is a potted general history of the events in which Ervine was involved. Ervine is far more economical about naming names than is Hughes, and we learn far less about the inner workings of the UVF than of the IRA. The contrast is not surprising. Whereas Hughes was mainly a ‘military’ figure, Ervine was a political one, his direct involvement in violence fairly restricted (though he tells us almost nothing about what it actually was). At the time their reminiscences were recorded Hughes was a harsh critic of his former colleagues, Ervine still closely connected to his. Ervine was a public figure of some prominence, Hughes living in obscure semi-retirement. One suspects also that Hughes had fully internalized the notion that his words would only be public after his death whilst Ervine, a younger man apparently in better health, had not.

If truth recovery can aid healing, as so many commentators believe, then Hughes's and Ervine's revelations should be a major contribution to that end, as should McKay's or Dawson's books, official investigations like the Saville report, and much other work we have mentioned here. Yet Ireland's modern history suggests that any such optimism must be very cautious. Bitterness, hurt, division will remain, long after the deaths of the conflict's protagonists. So much is implied by the ever-renewed controversies over what happened in the 'War of Independence' and Civil War after 1919, and especially over the causes and circumstances of particular IRA killings in those years, and how much of a sectarian element was present in these. The innovative work on this topic by Canadian historian Peter Hart – whose 1998 book *The IRA and Its Enemies* presented a severely unheroic analysis of the Cork IRA's 1920s operations, including accusations of a sectarian murder campaign against local Protestants – aroused unending controversy.³³ The unforgiving nature of such latter-day antagonisms was demonstrated in disgraceful fashion when some media and online commentators reacted to Hart's tragically early death, in July 2010 aged forty-seven, with open gloating. At the time of writing a related controversy, ignited by an Irish television documentary, continues to rage over the killing by the IRA, on 30 June 1921, of two young brothers at Coolacree, County Offaly. Richard and Abraham Pearson had opposed the local IRA, and supposedly shot and injured one of its members. Should their deaths be seen as a justifiable military execution or sheer murder – and how much did their Protestantism have to do with it?³⁴

From the more recent past, too, come reminders of the limits to truth and reconciliation. Near the end of his book Graham Dawson recounts the story of an encounter between IRA Brighton bomber Patrick McGee and Jo Tuffnall (née Berry), the daughter of one of those he had killed. For Dawson, this is a story of hope, painfully arrived at through dialogue. But McGee insisted still that his actions had been justified, and said that 'If Jo could just understand why someone like me could get involved in the armed struggle then something has been achieved'.³⁵ This sounds uncomfortably like an appeal, not just for understanding and certainly not for forgiveness, but for his victim to *agree* with what he had done.

And there is a yet more poignant footnote. Susan McKay also spoke to Jo Berry, who told how her own seven-year-old daughter had asked her after the meeting with McGee whether he was sorry. Berry replied (not entirely truthfully, as we have just seen), that he was. The little girl then asked 'Does that mean that Granpa can come back now?'³⁶

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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26 David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney and Chris Thornton, *Lost Lives: the Stories of the Men, Women and Children who Died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, Edinburgh, 1999. Other and earlier somewhat similar works include Malcolm Sutton, *Bear in Mind these Dead: an Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland, 1969-1993*, Belfast, 1994; and Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: the Human Costs*, London, 1999.

27 Dawson, 'Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972-2004', *History Workshop Journal* 59, 2005; 'Trauma, Memory, Politics: the Irish Troubles', in *Trauma: Life Stories of Survivors*, ed. Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff and Graham Dawson, Piscataway NJ and London, 2004; 'Mobilising Memories: Protestant and Unionist Victims' Groups and the Politics of Victimhood in the Irish Peace Process', in *Political Transition: Politics and Cultures*, ed. Paul Greedy, London and Sterling VA, 2003; 'Ulster-British Identity and the Cultural Memory of "Ethnic Cleansing" on the Northern Ireland Border', in *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, ed. Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, Basingstoke and New York, 2004.

28 Dawson, *Making Peace*, pp. xvi-xxi. Susan McKay, it may be noted, comes from a Northern Protestant background – but insofar as her work has been faulted for alleged bias (as her previous book, *Northern Protestants: an Unsettled People*, Belfast, 2000, was by some) it is for an excessively harsh view of 'her own' community.

29 It should perhaps be stressed here that the findings of the Saville enquiry overwhelmingly endorsed those survivors' claims, and repudiated and criticized those of the military witnesses.

30 Stephen Howe, 'Mad Dogs and Ulstermen: the Crisis of Loyalism', Pts 1 and 2, *OpenDemocracy* (<http://www.opendemocracy.net/>) 28 and 30 Sept. 2005 (shorter version in *Guardian*, 10 Oct. 2005).

31 *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* London, 1994.

32 Ed Moloney, *Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland*, London, 2010.

33 Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923*, Oxford, 1998. For part of the controversy see *Kilmichael: the False Surrender. A discussion by Peter Hart, Padraig O'Cuanachain, D. R. O'Connor Lysaght, Dr. Brian Murphy and Meda Ryan*, Belfast, 1999; Niall Meehan and Brian P. Murphy, *Troubled History: Ten Years of Controversy in Irish History - a 10th anniversary critique of Peter Hart's The IRA and its Enemies*, Millstreet, 2008.

34 See Alan Stanley, *I Met Murder on the Way: the Story of the Pearsons of Coolacrease*, Quinagh, 2005; Eoghan Harris, "'The tree has rotten roots and bitter fruit', *Sunday Independent*, 9 Oct. 2005; RTE film, 'The Killings at Coolacrease', Hidden History Series, produced and directed by Niamh Sammon, screened 23 Oct. 2007 and 13 May 2008. For critiques see Pat Muldowney, *The Pearson Executions in Co. Offaly: a debate on Alleged Sectarianism during the War of Independence*, Millstreet, 2007; Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney and Philip O'Connor, *Coolacrease: the True Story of the Pearson Executions, an Incident in the Irish War of Independence*, Millstreet, 2008, and numerous 2008-9 letters in *History Ireland* and elsewhere.

35 Quoted in Dawson, *Making Peace*, pp. 316-7.

36 McKay, *Bear in Mind those Dead*, pp. 241-2.

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Freedom Fighters by Ellen Carol DuBois

Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present*, Random House, New York, 2010; 503 pp.; 978-0-679-64314-2.

About a half century ago Eleanor Flexner published a general history of the American woman's rights movement, *Century of Struggle*, which until now was unsurpassed for narrative sweep, engagement with the large themes of American history, the incorporation of different classes and races of women, and an ability to balance the historian's judiciousness with an unabashed commitment to women's freedom. When Flexner wrote, there were few other historians on whom she could rely. She had few secondary sources to work with; much of the book rests on her own extraordinary labours in the archives.¹

Unlike *Century of Struggle*, Christine Stansell's magisterial new history, *The Promise of Feminism*, has behind it decades and libraries full of women's history research, on which she has drawn to great effect to produce the first serious modern history of American feminism in a very long time, arguably since Flexner. *The Feminist Promise* is forceful, confident, lovely and