

The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement\*

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I ever loved freedom, and its inevitable consequences, –  
and not only for what it will fetch, but the *holy principle*; –  
a democrat in my Sunday School, everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

## I

At Sheffield in late June 1842 a crowd of perhaps 50,000 mourners attended the public funeral of the twenty-seven year old Chartist militant Samuel Holberry, who had died of tuberculosis in a squalid cell at York Castle, after serving two years of a four-year sentence for his alleged involvement in an armed uprising. The immense crowd wept as George Julian Harney delivered a moving graveside oration. Harney praised the moral and intellectual qualities of this “heroic patriot,” sacrificed for “the cause of freedom” after being betrayed for “filthy lucre” by “rotten-hearted villains,” tools of “base employers – the oppressors that have pursued him to his grave.” “Tyrants,” Harney went on, were making determined attempts to “crush liberty; and by torture, chains, and death, to prevent the assertion of the rights of man....and arrest the progress of democracy,” but these “puny Canutes” were bound to be swept aside by “the ocean of intellect.” Harney reassured listeners that although Holberry’s life had been snuffed out by a corrupt state, his faith lived on and the glories of an Alexander or a Napoleon would eventually pale into insignificance alongside “the honest, virtuous fame of this son of toil.” Samuel Parkes also spoke and recommended that they should not rest until “by every legal and constitutional means you have made the Charter the law of the land, and thereby proclaimed the physical, moral and political freedom of the universal family of man!” The crowd pressed forward as the “splendid oak coffin” provided by Holberry’s supporters was lowered into the grave. Many must have

caught sight of the brass breastplate which bore the inscription, “Died a martyr to the cause of Democracy.”<sup>2</sup>

This vignette captures an important theme that has been marginalised in recent work on the Chartist movement: for almost three decades historians have downplayed the appeal of democratic discourse and have stressed instead that the language of popular radicalism in early Victorian England was dominated by what has been called the “constitutional idiom.”<sup>3</sup> Some have asserted “the basically constitutionalist nature” of Chartism, for instance; while others have gone further still, claiming that constitutionalism represented no less than a “master narrative,” which dominated the political field.<sup>4</sup> Continuities with eighteenth-century discourses of reform have been highlighted and it has been argued that there was no general conversion to a more recent language of natural rights. In short, Paine has been thoroughly subordinated to Blackstone. This current orthodoxy helps to explain why, despite the linguistic turn, languages of democracy in this period remain relatively unexplored. However, as James Epstein cautioned in an important contribution to the historiographical debate, it is often very difficult for the historian to disentangle constitutional from democratic strands within radical rhetoric as they were bound together so inextricably.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the speeches at Holberry’s graveside illustrate this intertwining. This article attempts to counter the overemphasis on constitutionalism and argues the case for reinstating the “democratic idiom” in this period to its rightful place – at the center of English radical culture.

It is worth recalling for a moment that “democracy” was a generally reviled concept among social and political elites in Britain throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and well beyond. T. B. Macaulay’s savage attack on American democracy as incompatible with

civilisation or liberty is merely a notorious instance of a general reaction, for as the eminently respectable radical George Jacob Holyoake observed in the mid 1860s, “in the eyes of the governing class” the idea of democracy was considered “a Frankenstein kind of product.”<sup>6</sup> Yet Chartists enthusiastically embraced this keyword from the late 1830s and wore it as a badge of honour until the movement’s gradual decline a decade or so later; thus “democracy” (as well as those “democrats” who propounded it) constituted a site of intense ideological struggle as different groups sought to define this multivalent, essentially contestable concept in various ways.<sup>7</sup> For sure, others had talked about democracy before the Chartists but it was they who brought it down from the speculative realm to the level of the street and the workshop. What gave the democratic idiom real force was that it was now backed by a mass movement of “the people” – or even the “working class” during the most heated phases of the Chartist agitation – that was insistently demanding the franchise not only as an abstract right but as a vital necessity in order to reconstruct social and economic relationships. It was little wonder that this appropriation cast a long shadow; after Chartism most upper and middle-class leaders worried that it might never again be possible to elevate democracy so that it could be “sterilized to innocuousness,” to borrow Frances Gillespie’s felicitous phrase.<sup>8</sup> As we shall see, in many respects Chartism was admittedly at its most threatening when democratic and constitutional discourses were fused together by the heat of social and political conflict. Nevertheless, for many Chartists it was not an imagined constitution but democracy that represented *the* cause. That is why so many signed letters to the radical press, “Yours in the cause of democracy.”

A full explanation of how the “constitutional idiom” assumed a center stage position within the historiography lies beyond the scope of this article, though some preliminary observations are in order. The idea that a differently imagined constitution provided manifold rhetorical and legal devices, which the “free-born Englishman” could use to challenge the hegemony of “Old Corruption,” was central to Edward Thompson’s argument and was taken further by those historians who followed his lead.<sup>9</sup> However, the real turning point came with the publication of Gareth Stedman Jones’s pioneering study of the language of Chartism that stressed how rooted the movement was in the past and how vital it was not to read off the movement’s political discourse from its assumed economic and social foundations.<sup>10</sup> Following a protracted, often acrimonious controversy in which positions tended to become more and more ossified into simple choices between language and structure, consciousness and being, postmodernism and Marxism, the new and the outdated, many historians now accept the theoretical and methodological force of this insight.<sup>11</sup> It has become part of our mental furniture and in this sense we have all taken the linguistic turn, albeit some more reluctantly than others. However, the argument presented in this article suggests that we might accept Stedman Jones’ theoretical proposition whilst rejecting the empirical and analytical narrative that was deployed by way of demonstration. This amounted to a critique of the “social interpretation” of Chartism proposed by the young Engels, who emphasised the “social” or “class” nature of the radical movement, manifested by the antithesis between “Chartist democracy and all previous political bourgeois democracy.”<sup>12</sup> For those historians who eagerly took the linguistic turn, Stedman Jones’ insistence on Chartists’ acceptance of the constitution as a framework for thought and action marked the limits of their challenge to the British state. Not only was the movement therefore

decidedly non-revolutionary in intent, it could also not be regarded as an expression of a putative “working-class.”

Thus, the “constitutional idiom” was made to do a great deal of work and provided much of the ground on which battles were fought over what became known as the Thompsonian approach to history, as well as the salience of class as an analytical category. One of the features of Stedman Jones’ work was that it appealed to rather different kinds of historians: “postmodernists” such as Patrick Joyce and James Vernon regarded the stress on constitutionalism as a weapon in the struggle against the “grand narrative” of Marxism and class analysis;<sup>13</sup> while liberal historians such as Eugenio Biagini and others used it to buttress a continuity thesis that downplayed the rupture between Chartism and Gladstonian liberalism.<sup>14</sup> One of the many aspects that fell through the gaps in the debate was a consideration of how popular radicals and others employed the relatively new, future oriented language of democracy to talk about politics and society in the first half of the nineteenth century. For it was not only the young Engels or left Chartists such as Harney who spoke the language of democracy: the historical sources reveal that the discourse of democracy was at the very heart of the movement. Notwithstanding the well-documented and undeniable pull of constitutionalism, from the outset Chartism was frequently elided with democracy, which was understood by many to refer to a project that went far beyond the political realm narrowly construed. How precisely does acknowledging the centrality of this democratic idiom affect our understanding of the movement as well as the transformation of British politics and society more broadly in the nineteenth century?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this study reconstructs some Chartist uses of democracy in order to suggest how popular radicals redefined and appropriated the concept for themselves. It has already been underlined just how charged this discourse was. Political elites were unanimous in their condemnation. As scholarship has shown, during parliamentary debates in the early 1830s, for example, opponents of electoral reform demonised the idea of democracy, seeing in its general application the root cause of all political, social and economic disorder.<sup>15</sup> Tory politicians in both Houses competed with one another to find the most damning adjectives with which to condemn what they thought would be the inevitable result of reformers' zeal; tyrannous rule by "a fierce democracy" (William Huskisson), "a reckless democracy" (Sir Robert Peel), "a monstrous democracy" (Lord Ellenborough), "a vile democracy" (the Earl of Harrowby), and so on.<sup>16</sup> Keen to enlist popular support, Whigs such as the Lord Advocate, Francis Jeffrey, T. B. Macaulay and the Lord Chancellor, Henry Brougham, carefully distinguished between calls for "a democracy" – meaning a completely transformed political system that represented a complete break with the past and which they reviled as much as any Tory – and necessary appeals to "the democracy," or the rising social and economic middle, whose interests deserved to be urgently represented.<sup>17</sup> This was a narrow, dangerous path to tread and Brougham got quite close to the edge, famously invoking the threat of the Political Unions and describing himself in the pamphlet version of a notorious speech published in the heat of the crisis as "a worshipper of the democracy."<sup>18</sup>

Whig supporters of reform were in a most awkward position because they shared much of their opponents' analysis as well as their fears, not least the continuing nightmare bequeathed by the French Revolution. They treated the Irish nationalist Daniel O'Connell's vision of "the great spirit of democracy" striding across the globe with as much disdain as the Tories but argued that

cataclysmic events across the channel demonstrated that reform was the only way to properly safeguard the British constitution. The contest over reform was as much about history as it was about contemporary politics; while Peel and others used Cicero and Tacitus to impugn the democratic legacy of classical Greece and Rome, and questioned the record of America since independence, it was the meaning of revolution in France that understandably loomed largest in their imaginations.<sup>19</sup> On this theme the anxieties of John Wilson Croker, one of the most able Tory opponents of reform who reckoned that the revolution had opened the floodgates to “the deluge of democracy” that now threatened to engulf other European states including Britain, was widely shared among political elites, regardless of any party affiliation.<sup>20</sup> Such fears did not subside after 1832 either. Macaulay’s whig history may have survived better but more widely read at the time was Archibald Alison, whose hugely popular ten volume study of the French Revolution was intended as a warning about “the consequences of democratical ascendancy upon the civil condition.”<sup>21</sup>

It is in this context that we need to situate Chartist democratic discourse. The historical models that were deployed to buttress their claims are discussed in the following section, which argues that the shared identity of “democrat” helped to conceal differences and unify the movement. The article then explores the way in which democratic ideas were imbricated in Chartist culture, informing both its solidaristic rituals as much as the practice of self-government. Moreover, during the early 1840s in particular Chartism and democracy were increasingly regarded as synonymous, quintessentially “working-class” causes; this was especially true after the failure of the Complete Suffrage Union to build an alliance between middle and working-class radicals. The study then moves on to discuss the discursive shift inspired by democratic and revolutionary movements on mainland Europe during the second half of the 1840s, when leaders



such as Harney attempted to reinvigorate Chartism following a period of defeat and state repression by adopting a continental language of “social democracy.” The final major section considers the linguistic and institutional splitting that took place after the climacteric of 1848. Firmly rejecting Chartist definitions of democracy and eager to forge an identity between material improvement and the spread of democratic rights, free trade radicals in particular began to renew attempts to reach out to the better off stratum of the working class, a process that involved ditching the language of democracy in favour of the much narrower demand for household suffrage. The conclusion offers further reflections on the significance of Chartist employment of the democratic idiom and its afterlife in subsequent decades.

### III

Chartists did not elaborate a well worked out, coherent theory of democracy, nor did they write treatise on the subject. What democracy meant to them has therefore to be inferred from the historical models, figurative tropes and ethical meanings which they attached to the concept in their speeches, writings and practice. But whatever the interpretive difficulties we can say that Chartists valorised the notion of democracy and wore it with pride, as a badge of honour. Importantly, it enabled them to contest Tory and Whig historical narratives and construct alternative versions of the past as well as the present and future. Some Chartists drew on natural rights arguments as well as the history of the American and French revolutions to support their cause. The contribution of James Bronterre O’Brien, the so-called “schoolmaster of Chartism,” was vital here. O’Brien had little time for earlier examples of democratic practice, pointing out in the *Poor Man’s Guardian*, for example, that classical Greece provided no straightforward model,

not least because of the institution of slavery. The government of Athens, O'Brien admitted, had been "a pure democracy" in which citizens were "direct makers of the laws," but this was impracticable in the more complex conditions of the present. Thus, he could argue that "the government we look for in England is not a democracy, but a representative republic based on universal delegation."<sup>22</sup> More recent experience provided a better guide according to O'Brien who introduced English plebeian radicals to the history of the French revolution in the wake of the agitation over the Great Reform Act. His understanding was informed by the writings of Philippe Buonarroti, the Italian émigré supporter of Babeuf's conspiracy for equality. According to this interpretation, the constitution or "the famous Democracy of 1793" represented the apogee of democratic form in modern times because, in theory at least, it gave power to the toiling millions by abolishing property qualification and the two degrees of election that had been established by the "middle class" constitution of 1791.<sup>23</sup> For O'Brien, Robespierre and the radical Jacobin had heroically sought to transfer real control from executive government to primary assemblies that elected representatives on an annual basis. O'Brien infused early Chartism with these ideas maintaining, for instance, that the three million victims of the "anti-Jacobin" war with France had been murdered to protect "the *upper, and middle classes of England,*" from "the Democracy of 1793" that had given "the working classes of France...a voice in the enactment of their own laws."<sup>24</sup>

Democracy appealed to Chartists like O'Brien because it symbolised the necessity for a clean break with the past, the complete rejection of tradition and authority. Such radical enlightenment ideology struck a chord with many workers, especially those local Chartist branches that styled themselves Democratic Associations, best known of which was the London Democratic Association that identified closely with the legacy of Paine and Robespierre, though

there were many others.<sup>25</sup> The LDA was of course the power base of that other revolutionary dramaturgist, Harney. It is worth pointing out, however, that the American and French revolutions were not the only sources for Chartist democratic thought. The more eclectic approach to history adopted by Thomas Cooper, the Leicester Chartist, was probably more representative of the movement's historical consciousness. An ardent student of classical history as well as much else, at his trial following the strike wave of 1842 Cooper informed Justice Denman (who was not impressed) that he "had imbibed the ennobling principles of democracy when only fourteen years old, by reading the glorious history of Greece."<sup>26</sup> Soon after his release from gaol in 1845, Cooper addressed a "Democratic Supper" organised by the London Democratic Association keen to build internationalist connections, and spoke at length on the meaning of "democrat." It was, Cooper said,

a word of grand associations, for it came from noble old Greece – the immortal land of Thermistocles (sic), and Aristides, and Miltiades: it breathed of the glorious struggles of Marathon and Salamis; it raised up the thrilling image of Leonidas and his fearless 300, who fell, a forlorn hope, at Thermopylae; and it told of the proud Persian humbled, and of kings and their arrogance laid low – but of a whole people exalted to freedom – and that people the noblest that ever lived beneath the sun for eloquence and poetry, and philosophy, and the arts, as well as for bravery. (Great applause.) The word "democrat" was, then, like the name "Chartist," one that ought to be dearly cherished for its associations. As Democrats, they possessed a name under which they could embrace as brothers, the shades of the patriotic dead of all countries, and the patriotic living of every land: as Chartists, they love a name dearer than life to many, for it had been sanctified by suffering.<sup>27</sup>

For Cooper, to be a Chartist was necessarily to be a democrat and others commonly conflated these terms, including Feargus O'Connor who described himself as “a Democrat – a Chartist” at his own trial in May 1840.<sup>28</sup> Cooper went on to give regular lectures to working-class audiences at the City Chartist Hall in London in which he sang the praises of republicanism and popularised “the magnificent themes of the Athenian democracy,” and he was not the only Chartist speaker to address this subject either.<sup>29</sup> During the winter of 1848 Cooper discoursed on the transition from “legendary” to “historical” Greece at the Hall of Science in City Road. His talks demonstrated a familiarity with not only the writings of Tacitus and Plutarch but also the most recent scholarly work by George Grote, whose multi-volume *History of Greece* began to appear in 1846. Although Cooper clearly respected Grote’s research, he did not hesitate to criticise him on various points nor develop his own distinctive perspective – one that privileged the position of “the ‘masses’ as they are so mechanically called.”<sup>30</sup>

Whatever the preferred historical sources and models, the democratic idiom depended as much on mythologized versions of the past as the constitutional idiom. Both looked back to lost freedoms, heroic struggles and ideal societies; both could be projected forwards to help imagine a new kind of society. Again, it is the interpenetration of these idioms that strikes the historian. “Democracy” was clearly a capacious term and Chartists filled it with a wide range of examples. For instance, like many other Chartists, Cooper found evidence of democratic practice much nearer to home, and also lectured on the experience of “Anglo Saxon democracy,” when it was supposed that the people had enjoyed real power over their leaders.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, although he typically claimed that familiarity with classical history had initially turned him into a “democrat” before the jury at the Special Commission at Stafford, he went on to stress that reading “the legal enactments of our glorious Alfred, and our other Saxon monarchs,” as well as the Magna Charta

and the Bill of Rights, had convinced him that national liberties had been constructed on “broad and enlightened principles of freedom,” and that the People’s Charter was therefore no less than “the embodiment of the principles contained in the theory of the British Constitution.”<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly perhaps, Cooper sometimes enlisted the Bible in the cause of freedom, another common ploy. The Bradford Methodist preacher William Arran stated that, “the founder of Christianity was the greatest and purest democrat that ever lived” at the great Chartist demonstration on Hartshead Moor; while William Parker defended Joseph Rayner Stephens for having, “proclaimed to the people that God’s own book laid down a pure system of Democracy.”<sup>33</sup>

The malleability of Chartist uses of democracy was a source of strength but also weakness: it could help unify different conceptions of the past and different tendencies within the movement but it could be divisive. Occasionally, differences emerged into the open. Although even a moderate Chartist such as Henry Vincent was keen to declare how from “boyhood he had been a democrat” and had devoured the writings of Paine and Volney, not surprisingly the enlightenment legacy was defended most vigorously by the Democratic Associations.<sup>34</sup> As a result, friction was generated within the movement. During the first General Convention in 1839 Thomas Ireland of the London Democratic Association, for example, rejected the idea that reforming bodies in London should drop separate titles, or the “idle distinction of names,” and merge into a single Metropolitan Charter Association. Ireland stressed that “names or words are so far expressive as to become nearly equivalent to things,” and considered the proposal an attack on “*government of and by the people*,” on democracy itself. Smelling the whiff of class conciliation and betrayal, Ireland urged metropolitan Chartists to abandon the “so-called” London Working Men’s Association and rally round the unfurled “banner of Democracy.”<sup>35</sup>

Soon after Lovett and Matthew Fletcher accused the LDA of trying to pack the Convention with “Jacobin” delegates imbued with the spirit of the French revolution. O’Connor forcefully refuted these claims, though expressed regret that “any member of the Convention should dread any infusion of democracy whether from a Jacobin club or from a Democratic Association.”<sup>36</sup> A similar, though far less acrimonious conflict broke out among Barnsley Chartists the following year and there were probably others.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the renowned auto didacticism of leaders such as Cooper, most of the working-class men, women and children that made up the majority movement would have had neither the time nor the opportunity to study either classical or revolutionary history. For them, affiliating with the concept of democracy was often more visceral, bound up as much with questions of individual and collective identity than it was with any well worked out and coherent historical sensibility, though one should not suppose it any less important because of that. Democracy connoted particular readings of the European past but, as we have already noted, whatever its intellectual sources it also functioned as an emblem or badge that signified membership of the movement and helped to create a sense of belonging. Thus, the self-identification democrat was pregnant with both ontological and ethical meaning. To be a democrat was to claim the moral high ground from the many “traitors” that surrounded the Chartists, erstwhile allies and political enemies who sought to tyrannise over them and against whom they contrasted their own methods and ideas: ‘base Whigs’ who had deserted the popular cause after 1832, “sham patriots” such as Daniel O’Connell, and middle-class Sturgites and “extension of commerce” men who peddled the false notion that free trade would solve the problem of working-class scarcity.<sup>38</sup> Chartist democrats claimed that these repeated attempts to flatter and beguile the common people had been successfully countered by a direct and truthful radical discourse that got to the heart of the

matter. It was a question of trust. William Atkinson supported Harney's election as Newcastle delegate to the Convention because he had proved himself "a thorough democrat, a man who had sworn never to bow to tyranny in any shape."<sup>39</sup> This contest on the linguistic level can be traced back at least to the unstamped press, if not before. Brougham's tone had incensed radicals as much as anything during the parliamentary debate on reform, for example, especially the way in which he twisted language to suit his own agenda. Thus, the *Poor Man's Guardian* reminded readers that it had long considered Brougham their "greatest and most deceitful enemy," especially as "he deals powerfully in most *fluent sophistry*; we will not call it 'eloquence,' because it lacks virtue and honesty, and common sense and truth – without but one of which 'true eloquence can't be.'"<sup>40</sup> For Henry Hetherington, the paper's publisher, authentic democratic discourse was marked by moral directness rather than by politeness, and many other radicals shared his opinion.<sup>41</sup>

Democrats thus spoke the language of "truth" and cast themselves as bearers of an irresistible universalism, an almost natural as well as historical force. The editor of the *Northern Star*, Rev. William Hill, personified the concept of democracy as a beneficent superman – "the giant form of virtuous Democracy" – that was striding across the world bringing liberty and peace, an image that superficially resembled O'Connell's, though Hill vehemently rejected the Irish nationalist's emphasis on commercial freedom or free trade as an inevitable corollary of political democracy.<sup>42</sup> The Liverpool Chartist, William Jones, warned middle-class magistrates who dealt harshly with Chartist prisoners after the "insurrection" of 1842 that; "They never could prevent the onward progress of democracy, unless they could chain down the human mind, and to do that they might as well attempt to pull down the dazzling orb of day, in the full blaze of meridian splendour, to command the ocean to recede, or the heavenly bodies to stand-still."<sup>43</sup>

Chartist leaders sometimes explicitly portrayed their own role as merely giving voice to this inexorable, world historical power. Thomas Cooper, for example, referred to himself as “the people’s mouthpiece”; while Feargus O’Connor playfully embraced the abusive epithet frequently hurled at him by his enemies: “I am a demagogue; if the fools understood Greek, they would have known it was a term of honour, rather than reproach. (Laughter, and cheers.)”<sup>44</sup>

Finally, the identity of democrat also implied that one was prepared to suffer, fight and even die for one’s beliefs if necessary; the term allowed Chartists to self-dramatise their excluded status in a highly melodramatic manner and this surely represented no small part of its appeal. This helps explain why Chartists were so keen to construct a kind of martyrology. State persecution was real enough from 1839 but just as interesting was the way in which Chartists handled their mistreatment. By 1842, the pantheon included John Frost, Zephaniah Williams, George Shell, William Jones, John Clayton, and Holberry of course, as well as many others. Countless meetings were organised to raise funds for the dependents of these men; numerous dinners were held to memorialise their sacrifice and keep up pressure for their release. At one of these David Ross, a Leeds Chartist, remarked that the “persecution of these virtuous men had first converted him to democracy.”<sup>45</sup> As with so much else, O’Connor intuited the popular mood perfectly and self-consciously embraced the identity of martyr. At his trial he proclaimed: “No revolution had been effected without many martyrs, and he supposed he was destined to be one.” And he continued the role in a letter written during his imprisonment in York Castle: “I hail the martyrdom. Martyrdom did I say, ‘tis glory. My treatment will do more for the holy cause of democracy than if I had been at large, and preaching for double the time.”<sup>46</sup> Others were similarly explicit. At his trial Thomas Cooper asserted, “on behalf of the great democratic body of this country,” that his spirit would not be crushed whatever the outcome: “If he was sentenced



to a dungeon, the first breath of heaven which he drew on his release, should be exclaimed in proclaiming liberty and the Charter.”<sup>47</sup> Imbued with the imagery and rhetoric of romanticism as well as Christianity, Chartist discourse dramatised individual and collective suffering as a necessary part of the struggle for freedom.<sup>48</sup>

#### IV

Discourses of democracy were deeply embedded in the culture of the Chartist movement, in its ritual and symbolism about which recent scholarship has taught us much. Local Chartist branches held regular tea parties, soirées and festivals to commemorate certain events, such as the release of a prisoner, or else simply to develop mutualistic ties between members.<sup>49</sup> Such forms were deliberately open and inclusive in order to maximise participation. Women, for example, regularly attended meetings and they did not merely wait on tables like their sisters in the Anti-Corn Law League.<sup>50</sup> Alcohol was often banned from events to make them more family oriented. At a festival held at Highbury to raise funds for the erection of a trades’ hall for London journeymen, a speaker named Balls stressed how important it was for the movement to own its own meeting places, so that they did not have to depend on others or meet in pubs. He hoped, therefore, that the project “was one in which the advocates of democracy and sobriety could mutually combine.” The moral revolutionist William Lovett argued for a similar linkage, at a mostly teetotal dinner to mark Henry Vincent’s release from gaol, for example, where Lovett stated that he hoped the event would demonstrate to the wider world that “their great cause was best served by sober, temperate, and prudent conduct – (cheers) – and so prove that democracy was as beneficial in practice as it was in theory.”<sup>51</sup> Little wonder that so many working-class

women took such an active part in the movement, sometimes following the common practice by signing letters to the press, “Sisters, in the cause of democracy,” like the female Chartists of Manchester.<sup>52</sup>

Democratic and constitutional idioms were often thoroughly intertwined at these cultural events. An impressive demonstration of the trades organised by Chartists in Aberdeen to honour the radical MP T. S. Duncombe, “the people’s own” who presented the national petition, was headed by numerous banners and a Chartist artwork: “A beautiful device emblematical of the triumph of democracy, supported by four splendid columns, after the Grecian-Doric order in the recesses, between which were portraits of ‘The Exile of Erin,’ Cobbett, H. Hunt, O’Connor – all hung in rich trappings of red silk, exquisitely wrought, surmounted by the Cap of Liberty, in red crimson, supported from the top of the columns by Grand Arches, tastefully arranged.”<sup>53</sup> Apart from the “Exile of Erin,” (Feargus O’Connor’s uncle, Arthur O’Connor, the United Irishman banished from Britain during the French wars, who later served as a general in Napoleon’s army), the portraits underlined the movement’s constitutionalism while the Phrygian cap counterpoised a different tradition. Speaking at the tea party at Leeds referred to above, William Jones succinctly fused these alternative strands in a series of questions: “Why was the working man excluded from a participation in national affairs? Why was he excluded from the pale of the Constitution? Why was he robbed of his natural rights, and deprived of his social privileges, converted into a mere drawer of water, a mere hewer of wood, a mere toiling machine, producing an enormous amount of wealth, which, after its production, he was obliged to hand over to others to enjoy?” In the midst of this period of acute social crisis when it seemed to many as if the monarchy was itself threatened, William Hill argued that the only way to head off a republic was “by infusing the true spirit of rational democracy into our constitution, and giving to every Briton

his rights as a human being, and his privileges as a freeman.”<sup>54</sup> Chartism was deeply infused with republicanism and leaders such as Hill and O’Connor had to work hard to keep republican sentiments in check. For tactical reasons as much as anything, they insisted that monarchy and “pure democracy” were not incompatible with one another, though it seems unlikely that the majority of Chartists agreed with them; royal scandals and extravagance were staple themes of the Chartist press, for instance.<sup>55</sup> Chartism appeared most threatening in the early 1840s, not only because a dire economic situation mobilised the masses against the state, but also because local and national leaders were able to interweave different idioms to press for reform. For sure, they drew on a version of the English past and the critique of the lost rights of the “freeborn Englishman,” but they also frequently employed natural rights arguments for democratic reform and conjured up more disruptive historical models. To separate these strands, as recent scholarship has attempted, is unhelpful and makes it harder to grasp the way in which Chartism was poised on the knife-edge present, to use C. Wright Mills’ vivid phrase.

Democracy was not merely a matter of texts or tradition for Chartists but was quintessentially a question of practice, as Lovett emphasised. As we have seen, they drew on an eclectic range of sources to buttress their beliefs and sustain their spirits. However, what they meant by democracy becomes more apparent when we also consider what they did, how they practiced democracy. The Leeds Working Men’s Association put it bluntly: “Self-government we *must* have. We will obtain it peaceably if we are suffered to do so; BUT WE WILL HAVE IT.” “Take your affairs into your own hand,” advised the Manchester Political Union; “We have no rich men leading or driving us but, in the true democratic spirit manage our own affairs.”<sup>56</sup> The movement’s participatory forms and practices reflected this passionate desire. While the idea of convention linked back to the American and French revolutions, the organisation of local

branches owed much to the old parish system with its quarterly vestry meetings.<sup>57</sup> Members exerted control at branch level through the regular election of officers but Chartists were keen to ensure individuals put forward to conventions or backed in parliamentary and municipal elections should be fully accountable. In short, they believed in the idea of delegation rather than representation, and this was a major distinguishing feature between them and many of their middle-class sympathisers from the start.<sup>58</sup> The mass platform also helped build support and nurture an intimate relationship between leaders and the majority. The first historian of this key institution distinguished between the Chartist platform, which he thought figured primarily as an “‘expression’ of the public voice,” and the way the platform was employed by the Anti-Corn Law League, where it appeared mostly “in its didactic aspect.” In other words, the latter sought to inculcate ideas of free trade from above by means of this form, while Chartists used the mass platform in order to allow the people’s voice to be heard.<sup>59</sup> Another central institution of Chartist democracy, the radical press, performed a similar function. Recent historians have demonstrated just how important a dialogic press was for the movement and have emphasised the often fluid boundary between radical readers and writers.<sup>60</sup> The *Northern Star* especially was often represented as a beacon spreading the light of democracy and enlightenment or else as a champion in the battle for freedom. Rev. Jackson, for instance, observed that since the paper “began to shine in our political firmament, its rays had penetrated and established the principles of democracy in every part of this country.” Indeed, Jackson hoped that one day “its refulgent rays should light the world to freedom.” “Democracy presented a darksome and gloomy hemisphere,” until the *Star* had disseminated “the light of truth,” according to William Hill, who welcomed the co-operation of other radical journals in “the battle of Democracy.”<sup>61</sup>

Long before Holberry was martyred in 1842, the attitudes of liberal friends of political reform had considerably hardened, as much because of the practical as the theoretical challenge Chartism posed. The *Leeds Mercury*, for example, damned Chartism from the outset: “The design is nothing short of this, to convert the Government of England into a perfect and simple Democracy of the wildest possible kind, swamping the Crown, the Peerage, and all the property and intelligence of the country.”<sup>62</sup> J. S. Mill chose to remain largely silent on the subject of democracy after reviewing Tocqueville’s influential work, most likely because of the threat from below.<sup>63</sup> Even the radical MP John Roebuck, who had put the Chartist case and sung a hymn to democracy in the Commons during the reform agitation, finally fell out with the movement over the question of class and O’Connor’s leadership in 1842, describing the second national petition as the work of “a cowardly and malignant demagogue.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the alienation of liberal middle-class opinion heightened as democracy became tied more securely to a developing “working-class” identity. We can see this clearly, if we consider the way in which usage of the term shifted from a more diffuse, inclusive sense to a more particularistic meaning during the most intense period of Chartist activity. The Leeds Working Men’s Association issued an address at the beginning of 1838, for instance, which portrayed history as a ceaseless struggle between “the spirit of Aristocracy, and the spirit of Democracy.” Constitutional methods – “begging, and praying and petitioning” – might be exhausted the authors claimed, and to illustrate their reading they pointed to the American and French revolutions, as well as the recent coercion of Canada, a country that would nevertheless soon witness, “the triumphant establishment of Democracy on the ruins of Aristocracy.” In similar fashion, later that year at a meeting at Manchester to commemorate Peterloo, Vincent declared that the country was now polarised into two camps; “those who are for the Democracy and those who are for the Aristocracy.”<sup>65</sup> Here, democracy

was employed in a rather vague, all-encompassing way, allowing the possibility of cross-class collaboration to defeat a backward looking ancien regime. O'Connor himself often turned this opposition to his own advantage, amused and flattered audiences with the remark that he had "been promoted from the ranks of the aristocracy to a commission in the democracy." Accused by detractors such as Lovett and Hetherington of coming from middle-class stock, O'Connor delighted in reminding them that he had in fact been an aristocrat in his own country, but had worked his way into "the democracy" through "honest service."<sup>66</sup> When O'Connor appeared in public dressed in a suit of fustian – "the emblem of your order," as he remarked to the crowd outside York Castle – he was communicating his social and moral transformation symbolically.<sup>67</sup>

As the economic and political crisis intensified in the early 1840s, the democratic idiom began to be inflected more directly by class. An editorial in the *Northern Star* that denounced "our besotted aristocracy" in 1840, for example, also rounded on "their still more besotted apes, the middle classes." Hill quoted extensively from one of Vincent's prison letters that expressed belief in the inexorable march of democratic progress, aided by the spread of popular education: "*To think* is to be a democrat – THINKING is DEMOCRACY." Disillusionment with middle-class reformers such as Thomas Atwood of the Birmingham Political Union sharpened definitional contests. Standing as a Chartist candidate in that city the following summer, George White urged his supporters to slough off middle-class Whig-Liberal "factions" and "erect the standard of pure democracy."<sup>68</sup> Middle-class radicals' vigorous support for the religion of free trade fuelled class antagonism considerably. In an attempt to buttress their democratic credentials, some Anti-Corn Law League speakers pointed approvingly to the example of Switzerland, including Jellinger Symonds at a meeting of the Leeds Reform Association, who described the country as "a perfect democracy" characterised by "the most cordial union between

masters and men.” Though Chartists also sometimes lauded the land of “the heroic Tell,” they were not taken in by this tactic, recognising that the League was also keen to identify with the country because of its adoption of free trade.<sup>69</sup> In the radical press, victories over the League were routinely celebrated as victories for the cause of both democratic principles and the socio-political group that most cherished those principles. The *Northern Star* reported the “Triumph of the Democracy over the Corn-Law Repealers” at a public meeting in Southampton in January 1842, for instance, while at Stalybridge a year later O’Connor proclaimed his faith that Chartists would not be led astray by the League’s blandishments because they understood that repeal of the Corn Laws without political power would represent a profound defeat: “this was the reason why the working classes would not join the League for their repeal. It was a fortunate thing for this country and the world that the people were determined to stand by the principles of true democracy.” Thus, in the febrile atmosphere of the early 1840s, “pure” or “true democracy” came increasingly to be regarded as the cause of “the people,” and “the people” was now often used synonymously with “the working class” or “classes.”<sup>70</sup>

This explicit class inflection was generalised by the massive strike wave that swept across northern industrial districts in the summer of 1842. In a speech at Lancaster in July, a month before the strikes started, O’Connor observed with characteristic humour that although “the working classes” now faced combined hostility from, “the three ocracies – the aristocracy, the smokeocracy, and the shopocracy,” he would continue to “back his own ocracy, democracy, against the other three – (laughter and cheers).” Thomas Cooper similarly believed that what he called “real democracy” was now a class question and elided it with the Charter: “Let the middle men come if they like; but do not court them. The People’s Charter is intended to be pre-eminently the working man’s boon; and let us be resolved to make it so.”<sup>71</sup> As overt class

conflict spread and enemies were seen to press more determinedly, so this identification became more frequent. The Anti-Corn Law League was exposed as a cynically manipulative middle-class body that hoped to use the Chartists for their own ends in an editorial in the *Star*, which cited private League correspondence that recommended activists denounce the aristocracy and “class legislation,” or “give the reins in favour of democracy,” because “the masses will not restrict their efforts to Corn Law Repeal.”<sup>72</sup> At the height of the struggle, the South Lancashire Chartist delegate conference issued an address that condemned the “monstrous power of Capital in the hands of the middle classes,” who were “rioting in luxuries as the swine wallows in mire.” Though this group was backed by a government that endeavoured “to stifle free discussion and put down Democracy,” delegates affirmed that “nothing short of political power to protect our wages will satisfy the working classes of this country.”<sup>73</sup> The treatment of Chartist prisoners by the state in the autumn of 1842 served to strengthen this embattled sensibility. Lord Abinger, who presided at the Chester Special Commission, had no doubt that democracy meant Chartism in 1842 and that both ought to be unremittingly suppressed.<sup>74</sup>

A final vital factor in this definitional process was the debate over the so-called “new move” between Chartists and the Complete Suffrage Union, pet of the Dissenting businessman Joseph Sturge, which preached the gospel of class conciliation and aimed to enfranchise householders. Sturge launched his movement at the most inauspicious time, towards the end of 1841 and its main significance, as far as Chartists were concerned, was that it helped to bond them more closely together. It did receive some initial support from moderate Chartists, however, including Lovett’s friend J. H. Parry who used the term democracy to underscore the cross-class, inclusive nature of the project at a public meeting at Holborn during the general strike. “The man who was continually denouncing the middle class was a traitor to the cause of



democracy,” Parry exclaimed, then went on to warn; “God forbid that he should attempt to divide the two classes; it was only by a union of them that a bloodless revolution could be effected.” Henry Vincent, who also spoke at the meeting, added a rather different emphasis, which did not bode well for future relations as it revealed Vincent’s primary commitment and linked this to their supposedly shared objective: “In his hearts deepest core he venerated the name of the People’s Charter; he had not a drop of blood in his veins which did not boil with ardour in the cause of democracy (tremendous cheering.)” Leaders of the “new move” continued to claim the language of democracy and attempted to open it up to other constituencies; an address from the Council of the CSU, for example, spoke of “unitedly raising up the intelligence and virtues of democracy on the basis of free institutions.”<sup>75</sup> The movement generated a torrent of criticism in the Chartist press, Harney predictably denouncing it as the work of “the ‘real’ foes of democracy,” but what buried the organisation were the actions of the CSU itself. Signing himself “Your brother Democrat,” the secretary of the Chartist Executive, John Campbell, launched a scathing attack in a letter to the *Star* in October 1842, accusing the organisation of class exclusivity, apparent in the selection of delegates to their meetings: “Can any working man – can any real Democrat come to any but the following – namely, that this party are not sincere,” Campbell wrote.<sup>76</sup> The final break came two months later, at a conference in Birmingham, when even Lovett refused to abandon the symbol of the Charter and joined forces with O’Connor to defend it. Although some historians have been rather puzzled by this “unlikely alliance” it becomes more understandable when we recognise that for all their differences both Lovett and O’Connor shared a belief in “pure” or “extreme democracy.”<sup>77</sup> For both men, democracy and the Charter could not be separated.

Thus, Chartists came to regard themselves as the true defenders of democracy against the depredations of aristocratic politicians, middle-class employers, corrupt judges and false friends. Just as the boundary lines marking which groups were included within or excluded from the concept of “the people” were redrawn in 1842, so too “democracy” as we have seen was redefined by popular radicals and their antagonists who both came to regard it as synonymous with Chartism, the political project of an enlightened “working-class.”<sup>78</sup> However, although this shift was important, it should not be supposed that the door was ever entirely shut on middle class reformers. Even during this period of acute social tension the combative Harney was still prepared to allow “the middle class” to join the cause of “the people,” just so long as they accepted the political demands of “the working class” and realised that the fight was for the “rights of man” and not just “the interests of a class.”<sup>79</sup> The relationship between class and democracy was therefore always shifting and contingent.

Democracy helped unify the Chartist movement, certainly, though it continued to divide. Soon after middle-class moderates like Sturge were purged the movement adopted a new constitution that according to Malcolm Chase marked a “fundamental departure” for the National Charter Association.<sup>80</sup> Not only did this constitution prioritise the land plan, it also placed more power in the hands of a salaried executive, which was in theory responsible to the annual convention but which in reality could exercise far more independent control. Member participation was seriously compromised by a change that was vigorously contested by Lovett who regarded it as further proof of the dictatorial influence of O’Connor – “the blight of Democracy from the first moment he opened his mouth as its *professed* advocate” – and his organ the *Northern Star*, which had sought to undermine “every thing good in Democracy, or to place Toryism once more in the ascendant.”<sup>81</sup> Cooper also launched an attack, outlining an

alternative organisational structure that would enable ordinary members to hold the executive more to account: “The government of the Association by such a body would, also, be essentially a government by representative democracy, while the government by a directory of five may, in its very nature, be termed an oligarchy.”<sup>82</sup> Cooper’s initiative failed to check a shift towards the centralisation of power which only served to widen the gulf between the rhetoric and reality of Chartist democracy.

## V

The strike wave of 1842 and the state repression that followed at the local and national level marked a profound caesura in the Chartist movement. Lacking a mass base, a belief that the cause of democracy could be imminently achieved was no longer sustainable. Defeat served to strengthen the centralising drift sketched above but ironically it may also have heightened the rhetorical appeal of democracy; faith in the inevitability of its coming surely provided some comfort for beleaguered radicals after the general strike. In this phase, Harney invested the concept with an agency of its own, repeatedly articulating a sense of the inevitability of democracy regardless of any setbacks, in editorials he wrote for the *Northern Star*. America was still pointed to as evidence of this progressive tendency, though its limitations had increasingly to be admitted. Harney worked hard to purge the concept of impurities, asserting; “*Democracy comprises all*; the negro as well as the white man; the African as well as the American.” He explained slavery as merely an aristocratic vestige from the past: “The cart whip ruffians of Carolina are as truly aristocrats as ever were the Norman brigands that followed in the train of the bastard WILLIAM.”<sup>83</sup> Contemporary realities posed as many problems for him as they had

for O'Brien a decade earlier, and middle-class radicals were not slow to pounce on how the American experience demonstrated the perversion of democratic ideals, which had often been used to cloak the worst kinds of oppression. The Anti-Corn Law League orator George Thompson, for example, denounced America as a "false democracy which obstructed the progress of freedom," precisely because it was built on the foundations of slavery, at the second annual meeting of the Complete Suffrage Association that was attended by the black abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass.<sup>84</sup>

Unswerving belief in the eventual triumph of democracy no doubt allowed Harney to put a brave face on things during this most difficult phase. He continued to argue that the movement of history was on the side of popular sovereignty, and sanguine editorials on "The Influence of Democracy" and "The March of Democracy" mapped the progressive signs of the times. The growth of co-operative initiatives among the working classes was seen as most hopeful, not only the Land Plan, which Harney thought would pave the way "for democracy to enter the legislature of the day," but also trade unions.<sup>85</sup> The need for more ambitious and less exclusive organisations such as the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour was widely acknowledged, not least by O'Connor, who hoped to substitute a "democracy of the Trades" for the existing "aristocracy of the Trades." Harney similarly opined that trade unions had "struggled hopelessly as an aristocracy of their order," and that they now had to "link themselves inseparably with the democracy of that order."<sup>86</sup> Producer and consumer co-operatives were also singled out as progressive forms, as sources of democratic renewal and advance that would allow working people to better regulate production and consumption. The leadership, however, remained divided here and it is worth noting also that early co-operative societies, including the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers founded in 1844, studiously avoided the

language of democracy; though the rules of the latter society promised vaguely to eventually “arrange the powers of production, distribution, education, and government,” they also contained a strong commitment to political neutrality.<sup>87</sup>

It is a commonplace of historical scholarship that at the leadership level Chartism became more internationalist in orientation from the mid forties. Harney and other metropolitan leaders were most excited by continental developments; the spread of democratic and revolutionary movements and the abortive uprising in Ireland understandably fed their romantic imaginations more effectively than the efforts of the Rochdale Pioneers. The language of democracy was profoundly shaped by these factors. It began to take on explicit revolutionary meanings for some, becoming therefore more sharply separated from constitutionalist discourse. Political exiles rubbed shoulders with Chartists in London and brought new influences; the establishment of the Fraternal Democrats in 1845 evidenced this cross-fertilisation. Many “Democratic Suppers” were held in the capital, ritualistic celebrations at which democratic-revolutionary past, present and futures interpenetrated. The first French republic provided a common reference point. At one of these events held at the City Chartist Hall in the autumn of 1845, the trade union activist John Skelton welcomed the German communist Wilhelm Weitling and recommended making Chartism an explicitly social as well as political project. Skelton looked forward to a time when “the people” of all lands, “having the power to make the laws, and form the institutions, will become really sovereign; and Democracy prepare the way for that social equality and general happiness which I have a fervent faith will yet prevail. (Cheers.)” Chartists did not lose sight of the nation at these meetings, however; William Sankey’s version of “Rule Britannia,” which celebrated England’s global role as harbinger of popular liberty, was regularly sung.<sup>88</sup>

Although often portrayed as a rather more insular thinker, O'Connor's position was complex and in many respects he was as keen on international links as anyone. At a meeting in Cantons Tavern off Leicester Square, for instance, O'Connor warmly welcomed foreign democrats, including the German Karl Schapper, who asserted that "democracy would shortly be triumphant, and that every man would be his own landlord and his own employer. (Cheers.)" O'Connor charted a singular course, arguing that those who fought "under the banner of Democracy" in England faced a more powerful aristocracy than existed anywhere else. He went on to emphasise that while foreigners desired a republic, "we contend for our Charter, which is an improved principle of Republicanism. (Loud cheers.)"<sup>89</sup> A feeling that the principle of democratic freedom was spreading throughout Europe was conveyed by numerous gatherings in support of Italy, Poland, Hungary and Germany. Again, O'Connor identified strongly with this historical trend, embracing the general atmosphere of flux and transition. Eighteen months later, he congratulated democrats in Prussia where "irresponsible despotism" had been forced to seek support from France against "the marching conqueror – DEMOCRACY!" O'Connor added a typical patriotic gloss to the effect that "the watchword" for change had emanated "from England and CHARTISM," and was careful to stress that success was bound up with practical moves such as "the Land and Trades' question, each of which are important branches of Chartism, while the success of one or both would materially advance the cause of Democracy."<sup>90</sup>

Harney was especially keen to engage with continental émigrés, opened the *Star* to their activities and covered an increasing amount of foreign news, falling out with O'Connor in consequence.<sup>91</sup> Events such as the Polish uprising against the Austrian Empire confirmed his belief in the interconnected nature of political and social reform. Harney hailed the Cracow Manifesto, issued by the Polish National Government early in 1846, because he reckoned it

combined a demand for “equal political rights and social justice,” and was therefore symbolic of the inexorable progress of “Fraternal Democracy, in which labour and reward would be equally apportioned, and happiness be the reward of each and all.”<sup>92</sup> The events in France two years later strengthened this view. For a while he was elated and no wonder; after all, he had eaten breakfast off Louis Philippe’s crockery in the deposed king’s palace when he had visited Paris in March 1848.<sup>93</sup> Harney enthusiastically adopted the term “social democracy” and démoc-soc ideology which was utilised by French socialists and moderate republicans such as Ledru Rollin at the time, as a way of marking out a new direction for the Chartist movement. The term it seems was first employed in an editorial that discussed the violent suppression of revolution on the streets of Paris in June 1848. For Harney, this was simultaneously a bloody physical act and a sustained ideological assault. He noted how, in an effort to undermine revolutionary principles, General Cavaignac had established an “Academy of Moral and Political Sciences,” which had appointed a committee to produce “a moral defence of ‘social order.’” Cheap tracts had been distributed among the masses to this end and the first of these by Victor Cousin was bitterly satirised by Harney for attempting to “throw dust in the eyes of the people.” Cousin sought to shore up social inequality with charitable activity, a futile exercise according to Harney: “General Cavaignac would do well to understand that though his precious band of ‘philosophers’ should publish millions of such tracts as ‘Justice and Charity,’ they will fail to raise a dyke against the ever-rising waters of Social Democracy.”<sup>94</sup> John Saville has demonstrated the very real threat that confronted the British state in the year of revolutions, though the pressure was successfully resisted.<sup>95</sup> Harney’s discourse failed to resonate with the majority of English workers. He became almost a revolutionary caricature, styled himself on the martyred Marat, signed articles “L’Ami du Peuple,” and increasingly peppered his editorials with the French terms “proletarian”

and “bourgeoisie.” Such language was both symptom and cause of Harney’s increasing alienation from the wider working class.<sup>96</sup>

It seems likely that the attempt made by Harney and others to align democracy explicitly with socialism in 1848 and after only served to exacerbate fractures within the movement.<sup>97</sup> In the early 1840s, the language of Chartist democracy was fluid enough to encompass alternative though often overlapping models derived from different conceptions of past, present and future. As we have seen, Cooper’s idealisation of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as England before the “Norman Yoke,” coexisted alongside O’Brien’s critical appropriation of the American and French revolutions; these democratic narratives did not preclude but intertwined with the “constitutional idiom.” Moreover, and regardless of such complexities, the argument that political change was necessary in order to regulate markets and humanise relations of production and consumption enjoyed widespread support within the movement. The identity of the “Chartist/Democrat” communicated a shared ambition. This helps to explain why Chartism elicited such fervent loyalty from so many working-class women, despite the fact that demands for their formal political empowerment was ruled out as utopian by the movement’s male leadership. Chartist women demanded the six points in order to check the operations of “iniquitous capitalists” and rescue workers’ families from the “horrors” of the New Poor Law, the factory and the mine.<sup>98</sup> Harney’s explicit insistence that Chartism stood for the integration of politics and social reconstruction had the advantage of clarity, certainly, but also served to isolate those who adopted a less confrontational approach, preferring not to attack the institution of private property directly.



Harney and his supporters enjoyed no monopoly over the language of democracy after 1848. Other individuals and groups with quite dissimilar aims were also swept up by continental revolution and engaged in the debate on democratic ideas. As Margot Finn has emphasised, many middle-class radicals were very enthusiastic indeed about nationalist movements in Germany, Italy and Hungary. The Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, for instance, enjoyed an almost cult status for a while in mid-Victorian England; thousands of genteel admirers flocked to see the heroic liberator when he was feted at the Crystal Palace in 1864. However, middle-class radicals had no truck with the démoc-soc notions that circulated in the year of revolutions and stressed the necessity, contra Harney, of the separation of the political from the economic domain. Not surprisingly, they rejected Louis Blanc's attempts at socialist reconstruction outright, and linked democratic moves abroad with the *douceur* of capitalist commerce – the spread of free trade.<sup>99</sup> Their views eventually received a sympathetic response among Chartists such as Holyoake who tried to look both ways for a time after 1848. Holyoake introduced Blanc's ideas on the "Organisation of Labour" to English readers through the pages of short-lived periodicals such as the *Spirit of the Age* and elsewhere, though only a few years later he espoused Mazzinist ideals, an airy, spiritualised nationalism popular among middle-class radicals.<sup>100</sup> "We are not democracy; we are an army bound to clear the way for democracy," proclaimed the joint republican manifesto issued by Kossuth, Ledru Rollin and Mazzini that Holyoake published in 1855, and their romantic, "manly" but suitably vague rhetoric retained its appeal for Holyoake throughout his long life.<sup>101</sup> Like the discourse on the nation, the democratic idiom had the potential to unite as well as divide classes from one another, though as the next section shows, the chance of finding common discursive ground remained extremely slim.

## VI

Although it was metropolitan radicals like Harney who embraced the democratic and social ideal most fervently, the clamour of democratic talk was heard in other parts of the country. The *Leeds Mercury*, for example, reported how speakers such as Joseph Barker and Mrs Theobald toured the West Riding during 1848, addressing large meetings that attracted many women on “the need for a thorough Democracy.” Baines’ paper first attacked the 1848 French Revolution as a form of “pure democracy,” then later gloated over the failure of “ultra-democracy.”<sup>102</sup> Other middle-class radicals took a more cautious approach and endeavoured to sketch an alternative path. The *Bradford Observer* published an address signed by more than 500 of the local electorate that included many prominent Liberals such as Titus Salt, W. E. Forster and William Byles, the paper’s owner and editor, which deprecated class hostility and expressed support for the principle of no taxation without representation.<sup>103</sup> No mention was made of democracy. At a public meeting of “the Middle Classes, Special Constables, and others” held at the Corn Exchange, Manchester on the same day as the Kennington Common rally, a petition was drawn up in support of the Charter, which was later presented to parliament by John Bright. Soon after forty-nine middle-class radicals led by the parliamentary reformer Joseph Hume and including prominent free traders such as Cobden, Bright and Sir Joshua Walmsley backed the relaunch of a “New Movement” in support of household suffrage, triennial parliaments, vote by ballot, no property qualification and equal electoral districts. Bright especially urged working-class radicals to drop the Charter – in effect to stop talking about democracy – and instead ally themselves with middle-class sympathisers and embrace household suffrage. Some of them responded to this call, including the Manchester Chartist R. J. Richardson whose desire for class conciliation and compromise was fuelled by his antagonism towards “democratic tyrants” like O’Connor.<sup>104</sup>

What made such a rapprochement difficult was the fact that the past was not easily forgotten and that words were still worth fighting for. Peter McDouall was merely expressing a common position when he spoke of “my Chartism meaning the purest democracy.” Although even Harney sometimes spoke about democracy transcending class society, a constructive salve rather than a destructive force – “Democracy endeavours to heal the wounds class-legislation has inflicted” was how he once put it – often, as we have seen, democracy was identified closely with class.<sup>105</sup> Harney called Bright a “choice specimen of the *bourgeoisie*” and attacked the Commons as “essentially a middle-class house” and therefore an obstacle to democratic progress. Ernest Jones similarly denounced the English middle-class as it “has cast down aristocracy on the left, and democracy on the right, and lives on the ruins of both.”<sup>106</sup>

Middle-class usage of the language of democracy did not aid co-operation. Many preferred to shy away from it altogether, including Cobden who generally only used it in private; he can therefore only be described as “one of the leading architects of modern parliamentary democracy,” in a highly qualified sense.<sup>107</sup> Writing to Sturge during the crisis of 1842, Cobden despaired of the Chartists for failing to grasp the basic principles of modern civilisation. He had recently attended a meeting at Coventry where workers had been “carried away by fellows whose fiendish spirit would have suited the time of Robespierre!” Most worrying, these people simply did not understand the movement of history and thus “direct all their attacks against capital, machinery, manufacturers, and trade, which are the only materials of democracy.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, for Cobden the development of capitalism and the spread of democracy were intimately connected parts of a single process, the progressive tendency of modernity. However, democracy here is not construed as an abstract, universal and romantic concept that might liberate the majority whatever their material condition, but is rather seen as a positive side effect

of accumulations of property. Such capitalist utopianism was publicly articulated in the pages of the *Leeds Mercury*, which struck a similar note in an editorial that read symbolic meaning into Queen Victoria's opening of the New Royal Exchange. Blind to the possible charge of blasphemous hubris, Baines enthused about England's global free trade mission that was inscribed over the entrance: "The Earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof." Like Cobden, Baines believed that capitalist growth had made democracy possible: "it is her manufacturing and commercial industry that has formed her great and intelligent democracy."<sup>109</sup> Cobden sometimes used the term more instrumentally or negatively, as in a letter sent to James Mellor as the climax of the campaign against the corn laws approached, in which he opined that it might be necessary for free traders to "shake the rod of democracy" in their opponents' faces before they finally conceded.<sup>110</sup>

With the language of democracy used in these ways, it was little wonder that Chartists in the main remained sceptical. There were more sympathetic middle-class figures who tried to keep channels of communication open, however, including William Byles, owner and editor of the *Bradford Observer*. Byles published a remarkable editorial in the same issue in which the conciliatory address referred to above appeared on, "The Secret of the Chartist Movement in England." Here he argued that while the People's Charter was despised by the respectable classes, it remained "the idol of the people. They love it in their heart of hearts. It is the symbol and summary of their political faith." For Byles, the Charter was not simply a set of political demands but also expressed the "social wants" and "sorrows" of "the people," their "hopes of social amelioration, of better wages, of comfortable cottages, of plenty of the necessaries of life." Though he fully appreciated how urgent material improvement was for the working classes, Chartism was clearly more than a "knife and fork" question according to Byles, it was a plea for

inclusion and respect and he therefore supported the view, pushed by thinkers as dissimilar as Tocqueville and Carlyle, that “democracy is coming, as steadily as time.” Rather than dismiss Chartism as the *Times* had done as “a *little fact*,” it was far better to learn lessons from the recent past and embrace the movement of history: “The landed aristocracy greatly miscalculated in resisting the inevitable advent of free trade; for the protracted struggle which they waged with the League all but annihilated the *prestige* of their order. It will be well if the middle classes take warning from this example, and fraternise with, rather than resist, the legions of democracy.”<sup>111</sup> As we have seen, some of Byles’ friends and colleagues shared these anxieties, though it is significant that they chose to ditch the language of democracy, tainted as it was by Chartism, in favour of the pragmatic language of incremental change, most importantly household suffrage.

Middle-class harmonists renewed their efforts to build alliances with more moderate working-class radicals after 1848. The “new movement” rediscovered that year linked extension of the suffrage to property ownership. The highest stratum of working-class male householders it was thought had earned the vote, which was regarded as a trust, a symbol of moral character. Thus, the right to the franchise was carefully decoupled from the language of democracy, a concept hardly ever invoked by Cobden and Bright, for example, so tainted had the keyword been by Chartism. The latter figures were especially keen on the freehold land movement that emerged at this time, which sought to enfranchise members who contributed to a fund to purchase property and eventually qualify to vote as forty-shilling freeholders, precisely because they saw it as a way of reinforcing an identity between suffrage and property.<sup>112</sup> In a revealing speech in support of Joseph Hume’s motion for household suffrage and other political reforms in the Commons in June 1849, Bright lauded this initiative as a way of meeting the demand of “the industrious, peaceable, and intelligent portions of the working classes” for inclusion “within the

pale of the constitution.” Careful to stress that he did “not insist at all on the plea of natural right,” Bright skirted round democratic discourse, claiming to represent “a popular, and, if you choose, a democratic, element...the common people of England...the cause of a population among whom I live.”<sup>113</sup> In this manner, Bright crafted his persona as the “people’s tribune,” an identity that he was to trade on consistently during the course of his political career.<sup>114</sup> He went on to express sympathy with working-class political demands but quickly denounced “the frightful thing which men call Chartism,” frightful not because of the six points but because it had stirred up “passions” and inculcated “false principles”; presumably arguments for political equality based on natural right.<sup>115</sup> He closed with an image of masses of thrifty, respectable working men eager to join freehold land societies in the localities, (1500 alone had enrolled in Birmingham), and work out “their own political enfranchisement.” This move appealed strongly to Bright and other middle-class backers because it reduced the vote to both a commodity and a reward for good behaviour: “I believe that every man who saves his money to get a vote, is socially and morally improving himself in so doing, and that his admission within the pale of the constitution will be a blessing to the country.”<sup>116</sup>

Some Chartists themselves tried to tag on to the freehold land movement, albeit for somewhat different reasons, including G. J. Holyoake and Henry Hetherington, but the majority took a hostile line.<sup>117</sup> Not surprisingly, Harney was a most scathing critic. He condemned it as Cobden’s brainchild, and for being restricted to the labour aristocracy. In an editorial in the *Star*, he rightly accused Cobden of having, “no fancy for universal suffrage,” keen only to extend the right to the franchise just enough “to place power in the hands of the ‘Manchester School’; but not so numerous as to risk the attainment of power by the advocates of reform *democratique et sociale*.”<sup>118</sup> However, even figures like Cooper held fast to an expansive conception of Chartism

long after the debacle of 1848. Giving the freehold land movement short shrift, Cooper pressed independent liberals like Dudley Coutts Stuart to support manhood rather than household suffrage as a matter of principle: “I know that *some* Parliamentary Reformers are accustomed to speak slightingly of all *natural right* to the franchise; but this is a doctrine so firmly fixed in the convictions of intelligent workingmen in this country, that they would as soon think of denying their own existence as of denying its truth.”<sup>119</sup>

To the majority Chartist movement narrowing the meaning of democracy to the vote for male householders, even if this was combined with one of the six points such as the secret ballot, was a travesty, an almost sacrilegious action. As Harney explained in an editorial entitled “What is Democracy?” that took issue with the *Times* for defining the concept as being based on the idea of letting people “take care of themselves,” Chartists wanted the franchise not simply for reasons of individual self-interest, to help improve the condition of themselves and their families, but to enable them to better look after each other in communities, as a people. Real democracy therefore implied “equal political privileges” for sure, but it also depended on “equal guarantees for the enjoyment of social happiness.”<sup>120</sup> Despite the fact that many Chartists happily subscribed to “the Charter and something more,” not all were as explicit as Harney on this point, though if it had been passed the “People’s Charter” would no doubt have involved a complete restructuring of the political domain, with MPs reduced to the role of delegates rather than representatives and parliament subject to real scrutiny and control by the people, now empowered to regulate the social and economic life of the nation.<sup>121</sup> That is why Chartism was so wilfully misrepresented by elites surely and also why it met such fierce resistance, not just at the time but by subsequent generations.<sup>122</sup>

## VII

Attending to the democratic idiom enables the historian to better gauge Chartism's radical challenge to the British state and also forces us to reconsider how the movement relates to the broader transformation of British politics and society in the mid-nineteenth century. Most obviously, it allows us to question seriously the notion that there was an easy transition from Chartism to liberalism. O'Brien's position was that political reform was necessary in order to secure social reform; this was the major lesson he had learnt from his study of the French revolution and the recent history of the American republic.<sup>123</sup> By the late 1840s this sense of connectedness was captured within the movement by the increasingly common phrase "the Charter and something more."<sup>124</sup> However, from Chartism's emergence a decade before, a wide range of activists had commonly employed the argument that politics needed to be remodelled in order to enable working people to check the "extension of commerce" – that is, the spread of market capitalism – and regulate the spheres of consumption and production.<sup>125</sup> Thus, the demand for democracy invariably spilled over into social and economic domains: Chartism was quintessentially the desire for self-government writ large. The six points of the Charter were the means but they were not the end as Engels, Carlyle, Macaulay, Mrs Gaskell and the majority of the British ruling elite understood very well. The liberalism of Cobden and Bright, which insisted on the rigid separation of the political from the economic and social domain and substituted the demand for household suffrage for the language of democracy, was incompatible with majority Chartist ambition, notwithstanding the drift of much recent historiography.



After Chartism's protracted demise, democrats were scattered in all directions and the language changed. O'Brien, for instance, was increasingly drawn towards authoritarian political forms, while loyal groups of supporters kept his democratic imaginary alive in the metropolis.<sup>126</sup> More moderate leaders of late Chartism such as G. J. Holyoake, who sought to make a living from what was left of the radical movement, took a different approach, attempting to fit the language to the times. He could adopt the role of revolutionary democrat on occasion but he also tried to package the democratic idiom in ways that middle-class radicals such as his mentor J. S. Mill would find acceptable. The difficulties he encountered underscore the power of Chartist appropriation. From the early 1850s, Holyoake tried to literally clean up the concept and its advocates; "democracy is a dignity," he insisted, requiring some "high private cultivation," aspects not always appreciated by many Chartists he added. Taking a veiled swipe at O'Connor, Holyoake went on to argue that dignifying the concept necessarily involved drawing social boundaries: "We expect therefore not to find the democratic politician coveting to be known as the unwashed, unshorn, and ill-dressed; we expect to find him a gentleman, not in the sense of the observance of a hollow and frivolous etiquette, but in the purity of high purpose and the simplicity and gentleness of noble manners."<sup>127</sup> Notwithstanding the qualification, we have come a long way indeed from Chartist identity and language, though it should be remembered that democracy was still demonised even among liberal elites at this time, with the Chartist employment almost completely effaced from the historical record.<sup>128</sup> Holyoake stubbornly continued to invoke the concept during the debates that preceded the Second Reform Act, making an effort to placate "governing class" fears that democracy was not "a possible monster, wilful, irresistible, with a ravaging intellect," but that in England its spread would in fact "consolidate order" among the "working class," as it had among the "middle class." Boundaries

continued to be important, naturally: “He is not a democrat, but an anarchist, who insists that the vote of the most ignorant shall count for as much as that of the most highly educated class in the community.”<sup>129</sup> Holyoake would have been well aware that by this definition, Chartists were not democrats but anarchists, as they had no time at all for schemes of graduated voting. Admittedly, Holyoake held utopian hopes for collective forms of working-class self help, particularly co-operation, but he adapted quickly to the changed reality in which political and social domains were clearly separated, embraced free trade ideology and sang the praises of John Bright. It was no wonder that Chartists like Cooper and W. J. Linton who were unable or unwilling to adjust quite so easily came to despise him.<sup>130</sup>

To be fair to Holyoake, Chartists advocated neither a coherent nor a comprehensive theory of democracy and it would be an error to regard their approach as systematically inclusive. Of course, most denounced the institution of slavery, turning the trope of “white slaves” against factory masters at home but we should also remember that racist notes were sounded within the movement, albeit very rarely.<sup>131</sup> The exclusion of women from formal political power on the other hand was far more deeply inscribed. Not only was female enfranchisement written out of the People’s Charter but organisational change at the local level after the defeat of early Chartism – specifically the creation of National Charter Associations – increasingly marginalised women from positions of authority.<sup>132</sup> As an ex-Owenite missionary and friend of Emma Martin, Holyoake was very sensitive to this blatant contradiction and turned it against the Chartists. He supported middle-class radical demands for colonial and female representation after mid-century, for example, pointing out that from this perspective the six points seem “tame and restricted. They hold principles of democracy which imply that womanhood, as well as manhood, is included in humanity.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite Holyoake's heroic efforts, the democratic idiom of mainstream Chartism could not easily be reconciled with the discourse of liberalism. For the former bore little relation to the highly circumscribed and partial practices that came gradually to constitute representative democracy in Britain between the late 1860s and the late 1920s. It had therefore to be reviled, misrepresented, or better still forgotten. Bezer's desire for self-government as a guiding principle of economic and social as well as political life – "a democrat in my Sunday School, everywhere" – a desire that lay at the heart of Chartist ambition, to many sounds as impossible today as it did over a century and a half ago. It seems not unreasonable, then, to wonder if the Chartists had succeeded in recasting the political nation in the 1840s, whether England's "sluggishly nineteenth century...notion of democracy," as George Orwell once called it, might not have been replaced by "a genuinely democratic government," one able to find "the right words, the right tone of voice" needed to effectively challenge wealth and power.<sup>134</sup>

\* Different versions of this essay were presented at the 'Two Eras of Democracy' conference, Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 24-26 June 2010, and at the conference on 'Contested Democracy', Institut du Monde Anglophone, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 20-22 September 2012. I should like to thank the organisers of these events for giving me the opportunity to try out my ideas, particularly Joanna Innes and Mark Philp. Thanks are also due to Jim Epstein, Gareth Stedman Jones and my anonymous readers for their helpful comments and encouragement.

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<sup>1</sup> John James Bezer, "Autobiography of One of the Chartist Rebels of 1848," in *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working-Class Politicians, 1790-1885*, ed. David Vincent (London, 1977), 187.

<sup>2</sup> *Northern Star*, July 2, 1842, 5. On the theatre of radical funerals see Thomas Lacquer, "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals," *Representations* 1 (1983): 109-131; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism. A new history* (Manchester, 2007), 152-7.

<sup>3</sup> James A. Epstein, "The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Journal of Social History* 23 (1990): 553-74; *idem*, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford, 1994); *In Practice: studies in the language and culture of popular politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Miles Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism, 1847-1860* (Oxford, 1995), 100; James Vernon, *Politics and the people: a study in English political culture, 1815-1867* (Cambridge, 1993), 296-7, 320.

<sup>5</sup> Note Epstein's careful caveats and qualifications in, "The Constitutional Idiom," 555-8, 564-5.

<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Sullivan, *Macaulay: the tragedy of power* (Harvard, 2009), 326-7; G. J. Holyoake, *The liberal situation: necessity for a qualified franchise. A letter to Joseph Cowen* (London, 1865), 11.

<sup>7</sup> See Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Essential Contestability of Some Social Concepts," *Ethics* 84 (1973): 1-9; J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and*

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*History* (New York, 1973); Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society* (London, 1983), 93-8.

<sup>8</sup> Frances E. Gillespie, *Labor and Politics in England, 1850-1867* (Chicago, 1927), 5.

<sup>9</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), 77-89, *passim*.

Thompson stressed how Tom Paine's work helped break the hold of precedent on the radical mind, though some of his strongest supporters have questioned such whiggism. See, especially, John Belchem, "Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform," *Social History* 6 (1981): 1-32; *idem*, "*Orator*" *Hunt: Henry Hunt and English working-class radicalism* (Oxford, 1985); James Epstein, "Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 122 (1989): 75-118; Paul A. Pickering, "'And Your Petitioners &c': Chartist Petitioning in Popular Politics 1838-48," *English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 368-88. See also the work on an earlier phase of popular politics by Mark Philp, who argues for the "tactical" nature of the constitutional idiom: "Disconcerting Ideas: Explaining Popular Radicalism and Popular Loyalism in the 1790s," in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, eds. Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge, 2007), 183.

<sup>10</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism," in his *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983); *idem*, "The Determinist Fix: Some Obstacles to the Further Development of the Linguistic Approach to History in the 1990s," *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996): 31.

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<sup>11</sup> Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History. What's Left of the Social?*

(Michigan, 2007), provide a balanced overview of the debate. For a more personal account see Geoff Eley, *A crooked line: from cultural history to the history of society* (Michigan, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Engels, "The Condition of England, the English Constitution," *Vorwärts!*, October 19, 1844, in *MECW*, Vol. 3, 513.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the people: industrial England and the question of class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge, 1991); *idem*, *Democratic subjects: the self and the social in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994); James Vernon (ed.), *Re-reading the constitution: new narratives in the political history of England's long nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> E. F. Biagini and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of radicalism: popular radicalism, organised labour and party politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991); Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), 9-10. Earlier proponents of the continuity thesis were Brian Harrison and Patricia Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery," *English Historical Review* 82 (1967):503-35. The trope was common before World War One. Joseph MacCabe's *Life and letters of George Jacob Holyoake* (London, 1908) is a fine example.

<sup>15</sup> See Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973), 205-6; John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832* (Cambridge, 1973); Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel. A study in the technique of parliamentary representation 1830-1850* (London, 1953); J. R. M. Butler, *The Passing of the Great Reform Bill of 1832* (London, 1914).

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<sup>16</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 22, 891-2 (House of Commons, February 23, 1830); vol. 5, 570 (House of Commons, August 2, 1831); vol. 12, 39 (House of Lords, April 9, 1832); vol. 12, 253 (House of Lords, April 11, 1832); vol. 12, 1252-3 (House of Lords, May 22, 1832).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 65-8 (House of Commons, March 4, 1831); vol. 3, 894-8 (House of Commons, March 24, 1831); vol. 7, 298-301 (House of Commons, September 20, 1831); vol. 8, 250-2, 263-4, 272-3 (House of Lords, October 7, 1831); vol. 9, 387-9 (House of Commons, December 16, 1831); Joseph Hamburger, *Macaulay and the Whig tradition* (Chicago, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> *Speech of the Right Honourable Lord Brougham, Lord High Chancellor of England, on the Second Reading of the Reform Bill* (London, 1831), 18. See also Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class. The political representation of class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1997), 321, who does not mention how Brougham sometimes used “the democracy” and “middle class” synonymously.

<sup>19</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 2, 1340, 1351-2 (House of Commons, March 3, 1831); vol. 4, 883-4 (House of Commons, July 6, 1831). Peel's reading of Cicero was not uncontested. Note, for example, the acute remarks of the liberal historian, Sir James Mackintosh, vol. 4, 693 (House of Commons, July 4, 1831). For the wider context see Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton, N.J., 1997).

<sup>20</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 13, 443-8 (House of Commons, June 5, 1832). Croker's views are dissected by William Thomas, *The Quarrel of Macaulay and Croker. Politics and History in the Age of Reform* (Oxford, 2000); Robert Portsmouth, *John Wilson Croker: Irish Ideas and the Invention of Modern Conservatism 1800-1835* (Dublin, 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Michie, *An Enlightenment Tory in Victorian Scotland. The Career of Sir Archibald Alison* (Montreal, 1997), 130. Lampooned as “Mr. Wordy” by Benjamin Disraeli in *Coningsby* (1844), Alison’s *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution of 1789 to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815* appeared between 1833 and 1842. Hedva Ben-Israel notes in, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), 152, that the success of Alison’s history ‘is hardly credible today. It was by far the best-selling history of the French Revolution in England and America almost to the end of the century, and was translated into most European and several oriental languages.’ See also below fn. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Poor Man’s Guardian*, June 7, 1834, 139; James Bronterre O’Brien, *The rise, progress, and phases of Human Slavery: How it came into the world and how it shall be made to go out* (London, 1885). Victorian readings of classical civilisation have been explored by a number of scholars. See especially Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Harvard, 1980); Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (Yale, 1984); Norman Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (London, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> *Poor Man’s Guardian*, November 24, 1832, 617-8; James Bronterre O’Brien, *Buonarroti’s History of Babeuf’s Conspiracy for Equality; with the author’s reflections on the causes and character of the French Revolution, and his estimate of the leading men and events of that epoch. Also, his views of democratic government, community of property, and political and social equality* (London, 1836), xix.

<sup>24</sup> *Operative*, December 23, 1838, 1; Alfred Plummer, *Bronterre. A Political Biography of Bronterre O’Brien 1804-1864* (London, 1971), 59-72.



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<sup>25</sup> See the appendix in Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists. Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (Aldershot, 1984), 341-68, which lists thirty-eight Democratic Associations, probably an underestimate. These associations were merged after the reorganisation of the movement in 1840 into local branches of the National Charter Association. For the LDA and revolutionary tradition see Jennifer Bennett, "The London Democratic Association 1837-41: a Study in London Radicalism," in *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, eds. James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (London, 1982), 112.

<sup>26</sup> *Northern Star*, May 13, 1843, 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16, 1845, 8. Harney refused to start the meeting with a toast to the Queen, observing "for Democrats, who had nothing to do with royalty but the questionable pleasure of helping to pay for it, it would be much more appropriate to drink 'the People,' and shout 'God save the rights of man.' (Cheers.)" See also Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners: The Radical Lives of Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) and Arthur O'Neill (1819-1896)* (Oxford, 2008), 108.

<sup>28</sup> *Northern Star*, May 16, 1840, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, August 23, 1845, 8; November 20, 1847, 8. Note also John Collins' defence of the Roman and Greek republics at a meeting of the Leeds Reform Association, which was trying to push the demand for household suffrage in preference to the Charter. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1841, 8. Cooper's 1845 lecture series is briefly discussed by Robert G. Hall, "Creating a People's History: Political Identity and History in Chartism, 1832-1848," in *The Chartist Legacy*, eds. Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts (Woodbridge, 1999), 237-8.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Reasoner*, 137, 22-7; 140, 72-6; 141, 88-91.

<sup>31</sup> See the notice of Cooper's lecture programme in *Northern Star*, July 19, 1845, 4. The lecture on Saxon England covered, "Alfred and his glorious philanthropy; our ancient democratic institutions, etc." Others discussed the impact of William "the Bastard" and the American and French revolutions. The classic study of the "Norman Yoke" theme is Christopher Hill's essay in *Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr*, ed. John Saville (London, 1954).

<sup>32</sup> *Northern Star*, October 22, 1842, 6.

<sup>33</sup> *The York Herald, and General Advertiser*, May 25, 1839, 4; *Northern Star*, April 6, 1839, 7.

See also *Chartist Circular*, September 28, 1839, 1. Stephens later strongly rejected democracy in his pamphlet, *The Altar, The Throne and The Cottage* (Stalybridge, 1868), 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Northern Star*, March 6, 1841, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *Operative*, April 14, 1839, 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Northern Star*, April 27, 1839, 1; Bennett, "The London Democratic Association," 98.

<sup>37</sup> *Northern Star*, September 5, 1840, 1; September 12, 1840, 3.

<sup>38</sup> On the later employment of this trope in labour movement discourse see Jacqueline Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats: Betrayal and the Remaking of Radical Organisations in Britain and Australia* (Victoria, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> *Northern Star*, December 29, 1838, 6.

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<sup>40</sup> *Poor Man's Guardian*, October 15, 1831, 125-6; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, 322.

<sup>41</sup> The relationship between languages of democracy and politeness deserves to be explored. For a start, see Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 90, 94-5; Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984); Owen Ashton, "Orators and Oratory in the Chartist Movement, 1840-1848," in *The Chartist Legacy*. In his graveside oration at Henry Hetherington's funeral, G. J. Holyoake remarked that although he was "a personification of good-humoured Democracy," the publisher's blunt, class-conscious discursive style was becoming outdated. See *The Life and Character of Henry Hetherington* (London, 1849).

<sup>42</sup> *Northern Star*, October 6, 1838, 4; January 2, 1841, 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, December 24, 1842, 6.

<sup>44</sup> R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1854* (London, 1854), 408; *Northern Star*, July 6, 1839, 6; James Epstein, *The lion of freedom: Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist movement, 1832-1842* (London, 1982), 90-3; Robert G. Hall, *Voices of the People. Democracy and Chartist political identity, 1830-1870* (London, 2007), 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Northern Star*, November 22, 1845, 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, May 16, 1840, 1; July 11, 1840, 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, May 13, 1843, 6.

<sup>48</sup> See Anne Janowitz, "Class and Literature: The Case of Romantic Chartism," in *Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations*, eds. W. C. Dimock and M. T. Gilmore (New

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York, 1994); *idem*, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998); Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the romance of politics, 1819-1869* (Oxford, 2003); Eileen Yeo, "Christianity and Chartist Struggle," *Past and Present* 91 (1981): 109-39; Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit. Christian Radicalism in Britain from the Fall of the Bastille to the Disintegration of Chartism* (Aldershot, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> See Eileen Yeo, "Culture and Constraint in Working-Class Movements, 1830-1855," in *Popular culture and class conflict, 1590-1914: explorations in the history of labour and leisure*, eds. Eileen and Stephen Yeo (London, 1981); James Epstein, "Some Organisational and Cultural Aspects of the Chartist Movement in Nottingham," in *The Chartist Experience*.

<sup>50</sup> Simon Morgan, "Domestic Economy and Political Agitation: Women and the Anti-Corn Law League, 1839-46," in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860. The Power of the Petticoat*, eds. Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (London, 2000); Peter J. Gurney, "'The Sublime of the Bazaar': A Moment in the Making of a Consumer Culture in Mid-Nineteenth Century England," *Journal of Social History* 40 (2006): 385-405.

<sup>51</sup> *Northern Star*, July 30, 1842, 7; March 6, 1841, 8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, July 31, 1841, 8. See also October 19, 1839, 6; Jutta Schwarzkopf, *Women in the Chartist Movement* (London, 1991).

<sup>53</sup> *Northern Star*, November 4, 1843, 1. See also *ibid.*, January 8, 1842, 1. There is a discussion of the symbolic meaning of the Phrygian cap for Chartists in Epstein, "Understanding the Cap of Liberty," 115-6.

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<sup>54</sup> *Northern Star*, December 24, 1842, 6; January 2, 1841, 3.

<sup>55</sup> See Antony Taylor, “Down with the Crown.” *British Anti-monarchism and Debates about Royalty since 1790* (London, 1999), 55-8, 126-8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1838, 6; December 22, 1838, 8. For a discussion of this theme see Eileen Yeo, “Some Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy,” in *The Chartist Experience*.

<sup>57</sup> T. M. Parsinnen, “Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical politics, 1771–1845,” *English Historical Review* 88 (1973): 504-33; Yeo, “Some Practices and Problems,” 353-4. Many middle-class Tories were also steeped in traditions of self-government at the parish level and this helps explain cross-class hostility towards the New Poor Law after 1834. Some useful leads can be found in David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997), 131-4, 164-6.

<sup>58</sup> Miles Taylor, “The Six Points: Chartism and the Reform of Parliament,” in *The Chartist Legacy*; Hall, *Voices of the People*, 52-3.

<sup>59</sup> Henry Jephson, *The Platform. Its Rise and Progress*, Vol. 2 (London, 1892; 1968), 304; Hall, *Voices of the People*, 58-60. For the post-war mass platform see John Belchem, “Orator” *Hunt: Henry Hunt and English working-class radicalism* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>60</sup> See James Epstein, “Feargus O’Connor and the *Northern Star*,” *International Review of Social History* 21 (1976): 51-97; Joan Allen, “‘A Small Drop of Ink’: Tyneside Chartism and the *Northern Liberator*,” in *The Chartist Legacy*; Joan Allen and Owen Ashton (eds.), *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press* (London, 2005).

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<sup>61</sup> *Northern Star*, April 22, 1843, 1; November 17, 1838, 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, August 11, 1838, 4.

<sup>63</sup> In his well-known review of Tocqueville's complete work, J. S. Mill employed "democracy" in various ways, to signify a particular form of government, the movement towards social equality (Tocqueville's dominant sense), but he also, significantly, equated it like Henry Brougham with the rise of the "middle class," noting; "To most purposes, in the constitution of modern society, the government of a numerous middle class is democracy. Nay, it not merely is democracy, but the only democracy of which there is yet any example; what is called universal suffrage in America is all middle class; the whole people being in a condition, both as to education and pecuniary means, corresponding to the middle class here." Just before this passage Mill had explicitly ruled out universal suffrage, which he reckoned was "never likely to exist where the majority are prolétaires." Degraded by poverty and gin, the rural and urban poor would likely remain in political subjection, Mill thought, though the middle class might from time to time be threatened by "Swing outrages, or Wat Tyler insurrections." See "De la Democratie en Amérique," *Edinburgh Review* 145 (1840): 13-14. Mill later developed his ideas on the machinery of democracy in *Considerations on Representative Government* (London, 1861). See also Jens A. Christophersen, *The Meaning of 'Democracy' as used in European ideologies from the French to the Russian Revolution* (Oslo, 1966), 158-69.

<sup>64</sup> *Northern Star*, June 4, 1842, 4; Chase, *Chartism*, 56.

<sup>65</sup> *Northern Star*, January 6, 1838, 6; August 18, 1838, 8.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., July 6, 1839, 6; May 8, 1841, 7. Note O'Connor's remarks about Ernest Jones cited by Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics*, 22. See also John Belchem and James Epstein, "The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited," *Social History* 22 (1997): 174-193; Paul A. Pickering, *Feargus O'Connor. A Political Life* (London, 2008), 148-9.

<sup>67</sup> Paul A. Pickering, "Class Without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement," *Past and Present* 112 (1986): 157-62.

<sup>68</sup> *Northern Star*, August 22, 1840, 4; June 26, 1841, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., January 23, 1841, p. 8; October 23, 1841, p. 8; January 4, 1845, p. 2; May 17, 1845, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., January 29, 1842, p. 4; February 4, 1843, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., July 9, 1842, 5, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., July 27, 1842, 4. The letter was from J. Whittern to the Chairman of the Anti-Corn Law conference in London.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., September 17, 1842, 1. For the strikes see Mick Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London, 1980).

<sup>74</sup> *Northern Star*, October 15, 1842, 1. Abinger was not alone. The popularity of Archibald Alison's history was due no doubt to his attempt to roll back the democratising influence of the French Revolution and the final volume of his magnum opus, published in 1842, contained a violent denunciation of democracy. It was consequently lauded to the skies by Tory periodicals and attacked in the *Northern Star*, which compared Alison directly with Abinger. See *ibid.*,

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November 19, 1842, 6; “European History,” *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine* 52 (1842): 419-45.

<sup>75</sup> *Northern Star*, September 3, 1842, 4; September 17, 1842, 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, September 10, 1842, 7; October 1, 1842, 1.

<sup>77</sup> John Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1996), 84; Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London, 1987), 129-30; *Northern Star*, January 7, 1843, 6; July 29, 1843, 8. The Nottingham Chartist, R. T. Morrison, condemned the “absurd and anti-democratic conduct” of the Sturgites who had tried “to substitute power delegated from the people, to power assumed over the people” in a letter to the *Northern Star*, January 7, 1843, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Dorothy Thompson, “Who were ‘the People’ in 1842?” in *Living and learning: essays in honour of J. F. C. Harrison*, eds. Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Aldershot, 1996).

<sup>79</sup> *Northern Star*, March 5, 1842, p. 4. See also Harney’s editorial on “The Working and Middle Classes” that similarly countenanced middle-class admittance into the ranks of “the Democracy.” September 4, 1847, p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> Chase, *Chartism*, 248.

<sup>81</sup> William Lovett, *Letter from Mr. Lovett to Messrs. Donaldson and Mason, containing his reasons for refusing to be nominated secretary of the National Charter Association* (London, 1843), 2-3



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<sup>82</sup> *Northern Star*, December 10, 1842, 7. For later contests on the left over democratic form see Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock, *Democratic ideas and the British labour movement, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>83</sup> *Northern Star*, April 27, 1844, 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Daily News*, May 21, 1846, 5. See also D. P. Crook, *American Democracy in English Politics, 1815-1850* (Oxford, 1965); Simon J. Morgan, "The Anti-Corn Law League and British Anti-Slavery in Transatlantic Perspective, 1838-1846," *Historical Journal* 52 (2009): 87-107.

<sup>85</sup> *Northern Star*, January 30, 1847, 4; December 14, 1844, 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, February 8, 1845, 4; April 25, 1846, 4. See also David Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982).

<sup>87</sup> A point often underlined by outside observers, including Daniel Stone in, *The Rochdale Co-operative Societies; A Study For Working Men* (Manchester, 1861), 5: "Their transactions bear no sign of political bias, no religious test, or passport of secret favour."

<sup>88</sup> *Northern Star*, September 27, 1845, 5; Y. V. Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature* (Moscow, 1956), 78. See also Henry Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe, 1815-1848* (London, 1975); Iorwerth Prothero, "Chartists and Political Refugees" in *Exiles from European Revolutions. Refugees in Mid-Victorian England*, ed. Sabine Freitag (London, 2003); Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees. German socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (London, 2006).

<sup>89</sup> *Northern Star*, November 15, 1845, 7.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., March 27, 1847, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Pickering, *Feargus O'Connor*, 123.

<sup>92</sup> *Northern Star*, February 27, 1847, 7; Salvo Mastellone, *Mazzini and Marx: thoughts upon democracy in Europe* (Westport, 2003), 71-80.

<sup>93</sup> A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge. A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958), 159.

<sup>94</sup> *Northern Star*, October 14, 1848, 5.

<sup>95</sup> John Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>96</sup> *Northern Star*, November 25, 1848, 7; June 23, 1849, 5. For more on the adoption of démoc-soc ideals by Harney and other Chartists see Margot Finn, *After Chartism. Class and nation in English radical politics, 1848-74* (Cambridge, 1993), 113-5.

<sup>97</sup> In a series of articles in G. J. Harney's periodical *The Democratic Review*, Helen Macfarlane contested Carlyle's fulminations in his *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Arguing that "pure democracy" was synonymous with both "Red Republicanism" and the true meaning of Christianity, she concluded: "We Socialist-democrats are the soldiers of a holy cause; we are the exponents of a sublime idea; we are the apostles of the sacred religion of universal humanity." May 1850, 450; June 1850, 19; David Black, *Helen Macfarlane. A Feminist, Revolutionary Journalist, and Philosopher in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (Lanham MD, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> *Northern Star*, February 2, 1839, 3; February 9, 1839, 6. For contrasting views of women's participation in Chartism see Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: socialism and*

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*feminism in the nineteenth century* (London, 1983), 265-75; Thompson, *The Chartists*, 120-51; Anna Clark, *The struggle for the breeches: gender and the making of the British working class* (London, 1995); Schwarzkopf, *Women in the Chartist Movement*.

<sup>99</sup> Finn, *After Chartism*, ch. 2; Belchem, *Popular Radicalism*, 95-6; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, April 17, 1864, 1; *Daily News*, April 18, 1864, 5.

<sup>100</sup> Lee E. Grugel, *George Jacob Holyoake. A Study in the Evolution of a Victorian Radical* (Philadelphia, 1976), 52-3, 84-5; Gregory Claeys, "Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854," *Journal of British Studies* 28 (1989): 225-61; *Giuseppe Mazzini and the globalisation of democratic nationalism 1830-1920*, eds. Christopher Bayly and Eugenio Biagini (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>101</sup> *Manifesto of the Republican Party* (London, 1855), 10; G. J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life* (London, 1906), 532-3; Peter Gurney, "George Jacob Holyoake: Socialism, Association and Co-operation in Nineteenth-Century England," in *New Views of Co-operation*, ed. Stephen Yeo (London, 1988), 54.

<sup>102</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, March 11, 1848, 4; July 29, 1848, 1; October 14, 1848, 1; November 18, 1848, 10; December 30, 1848, 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Bradford Observer*, April 13, 1848, 1. Saville reveals Forster's cynical motives in 1848, 146-7.

<sup>104</sup> John Bright, *New movement: household suffrage, triennial parliament, vote by ballot, no property qualification, and equal electoral districts* (Manchester, 1848), 5, 10.

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<sup>105</sup> *Northern Star*, February 17, 1844, 1; November 13, 1847, 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1848, 4; January 15, 1848, 9.

<sup>107</sup> Roland Quinault, “Cobden and Democracy,” in *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism. Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays*, eds. Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan (Aldershot, 2006), 67.

<sup>108</sup> Anthony Howe (ed.), *The Letters of Richard Cobden. Vol. I, 1815-1847* (Oxford, 2007), 280-1. Cobden recommended a forceful stand and later in the letter referred to artillery, Congreve rockets and “other diabolical contrivances of wholesale slaughter,” which would soon put Chartists to flight “like sheep.”

<sup>109</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, November 2, 1844, 4.

<sup>110</sup> Howe (ed.), *The Letters of Richard Cobden*, 417.

<sup>111</sup> *Bradford Observer*, April 13, 1848, 4; Saville, *1848*, 146; Theodore Koditschek, *Class formation and urban industrial society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), 520-1, *passim*.

<sup>112</sup> Malcolm Chase, “Out of Radicalism: The Mid-Victorian Freehold Land Movement,” *English Historical Review* 106 (1991): 319-345.

<sup>113</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 105, 1197-8 (House of Commons, June 5, 1849).

<sup>114</sup> Discussed by Joyce in, *Democratic subjects*, 85-146.

<sup>115</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 105, 1206 (House of Commons, June 5, 1849).

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., col. 1208. Cobden sometimes had even higher expectations of the freehold societies. See F. M. L. Thompson, “Cobden, Free Trade in Land, and the Road to the Abbey National,” in *Rethinking Nineteenth Century Liberalism*, 73-9.

<sup>117</sup> Chase, “Out of Radicalism,” 332-3.

<sup>118</sup> *Northern Star*, December 29, 1849, 5. Harney closed by expressing hope in “that great, incontrovertible fact...the universally acknowledged march of the principles of Social Democracy.”

<sup>119</sup> *Cooper’s Journal*, January 17, 1850, 35.

<sup>120</sup> *Northern Star*, April 27, 1844, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Taylor, “The Six Points,” 7-13; Hall, *Voices of the People*, 41-54.

<sup>122</sup> Robert Saunders, “Chartism from above: British elites and the interpretation of Chartism,” *Historical Research* 81 (2008): 463-84.

<sup>123</sup> *Poor Man’s Guardian*, December 8, 1832, 636-7; May 17, 1834, 115-6; January 10, 1835, 386-7; January 17, 1835, 393-5.

<sup>124</sup> The expression went back much further. John Cleave, for instance, affirmed his belief in “the Charter and something *more*” in a letter that contested accusations that he had betrayed the cause by trying to form a “National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People.” In his peroration, Cleave trusted that he had lived and would die “a Democrat.”

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*Northern Star*, May 8, 1841, 3. See also June 19, 1841, 5; Thomas Frost, *Forty Years Recollections, Literary and Political* (London, 1880), 38, 341.

<sup>125</sup> Peter J. Gurney, “‘Rejoicing in Potatoes’: The Politics of Consumption in England during the ‘Hungry Forties,’” *Past and Present* 203 (2009): 99-136.

<sup>126</sup> O’Brien was deeply attracted to charismatic, often military leaders such as Babeuf, Robespierre and the U.S. President Andrew Jackson, who he hoped might sweep away old political oligarchies as well as the newer breed of “profit-mongers.” Jackson’s defence of the republic from the machinations of bankers or “monied monopolists” was especially approved. See *Poor Man’s Guardian*, December 8, 1832, 636-7; January 10, 1835, 386-7; January 17, 1835, 393-5; J. B. O’Brien, *State Socialism* (London, 1850); Plummer, *Bronterre*, 80-4, 201; Stan Shipley, *Club life and socialism in mid-Victorian London* (London, 1983).

<sup>127</sup> G. J. Holyoake, *Organisation: Not of Arms – But Ideas* (London, 1853), ch. 2, 5-6.

<sup>128</sup> See John Alfred Langford’s, *English democracy: its history and principles* (London, 1853), which equated democracy with the rise of the middle class and economic liberalism. Though Langford marginalised Chartism, he admitted (66-7) that “the first point of the celebrated Charter is still the one demand of the people.”

<sup>129</sup> G. J. Holyoake, *The liberal situation: necessity for a qualified franchise. A letter to Joseph Cowen* (London, 1865), 9, 10-11, 13. This pamphlet backed Bright’s plan for partial enfranchisement. See also his more positive remarks produced in a moment of post-reform euphoria in, *Working-class representation: its conditions and consequences* (London, 1868), 6, 16. The Birmingham Chartist, Arthur O’Neill, also defended the idea of democracy during 1867.

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See Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners*, 135, and for the wider debate Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867. The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Farnham, 2011).

<sup>130</sup> F. B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton, 1812-97* (Manchester, 1973), 98; Peter Gurney, "Working-Class Writers and the Art of Escapology in Victorian England: The Case of Thomas Frost," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 67.

<sup>131</sup> See John Campbell's virulently racist, *Negro-Mania: Being an Examination of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men* (Philadelphia, 1851). Campbell held back until he had emigrated as Chase underlines in *Chartism*, 306.

<sup>132</sup> Dorothy Thompson, "Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension," in *Outsiders. Class, Gender and Nation* (London, 1993).

<sup>133</sup> G. J. Holyoake, *The workman and the suffrage: letters to the Right Honourable Lord John Russell, and the "Daily News"* (London, 1859), 7.

<sup>134</sup> George Orwell, "Propaganda and Demotic Speech," in *The Complete Works of George Orwell. Vol. Sixteen. I Have Tried to Tell the Truth, 1943-1945* (London, 1998), 314-5. A useful context for Orwell's intervention can be found in Geoffrey G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil. Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2011).