

1. ‘Honourable House of Blasphemers’: the radical public of Newgate in the early nineteenth century

In 1799, former Newgate state prisoner Thomas Lloyd reflected on his ‘1187 days’ of imprisonment in London’s most notorious and loathed gaol as a ‘[c]ourse of life [that] has tended to bring into view almost all the great political questions which have agitated the two hemispheres for five and twenty years past’.¹ A debtor in the Fleet prison in 1792, Lloyd had received a further three-year sentence to Newgate for producing and displaying a truculent political poster in the Fleet.² For Lloyd, incarceration in Newgate gaol allowed a period of intense intellectual development, fostered by a vibrant and eclectic radical milieu that thrived in the prison during the 1790s.³

Lloyd’s ‘political enlightenment’, however, was not his only focus during his imprisonment. Apart from several works written about his experiences in the American colonies during the 1780s, he also penned a damning indictment on the management and operation of Newgate itself. Overwhelmed by what confronted him on the felons’ side of Newgate, Lloyd documented the squalor and destitution of the prisoners and the venality of the Keeper in his prison tract, *Impositions and Abuses in the Management of the Jail of Newgate*.⁴ The publication chronicled a litany of abuses: those with the means to pay could purchase superior accommodation, no matter what their crime; prisoners were shackled with fetters and irons until they paid to be released; the windows of

1 Quoted in Michael Davis, Iain McCalman and Christina Parolin (eds), *Newgate in Revolution: An anthology of radical prison literature in the age of revolution* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 81.

2 For a brief biographical account of Lloyd, see *ibid.*, pp. 67–8, 81. For an account of prisoners’ experiences in eighteenth-century debtors’ prisons, see Joanna Innes, ‘The King’s Bench Prison in the Later Eighteenth Century: Law, authority and order in a London debtors’ prison’, in John Brewer and John Styles (eds), *An Ungovernable People: The English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 251–387; Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal debt in English culture, 1740–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 109–51. While Finn and Innes offer a view of debtors’ prisons as sites of prisoner agency, Philip Woodfine offers a ‘darker’ vision of these prisons in his paper ‘Debtors, Prisons, and Petitions in Eighteenth Century England’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2006), pp. 1–31.

3 See Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution*, pp. ix–xxv; Iain McCalman, ‘Newgate in Revolution: Radical enthusiasm and Romantic counterculture’, *Eighteenth Century Life*, vol. 22 (1998), pp. 95–110; Ralph A. Manogue, ‘The Plight of James Ridgway, London Bookseller and Publisher, and the Newgate Radicals 1792–1797’, *Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 27 (1996), pp. 158–66; Uwe Böker, ‘Institutionalised Rules of Discourse and the Courtroom as a Site of the Public Sphere’, in Uwe Böker and Julie A. Hibbard (eds), *Sites of Discourse—Public and private spheres—legal culture* (Amsterdam, NY: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 211–47; John Bugg, ‘Close Confinement: John Thelwall and the Romantic prison’, *European Romantic Review*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2009), pp. 37–56.

4 Thomas Lloyd, ‘Impositions and Abuses in the Management of the Jail of Newgate’ (London, 1794), reprinted in Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution*, pp. 69–79.

the felons' side were unglazed so that the 'poor naked wretches [were] constantly exposed to all the rigour of this severe weather'; for several days at a time the 'cisterns and pipes of the water closets see not a drop of water, to wash off the excrement and filth'; and tubs of urine were kept standing in the yards for days at a time.⁵ He despaired:

Here, in the midst of hunger, of disease, and of nakedness, rapine finds the means of gorging its voracious maw!! Such few of the miserable tenants, as have any plunder left, which their deprecations procured, are obliged to surrender it, to the myrmidons of the place.⁶

Despite regulation, and the prison's design itself, which provided for separation of different categories of prisoners, Lloyd found that money remained '*passé-partout*, the master key' to location; he was 'forced over' to the felons' side after refusing to pay the 'extortionate demands' of the Keeper for more agreeable lodgings on the state side of the prison.⁷

Lloyd's exposé indicates the vast difference between prisons operating in the late eighteenth century and the modern penitentiaries that arose in the first decades of the following century. During Lloyd's time, Newgate operated as a private concern, essentially unregulated and unchecked by government authorities.⁸ Fees were extracted from prisoners for food, bedding, favours and, remarkably, for a prisoner's release once their sentence expired. Such expenses provided the main source of income for Keepers who kept their staff to a minimum in an effort to make a profit. Almost everything was available for a price within the gaol, and from the architectural plans of the prison, it is evident that even a tap room and wine room were accessible to those with the financial means to anaesthetise their sentence. A ruthless Newgate economy centred on cheap and unrestricted alcohol and a bartering system for the most basic necessities of food and clothing.

Almost two decades before Lloyd penned his Newgate treatise, the misery, overcrowding and deep corruption inherent in Britain's prisons provided the impetus for the publication of John Howard's celebrated prison reform tract, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales*, published in 1777.⁹ Howard's

5 Ibid., p. 72.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 73.

8 On the history and operation of Newgate prison, see Charles Gordon, *The Old Bailey and Newgate* (London, 1902); Hepworth Dixon, *The London Prisons: With an account of the more distinguished persons who have been confined in them* (1850; reprinted, New York: Garland Publishing, 1995); Arthur Griffiths, *The Chronicles of Newgate* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1884); Anthony Babington, *The English Bastille: A history of Newgate Gaol and prison conditions in Britain 1188–1902* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1971); Richard Byrne, *Prisons and Punishments in London* (London: Grafton, 1992), pp. 25–39.

9 John Howard, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales, With preliminary observations, and an account of some foreign prisons* (Warrington, 1777).

groundbreaking publication was the culmination of an exhaustive research tour of hundreds of gaols by Britain's pioneer prison reformer. He chronicled the idleness, profligacy, debauchery and immorality that resulted from the cheap and easy supply of alcohol, the prevalence of gaming and the freedom of sexual exchange allowed by unrestrained movement of male and female criminals throughout the prisons.¹⁰ Howard's *State of the Prisons* provided the catalyst for a committed and exerted campaign for changes to both criminal law and punishment in Britain. The fundamental principles for penal reform—many of which relied on a complete overhaul of prison architecture—would ultimately lead to the birth of the modern penitentiary in the nineteenth century.¹¹

The images of Newgate prison presented by both Howard and Lloyd are in stark contrast with the portrait of radical civility and conviviality in the prison captured in 1793 by young radical engraver Richard Newton.¹² The centrepiece of Newton's print *Soulagement en Prison, or Comfort in Prison* is Lord George Gordon's dining table in his apartment on the state side of the prison, around which a myriad radical (and other wealthy) Newgate inmates and visitors gathered to smoke pipes, drink wine and engage in conversation. Inspired, as Iain McCalman writes, by 'radical-romantic enthusiasm' and developments in revolutionary France, Gordon and men such as James Ridgway, Henry Symonds, William Holland and Charles Piggot were confined in Newgate for publishing an array of cheap subversive writings against church and state. According to McCalman, the prison became a site of 'British Jacobin civility', a 'salon of radical philosophes'.¹³

The suppression of intellectual dissent in the 1790s proved to be the first instalment in a succession of interventions to curb political and religious heterodoxy, which continued into the early decades of the 1800s. The surge in prosecutions against radicals in the early decades of the nineteenth century has been the subject of much scholarly attention, yet the connection between the prison space and radical activity remains inconspicuous in the historiography. This chapter builds on McCalman's study of 1790s Newgate to survey these other two phases of radical imprisonment in Newgate in the early decades of the nineteenth century—a crucial period in British penal history as the prison reform ideals that emanated from the work of Howard and other prison reformers increasingly impacted on the operations and management of Britain's

10 For an account of this Newgate culture of the eighteenth century, see W. J. Sheehan, 'Finding Solace in Eighteenth-Century Newgate', in J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England 1550–1800* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 239–45.

11 For an excellent overview of the prison reform agenda, see Randall McGowen, 'The Well-Ordered Prison: England, 1780–1865', in Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (eds), *The Oxford History of the Prison: The practice of punishment in Western society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 79–110. For more on prison reform, see Chapter 2 of this study.

12 McCalman, 'Newgate in Revolution', pp. 95–9.

13 Ibid.

oldest prison and, necessarily, on those confined there. Although Newgate prison entered the nineteenth century without the benefit of the architectural innovations prescribed in the new vision for prison reform, it is clear that by the 1820s, prison life was being transformed by the encroaching reform ideals. Although the radical prisoners themselves were of a markedly different ilk to their earlier counterparts, particularly in terms of social rank, they too found ways to perpetuate the rigorous and effective counter-culture of the 1790s. The achievements of this later cohort of radicals within the prison warrant attention because in many ways, they relied on a measure of their tenacity rather than the depth of their pockets.

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Great Old Bailey Road was part of the burgeoning metropolitan landscape in 1820s London (Figure 1.1). An entirely built environment, muted shades of sandstone and various intonations of grey coloured the three-storey buildings that dominated one of London's oldest streets.¹⁴ Tavern signs hooked the eye with splashes of colour, with the whole landscape lifted in texture and spirit by the dome of St Paul's in the distance and various church spires spiking the horizon. One of the four ancient gates to the city, *New gate* once crowned the street but by the eighteenth century had long since been claimed by fire and urban regeneration. Residential dwellings, shops and taverns with solid and indistinguishable facades now screened one side of the street, seemingly pinned to an axis at one end by the spire of St Sepulchre's church and repelled at the other by its formidable neighbour opposite: Newgate gaol.

With no framing outer prison wall, Newgate's carceral function was not immediately betrayed by its imposing facade (Figure 1.2). Stretching 300 feet (90 m) along the street and three storeys high, Newgate had a monotonous texture and colour and an imposing magnitude that struck the eye of contemporary observers.¹⁵ In the centre of the facade was the Keeper's residence. While hardly elaborate or elegant, the central section was the most embellished, reflecting, to some extent, the aesthetic aspirations of grand architecture and its celebrated City of London architect, George Dance, the Younger.¹⁶ Each floor of the Keeper's

14 The description of the environs of Newgate that follows is drawn from the visual representations of the area such as that at Figure 1.1.

15 Dixon, *The London Prisons*, pp. 191–223. See also W. H. Leeds, *Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London: With historical and descriptive accounts of each edifice*, vol. 2, second edn (London: John Weale, Architectural Library, 1838), pp. 100–13.

16 On George Dance, the Younger (1741–1825), see H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, fourth edn (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 295–8; Roger Bowdler, 'Dance, George, the Younger (1741–1825)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/view/article/7096>> (hereafter *ODNB*). For an extensive account of the development of Dance's design of Newgate, see Harold D. Kalman, 'Newgate Prison', *Architectural History*, vol. 12 (1969), pp. 50–61, 108–12.

section was stamped with neat rows of five arched windows. To the left and right of centre, two identical gatehouse features provided entry points—one for debtors and one for felons—to an otherwise impenetrable fortress. Half the height of the building, they were incorporated into the granite facade and stood as bookends supporting the centre. Abutting these, the outermost wings of the building abandoned any aesthetic considerations. Large granite slabs melded together to create dense walls, subdued only by arched brick recesses taunting observers with the illusion of windows. In place of casements, statues representing the figures of Justice, Fortitude and Prudence guarded the recesses.



Figure 1.1 Newgate from Old Bailey Road with St Sepulchre's spire in the background.

Thomas Malton, 1792. Copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

Newgate had occupied an imposing and malevolent presence on the London townscape for centuries. The building was a phoenix, rising again on the same site on three occasions: following its destruction by London's great fire in 1666; after it was demolished to accommodate increased traffic flows in the burgeoning metropolis in 1770; and after it was razed during the Gordon riots, which enveloped the prison in 1780.¹⁷ The fervour with which the rioting crowd ransacked and torched the prison (along with several other London gaols) reveals the extent of the revulsion for the prison in the psyche of the London populace,

¹⁷ For a discussion of the Gordon riots, see John Nicholson, *The Great Liberty Riot of 1780* (London: Panther Press, 1995); Iain McCalman, 'Controlling the Riots: *Barnaby Rudge* and Romantic revolution', in Michael T. Davis (ed.), *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain, 1775–1848* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 207–28; Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), pp. 152–75; George Rudé, 'The Gordon Riots: A study of the rioters and their victims', *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), pp. 268–92. On the rebuilding of the prison after the riot, see Babington, *The English Bastille*, pp. 39–58; Kalman, 'Newgate Prison', pp. 108–12.

particularly the London poor. The storming of the Bastille by the Parisian revolutionaries, which became the hallmark of the 1789 revolution, helped to further cement the image of Newgate—London’s oldest prison—as a comparable symbol of government repression and neglect.¹⁸ Yet as contemporary observer James Grant noted, Newgate had an appearance of ‘indefinite durability’ about it, to the extent that ‘one would suppose that even Time himself, whom Lord Bacon personifies as the great innovator, could hardly make an impression on Newgate’.¹⁹

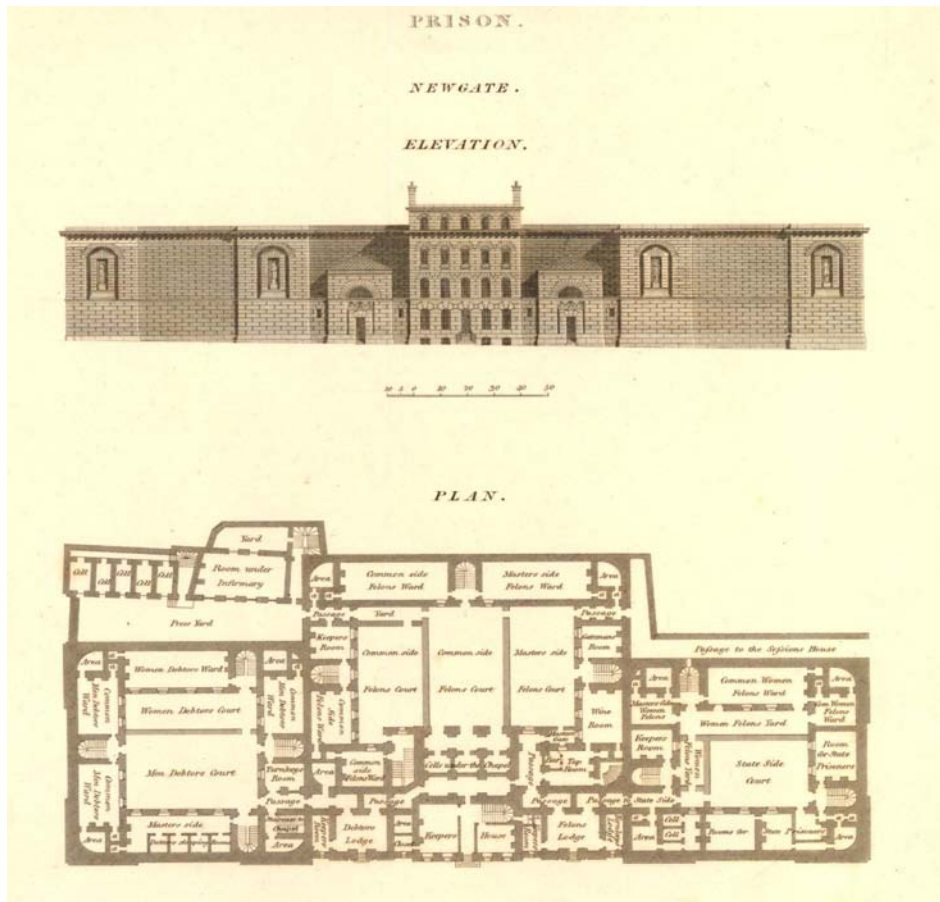


Figure 1.2 Newgate prison, following reconstruction after the Gordon riots. Ground-floor plan of Newgate showing the state side accommodation and the wine and tap rooms.

George Dance, the Younger, architect. Copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

18 Margaret DeLacy, ‘Grinding Men Good? Lancashire’s prisons at mid-century’, in Victor Bailey (ed.), *Policing and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 182. For a discussion of British perceptions of the Bastille, see Norbert Schürer, ‘The Storming of the Bastille in English Newspapers’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2005), pp. 50–81.

19 James Grant, *The Great Metropolis* (London, 1837), vol. 2, p. 217.

Newgate's reputation for vitriolic punishment, despair, destitution and disease was seared on the collective memory of Londoners long after the Bastille had been demolished. As Hepworth Dixon asked rhetorically in 1850: 'Of all that busy, whirling, thoughtful throng of passengers, which daily roll beneath its massive battlements, is their one who heedlessly goes by, without bestowing on it a glance of curiosity, a shudder, or a sigh?'²⁰

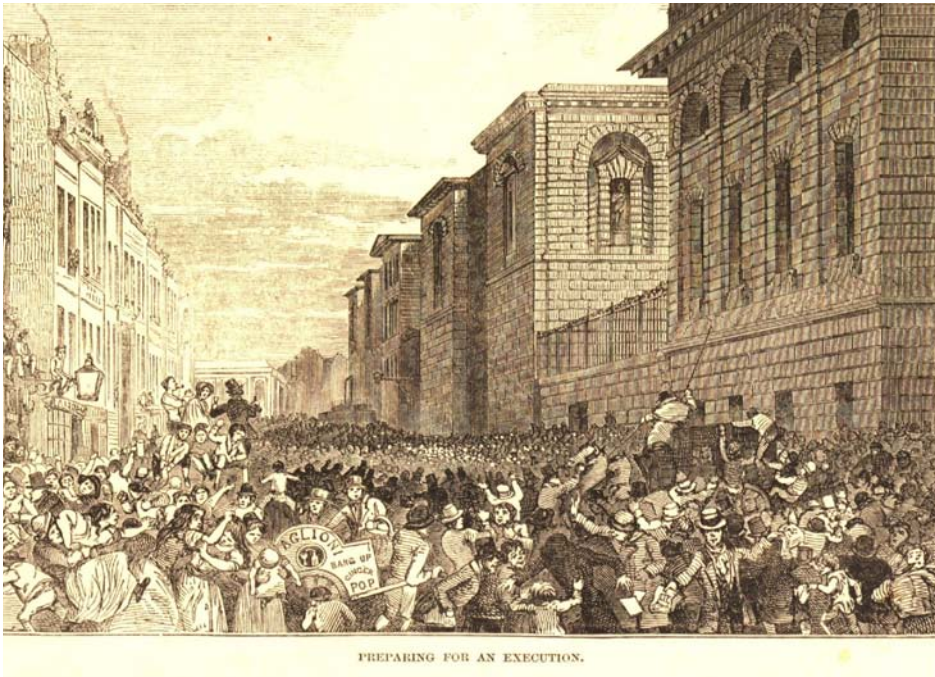


Figure 1.3 *Preparing for an Execution.*

Artist unknown, c. 1846. Copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

Answering his own question, Dixon observed that 'some of this interest is very probably owing to the fearful memories which float about the spot'; those traversing Newgate Street and Great Old Bailey milled on the same roadway where hundreds of lives had terminated at the end of a gallows rope. In 1783, with Britain's Bloody Code of capital punishments still in full swing, Newgate had replaced Tyburn as the site of public executions in the capital. The move had the unintended consequence of providing a new, albeit grim, source of popular metropolitan entertainment.²¹ As depicted in Thomas Rowlandson's print *An Execution outside Newgate Prison* news of an impending execution brought thousands of Londoners into the street outside the prison to witness the

²⁰ Dixon, *The London Prisons*, p. 191.

²¹ On the place of executions within both British criminal history and wider culture, see V. A. C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English people 1770–1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

macabre drama and spectacle that surrounded the public hangings.²² The print *Preparing for An Execution* reveals that the gruesome appeal of an execution would last well into the nineteenth century (Figure 1.3).

The Rowlandson print is but one example of the prominent place of Newgate in the print culture of the period.²³ Such prints were forms of public commentary accessible to the literate and illiterate alike. The fascination with Newgate, and the mystique surrounding the prison, is also evident in written forms of print culture, including the metropolitan newspapers, which increasingly reported events concerning the prisons, and in the immense popularity of the *Newgate Calendar*.²⁴ Editions of the *Newgate Calendar*, originally a monthly bulletin of executions published by the Keeper of Newgate, were produced in 1774, 1824 and 1826 and chronicled, in often macabre detail, the crimes of those brought to trial, imprisoned in the gaol or sentenced to be executed.

Newgate also held a central place in prison narratives of the eighteenth century, most prominently in Daniel Defoe's famous novels *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *John Sheppard*.²⁵ Moll Flanders' traumatic response to Newgate, following her committal for stealing two pieces of silk, speaks of the dread of the space:

'Tis impossible to describe the terror of my mind, when I was first brought in, and when I look'd round upon all the horrors of that dismal Place: I look'd on myself as lost, and that I had nothing to think of, but of going out in the world, and that with the utmost Infamy; the hellish Noise, the Roaring, Swearing, and Clamour, the Stench and the Nastiness, and all the dreadful croud of Afflicting things that I saw there; joyn'd together to make the Place seem an Emblem of Hell itself, and a kind of Entrance into it.²⁶

John Bender writes that for Moll Flanders, Newgate 'signifies liminality at its most concentrated'.²⁷ The novel encapsulated the fear, loathing and terror

22 For a fascinating firsthand account of the spectacle surrounding an execution, see Dixon, *The London Prisons*, pp. 193–7.

23 For an overview of the place of Newgate, and prison in general, in the print culture and popular imagination, see John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the architecture of mind in eighteenth-century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Uwe Böker, 'The Prison and the Penitentiary as Sites of Public Counter-Discourse', in Böker and Hibbard, *Sites of Discourse*, pp. 211–47.

24 See Simon Deveraux, 'From Sessions to Newspaper? Criminal trial reporting, the nature of crime, and the London press, 1770–1800', *London Journal*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1–27.

25 Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary*, p. 44. See also Sean Grass, *The Self in the Cell: Narrating the Victorian prisoner* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 22, 46–50. Newgate continued to be of great interest to novelists of the nineteenth century, including Charles Dickens. See 'A Visit to Newgate', in *Sketches by Boz* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1877), pp. 114–22. For an overview of the literature, see Keith Hollingsworth, *The Newgate Novel 1830–47: Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens, & Thackeray* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963).

26 Quoted in Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary*, p. 45.

27 Ibid.

generally associated with the prison in the print culture of the period. The image of Moll's Newgate was also enduring, reinforcing the horror and awe of the prison for generations of readers.

Given Moll Flanders' experience of the prison, she might well have agreed with the suggestion of architectural historian Harold Kalman that Newgate achieved 'sublimity as much as may be expected in solid stone'.²⁸ Kalman argues that Dance's design for Newgate was influenced by Edmund Burke's aesthetic of the sublime, outlined in his 1757 publication, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Burke proposed that sublimity was derived from the emotions of pain and terror: 'Terror is in all cases whatsoever', wrote Burke, 'the ruling principle of the sublime'.²⁹ Dance admired Burke's treatise as 'a very excellent work' and the 'dark and gloomy' presence of Newgate, its 'greatness of dimension' and the 'succession and unity of parts', all correspond with Burke's definition of the sublime in built form. Further, Kalman maintains that Burke's description of one of the emotional characteristics of the sublime, as the 'idea of bodily pain, in all the modes and degrees of labour, pain, anguish, [and] torment', can also be used to 'read' Newgate as a site embodying the principles of the sublime.³⁰ In this sense, Dance, as architect, played a key role in building not only the physical attributes of the space, but the awe and mystique associated with London's most notorious prison.

Though the facade of the building was calculated to hold terrors for passers-by, as Moll Flanders discovered, the real horrors awaited those immured within. The dominance of such emotional responses to the prison experience by inmates and visitors alike has tended to replace purely descriptive accounts of the interior so that it is harder to gain a sense of the internal material structure of the prison. The architectural plans for the prison, however, provide some insight into the internal arrangements of the prison in this period (see Figure 1.2). The northern side of the prison was allocated to male and female debtors and consisted of two small courtyards surrounded by three storeys of wards, which housed the prisoners.³¹ The state side was located on the southern end of the prison, along with the felons' quadrangle and the women's ward. According to contemporary observers, the large open wards for accommodating prisoners were of similar

28 Kalman, 'Newgate Prison', p. 55.

29 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756; reprinted, J. T. Bolton [ed.], London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 59.

30 The ability of the prison space to elicit such emotions in the populace, according to both Kalman and Bender, also meant that Newgate conformed to the premise of *architecture parlante*, described as 'narrative architecture', which 'stressed the capacity...to foster emotion in its spectators as much as narrative paintings did'. Dance's use of real chains and shackles above the prison's two entry doorways provides further evidence of the building conforming to the mode of *architecture parlante*. See Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary*, p. 241.

31 A good overview of the layout of Newgate is provided in James Neild, *State of the Prisons in England, Scotland and Wales...Together with some useful documents, observations, and remarks, adapted to explain the conditions of prisoners in general* (London, 1812), pp. 412–29. See also Griffiths, *The Chronicles of Newgate*, vol. 1, pp. 70–101; George Wilkinson, *The Newgate Calendar* (Leeds: Panther, 1965), vol. 3, pp. 9–11.

proportions on both the debtors' side and the state side of the prison.³² Stone walls divided a central court into three sections: 'yards for the male felons who could afford a bed, for poorer ones who could not, and for women; and the south quadrangle received a separate enclosed area for state prisoners.'³³ According to Dance's intentions, then, the spatial hierarchy of the prison was determined both by the capacity to pay and according to the nature of the offence.

The configuration of Newgate lent itself to the development of the well-known radical culture of the 1790s, many of whose members were independently wealthy gentlemen.³⁴ Newgate keepers had a long tradition of renting out the rooms available on the state side of the prison where most radicals were housed for the majority of their sentence. The prison economy also allowed radical prisoners to enjoy alcohol and to purchase coal, furniture and food. Lord George Gordon had a seemingly limitless capacity to pay for his own apartment, to be attended by two personal maids and, as Newton's *Soulagement* print depicts, to entertain and dine with guests (Figure 1.4).³⁵ The spatial hierarchy of the prison reflected that of the outside world: money allowed wealthy prisoners to buffer their prison experience and to be separated from their poorer prison counterparts—the criminal underworld—depicted so menacingly in the literature of the period.³⁶

As McCalman argues, the ability of the 1790s radicals to forge a distinct presence in the prison facilitated the sense of collectivity and resistance as prisoners had to fortify, entertain, advise and rely on each other.³⁷ They were united by their convictions under William Pitt's 'reign of terror' for publishing a barrage of subversive writings including Paine's most prosecuted political works, numerous records of the French National Assembly, pro-Gallic addresses and petitions from all major metropolitan radical clubs and several scathing attacks on Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.³⁸ In Newgate, they

32 Wilkinson, *The Newgate Calendar*, pp. 9–11.

33 Neild, *State of the Prisons in England, Scotland and Wales*, p. 412.

34 See McCalman, 'Newgate in Revolution'. The dissenting minister Reverend William Winterbotham was confined to Newgate for four years for seditious preaching. He complained that everything but liberty was available in Newgate for a fee. See Manogue, 'The Plight of James Ridgway', p. 162. There were claims of neglect by some radical prisoners such as William Hodgson and Joseph Gerrald, but these appear not to have been the norm in this period.

35 For a discussion of Gordon's term in prison, see William Hazlitt (ed.), *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft* (London, 1816), vol. 1, p. 78; Babington, *The English Bastille*, p. 139.

36 For an interesting discussion of the concept of the 'deviant underworld' and attitudes towards crime and criminals, see Victor Bailey, 'The Fabrication of Deviance: "Dangerous classes" and "criminal classes" in Victorian England', in John Rule and Robert Malcolmson (eds), *Protest and Survival: The historical experience: essays for E. P. Thompson* (London: Merlin Press, 1993), pp. 221–56.

37 McCalman, 'Newgate in Revolution'.

38 See Clive Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's Terror: Prosecutions for sedition during the 1790s', *Social History*, vol. 6 (1981), pp. 154–84; T. A. Jackson, *Trials of British Freedom* (London, 1940), p. 35; Jon Mee, "'Examples of Safe Printing": Censorship and popular radical literature in the 1790s', *Essays and Studies*, vol. 46 (1993), pp. 81–95; Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, politics and the people, 1790–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 81–111.

formed a prison publishing collective that generated such iconic enlightenment texts as Paine's *Age of Reason*, Helvetius's *Catechism of Man*, Rousseau's *Social Contract* and Volney's *Ruins of Nature*.³⁹ Aimed especially at disseminating each other's work, the 1790s makeshift publishing house of Newgate produced dozens of polemical, satirical and philosophical publications from prisoners and their friends and fostered long associations between writers and publishers. Radical publishers James Ridgway and Henry Symonds formed a partnership to produce Newgate radical publications that lasted four years and, despite their own incarceration for publishing, Ridgway and Symonds remain amongst the most prolific publishers of radical writings in this period.⁴⁰ By transforming a prison into a site of significant literary production, the 1790s milieu produced what McCalman describes as an 'enthusiastic cultural revolution'.⁴¹



Figure 1.4 *Soulagement en Prison, or Comfort in Prison.*

Richard Newton, 1793. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Because visitors to Newgate moved freely in and out of the prison in this period, the 1790s radical milieu also extended well beyond the prison walls. Historians have documented the extensive network of radical intelligentsia who regularly visited the state-side apartments, such as the doctor and radical James Parkinson and 'prison breakfaster' William Godwin, whose diaries record some

³⁹ Manogue, 'The Plight of James Ridgway'. For a sample of the publications produced by radicals such as Charles Piggot and William Hodgson within Newgate, see the anthology of prison writings edited by Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution*.

⁴⁰ Manogue, 'The Plight of James Ridgway'.

⁴¹ McCalman, 'Newgate in Revolution', p. 107.

of the ‘intricate webs of radical and literary sociability associated with Newgate culture’.⁴² In his study, McCalman has identified women such as Maria Reveley and Amelia Alderson among those ‘taking the lead in Newgate sociability’.⁴³ The free movement of visitors within the prison allowed the prison publication enterprises to flourish and generally ensured that prisoners were well maintained and sustained by friends and family.⁴⁴ The sociability within the prison also meant that radicals could re-create familiar spaces from the world of the radical intelligentsia outside prison such as the tavern and the coffee house.

By depicting Newgate as a site of radical conviviality and sociability, there is a risk of trivialising the suffering that undoubtedly accompanied imprisonment. To borrow from McCalman, the ‘unfreedom of Newgate’ as well as the ever-present threat of the lethal gaol fever cannot be lightly dismissed. Yet despite the physical and psychological hardships endured by the 1790s Newgate radicals, many clearly had the financial means, or at least the backing of wealthier patrons such as Whig leader Charles James Fox, to cushion the effects of the harsher aspects of prison life.⁴⁵ As a consequence, it is helpful to think of at least two ‘Newgates’ in operation at this time: that of relative comfort for those with the means to pay, and that faced by the majority of the Newgate population, who lived a harsh and crippling existence in the ‘mansion of misery’.⁴⁶

The horrors of Newgate for most of the prison population had not gone unnoticed during the eighteenth century. Although the subject of prison reform is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 2, a survey of the basic premises of the reform is crucial if we are to appreciate the changes that impacted on the subsequent waves of radical prisoners in Newgate. Though Howard’s *State of the Prisons* initiated the call for wide-reaching changes to penal practice in Britain, other vocal British agitators soon joined the fray, including James Neild, Sir Samuel Romilly, Sir George Onesiphorus Paul and Jeremy Bentham. The British reform movement was also heavily influenced by Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria, who campaigned against the death penalty and penned the famous treatise *An Essay on Crimes and Punishment*, published in 1764. Other influences included the work of French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu on crime, punishment and the law.⁴⁷

42 Ibid., p. 98. On Godwin’s involvement in the Newgate circle, see also Mark Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), chs 4–5. On Parkinson, see A. D. Morris, *James Parkinson: His life and times* (Boston: Birkhauser, 1989); Roy Porter, *Doctor of Society: Thomas Beddoes and the sick trade in late Enlightenment England* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 157–66.

43 McCalman, ‘Newgate in Revolution’, p. 102.

44 See Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution*, p. xiii.

45 Manogue, ‘The Plight of James Ridgway’, pp. 159, 165.

46 The phrase belongs to Thomas Lloyd. See Lloyd, ‘Impositions and Abuses in the Management of the Jail of Newgate’, p. 72.

47 For an overview of the philosophies of Montesquieu and Beccaria, see Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 42–4, 252–9.

British reformers were generally united in visualising a new approach to criminals, which held out the possibility of reform and redemption of even the most immoral, deviant and wayward. Custodial sentences were advocated in place of the death penalty for many serious offences. A new and rigid disciplinary system centred on mandatory religious instruction, often pernicious hygiene measures and forced labour as the means by which even the most hardened criminal could be delivered back to society a redeemed and reformed citizen.⁴⁸

The physical space of prison came under close scrutiny in the effort to envisage a new era in the approach to crime and punishment. The issue of prisoner accommodation was a crucial aspect of reform, and also the most contentious. Bentham and Paul were particularly focused on the need to reform prison architecture as a means to realise the changes advocated by Howard. Although reformers agreed on the separation of men and women within the prison, the extent to which a prisoner should be consigned to solitary cells was more controversial. Howard considered that each prisoner should have a small room in which to sleep alone at night but should spend the day in a common ward in the company of other prisoners. Bentham's model for the panopticon—Greek for 'all seeing'—proposed confinement based on extreme solitude and continuous surveillance.⁴⁹ The design—a circular structure with a central tower at its axis—meant the prison staff could observe each of the single-occupant cells that formed the building's circumference. Although the panopticon was never built, its influence can be seen in the many nineteenth-century prisons that continue to hold a presence on the British urban landscape.

The configuration of older prisons such as Newgate, with large wards rather than single cells, made it easier to resist prison reform. Dance's original design for the 1770 rebuild of the prison, and the laying of the foundations for it, predated Howard's landmark exposé in 1777. When Newgate was rebuilt following the Gordon riot fires in 1780, however, Dance made only minor modifications to his original plan. Howard despaired at the time that no design could have been worse for 'unless room be given for the separation of prisoners', he predicted, 'an audacious spirit of profaneness and wickedness will continue to prevail'.⁵⁰ The immediate changes demanded by reformers to the operation and culture of

48 For an overview of the chronology and ideology of prison reform, see Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750–1900* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 248–92; J. E. Thomas, *House of Care: Prisons and prisoners in England 1500–1800* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1988), pp. 147–81; Babington, *The English Bastille*; Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 44–79. On the relationship between prison reform and radical culture, see J. Ann Hone, *For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London 1796–1821* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 249–50.

49 For more on Bentham and prison reform, see Chapter 2 of this study.

50 Howard is quoted in H. G. Bennet, *A Letter to the Common Council and Livery of the City of London, on the Abuses Existing in Newgate*, second edn (London, 1818), p. 3. See also Dixon, *The London Prisons*, p. 209.

Newgate stood little chance in a space that simply could not accommodate the necessary separation or solitary confinement of prisoners, and in an institution that had functioned largely unchecked for hundreds of years.⁵¹

* * *

William Pitt's 'reign of terror' against the radicals of the 1790s did little to dissuade radical followers. As political dissidence continued to gain momentum in Britain after the turn of the century, Newgate hosted another wave of radical prisoners. William Cobbett's experience of the prison in 1810 suggests little had changed since Lord George Gordon's time. Cobbett, a radical writer, publisher and farmer, was prosecuted for publicly criticising the flogging of five militiamen who had been involved in a mutiny at Ely. Cobbett was tried and convicted for seditious libel in June 1810 and sentenced to Newgate for two years.⁵² Immediately after arriving at the prison, Cobbett agreed to pay five shillings a week to the turnkey for a single apartment in the state side of the prison. The intervention of Matthew Wood, Sheriff of London and Middlesex and radical sympathiser, however, was a boon for Cobbett.⁵³ For 12 guineas a week in rent and another eight guineas in fees, he was moved to an even more comfortable abode on the top floor of the Governor's residence.

Separated from other prisoners, he was allowed to entertain as many visitors as he chose each day between midday and 10 o'clock in the evening. Friends dined with him, or took refreshments, and his family was permitted to stay with him in his room. In the tradition of the 1790s radicals, he continued his writing and publishing endeavours, editing and managing *Cobbett's Weekly Register* from the prison. 'In fact', G. D. H. Cole noted in his biography of Cobbett, 'there was no restriction on his freedom save that he could not move beyond the prison walls'.⁵⁴ In his autobiography, Cobbett recalled that a hamper which travelled between his farm in Botley and the prison provided for his every need: carrying letters of support, providing 'fruit and all sorts of country fare', the necessary materials to keep a journal, plants, bulbs and the most 'beautiful flowers...

51 Unlike that for many eighteenth-century prisons, Dance's design had allowed for separate quarters for men and women, but the separation was rarely enforced during the late eighteenth century until the intervention of prison reformer Elizabeth Fry (see Chapter 3).

52 Cobbett also faced an extraordinary £3000 in fines and two sureties of £1000 each for good behaviour for seven years to be paid on his release. For an account of his trial, see *Morning Chronicle*, 16 June 1810. On William Cobbett, see George Spater, *William Cobbett: The poor man's friend*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); William Cobbett, *The Autobiography of William Cobbett: The progress of a plough-boy to a seat in Parliament*, William Reitzel (ed.) (London: Faber, 1967); G. D. H. Cole, *The Life of William Cobbett* (London: Collins, 1924).

53 Spater, *William Cobbett*, p. 246. On Matthew Wood, see Anita McConnell, 'Wood, Sir Matthew, First Baronet (1768–1843)', in *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29889>>. On Wood's involvement in London radical culture, see Hone, *For the Cause of Truth*, pp. 8–9, 186–9, 347–9.

54 Cole, *The Life of William Cobbett*, p. 161.

everything that they thought calculated to delight me'.⁵⁵ Cobbett's detention, to borrow Cole's words, was 'irksome enough', but it was the 'mildest that well can be imagined'.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to make light of such a period of 'unfreedom'. As Philip Harling notes, Cobbett suffered financially from his period of imprisonment, which could account for his decision to flee to America following the *Habeas Corpus Suspension Act* in 1817 to avoid any repeat prison term.⁵⁷

The imprisonment of another prominent radical of the period closely coincided with Cobbett's release in 1812. Daniel Isaac Eaton, the veteran radical publisher who was part of the early 1790s Newgate milieu as a regular visitor, had managed to avoid a prison term during the 'reign of terror' despite successive prosecutions.⁵⁸ His publication of the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason* in 1812 finally gave the authorities the verdict they had long sought. Eaton's imprisonment was clearly less agreeable than Cobbett's. In 1813, he published a damning account of the gaol, *Extortions and Abuses of Newgate*, which, like Lloyd's exposé, documented a corrupt prison economy in which prisoners continued to remain vulnerable to the profit making of keepers and turnkeys.⁵⁹

One of Lloyd's key complaints was that men judged guilty of felonies but 'possessed of financial means' could pay their way into the superior rooms of the state side.⁶⁰ Similarly, Eaton raged that despite laws that then provided for the separation of prisoners into classifications of debtors, felons and misdemeanours (with state prisoners in the last), 'in rapacity of fees, Felons of all descriptions are admitted into [the state side], and the accommodation [is] distributed to them in a partial, unjust, and oppressive way'.⁶¹ It remains unclear why Eaton was not afforded the luxury of the Keeper's residence as Cobbett had been. Eaton's growing impoverishment could have meant he simply did not have the financial means to warrant special privileges. His fractious relationship with the

55 Cobbett, *The Autobiography of William Cobbett*, p. 124.

56 Cole, *The Life of William Cobbett*, p. 161.

57 Philip Harling, 'The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2001), pp. 118–19.

58 On Daniel Isaac Eaton, radical publisher, see Michael T. Davis, "'Good for the Public Example": Daniel Issac Eaton, prosecution, punishment and recognition, 1793–1812', in Davis, *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain*, pp. 110–32; Michael T. Davis, "'I Can Bear Punishment": Daniel Issac Eaton, radical culture and the rule of law, 1792–1812', *Criminal Justice History*, vol. 18 (2003), pp. 89–106; D. McCue, 'The Pamphleteer Pitt's Government Couldn't Silence', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 5 (1978–79), pp. 38–49.

59 Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Extortions and Abuses of Newgate* (London, 1813), reprinted in Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution*, pp. 145–66. This is supported by Henry Mayhew, who later reported that from 1788 to 1810, 'Newgate continued in a wretched, misguided condition'. Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (London: Griffin, 1862), p. 591.

60 Lloyd, *Impositions and Abuses in the Management of the Jail of Newgate*, p. 73.

61 Eaton, *Extortions and Abuses of Newgate*, p. 152.

Keeper could also account for his treatment, for, as we will see in Chapter 2, this relationship was a crucial factor in determining the prisoner's experience of the prison space.

In many ways, Eaton was the exception that proved the rule. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the resistance of the informal prison economy to the reform process generally continued to benefit those incarcerated for political offences. Five years after Cobbett vacated the Governor's rooms, John Cam Hobhouse, radical Westminster MP, took up residence. In 1819, Hobhouse was imprisoned in Newgate after suggesting that if soldiers did not protect the Parliament, 'members of that House [of Commons] would be pulled out by their ears'.⁶² At a time of pressing social discontent, and in the highly charged atmosphere that followed Peterloo, his comments were deemed to be inciting unrest. As it had been for Cobbett, Newgate was to be a site of confined comfort for Hobhouse. It was reported that he 'lived in the governor's rooms, and in splendid style' (Figure 1.5).⁶³



Figure 1.5 'A Trifling Mistake'...Corrected..., a satirical depiction of John Cam Hobhouse's accommodation in Newgate.

George Cruikshank, London, 1820. Copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

⁶² On John Cam Hobhouse, see Robert E. Zegger, *John Cam Hobhouse: A political life, 1819–1852* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973).

⁶³ Dixon, *The London Prisons*, p. 210.

Most startling was Hobhouse's ability to continue his political affairs from the prison in full public view. In an advertisement placed in *The Times* in early January 1820, a 'Metropolitan and Central Committee' announced a meeting to decide on the dispersal of funds collected for Peterloo victims. 'The place of the meeting', the advertisement announced, 'will be Mr Hobhouse's apartments on the State side of Newgate, the time for the meeting 12 for 1 o'clock on Monday 10th January 1820'.⁶⁴ As it had been for the 1790s radicals, the prison space proved no impediment to either Cobbett's or Hobhouse's participation in the political life of the nation. Moreover, the fact that the propriety of conducting a public meeting in a prison was not questioned suggests a tacit recognition that prison should not impede participation in the mainstream public sphere, at least for elite radical politicians such as Hobhouse.

Hobhouse's ability to conduct his political activity from Newgate, almost two decades after that of the 1790s radical prisoners, provides a useful index of the slow pace of change within the old prisons. According to Henry Grey Bennet MP, this is also true of the conditions facing the general prison population. Bennet conducted his own inquiry into Newgate in 1818, and published his findings the same year.⁶⁵ He reported that corruption remained rampant in the prison, despite the payment of an annual salary to the Keeper. He noted that the sale of alcohol continued and that gaming and 'freedom of exchange and movement' within the prison were prevalent; 'drunkenness prevailed to such an extent, and was so common, that unaccompanied with riot, it attracted no notice'.⁶⁶ He also noted that despite male and female prisoners being housed in separate parts of the prison, local prostitutes and other women were still permitted to stay during the night. This was easily accomplished, Bennet maintained, by claiming to be the wife of a prisoner and slipping a shilling to the turnkeys.⁶⁷

Given that Newgate generally appeared impervious to prison reform for the gentlemen radicals such as Cobbett and Hobhouse, and in turn for the wider prison population, what of the conditions that faced the next cohort of radical prisoners in the 1820s? This decade was marked by the renewed suppression of political and religious dissidence, with the London radical bookshop of Jane and Richard Carlile a key target. Their Fleet Street bookshop and publishing enterprise played a crucial role in circulating a range of radical texts, not only in the metropolis, but throughout Britain via an extensive regional network of print sellers.⁶⁸ The bookshop became a marked site; Richard and Jane were both

64 *The Times*, 8 January 1820. For further accounts of Hobhouse in Newgate, see *Morning Chronicle*, 2 February 1820, 7 February 1820; *Examiner*, 6 February 1820.

65 Bennet, *A Letter to the Common Council and Livery of the City of London*.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

68 For further discussion of Jane and Richard Carlile's contribution to London radical culture, see Iain McCalman, *Popular Radicalism and Freethought in Early Nineteenth Century England*, Unpublished MA thesis (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1975); Joel Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought*

imprisoned in the early 1820s, and the shopmen and women who answered the call to keep the bookshop open did so at great peril. The provisions of the Six Acts combined with the suspension of habeas corpus in 1817 saw almost 150 workers, distributors and volunteers associated with the Carliles' bookshop imprisoned throughout the country during the 1820s—the sum of their sentences totalling a staggering 200 years.⁶⁹

The years between 1820 and 1824 saw the most intensive suppression of the Carliles' bookshop. Volunteers Susannah Wright (to whom I will return in Chapter 3), Humphrey Boyle, Joseph Rhodes, William Holmes, William Tunbridge, William Haley, Thomas Jeffries, Thomas Ryley Perry, Richard Hassell, John Clarke, William Campion, William Cochrane and John Christopher all spent time in Newgate, either for the entirety of their sentence or for a holding period before they were moved to another prison.⁷⁰ Bennet B. Jones, a London radical and key supporter of radical prisoners in the period, later recalled that 'no sooner did a person stand behind the counter in the shop, than he was taken to Newgate. We had one week seven taken, and lodged [there].'⁷¹

One consequence of the dichotomy between the earlier radical experience of Newgate and that of the general prison population was that those radicals who followed Hobhouse into prison were primed to expect more amicable conditions by virtue of their status as state prisoners. This could account for the boldness exhibited by one of the Carliles' shop workers, William Haley. He defiantly advised the judge that

we have every reasonable prospect of being consigned to the company of the Newgate beetles, for some five or six and thirty moons: yet no title in the gift of the proud sovereign of these realms is more eagerly sought, than a situation of so honourable a nature.⁷²

in *Nineteenth-Century Britain: The life of Richard Carlile* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983); Guy Aldred, *Richard Carlile, Agitator: His life and times* (London: Pioneer Press, 1923); James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political language, ritual and symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 100–46; Angela Keane, 'Richard Carlile's Working Women: Selling books, politics, sex and *The Republican*', *Literature & History*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2006), pp. 20–34; Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 156–60, 181–217; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1968), pp. 791–846. See also Chapters 6–8 of this study.

69 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 757.

70 William Campion (Lancaster shoemaker), John Clarke (an ex-Methodist preacher), Thomas Ryley Perry (an actor-comedian) and William Haley (shoemaker) all received the harshest sentences of 36 months. For reports on the trials of William Haley, see *Leeds Mercury*, 19 June 1824; on William Holmes, see *Morning Chronicle*, 20 February 1824; on the trials of the seven other men, see *Morning Chronicle*, 8 June 1824, 10 June 1824; also the *Examiner*, 13 June 1824. See also McCalman, *Popular Radicalism and Freethought in Early Nineteenth Century England*, pp. 76–7; Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 89–95.

71 B. B. Jones, 'The Peoples' First Struggle for Free Speech and Writing', *The Reasoner*, 5 June 1859, pp. 178–9.

72 Quoted in Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 89.

It appears Haley, as a prison martyr, had discovered his *raison d'être*.

If Haley and the other shop workers expected the comforts enjoyed by earlier radicals, their hopes were soon quashed. The reality of life in Newgate reported by the Carliles' shop workers during this third wave of radical imprisonments suggests a discernable shift in approach towards those imprisoned for political and religious offences. In 1822, Humphrey Boyle, a shoemaker from Leeds, reported that he had been held in conditions similar to those facing the general prison population.⁷³ After five months, he claimed, he was still sleeping on a hempen mat on the floor of the apartment, with 'only three rugs for covering'—the standard issue for prisoners in Newgate. Furthermore, he was forced to share his ward with up to 10 other prisoners, including felons.

The shopmen convicted of blasphemous libel in 1824 related similar conditions. Richard Carlile printed an 'exact account' of the men's treatment, expressing his outrage at the conditions that faced his men on their arrival in Newgate. Confined with 10 men in a room measuring 22 ft x 16 ft (7 m x 5 m), they were given three 'door mats' to lie on, the rugs constituting the 'whole of bed and bedding'.⁷⁴ For sustenance, they received only the new prison food allocation, described as the 'the most wretched stuff': 'one pound of bread and one pint of gruel each day' with six ounces of beef each alternate day. This, they claimed, was no better than 'dog's meat'.⁷⁵ Carlile reported that his men were denied 'all means of procuring proper food' from friends and relatives, as 'undressed food' was not allowed in the prison, leaving that which had been 'mangled...by some filthy men and women employed for that purpose'—the only option to avoid starvation.⁷⁶

In one of the most notable departures from earlier practice towards state prisoners, radicals in this period reported that they were no longer permitted to receive visitors in their wards. Relatives were forced to 'converse between bars', with friends excluded altogether without '*lying like a Christian*, by saying they are relatives'.⁷⁷ Carlile further claimed that men's visitors were insulted and were often refused entry to the prison altogether. Most galling, however, was that even the 'most respectable' female visitors 'must submit to be stripped, by two of the most disrespectful' turnkeys and then were permitted only 'to talk through a double row of iron gratings four feet apart!'.⁷⁸

These conditions are in stark contrast with the scenes of conviviality and sociability in the 1790s and the comforts enjoyed by Cobbett and Hobhouse.

⁷³ *Republican*, 7 June 1822.

⁷⁴ Reports on the men's treatment also appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, 30 June 1824 and 9 July 1824.

⁷⁵ *Republican*, 25 June 1824.

⁷⁶ *Republican*, 6 August 1824.

⁷⁷ *Republican*, 25 June 1824, 6 August 1824; *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 November 1824.

⁷⁸ *Republican*, 6 August 1824, 3 June 1825.

What, then, accounts for the shift in the treatment of radical prisoners after 1820? Part of the answer lies in the headway finally being made by British prison reformers. Although reforms were designed to improve the conditions of the most disadvantaged of the prison population, they appear to have had an inverse effect on the treatment of state prisoners. At the heart of reform was an egalitarian approach, which, theoretically, treated all inmates without favour. Tighter controls on prison management now existed, with visiting prison committees and visiting magistrates overseeing the work of the Governor and attempting to stamp out the old prison economies and profit making from prisoners. While the system of classifying prisoners according to the nature of their crime still meant prisoners who were convicted of sedition, blasphemy or libel could be housed in the state side, separation from other classifications of prisoners within the state side was never assured as Newgate became at times breathlessly overcrowded.⁷⁹ Furthermore, visiting rights were now regulated and restricted as reformers considered that personal reform and redemption could not be achieved if the prisoner continued to be surrounded by their unsavoury milieu.⁸⁰

That the prison was finally succumbing to the reform endeavour, however, is not the complete picture. The generous concessions paid to Hobhouse only a year or so earlier suggest that other factors could account for the conditions faced by the 1820s radical milieu. At the same time that prison reform was finally making progress, the face of radicalism was also undergoing dramatic change. Many of the 1790s radicals, and those imprisoned before the 1820s, had the capacity to purchase superior accommodation and other comforts because of their social rank: either they were independently wealthy or they had the financial backing of a wealthy supporter. By the 1820s, the rapid dissemination of radical principles among the people resulted in the first wave of popular, as opposed to parliamentary, radicalism. Spurred on by the events at Peterloo and the Queen Caroline affair,⁸¹ the shopmen and women who rallied to the Carliles' cause represented a 'microcosm of the thousands of artisans and mechanics', who, Joel Wiener notes, were drawn to the popular radical movement in this period.⁸² Significant numbers of the volunteers were shoemakers or in the print

79 Several contemporary reports observed the overcrowding in the prison. See, for example, Neild, *State of the Prisons in England, Scotland and Wales*, pp. 412–14.

80 Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain*, p. 102.

81 The Queen Caroline Affair, which engrossed the country during 1820, involved the attempt by newly anointed King George IV to deprive Caroline, his estranged wife, of the title of queen. Her cause attracted overwhelming popular support, and many in the radical community also took up her cause. See Anna Clark, 'The Queen Caroline Affair and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820', *Representations*, vol. 31 (1990), pp. 47–68; John Stevenson, 'The Queen Caroline Affair', in John Stevenson (ed.), *London in the Age of Reform* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), pp. 117–48.

82 Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 87–8. See also Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, passim.

trade, with half from London and the newly industrialised centres of Leeds and Manchester, and the remainder from smaller towns and villages across England.⁸³

It is not my intention here to reduce either the complexities of radical imprisonment or the intentions of reformers to a cursory class analysis. The shift in social status of prisoners, however, clearly had implications given the intricate dynamics of social ranks within British society, the threat posed by the rapid spread of radicalism among the 'masses' and the central role that both money and status played in securing the comforts of earlier cohorts of radical prisoners. The impact on the relationships with the staff, and the magistrates, who oversaw the management of the prison, is but one example. Where earlier radical prisoners were of an eminently higher social standing than those who staffed the prisons,⁸⁴ the plebeian radicals of the 1820s encountered markedly different power relations within the prison space. Though beyond the scope of this study, a survey of political convictions across the broader nineteenth century would help illuminate the extent to which social status impacted on the radical experience of the prison space.⁸⁵

Irrespective of the reasons behind the harsher treatment faced by radicals in the 1820s, a clear consequence of the shift in approach to their imprisonment was a rigorous effort to construct a distinctive radical collective within the prison. This was designed to directly counter that of the criminal identity, which was being increasingly prescribed by both the authorities and the prison space itself. One of the key radical strategies in this regard was to agitate for sole access to the state-side accommodation. Of all the complaints reported by radicals between 1790 and 1830, their confinement with felons was the most galling. The presence of 'real criminals' in the state side of the prison first prompted the exposé by Eaton, who maintained that his Keeper had disregarded and departed from the 'immemorial usage' that saw felons excluded from the state side of the prison.⁸⁶

Despite the system of classifying prisoners, which legislated for their separation within new and old prisons, H. G. Bennet noted in 1818 that little attempt had been made to implement the regulations so that the 'political libeller was confined with the perjured, fraudulent and persons convicted for attempts to commit abominable crimes'.⁸⁷ For Humphrey Boyle, despite having slept on the

83 Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 87–8.

84 For an account of the changing nature of prison staff from 'keepers' to 'gentlemen governors' in this period, see Shane Bryans, *Prison Governors: Managing prisons in a time of change* (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2007), pp. 14–19.

85 To date, there is no comprehensive study of British political prisoners across either the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries.

86 Eaton, *Extortions and Abuses of Newgate*, p. 158.

87 Bennet, *A Letter to the Common Council and Livery of the City of London*, p. 6. See also *Morning Chronicle*, 13 November 1818.

floor for much of his sentence, the issue of separate accommodation remained paramount during his imprisonment in Newgate in 1822. Admitting that ‘good beds were much to be desired’, he reported that what he and fellow radical prisoners Joseph Rhodes and William Holmes hoped for most was a room of their own.⁸⁸ Though their demands were never met in Newgate, they were later moved to another prison, the Giltspur Street Compter, where they gladly reported that they secured a ‘good room’ for themselves.⁸⁹

It is unclear what prompted the three men’s move to the Compter, although reports from within Newgate suggest that the issue of accommodation could have forced the authorities’ hand. Following the initial complaints of the 1824 cohort, the men soon reported that they had won some concessions regarding their accommodation. By July 1824, the *Morning Chronicle* reported that the shopmen’s complaints prompted an investigation by the magistrates and officials who formed the City Gaol Committee.⁹⁰ Despite finding that the men’s allocated room was ‘not crowded to inconvenience’, the committee determined that the group of radical prisoners ‘should be allowed the use of another room’. The committee also addressed the men’s complaints regarding their lack of proper bedding, acknowledging that ‘horse bedsteads should be allowed to the complainants’ despite the committee’s concern that such a concession ‘might be regarded as a violation of the discipline’.⁹¹

The victory in securing separate accommodation was a major coup for the radicals. Not only did it distance the men physically from the remaining prison population, it assisted with creating a moral divide from the criminals, whom radicals generally appear to have regarded with disdain. Richard Hassell, for instance, remarked dispassionately in 1826 that he had ‘never felt the least interest in the fate of any one who was executed’ in Newgate.⁹² Prompted by their own contempt for the criminal other, particularly felons, radicals in Newgate appear to have avoided any extensive contact or communication

88 *Republican*, 7 June 1822.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Morning Chronicle*, 9 July 1824.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 March 1826. Hassell, a farm labourer from Dorset, was entirely self-taught and continued his education in prison, where he excelled in mathematics and French. His work on political economy while in Newgate had a marked impact on Carlile’s thinking, and Patricia Hollis contends it was the first time the ‘interweaving of economic and political power’ was presented in the popular press. See Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A study in working-class radicalism of the 1830s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 210. See also Aldred, *Richard Carlile, Agitator*, pp. 130, 183; Joel Wiener, ‘Hassell, Richard’, in Joseph Baylen and Norbert Gossman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals* [hereafter *BDMBR*] (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 213–15; McCalman, *Popular Radicalism and Freethought in Early Nineteenth Century England*, p. 158. Tragically, Hassell was to die within months of his release, aged twenty-five. Carlile was devastated. He genuinely anticipated that Hassell would become a future leader with the potential to unite the generally fractured radical movement. See Wiener, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 136.

with the remaining prison population.⁹³ It was not, however, simply their own exertions that led to the separation from other prisoners. The surge in popular radicalism in the intervening decades since the 1790s gave the 1820s radicals a key advantage: the authorities were now even more concerned by the dangers of exposing the criminal classes to the apostasy of radical views and publications.⁹⁴

Contagion was an ever-present danger in the unreformed prison, but here was the threat of contamination of a different sort. Paradoxically, it was the risk of contagion *from* the state prisoners to the wider prison population that in many cases secured these radicals the separate accommodation they demanded. The concern of the authorities was not without basis. When Gilbert Wakefield was imprisoned in Dorchester during the late 1790s for a 'seditious utterance' (suggesting that the English people were in such a state of misery they had little to lose from a French invasion), he assisted felons with writing petitions, paid some fines and debts of prisoners and debtors and sometimes purchased food for those without.⁹⁵ Convicted Peterloo orator Henry Hunt used his imprisonment in Ilchester during 1820–21 to publicly advocate for an improvement in the situation of debtors and also assisted with petition writing.

Nevertheless, many radicals scoffed at the fears of the prison authorities, believing that other prisoners were incapable of understanding even the most basic tenets of radicalism. In 1826, the radicals' brief contact with a fellow prisoner, Edward Cockerill, however, both challenged the general disdain of radicals for their prison counterparts and affirmed the authorities' fears of the potential for contagion from state prisoners to the wider prison community. Cockerill had been awaiting execution in Newgate for his crime of forgery, when, following the release of Thomas Jeffries, and for the six weeks before his execution, he shared the state-side accommodation with Campion, Clarke and Hassell. They reported that Cockerill 'had the free use of our library, and the benefit of some philosophical and blasphemous conversations' and, despite being a 'stranger' to infidelism, Cockerill read with 'avidity'. By the time of his execution, the radicals reported that he had 'imbibed our principles'.⁹⁶

To the disgust and despair of the prison chaplain, Cockerill refused religious consolation and shunned God during the entire proceedings at the gallows.

93 Michael Ignatieff notes the same of the radicals imprisoned in Gloucester during the late 1790s. See Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain*, p. 125.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

95 See *ibid.*, p. 126. See also the campaign by Henry Hunt to improve the situation of debtors while he was imprisoned in Ilchester during 1820–21, in John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt: Henry Hunt and English working-class radicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 8–9, 134–43; Margot C. Finn, 'Henry Hunt's "Peep into a Prison": The radical discontinuities of imprisonment for debt', in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism 1550–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 191–216. As Finn notes, imprisoned debtors, because of their status as civil prisoners rather than criminals, had been seen as 'fitting objects of radical solicitude since the seventeenth century'.

96 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 March 1826.

His radical roommates instead had prepared him with the ‘consolation of philosophy’ to see his fate as the ‘inevitable result of life’, as ‘merely the termination of sensation, a perfection of that state of unconsciousness which he nightly experiences in an inferior degree’.⁹⁷ The incident made news across Britain with the mainstream press reporting Cockerill’s long and painful death on the gallows as a consequence of his impiety, juxtaposing it with the instant death of a fellow condemned prisoner who had allowed the presence of God during his final days.⁹⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the radicals instead related a different version of events, in which the two men suffered equally at the gallows.

Such a public conversion to the infidel cause was abhorrent to orthodox early nineteenth-century society on several levels. First, it occurred at a moment so sacred in the Christian faith—that of preparing to face God upon death. It was also a direct affront to the central tenets of prison reform, which claimed that even the most wanton and fallen criminal could be redeemed through religious instruction. The separate and solitary system advocated by prison reformers could well have prevented the contagion of Edward Cockerill. The space of the old prison was once again the radicals’ ally.

The incident, Campion reported, ‘occasioned the consultation of a coterie of Alderman’.⁹⁹ This committee determined that ‘no more prisoners were to be mixed with us, and that all communication between us and any other prisoners should, as far as possible, be prevented’.¹⁰⁰ The risk posed by the seepage of such heretical views through the wider prison population created a spatial conundrum for the prison authorities. The four rooms that housed the remaining three radical prisoners in Newgate in 1826 would have otherwise accommodated between 40 and 50 prisoners in other parts of the prison. As Campion quipped, the prison authorities had only three choices: send in more prisoners to share the space and risk their ‘souls be[ing] lost to Jehovah—or keep the yard solely for us—or send us to another prison’.¹⁰¹ Despite being an ‘orderly set of fellows’, wrote Campion, ‘we have been more trouble to our Keepers than all the other prisoners who have been in the place since our arrival’, claiming the Keeper had ‘wanted to get them out’ as soon as they arrived at the prison.¹⁰² His observations suggest that state prisoners had become a troublesome anomaly in the old prisons, which, despite reform ideals, generally housed many more inmates than room allowed.

97 Ibid.

98 The *Ipswich Journal*, 25 February 1826, claimed the hangman was forced to pull on Cockerill’s legs until he died. For a similar account, see *The Times*, 22 February 1826; *Aberdeen Journal*, 1 March 1826.

99 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 July 1826.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

If Cockerill's conversion to atheism was trumpeted as a triumph in the 'Honourable House of Blasphemers', their bluster was to be short-lived. As Cockerill was being enlightened 'on the real value of religion', one of their own was rescinding his radical principles in favour of Christianity. William Haley, the defiant shopman who scoffed at the prospect of his confinement with the 'Newgate beetles', received one of the longest sentences in the 1824 prosecutions, and had become one of the most vocal complainants from within the prison. The reality of life in London's 'mansion of misery', however, eventually tested both Haley's bravado and his commitment to the radical cause. The authorities shortened his sentence by 15 months after he renounced the infidel views that led to his prosecution.¹⁰³ When Hassell discovered the petition Haley had penned to Home Secretary, Robert Peel, advising of his conversion to Christianity, he quickly relayed his find to Richard Carlile.

The betrayal drew an acerbic response from the radical leader. Characteristically, Carlile went on the attack, not only labelling Haley a 'bad principled fellow', a 'thief' and a 'traitor', but also claiming to have countered Haley's move by forwarding his own doubts of the shopman's recant directly on to Peel. Carlile crowed publicly that his efforts had 'kept Haley a prisoner through the last winter'.¹⁰⁴ On Haley's eventual release from Newgate, Carlile reported that

I heartily rejoice at his release from prison, that we may say that we are fairly rid of him, well assured, that his habits and character, notwithstanding his ability with the pen, will lead him to his former rags and wretchedness.¹⁰⁵

Although Carlile's spiteful treatment of Haley raised the ire of the wider radical community, we cannot underestimate the depth of feeling Haley's defection engendered in the small Newgate community; it dealt a heavy blow to the collective political identity that the men had forged despite the ordeal of imprisonment. Solidarity was crucial to their resistance. Haley's recantation also drew the radicals back into the criminal ether of the prison; his conversion suggesting that radicals, like other prisoners, could be reformed and find redemption under the right prison conditions.

Haley's actions were also the very antithesis of what Carlile expected from his shopmen and women. Carlile's own experience of prison was as an unparalleled opportunity for self-improvement and knowledge, which deepened his commitment to the radical cause.¹⁰⁶ He expected his fellow radicals to make similar use of the opportunity. Richard Hassell's liberation three months after

¹⁰³ Reports of the events appeared in the *Republican*, 31 March 1826.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 187.

the Haley affair gave Carlile the opportunity to praise him as the model radical prisoner, celebrating his dedication to self-improvement and instruction during his incarceration.¹⁰⁷ Prison reformers believed that mandatory religious instruction would result in reform and redemption, but Hassell's educative achievements were of an entirely different order. Just as the 1790s radicals utilised Newgate as a 'virtual college', Hassell found the prison gave him an opportunity for political enlightenment, and Carlile reported Hassell had 'diligently spent his time in various modes of self-improvement' developing his 'literary, mathematical, linguistical, and philosophical talents'.¹⁰⁸ Carlile could boast that Hassell left prison 'well prepared to take a lead in assisting to reform those who sent him there'.¹⁰⁹

Education led to greater political awareness, which was another means of resistance within the prison space. Hassell's prison education was not an isolated occurrence for the 1820s radicals. Carlile's correspondence with other imprisoned radicals also urged them to use the opportunity presented by their prison sentences to further their education. Carlile wrote to Boyle in 1823, expressing his earnest wish that he would use the remainder of his imprisonment to 'conquer [his] antipathy towards to the complete study of Grammar', hoping that following Boyle's release he could be employed 'in the superintendence' of Carlile's publishing business.¹¹⁰ The study of grammar, however, was not to Boyle's taste; his preference instead was 'amusing [himself] in arithmetic'.¹¹¹ The promise of self-improvement was also a way for radicals to come to terms with the 'unfreedom' of prison. Boyle considered that his '18 months imprisonment shall not be 18 months of my life lost; I think in 18 months I can gain some little knowledge of geometry'.¹¹² Carlile taunted the authorities for facilitating the education of his shopmen; had more prosecutions been effected, he claimed, 'we should have had more Philosophers in our Gaols than debtors, smugglers or poachers'.¹¹³ As George J. Holyoake would later recall, Carlile 'suspected the qualifications of every man who had not taken out a diploma from the Attorney General'.¹¹⁴

The educative possibilities presented by imprisonment also endowed radicals in the 1820s with the skills and confidence to embark on their own publishing enterprise. In one of the most striking and overt forms of resistance and

107 *Republican*, 2 June 1826.

108 *Ibid.* See also E. P. Thompson, who noted that debtors' prisons also functioned as 'finishing schools for Radicals'. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 692.

109 *Republican*, 2 June 1826.

110 Richard Carlile to Humphrey Boyle, 18 January 1823, Humphrey Boyle Papers, WYL623/5, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds.

111 *Republican*, 7 June 1822.

112 *Ibid.*

113 *Republican*, 20 January 1826.

114 George J. Holyoake, *The Life and Character of Richard Carlile* (London, 1849), p. 39.

renegotiation of the Newgate prison space, the men produced their own prison publication, the *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, from within their ward. Modelled on Carlile's *Republican* (and produced with Carlile's assistance), the first edition was issued shortly after their initial incarceration in 1824. In addition to providing a public vehicle in which to air their grievances about their conditions and expose 'life in Newgate', the publication was used to defy their containment in the prison space by continuing to disseminate their trenchant views on social, theological and political issues. Despite the altered conditions for political prisoners, the existence of the *Newgate Monthly Magazine* highlights the continuities with older radical prison traditions.

As Kevin Gilmartin has observed, the 'ability to work through repression, and especially imprisonment, became a litmus test for the viability of radical protest in print'.¹¹⁵ It was, but prison publications also suggest much more. The editorial collective of the magazine was drawing on a long tradition of literary pursuit and prison publications that was a manifest form of prisoner resistance and expression of political identity—a defiance of their forced removal from society. As radical poet Elijah Ridings wrote to the *Newgate Monthly Magazine* editors:

Your thoughts are not confined either in your own cranium or within the walls of your prison, but are wandering around the Island of Albion... almost persuading me that you are at large, once in each month at least, perambulating and disputing, confabulating and philosophising.¹¹⁶

Gilmartin notes that the prison name itself 'hovered over the production and reception of the magazine, but its impact was not entirely negative, since prison called attention to injustices that demanded reform'.¹¹⁷ In fact, from the radical perspective, there was little that was negative about the use of 'Newgate' in the magazine's title. It was shrewdly selected as a means of resistance, announcing clearly to the wider public that the walls of the prison would not serve to silence radical voices. The *Newgate Monthly Magazine* also serves as an important reminder to historians that public discourse and exchange occurred beyond those institutions typically described as outlets of rational communication in Habermas's original conception of the bourgeois public sphere.

The very existence of the magazine demonstrates how the prison space afforded radicals a measure of protection from prosecution throughout this period. As the ultra-conservative *New Times* newspaper protested, imprisonment did not 'in the slightest degree check the publication of fresh blasphemies on [Carlile's]

115 Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The press and radical opposition in early nineteenth-century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 90.

116 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 April 1826.

117 Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, p. 90.

part'.¹¹⁸ Prison allowed for a freer expression than was able on the outside. The *Newgate Monthly Magazine* was heralded by supporters as a publication of 'the greatest utility' and as a 'medium for the interchange of sentiments uncorrupted by the prejudices of the times, and untainted by servility'.¹¹⁹ It tapped into the groundswell of popular radicalism, and the imprisoned men believed that instruction in rational thought and reason was vital in order to effect their political and social aims. It appears particularly incongruent that the authorities should be so concerned with containing the possibility of radical contagion within the prison walls and yet approached the prison publications with such leniency. Part of the explanation lies in the rights claimed by radical prisoners, which will be explored in detail in Chapter 2. It also suggests that regardless of prison reform, the authorities considered the prison space and state prisoners themselves as legitimate elements of both the radical public sphere and the wider compass of political discourse.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the literary production of the 1820s radical prisoners never matched that of the 1790s milieu. Several factors worked against a more prolific output in the period, not the least of which involved both the education levels of the new cohort of radicals and their working-class status, which directly impacted on their financial means to fund such production. Unlike their earlier counterparts, most did not enter prison primed with the knowledge or skills to produce a prison tome. Another crucial impediment to the 1820s group was that which proved the 1790s milieu's greatest ally: the unhindered entry of visitors to the prison space. Despite securing some concessions in terms of accommodation and beds, Newgate radicals of the 1820s never succeeded in having the restrictions on the entry of visitors lifted. In 1825, Perry complained in a petition to Parliament that 'the regulations of the prison place your Petitioner under the treatment of a convicted felon; all which annoyances, and degrading regulations amount to a total exclusion of all your Petitioners friends'.¹²⁰ This provided less opportunity for the creation of a 'salon of radical philosophes' for engaged discussion and debate for developing and testing novel thoughts and ideas.

In this light, prison newspapers such as the *Newgate Monthly Magazine* and the *Republican* also played a vital role in providing physical contact with the outside world. Both the prisoners and their families depended on the subscriptions generated by and encouraged in the radical press. A particularly generous offer from one region could encourage support from another. The magazine also served as reminder to the radical community that its advocates and leaders

118 Reproduced in *Republican*, 14 January 1825. See also complaints printed in *The Times* of the *Courier* newspaper lamenting the 'fresh blasphemies' shortly after Carile's imprisonment. *The Times*, 26 October 1819.

119 *Republican*, 15 April 1825.

120 *Republican*, 3 June 1825.

were paying a heavy price in pursuit of a new political and social order for the nation. As one subscriber to the *Republican* noted, the Newgate magazine had 'a double claim for patronage upon every friend of truth and reason: coming as it does from the shrine of virtue and containing the sentiments of her invincible votaries'.¹²¹

The restrictions on visitors entering the prison also impacted on the ability of the 1820s radicals to emulate the sociability and conviviality of the earlier radical imprisonments. During the 1790s, and during Cobbett's and Hobhouse's confinements, the entry of visitors to the state-side apartments allowed radicals to re-create the familiar radical spaces of the tavern, the coffee house or the dining room of the radical home. Despite the restrictions on visitors to the prison, the 1820s radicals made the most of their situation to ensure their continuing participation in important radical events. One episode in the prison in 1826 speaks volumes of the determination to maintain a radical collective and a connection with radical culture outside the prison.

In a scene that evokes the image of radical sociability depicted by Newton in his *Soulagement* print more than 30 years earlier, on the afternoon of 29 January 1826, the four remaining shopmen, Perry, Hassell, Clarke and Campion, all gathered in their state-side apartment to commemorate the birth of radical ideologue and icon Thomas Paine (a birth date serendipitously shared by Perry).¹²² Belting out tunes with titles such as *The Bravest of the Brave* and *Lovely Woman Governs All*, the men reported that the gathering provided opportunity for much 'hilarity' and revelry. Assembling their own makeshift tavern, they sat down to an 'excellent leg of mutton' with all the 'expected trimmings', filled their tankards with wine at the end of each rendition and raised their cups in earnest to toast 'the immortal memory of Thomas Paine', 'Richard Carlile' and 'The Female Republicans'. In defiance of their incarceration, they reserved a toast for their adversaries: 'May our example teach the Government that Imprisonment for opinions is useless.' In a rare public avowal of the much maligned prison authorities, the men acknowledged that the prison Governor had been kind enough in this instance 'to allow us to remain together until eight o'clock, instead of being locked up as usual, at this season of the year, at five'.¹²³

The anniversary of Paine's birth had become an auspicious day for the radical community in Britain. As the four men celebrated in Newgate, 75 'respectable, well dressed' radicals also met in honour of Paine's birth at the City of London tavern, where a 'half-a-guinea ticket' provided dinner, dessert and wine.¹²⁴ Mirroring events in Newgate prison that afternoon, the London tavern assembly

121 *Republican*, 15 April 1825.

122 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 March 1826.

123 *Ibid.*

124 *Republican*, 3 February 1826.

raised their glasses to honour the four men—‘freedom of mind’s undaunted champions’.¹²⁵ Clearly, the incarceration of Perry, Hassell, Clark and Campion was to prove no impediment to their own participation in this important radical community event. The men were as happy, they reported, as ‘our friends could possibly be at the London Tavern, or elsewhere’.¹²⁶

The observance of ceremonies such as the birth of Thomas Paine in 1826 fostered radical camaraderie and a sense of fraternity within the prison, and a shared collective identity both with earlier generations of radical prisoners and with the radical community beyond the prison walls. Like the early generation of radical prisoners, they defied their containment within the prison space by re-creating familiar radical spaces such as the tavern. Certainly, their festivities were more solitary affairs than previous radical gatherings in the prison; however, the ability of radicals to subvert the prison regime and routine and maintain contact across time and space with the wider radical community attests to the vitality and adaptability of the new generation of plebeian radicals.

The defiance with which radicals faced imprisonment, and the concessions they fought hard for and won, however, should not obscure the suffering that undoubtedly came with imprisonment. Separation from family inflicted deep emotional and financial hardship not only on those confined, but on families who were left without a breadwinner. Thomas Ryley Perry’s petition to the House of Commons for a reprieve for his situation noted the ‘state of extreme distress’ his imprisonment had caused his wife and two infant children.¹²⁷ Despite the claim by the songsters of 1826 that the afternoon provided much hilarity, at times it also took on a particularly sombre tone. One tune, a parody on the poem *A Soldiers Dream*, spoke of ‘thoughts from my prison-house’ wandering back to the ‘sweet home’ where

My little-ones kiss’d me a thousand times o’er
And my wife sobb’d aloud in the fullness of heart.
Stay, stay, with us Father, you must not return
And fain was the thrice happy parent to stay,
But sorrow came back with the coming of morn,
When the heart-cheering vision had melted away.¹²⁸

Doubtlessly, the martyrdom, radical credentials and educative possibilities of prison came at a high price for many radical prisoners.

125 *Republican*, 24 February 1826.

126 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 March 1826.

127 *Republican*, 3 June 1825. On Perry, radical and freethinker, see Joel Wiener, ‘Perry, Thomas Ryley’, *BDMBR*, pp. 372–3.

128 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 March 1826. The editors noted that the song was a ‘parody on Campbell’s “Soldiers Dream”’.

The *Newgate Monthly Magazine* was to be the last gasp of radical expression from Newgate prison. The remaining men—Clarke, Perry and Campion—were removed from Newgate on 25 July 1826 to the Compter, where they, like Boyle three years before them, reported more comfortable conditions.¹²⁹ Most importantly, friends were admitted each day between noon and 2 pm, and on Sundays could remain until four in the afternoon. In what Gilmartin refers to as an 'appropriate irony', their departure from Newgate saw the *Newgate Monthly Magazine* cease production.¹³⁰ This appears less ironic when the production of the magazine is viewed as an integral part of their prison resistance and assertion of a political identity rather than the criminal identity afforded by the prison space.

Although the men initially reassured their readers that relocation to another prison would simply mean a new title—the *Compter Magazine*—they finally conceded that to continue with a third volume 'would be inconvenient', for before 'twelve more numbers could be published we may be very widely dispersed'.¹³¹ In the end, the demise of the magazine could also have been due to financial considerations. The men had complained that their own financial support through subscriptions had begun to dwindle and so too, perhaps, had interest in the publication. Carlile, never one to be beaten, claimed that the last edition of the magazine was necessitated by the fact the men had 'finished their education'.¹³²

The radical relationship with Newgate, from the 1790s through to the 1820s, suggests that it was a symbiotic and dialectal one. Newgate both shaped and was shaped by its radical inhabitants. The ability of radicals in the 1820s to adapt to the encroaching impact of prison reform by forging a radical identity and retaining a voice in the public sphere remains an enduring link between two generations of radical prisoners. From the production of the *Newgate Monthly Magazine* to the fight to secure better conditions within the prison; from the opportunities for self-improvement to the revelries of January 1826—these all attest to the vitality and tenacity of radical culture, even faced with the hardship and liminality of the prison space.

As well as highlighting the need for change in older prisons such as Newgate, the rigorous drive for prison reform also resulted in the proliferation of new, purpose-built prisons on the English landscape. During the early nineteenth century, magistrates could take advantage of a greater selection of destinations for those convicted of political and religious offences. Radical prisoners could now be scattered around the metropolis and beyond—from Newgate

129 *Republican*, 26 July 1826.

130 Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, p. 90.

131 *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 August 1826.

132 *Republican*, 20 January 1826.

to the Compter, from Coldbath Fields to Dorchester. The new prison spaces differed markedly to Newgate; they were designed and built specifically to accommodate the new ideals of separation and solitary confinement. The new spatial arrangements presented a fresh challenge for radical culture; how radical prisoners incarcerated in one such prison, the House of Correction at Coldbath Fields, responded to this challenge is examined in the following chapter.