11

Consecrate and Desecrate

In a secluded chamber deep within the Conciergerie, in Paris, away from the heavy traffic of tourists, is a serene space called the Girondins' Chapel. Its vaulted ceilings are contoured by shafts of light entering through elevated portals. The chapel is located on the very site of the king's medieval oratory—a "place of prayer" (Conciergerie, n.d.). Its sacred ambience is maintained by honoring the 21 Girondins who feasted there prior to their execution on October 30, 1793. A large portrait of the Girondins performs memory and activates a sense of tragedy in the face of the Reign of Terror then sweeping France. The Girondins, a radical group that supported the overthrow of the monarchy but denounced the spiraling violence, were not spared that carnage. A stark painting by Julien-Leopold Boilly, titled "Banquet of the Girondins" (1847), adds historical context to the chapel. Interestingly, the event captured on canvas is remembered through the many moods of the Girondins. At the center is a small dining table at which a few Girondins are sharing a final intellectual soirée; in the background, others appear a bit more boisterous. Even with all that activity, the viewer fixes on a corpse covered in a white sheet, where only a single mourner is conveying grief. The content of the painting is explained in a caption labeled "Memory of the Girondins." It informs viewers that a few hours earlier the Revolutionary Tribunal had condemned the Girondins, including Brissot, Vergniaud, and Gensonne. "According to tradition, they gathered together on their last night for a fraternal banquet, probably in the prison chapel, while one of them, Dufriche-Valaze, lay dead after committing suicide by plunging a stiletto in his heart."

In the performance of memory, the sacred occupies a unique stage where acts of consecration ritualistically unfold, producing affirmative gestures that bond certain people together. Communal identities are thus maintained in ways that reinforce ethnic, religious, and even political heritage. The sacred, especially from a Durkheimian perspective, is a potent force that not only evokes awe but also triggers countervailing impulses that defile and pollute. Those forms of desecration

are as subjective as consecration itself, contributing to cultures that are often contested (Welch, 2000). In this chapter, those polarities of remembrance are explored so as to detect symbolic harmony as well as dissonance. In an examination of collective memory in Ireland—North and South—during the Troubles, critical attention is turned to the many expressions of consecration vis-à-vis desecration. The sanctity of death and that of sacrifice are among the socio-religious concepts to be inspected, largely because they are grounded in the transformed sites of political imprisonment. Along the way, the phenomena surrounding hunger strikes are surveyed due to their cultural production of martyrdom. More abstractly, bodily sacrifice serves to mobilize the hunger striker as a mediator between the worlds of the sacred and the profane (Hubert and Mauss, [1898]1981; Smith, 2008).

Discussion of consecration and desecration extends to the southern cone of Latin America, where similar socio-religious symbolism is manifest at memorial sites in Buenos Aires, Santiago, Montevideo, and Asunción. There, technological forces are considered as they interact with the sacred and the profane. The death flights carried out by the Argentine military, for instance, demonstrate the use of technological procedures aimed at sanitizing crimes against humanity. As described in previous chapters, before being murdered, victims were ritualistically sedated so as to cleanse their unholy death and manage the pollution caused by genocide. Other insignias represent the gross desecration of victims, such as mass graves simply marked "N.N."—no names. In Santiago, certain sites and symbols remind visitors of enduring tensions in a post-dictatorship society, typically by honoring the memory of Allende while ridiculing the legacy of Pinochet. Similar performances have unfolded in Montevideo and Asunción, with special reverence for the "student martyrs" killed by police and soldiers during political protests. As noted in previous chapters, many former detention, torture, and extermination centers in the southern cone underwent purification ceremonies so that in their afterlives they could properly function as memorial sites and metaphors for human rights.

SANCTITY OF DEATH AND IRISH REPUBLICANISM

As noted earlier, memory of political imprisonment is deeply embedded in Irish history, especially during both periods of conflict known as the Troubles. Adding to the cultural landscape, narratives of those events often evoke socio-religious meaning by defining Irish Republicanism in terms of sacrifice and martyrdom. From a Durkheimian perspective, those emotive impulses activate what can be described as the sanctity of death, thus buttressing demands for proper memorialization following the tragic loss of life (Welch, 2016a). Robert Hertz, an early Durkheimian scholar, delved into that phenomenon, declaring that "death has a specific meaning for the social consciousness; it is the object of a collective representation" ([1960]2009: 28). Burial rites, to be sure, figure prominently in

Irish culture, and those rituals are powerful expressions of shared values among certain people.

Before embarking on an interpretation of the sites and symbols that project the sanctity of death, some conceptual overtures are in order. An important starting point is Emile Durkheim ([1915]2008) and the Année sociologique, an intellectual group that included the young pioneering theorists Marcel Mauss and Robert Hertz (Guyer, 2014). Together, those luminaries of the early French sociological school set out to "discover the origin of social solidarity in a modern and secular way by departing from traditional, theological explanations" (Kwon, 2014: 123; see Durkheim and Mauss, [1903]1963; Riley, 1999). Despite their shared perspectives on various socio-religious phenomena, they diverged in important ways. For instance, Durkheim focused on the creation and maintenance of social solidarity (see Smith and Alexander, 2005). By contrast, Hertz assumed "the task of studying the responses of society to breaches in that solidarity" (Hertz, [1988]1994: 18). In deciphering a Troubled Ireland, it is important to bear in mind that violations of the sanctity of death not only create resistance but also, in doing so, perpetuate conflict driven by unresolved injustices.

A promising scholar—and pupil of Durkheim—Hertz was among the casualties of the First World War. At the age of 33, he was killed leading his military unit in an attack on Marcheville. Hertz's scholarly legacy survives through the translation of *Death and the Right Hand* (1960]2009). That volume consists of two separate works. For our purposes, focus remains on the first essay, "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death" (1907). Hertz begins by reminding us that "we all believe we know what death is because it is a familiar event and one that arouses intense emotion" (2009: 27). Perhaps hinting at the sanctity of death, he goes on to observe that "the body of the deceased is not regarded like the carcass of some animal: specific care must be given to it and a correct burial; not merely for reasons of hygiene but out of moral obligation" (2009: 27). Toward that end, Hertz concludes that the final ceremony serves several social—and spiritual—functions. It provides a proper burial to the remains of the deceased so as to grant peace to the soul. The final ritual liberates the living from their obligations of mourning and allows them to rejoin "communion with society" (2009: 62).

Returning to the realm of a troubled Ireland, we remain mindful of the meaning of the sanctity of death along with community efforts to restore its violations. The Collins Barracks Museum in Dublin serves as a place of learning about different aspects of the Irish struggle, including hunger strikes. Curators are quick to point to a tradition of hunger striking by commemorating Thomas Ashe, who died on a hunger strike in 1917. Despite some concessions, the protests continued. In 1920, 60 Irish prisoners went on a hunger strike. That year, Terence MacSwiney died at the Brixton jail (England) after 74 days on a hunger strike, an event that attracted international attention to the plight of Irish prisoners of war. A vintage photograph documents an act of solidarity with the hunger strikers at Mountjoy

prison in 1921. Among the four women protesting outside the prison gates was Charlotte Despard, a socialist, Republican activist, and suffragist. It should be noted that the Suffragettes, who themselves used hunger strikes to protest their imprisonment, inspired the Irish Republican movement to maximize that form of resistance (Grant, 2019; Murphy, 2014).

Various forms of prisoner resistance at the Maze (e.g., blanket protest, dirty protest) culminated into the 1981 hunger strike, which thrust Bobby Sands into the center of a wider narrative on martyrdom. The Irish Republican History Museum goes to great lengths to honor that sacrifice by quoting Sands: "Greater love hath no man that this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (see Sands, 1998; Beresford, 1987). A higher order of nationalism surrounds the memory of the hunger strikers. Political posters are decorated with renderings of the Irish flag alongside the list of five demands:

1) No prison uniform
2) No prison work
3) Free association
4) Visits, letters, parcels, and recreational facilities
5) Full remission

That posting pleads "Don't Let Them Die!" and features an illustration of a woman prisoner with her fist raised in defiance. Martyrdom is conveyed not only in written language but also in visual terms. Sands is often presented as a Christ-like figure: as a prisoner dying on a crucifix. Many posters blend the fine details of Catholic and paramilitary protocol. One poster depicts a funeral procession in which the casket, covered in the Irish tricolor flag, is carried through the streets by men in civilian clothes. Escorting them is an IRA volunteer dressed in a black turtleneck sweater, black gloves, beret, and shades. The caption draws historical lines between the recent Troubles and an earlier era by quoting 1916 rebel leader, P. H. Pearse: "They shall be spoken of among their people and generations shall call them blessed." To commemorate the fallen, portraits of hunger strikers identified by name arranged around the border of the artwork. The paramilitary tradition known as the "firing party" appears in several photographs. During that ceremony, which is often performed at public funerals, three soldiers in unison each fire three shots aimed over the casket. The ritual can be traced back to the European dynastic wars, when battles were suspended to bury the dead. That "three volley salute" marks the continuation of fighting and struggle (see Moloney, 2007).

Perhaps the most honored "firing party" was the one performed at the funeral of Bobby Sands. A poster brings the viewer into close range as three IRA commanders position their rifles. A photograph of Sands contains his words: "I refuse to change to suit the people who oppress, torture, and imprison me, who wish to dehumanise me. . . . I have the spirit of freedom which cannot be quenched by even the most horrendous treatment. Of course, I can be murdered, but I

remain what I am—a political prisoner of war" (see Sands, 1998). His death was mourned worldwide. More than 100,000 attendees lined the funeral route to the cemetery, his final resting place. Many illustrations in the archive display other symbols of Irish Catholicism, including the Celtic Cross and the even more politically charged the Easter Lily. Members of the Official IRA have been nicknamed the "Stickies" because their supporters are known to "stick Easter lilies on their lapels" to commemorate the Easter Rising of 1916 (P. Taylor, 1997: 369). Altogether those sacred rituals and venerated objects reflect the sanctity of death in ways that enhance solidarity.

In *An Archaeology of the Troubles: The Dark Heritage of Long Kesh/Maze Prison*, Laura McAtackney offers a rare study of the remains of the H Blocks that were eventually demolished, including documents (e.g., secret prisoner communications), artifacts (e.g., a plastic cup holding a small incendiary device), and landscapes (e.g., murals). Having been transformed from their use-value to their signifying-value, those objects serve to narrate the Irish heritage of political imprisonment. Her description of this "highly mythologized site" provides an avenue for theorizing about culture, identity, and power. McAtackney shares her material and conceptual observations of the "death bed" of Bobby Sands that is on display at McCorley's Club in Belfast. Surrounded by emblems of martyrdom, the bed draws a degree of respect that is "palpable," revealing "how the emotive quality of place can transcend its physical structures" (2014: 270). McAtackney concedes that in all probability, that particular bed is not the actual one in which Sands died. But that doesn't really matter since its immense symbolism—it is a touchstone of Irish Republican culture—has already been established for those who wish to revere it (Graham and McDowell, 2007; Welch, 2016b).

Martyrdom by way of a hunger strike carries enormous sociological significance. Returning to lessons from Durkheimian thought, there is much to learn from a sharper interpretation of sacrifice. From that perspective, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss extract the underlying meaning of sacrifice, which "consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and profane worlds through the mediation of the victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of ceremony is destroyed" ([1898]1981: 97; see also Welch, 2006). The sacrifice imparts to the victim a power that is exercised through a ritual. In the case of a hunger strike, the victim is a conduit for passing on a sacred element of the religious world to the profane world, or vice versa. The direction of that current is indifferent to the victim because the victim is merely an intermediary. A hunger strike is a rite that puts into motion an entire complex of sacred entities; the sacrifice is part of a wider system of consecration.

Ostensibly, both sacrifice and hunger strikes involve destruction. Hubert and Mauss theorize: "If the religious forces are the very principle of the forces of life, they are themselves of such a nature that contact with them is a fearful thing for the ordinary man. Above all, when they reach a certain level of intensity, they

cannot be concentrated in a profane object without destroying it" ([1898]1981: 98; see also Smith, 2008: 165–66). Situated between those powers is the intermediary, and as the chosen victim, it "penetrates into a perilous domain of sacrifice, it dies there, and indeed it is there in order to die" ([1898]1981: 98). In the case of a hunger strike, the ritual is not simply symbolic of a partisan struggle. It is a conduit that unites the sacred and profane, and in doing so, it bonds the prisoner's immediate plight to a mythological space involving an imagined political identity. And that is why death by hunger has so much meaning for believers in the Irish Republican cause. That powerful rite—transmitted through a martyr—connects the historical markers between the past and the present as well as the future.

THE SACRED AND PROFANE IN THE SOUTHERN CONE

Elaborating further on a sociology of culture, Smith (2008) sorts out the nuances of technology, particularly as they make contact with the sacred and the profane. Technology is used to cleanse certain forms of death—such as executions—in ways that "remove semantic irregularities and indignities" (142). By doing so, it produces a message about purification, civilization, and the sacred dignity of the person, even as the body is destroyed. Technology also "transforms into a totem and signifier in a complex semiotic universe of sacred and profane iconography" (142). The death flights that were carried out by the Argentine dictatorship have profound Durkheimian import. Prior to their execution, victims were subjected to a technological ritual in which they were injected with a sedative. That protocol conforms to Smith's observations that "judicial death, like all sacrifice, seems to require special cultural preparations" so as to manage pollution (2008: 153). It is crucial to note that the secret procedure occurred in the basement of ESMA, a restricted area separated from other sectors of the compound. Smith similarly notes that executions take place in a designated "death house" because "the sacred is dangerous and so needs to be segregated from the profane or everyday" (153; see also Johnson, 1990).

The modern technology of execution is designed to avoid indicators of chaos, such as an unruly body. For instance, in the US, lethal injection was introduced to replace the grisly product of the electric chair. Lethal injection, with all its medical pretense, is understood to be a "defensive reaction to the semiotic excess of the electric chair, working not so much to remove cruelty as to limit production of signs and disorder and degradation" (Smith, 2008: 166). Far from being a purely sanitized form of extermination, death flights breached the hallowed principle of violating the body since it retained sacred powers. Recall the words that Lieutenant Aztiz—the "Blond Angel of Death"—used to describe the death flights in which victims were thrown from aircraft into an ocean that was hard as a "steel plate," thereby breaking their necks (Graziano, 1992). Many of those mutilated bodies washed ashore, revealing more warnings of disorder and pollution that, as Smith contends, are not easily regulated and contained (see Douglas, 1966).

FIGURE 23. "Sculpture of Pablo." At the Memorial Park in Buenos Aires, Claudia Fontes installed her work "Reconstruction of the Portrait of Pablo Miguez" just off the waterfront. © retrowelch 2022.

In Buenos Aires, El Parque de la Memoria serves as a monument to the victims of state terrorism. The site, along the Rio de la Plata, was selected so that visitors could make visual contact with the channel of water where many of the disappeared met their fate. The river was used by the dictatorship to harshly dispose of its victims, yet it maintains qualities that are potentially tranquil and purifying. Thus, the location is remarkably suitable for memorialization, serving as it does as an open-air gallery to commemorate human rights. The park's vast landscape is contoured with imposing art installations. Among them is a piece by Claudia Fontes, who was commissioned to deliver a "Reconstruction of the Portrait of Pablo Miguez." The sculpture is placed in the river but close enough to be viewed from the waterfront. Its shape "articulates the concepts of appearance/disappearance and is based on the portrait of an adolescent who was disappeared when he was only 14 years old. The work was inspired by the case of Pablo Miguez, who, if he were still alive today, would be the same age as the artist" (Monumento a las Victimas del Terrorismo de Estado: Parque de la Memoria, n.d.; figure 23).

Nearby another artist has posted a sign with simple message—"N.N."—referring to the mass graves of victims who were buried with "no names." The caption of that piece contemplates the inhumanity and indignity of what has been discussed previously as breaching the sanctity of death. That desecration, however, is

often countered by performances of consecration. Consider the site at Iglesia Santa Cruz. The courtyard of that church hosts a memorial to those who "struggled to find their loved during the state terror (1976–1983)." Twelve victims are remembered with headstones bearing their names; they include Leonie Duquet and Alice Domon, the French nuns murdered by death flights. Another recognizable name, Azucena Villaflor, appears as it does at so many memorials around the city. Villaflor was a founder of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the activist group that confronted the military dictatorship over the disappearances of their children. Villaflor was also the victim of a death flight, but in her case, her bodily remains were recovered. Her ashes were deposited in the Pyramid of the Plaza de Mayo, and a street in Buenos Aires has been named in her honor (Bosco, 2006).

Another former detention center, known as Club Atletico, is dedicated to the "Project for the Recovery of Memory." Recovery here refers not only to emotional and psychological healing but also to the physical unearthing of the site. The Atletico offers both a memorial space and a collection of objects, but principally it is an excavation site where investigators continue to search for evidence of political violence. In its previous life, the Atletico served as an administrative unit for the federal police in the San Telmo neighborhood of Buenos Aires. From February to December 1977, the basement was used for detention. The building was then demolished for the construction of a major motorway. Through the rubble, the original floor could be seen from the street. Based on this, survivors testified that they were certain they had been held at the Atletico because even though they had been blindfolded while confined there, they could see the checkerboard floor below them. Human rights organizations descended on the property to protect it from further destruction. Once it was realized that the Atletico held valuable clues about its role as a detention center, it was transformed into an active archaeological recovery site.

The Atletico is more than an excavation site where its life as a clandestine center is being uncovered; as one poster explains, it is also a symbol of the pursuit of truth. The site reaches deep below the surface beyond view, but it is accompanied by an enormous silhouette of a victim that is illuminated throughout the night. That artwork joins a billboard displaying photographs of those who were detained—and were disappeared—at the Atletico (see Longoni and Bruzzone, 2008). Those cultural representations of the victims make the Atletico "a spontaneous call to memory at a symbolically 'loaded' location . . . assuming a life of its own, becoming a space for informal memorials," such as graffiti, poems, and drawings (Gates-Madsen, 2011). Adding even greater primordial sacred importance to the site, a totem has been installed on one of the columns. Artists have shaped sculptures of twisted—unruly—bodies of blindfolded and handcuffed detainees, thereby projecting a tense aura where the sacred and profane collide.

Themes of consecration and desecration also abound today in Santiago. The most formal expression of commemoration is Cementario General, where Chile's

most revered historical figures are buried, most notably Salvador Allende. His tomb, a painful reminder of the nation's tumultuous past, is joined by a memorial to those civilians who were detained, disappeared, and executed by Pinochet's forces. Other public sites possess emotive power because of the victims who were actually murdered on the premises. At the National Stadium, candles burn in memory of Americans Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi as well as countless others. In the stadium's concourse, images of desecration are displayed, such as a photograph of a soldier burning books amid the coup. A closer look reveals "Cuba" in the title, perhaps a sign of danger and disorder from the standpoint of Pinochet, who was preoccupied with the threat of Marxist ideology. With much less subtlety, pictures show a smoldering La Moneda after it was repeatedly bombed by fighter jets on September 11, 1973. The desecration of the seat of executive government is more than emblematic of the destruction of Allende's presidency; it also portends the coming dictatorship. Those dramatic events are chronicled at Museo Histórico Nacional. The collection contains Allende's broken glasses, which have been transformed from use-value to signifying-value. Nearby, a series of international newspapers are posted to amplify the global significance of the coup. London's *Observer* printed the headline "Champagne and death in Santiago." Revealingly, that article is not the most prominent story on its front page. It is overshadowed by a more ominous danger: "'Beware,' IRA warns Heath" (a reference to the British prime minister at the time). Companion articles echo that danger: "UDA fears for chief" (a reference to the Loyalist paramilitary, the Ulster Defence Association, targeted by the IRA in Northern Ireland) and "Police warn of new blasts" (in reference to an expanding IRA bombing campaign).

In Santiago, and in other Chilean cities, the Pinochet regime is regularly scorned in popular culture. At Bar Radicales, patrons are immersed in a cultural milieu of dense ridicule as the image and memory of Pinochet is desecrated with dark humor. Next to a bustling dining and drinking area stands a mock museum boasting the dubious achievements of Pinochet. Electric candles illuminate a parlor featuring a "wanted poster" of Pinochet. The exhibit's curators joke about an imaginary tour of Cementario General, as it is common knowledge that then-President Bachelet denied Pinochet a state funeral (see Joignant, 2013). In another salon of the sprawling Bar Radicales, a portrait engages in satirical veneration by depicting Bachelet as "Santa Gladys: Ruega por Nosotros" ("Saint Gladys: Pray for Us"; see Collins, Hite, and Joignant, 2013).

Elsewhere in Santiago, parodies of Pinochet abound at another drinking establishment known simply as The Clinic. The lively night spot first opened under the name The London Clinic, alluding to the site where Pinochet was arrested while undergoing medical treatment. Compared to Bar Radicales, The Clinic seems edgier. A life-size wooden panel is painted showing Pinochet dressed in his signature Prussian cape—often mocked as "Darth Vader" (Oquendo-Villar, 2011: 274). A thick noose is wrapped around his neck, and various crimes are listed under his

feet: theft, kidnapping, assassination, and genocide. In contrast to modern forms of execution, such as lethal injection, which are aimed at concealing and managing bodily mutilation, the mock hanging of Pinochet resembles the crass execution of common criminals deprived of dignity and the sanctity of death. As a bookend to that narrative, a framed photograph of lawyer Baltasar Garzón is posted across the barroom—perhaps as an expression of gratitude, for it was he who filed Pinochet's arrest warrant (see Roht-Arriaza, 2005).

Museo de la Memoria, in Montevideo, exhibits distressing images and narratives of desecration during the dictatorship. Photographs show the interior of a ransacked church. Shattered pews and broken stained glass are evidence of the violent disorder inflicted on a venerated space of worship by the military, which viewed religious groups as dangerously subversive. Similarly, universities—spaces for enlightenment—were searched and placed under intense surveillance. Students organized and resisted the military's encroachment on their campus. In 1968, police stormed a protest and injured student Liber Arce, who died two days later at the age of 28. "On the 14th of August a big crowd accompanied the funeral procession walking to the Buceo Cemetery. The crowd was expressing indignation and disgust over this assassination. From the following year and until today the anniversary of Liber Arce's death constitutes a symbolic date in memory of the 'student martyrs.'"

Desecration of a different sort seems to confirms Foucault's (1979) theory that the body is the ultimate material on which political agendas are inscribed (see Garland, 1990). A large news clipping from Montevideo shows a jarring photograph of Nazi swastikas carved into the legs of a young woman. The article explains that in 1962, Soledad Barrett Viedma was kidnapped by four men who threatened to kill her. They demanded that she shout "Viva Hitler" and "Death to Fidel [Castro]." Her attack compounded the plight of her family, who had fled to Uruguay to escape persecution by the Stroessner regime in Paraguay. Soledad's mutilated body is a physical *and* symbolic reminder of the disorder within ideological spheres that rely on repression to establish a certain form of order that—ironically—manifests itself as violence (see figure 24).

The city of Asunción, in 1537, was named by the Spanish conquistador Juan de Ayolas in honor of Our Lady Saint Mary of the Assumption. The Feast of the Assumption commemorates Mary as her body ascends to heaven, departing from her earthly life. At Museo de las Memorias, an artwork titled "The Tree of Life" is accompanied by a photograph of Pope John Paul II, who performed a purifying ceremony for the Paraguayan people in 1988. The following year, the brutal dictatorship came to an end. Stroessner is remembered, according to a separate placard, for his persecution of Catholic priests, who had been maligned as "subversives and communists" (see Mora, 1998). Strangely situated next to the Presidential Palace is Plaza de los Desaparecidos, where twisted sculptures capture the body in pain (see Scarry, 1995). The site's close proximity to the palace creates cultural tension between perpetrators and victims, hinting at binary themes of danger and purity.


INFORMACION

EPOCA — Sábado 7 de Julio

BRUTAL ATENTADO NAZI CONTRA UNA JOVEN

Le Graban Dos Cruces Gamadas en las Piernas

Soledad Barret es la Víctima de los Salvajes

LA NOCHE ANTERIOR

Soledad Barrett Viedma (1945-1973)

El 9 de julio de 1962 cuatro hombres secuestraron a Soledad al salir de su trabajo, en Montevideo. La arrastraron hasta un auto y, amenazándola de muerte, quisieron obligarla a que gritara Viva Hitler y muera Fidel. Como se negó, le tajearon dos svásticas en los muslos.
Tenía 17 años y pertenecía a una familia paraguaya llegada a Uruguay huyendo de la

FIGURE 24. "Soledad and Swastikas." On display at the Museo de la Memoria in Montevideo is a photograph appearing in a newspaper article on the attack of Soledad Barrett Viedma, whose legs were disfigured with swastikas. © retrowelch 2022.

Down the avenue, another memorial site narrates the difficult transition toward democracy in the 1990s. The Monument to the Marzo Paraguayo stands amid a checkerboard of black-and-white tiles at the foot of Congress. Just before Easter, in 1999, students and pro-democracy protesters clashed with the "Oviedistas," who riddled the crowd with powerful fireworks and sniper fire. To defend themselves, the demonstrators pulled up the tiles, hurling them at their attackers. The violence escalated until eight were killed and more than 700 wounded, 90 by bullets. A makeshift memorial is devoted to the victims, who "gave their lives to make us free . . . Justice! Liberty! Democracy!"

Those events, known as the Marzo Paraguayo (Paraguayan March), can be understood as a youth movement aimed at ridding society of the persistent residue of the dictatorship. At the center of the controversy is General Lino Oviedo, who was convicted of planning a coup in 1996 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. That same year, a fanatic named Tomas Velazquez staged a hunger strike to draw attention to what he described as the political persecution of Oviedo. The public spectacle, in front of the Supreme Court, culminated in Velazquez being bound and then hoisted onto a large wooden cross. He allowed his fellow protesters to drive nails through his palms in an act of crucifixion (BBC, 1996). The cultural significance of crucifixion ought not be overlooked. James Q. Whitman points out

the symbolic value of the cross has carried throughout Christianity because "crucifixion was the most degrading low-status punishment inflicted by the Romans, and the crucifixion of Christ, like the wearing of the cross by individual Christians, was long remembered as a fundamental symbol of a Christian uneasiness about status. It drew its power precisely from the revulsion created by low-status punishment. Embracing low-status punishment was a shocking act" (2003: 29). Other supporters, the "Oviedistas," intensified their violence during the riots of the Marzo Paraguayo, and on March 23, 1999, Luis Maria Argana, the country's vice president and a political rival of Oviedo, was assassinated. Soon after, Pablo Vera Esteche was arrested for the murder of Argana. In his defense he testified that he and two other gunmen had been paid US$300,000, authorized by Ovieda. The court sentenced Vera Esteche to a 20-year prison term (*Miami Herald*, 1999).

Returning to Buenos Aires, stark symbolism endures along lines of consecration and desecration. In what remains as an unresolved mystery, the hands of controversial President Juan Perón were sawed off his corpse as it lay in the family tomb. In 1987, burglars broke into the crypt—a sacred space—and mutilated the body. Adding further allegory to the act of desecration, Perón's military cap, ceremonial sword, and a poem by his last wife, Isabel, were also stolen. An anonymous ransom letter was sent to the Peronist Justicialist Party demanding $8 million. The ransom was rebuffed, and several suspects were arrested but released after a judge determined they had no involvement in the crime (Christian, 1987). In *Death, Dismemberment, and Memory: Body Politics in Latin America*, anthropologist Rosana Guber contends that in Argentine society, Perón's missing hands not only are symbolic of his political power but also arouse anxiety over a post-dictatorship culture (Johnson, 2004: 251–53). Indeed, central to the haunting aura of a dismembered cadaver is the power of the sacred as it intersects with danger and disorder (Welch, 2016a; Verdery, 1999).

CONCLUSION

In the opening passage of this chapter, the cultural significance of the Girondins' Chapel was carefully considered. As a place of worship, its sacredness is enhanced by being spatially partitioned from the main flow of tourist circulation at the Conciergerie. Beyond the visual narrative contained in Julien-Leopold Boilly's painting "Banquet of the Girondins" (1847), the ultimate fate of the Girondins is remembered through forms of consecration as well as desecration. On October 31, 1793, the day after the banquet, the Girondins were summarily executed. "On the scaffold, Sanson took just thirty-six minutes to cut twenty-two heads, and was remarkably pleased at this further evidence of the efficiency of the *rasior national*" (Schama, 1990: 804–5). Adding a surreal touch to the spectacle, the prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, apparently miffed that Dufriche-Valaze had taken his own life, demanded that his cadaver also be guillotined—thus, defiled. Schama observes

that "though there was something like an epidemic of suicides among fallen revolutionaries, the Girondins seem to have been especially susceptible to the poetry of self-destruction" (1990: 804). In 1795, the memory of the Girondins was honored in a special *fete* for the "martyrs of liberty" (Sarmiento, 2005: 274). It is worth noting that inside the Girondins' Chapel, those themes of martyrdom echo through a parallel painting of Christ's crucifixion. French culture retains the memory of the Girondins as victims of the Terror in the form of a monument unveiled in Bordeaux in 1902.

The sacred and the profane, and the sanctity of death and sacrifice, figure prominently in the sites and symbols of political imprisonment. In the southern cone of Latin America, memorials sanctify the very places where atrocities occurred. Before those afterlives could be established, however, purifying ceremonies had to cleanse the space of its pollution. Turning the pages of history in those nations ravaged by dictatorships is not a smooth process. Resistance continues to manifest itself in many public demonstrations during which the names of the disappeared are slowly recited. In a call-and-response ritual, the audience chants in unison "Presente!"—a vocal affirmation that the victim is still with the community, at least metaphorically or spiritually. The performance of memory in Northern Ireland takes a different cultural tone. As noted, there are no state-sponsored memorials to civilians who died in the course of the Troubles in Belfast, and beyond. That cultural void demonstrates the extent to which the government deliberately avoids the legacy of the past and its thousands of fatalities (Graham and Whelan, 2007). To compensate for that official denial of memory, commemoration is expressed throughout special gardens, private exhibits, and personal collections.

Beyond the lack of state recognition of victimhood amid the Troubles, sites and symbols of political imprisonment continue to resonate in political exchanges between the Irish and the British. In 2014, a momentous occasion took place at the Crumlin Road Gaol (Belfast), where Queen Elizabeth toured the former prison, which has since been transformed into a history museum. Her Majesty was accompanied by then–First Minister Peter Robinson and then–Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. Both of those members of the power-sharing regime in Northern Ireland had served time at the Crum. McGuinness was confined there for more than a month in 1976 on a charge of IRA membership; a court later dismissed the case. Robinson was held at the Crum on several occasions during the 1980s for his involvement in protests against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. "In a landmark visit marking Northern Ireland's steady transition from a violent past to a peaceful future, the symbolic visit to the once forbidding Crumlin Gaol," the Queen announced: "Belfast should be an example to the world of people overcoming differences." Her concluding remarks at the photo-op served as a reminder of the ways in which the sacred is expressed in communal prose: "always remember that the thoughts and prayers of millions, including my own, are with you" (Carty and Young, 2014: 2–3; O'Connor, 2014).