

**'Doing Your Time Right': The Punishment and Resistance of
Women Political Prisoners in Northern Ireland, 1972-1995.**

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Abstract

The thesis is a case study in prison resistance. It examines the imprisonment and penal treatment of women who were confined for politically motivated offences in Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1995. It comprises an historical account of the main events in the women's prisons during the period, and establishes links between successive phases in the administration of political imprisonment and qualitative shifts in the character of prison regimes. The account also links the various punitive, administrative and gendered regulatory responses by the prison authorities to different strategies of collective organisation and resistance by women political prisoners. In modelling the cycle of punishment and resistance in terms of a dialectic of prison conflict, the thesis also argues that this relationship was grounded in prison regimes that combined both politicised and gendered correctional influences.

The theoretical basis of the thesis comes from the Foucauldian formulation that structures of power or authority produce the conditions by which they are resisted. However, the thesis also engages feminist analyses in order to explain how 'general' penal procedures take on different forms and meanings according to the disciplinary population upon whom they are practiced. This supports the argument that, just as prison punishment acquires specific forms when applied to different prisoner populations, punishment also forms the context in which prison resistance materialises. The practical and empirical basis of the thesis is grounded in the oral narratives of women former political prisoners, staff, and other relevant participants and observers.

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Introduction

Although one in twenty prisoners detained during the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland were women (Appendix One), the precise nature of the regimes in which they were confined and the distinctive dimensions of the political imprisonment of women, have only been infrequently addressed in the literature (D’arcy, 1981). Despite the centrality of events in the prisons to the momentum of violence and disorder at different junctures of the conflict, most political and sociological accounts have focused on male prisoners’ experiences (Beresford, 1987: O’Malley, 1990: Campbell et al., 1994: McKeown, 2001: McEvoy, 2001), and have yet to account for political imprisonment as implying other, systematic influences, such as the gendered organisation of penal punishment. As a consequence, the political roles and institutional experiences of women political prisoners in Armagh prison, and later, HMP Maghaberry, have been cast as being of incidental or separate significance to the scholarly analysis of political imprisonment in Northern Ireland.

This absence in academic accounts of women in Northern Ireland as political actors in the penal sphere has both directly and indirectly shaped the empirical and critical directions of this thesis. Directly, in that its objective is to establish a historical and theoretical account of the penal punishment and resistance of women who were imprisoned for politically motivated offences in Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1995. Indirectly, in that the development of regimes of political punishment in prisons for women implicates other structures of power, and thus takes the question of state imprisonment beyond being solely a matter of political legitimacy.

Therefore, there are three separate dimensions to the task: accounting for women as political prisoners; accounting for political prisoners as women in prison; and accounting for the gendered and political dimensions of penal punishment. With regard to the first question, the thesis gives an account of the penal punishment of women who were imprisoned for politically motivated offences between 1972 and 1995. From 1972, women political prisoners were engaged in a campaign to obtain formal recognition as political prisoners, and later, to retain that status after it was revoked in 1976. They sustained their efforts

through different phases of penal administration in Northern Ireland, as these were in turn shaped by prevailing political approaches to managing political violence. These were: 'reactive containment' from 1971 to 1975; 'criminalisation' from 1976 to 1982; and a putative period of 'normalisation', which operated from the 1980s to the negotiated release of political prisoners under the terms of the Belfast Agreement in 1998.

Situating women in the Northern Ireland prison campaign

In one sense, the central objectives of their prison campaign reflected many of the defining elements of political dissent in prisons more generally, notably an ideological opposition to the legitimacy and authority of the state, and a view of confinement as a form of political injustice. These views in turn supported the perception of imprisonment as the continuation of a larger struggle beyond the prison walls, and a subjective separateness from the authorising imperatives of penal discipline within them. In this broader context, the common characteristics of prison resistance by men and women in Northern Ireland centred on the refusal to be designated as 'criminals' and, by extension, to conform to 'ordinary' penal discipline. Furthermore, the longevity of their resistance to penal authority, by successive incoming prisoners, differed from the more familiar modes of reactive and often short-lived prison disturbances and mutinies. This very continuity posed questions about the relationships between vernacular, mundane resistance and the broader 'objective', 'political' ideologies and motivations of political prisoners. Secondly, it raised questions about the versatility and range of strategies that made up their alternative social system in prison, as it fostered an ethos of political separateness and internal cohesion, and emerged as a resistant counter-disciplinary structure to the official regime. The quotation in the title of the thesis, 'doing your time right', thus connotes both the political values and subjective consciousness of women as political prisoners.

But whereas the previous questions have centred on a general, indeed dominant, understanding of 'political imprisonment' as a set of circumstances in which women *may* be situated, and which *might* enable women to be legitimised, or legitimise themselves, as political actors, this study has also confronted the ambiguities that this very scenario

suggests. The examination of women as political prisoners has necessarily moved the terms of the argument beyond simple, restorative concerns – that is, reinstating the role of women in existing definitions of the Northern Ireland ‘prison struggle’ – to more fundamental epistemological and structural questions about ‘women in prison’ and ‘political imprisonment’ as less than coherent, taken-for-granted, categories. That women’s roles are contingent to dominant definitions of political struggle is not new to feminist theory (Edgerton, 1986: Pateman, 1989: Elshtain, 1995: Lentin, 1997). At the same time, the very ambiguity of women within the terms of ‘the political’ has engaged the argument, made frequently, but not solely by post-structuralist and feminist theorists, that institutionalised definitions of the political realm elude the normative conditions of their own making. The first problem then, becomes the manner in which ‘political imprisonment’, as a general category, is sustained by its own definitional norms and internal ‘coherence’, and, by implication, that those who challenge them, women political prisoners, transgress these meanings as fundamental forms of domination.

The social construction of female political prisoners: ‘difficult’ and ‘dangerous’ women

However, this thesis is not primarily engaged in accounting for the meaning of women’s resistance in terms of their exclusion from the political realm, nor with deconstructing gendered difference vis-à-vis existing norms of ‘political imprisonment’, although these questions pervade the specific concerns of the analysis. Rather, it is concerned with examining the set of conditions in which women political prisoners in Northern Ireland emerged as the subjects of penal punishment, and as gendered and politicised agents in the context of prison struggle. The consideration of women as politically motivated prisoners brings together various sociological debates about political imprisonment, the individual and social effects of incarceration, and gender as a complex signifier of punishment. These questions have hitherto been implicitly discrete areas of analysis in the criminological literature. Taken together, the range of scholarly concerns with gender, imprisonment and state punishment are used to explore the structural and discursive construction of women political prisoners as subjects of penal power. It is argued, moreover, that these concerns are inseparable when accounting for the intersecting gendered and political dimensions of

penal punishment, or examining the role of punitive difference in the development of regimes of political imprisonment.

Nevertheless, in turning from the question of 'women as political prisoners' to that of 'political prisoners as women', an equally vexatious set of questions arise. Women political prisoners are problematic within dominant definitions of women in prison, firstly in the area of classification, especially with respect to the unresolved question as to whether they are primarily treated, in practice, according to their gender or security-status. Secondly, they are viewed as presenting a particular set of challenges to administrative concerns with order and control, especially where they have resisted their integration into the economies of dependence and pastoral power which are intrinsic to prison regimes for women (O'Dwyer, 1986: Anderson and O'Dwyer, 1997: Davis, 1988: Churchill and Vander Wall, 1992: 388-399). Thirdly, they occupy a distinctive place in social and administrative discourses as 'dangerous and disorderly' women because serious or violent female offenders are discursively constructed as signifiers of gendered and social disorder (Brown, 1990: Hutter and Williams, 1981). The treatment of high-security female prisoners as an exceptional, problematic minority within the women's prison population also demonstrates the limitations of the administrative imagination and, in a broader sense, the pernicious influence of the mythology of the 'female grotesque' in criminological discourse (Lloyd, 1995: Theweleit, 1987).

In this context, feminist penology supports the argument that political prisoners *as women* are framed within a double jeopardy where there is a denial of gendered difference in normative constructions of penal punishment, while at the same time they are subject to specific correctional strategies which target them as transgressive, offending women (Carlen, 1998). Feminist perspectives also offer an insight into criminological apprehensions about 'violent women' in the criminal justice system (Worrall, 1990: Ballinger, 2000). An example is the prevalence of assumptions in the judicial and penal responses to serious or violent women offenders which hold that their lawbreaking renders them 'doubly-deviant, and doubly damned' (Lloyd, 1995), and in turn ensnares such women in a redoubled punitive bind as both high-risk and non-compliant prisoners (Shaw, 1995). As

feminist theorists argue, even the most complex female figure is reduced to the explanatory framework of an essential 'body' (Grosz, 1994), which facilitates the penal processes wherein their persons became sites for the inscription of various social controls, including the inculcation of normative, officially-endorsed forms of femininity (Dobash et al., 1986). In women's prisons, 'femininity' is also a manifestation of complex responses to the constraints of confinement, where access to alternative subject positions has to be negotiated as part of the penal economies of discipline, privileges and pastoral power (Bosworth, 1999). This thesis, therefore, traces how the penal regulation of women political prisoners was shaped by vigilance and deterrence against feminine 'disorder', compounded by the inevitable qualifying discourse that, as political prisoners, their 'dangerousness' positioned them as a special case in relation to conventional correctional influences. At the same time, it is not intended to rely on the categories 'women as political prisoners' or 'political prisoners as women' as mutually exclusive or intrinsic conditions. Rather, it is argued that the semantic differences in emphasis, and possible tensions between them inform some of the theoretical differences in analysing the penal punishment of such women.

However, if this thesis points to the dangers of laying claim to the unity of experience of women's political imprisonment, then it must acknowledge significant differences in the experience and motivations of women from the opposing loyalist and republican factions. At first blush, an analysis of the relatively 'defensive' and introspective organisational style of loyalist women appears to confirm a 'weaker' capacity for resistance when compared with republican women. The explanations lie in complex external socio-cultural influences, as well as structural penal constraints. These included their significantly smaller numbers both as combatants and prisoners, and their organisational disadvantages relative to their male loyalist peers and republican women. In addition, the 'secondariness' of the roles and status of loyalist women was intrinsically connected to the social and political insularity of their organisations, the differential attitude of loyalists to the state, and the socio-cultural restrictions on loyalist women's role in the political domain. These factors contributed, in turn, to their reluctance to participate in a study such as this one. Finally, while I was conscious that some work with women former prisoners was being conducted

by loyalist organisations, this material has yet to appear in the public domain. Consequently, although the thesis has sought to shed some light on this neglected aspect of women's and political imprisonment, it has revealed, in the process, the dearth of information about the prison experiences of loyalist women.

Resistance to the gendered and political dimensions of penal punishment

The third question with which this thesis is concerned relates to the intersecting gendered and political dimensions of penal punishment that constituted the conditions of the political imprisonment of women in Northern Ireland. As these elements of penal punishment - the correction of gendered transgression and the punishment of political dissent - have conventionally implied different correctional objectives, this case study is also concerned with the contexts and circumstances which brought them together. In the first instance, the development of an apparatus of political imprisonment for women is rooted in the historical circumstances of the conflict, the nature of the political emergency, and the responses to women's involvement in political activism and violence in the period. Therefore, the reactive character of penal policy in the early phase of the conflict can be attributed to the lack of administrative preparedness for the historically unprecedented number of incoming prisoners, and subsequent pressures on the penal infrastructure. However, another set of conditions is relevant to analysing the mutuality of gendered correctional influences and the evolution of penal regimes for women political prisoners. These are the ideological and structural factors which ensured that the primary emphasis on containment and deterrence, characteristic of political imprisonment, was reinforced by a highly normative ethos of gendered regulation and discipline.

If the gendered and political dimensions of imprisonment were mutually formative, they also illustrated the contradictory penal drives of penal punishment. The project of political imprisonment was itself constructed on an underlying contradiction between the stated official objective of fostering 'rehabilitation', with its assumptions of individual culpability and willingness to be reformed, and the realities of circumscribing a self-consciously collectivist and politicised prisoner group. In effect, however, the

language of rehabilitation and care was subordinated to the objectives of penal containment and the enforcement of disciplinary regimes for ensuring that they acknowledged the authority of the prison regime. But if conflict in the prisons was characterised by underlying contentions over legitimacy, additional nuances were brought into play by the particular set of constraints on women acting politically and collectively in penal disciplinary structures which have customarily emphasised highly individualised, gendered forms of correction. In highlighting the specific regulatory techniques and punitive mechanisms which made up penal regimes for women, this thesis argues that their campaign of prison resistance was shaped in response to different kinds of penal normalisation, and points to the multifaceted character of the dialectic of penal struggle as it was grounded in punitive difference.

An outline of the chapters

The main arguments of the thesis are: firstly, it outlines the key events in the development of penal regimes in relation to women politically motivated prisoners. Secondly, the analysis identifies women political prisoners as a distinctive prisoner population, constructed through overlapping discourses of political prescription, criminalisation and gendered punishment. Thirdly, the account traces the links between different stages of development in the collective organisation and resistance of women political prisoners, and successive phases of prison administrative and political approaches to managing political prisoners from 1972 until 1995. Fourthly, it establishes a framework for analysing these relationships in terms of a dialectic of penal punishment and resistance. This dialectical relationship was shaped within the intersecting material, ideological, political and gendered frameworks that both contributed to the forms and momentum of penal punishment and control, and established the conditions in which women political prisoners created opportunities to exercise agency and resistance. Finally, the prisoners' campaign is framed in terms of a continuum of different strategies of resistance as they were developed in relation to the various 'fields' of penal power.

The first two chapters offer an historical account of women's political imprisonment in

Northern Ireland. Chapter one traces the historical origins of political imprisonment in Ireland in the context of social disorder and political rebellion. It connects the emergence of political and administrative responses to the question of the political status of prisoners in Northern Ireland after 1971 to earlier historical precedents in Irish political history. The chapter then discusses the alternative administrative formulations of political status in the context of the expansion of the prison estate after the introduction of internment in 1971. However, it concludes that prison regimes for women occupied a peripheral place in the modernisation and expansion of the penal infrastructure. Chapter two examines the imprisonment of women female politically motivated prisoners from the internment of women in 1972 until 1995. It traces the development of distinctive punitive regimes for women political prisoners in the context of key conflicts in Armagh prison, where women were confined until 1986, and subsequently in Mourne House, HMP Maghaberry. Furthermore, it examines the significance of practices such as institutional violence and strip searching in the context of, and as a consequence of, the failure of other penal strategies for ensuring the disciplinary re-enclosure of female political prisoners.

Chapters three and four form the theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter three returns to the question of the anomalous and contradictory position which women political prisoners occupy in penal administrative structures by turning to their criminological construction. It argues that they have been problematically or inconclusively defined in the various sociological literatures on women's 'criminality', political imprisonment, prison sub-cultural theory and feminist theories of crime and penal punishment. As a consequence, the chapter explores those elements of feminist criminological literature which link the social and penal construction of the 'difficult' and 'dangerous' woman in prison with the development of penal techniques of control and regulation of 'exceptional' and dangerous prisoners. It concludes by modelling the regimes for women political prisoners as an ecology of containment which incorporated both enhanced securitisation and gendered controls.

Chapter four offers a theoretical framework for accounting for the resistance of women political prisoners in the context of the multifaceted material, structural and ideological

power relations which shaped their prison experiences. Using a Foucauldian framework, it accounts for the dialectical relationship of prison struggle as ongoing and dynamic interchanges between the prison authorities and the prisoners, which engaged different forms of penal power. However, conscious that 'resistance' is a far from taken-for-granted term in feminist penology, the chapter then turns to contemporary debates about the limits of women's agency and resistance in the context of often overpowering penal constraints. It thus accounts for the gendered and relational dimensions of any penal dialectic in the context of these material and structural restrictions.

Chapter five outlines the ethnographic problems and negotiations in researching women political prisoners. It accounts for the methods adopted for interviewing former prisoners in the community, in the context of state secrecy and the exclusion of the research gaze from institutions connected with the security apparatus in Northern Ireland. It also delineates the ethical dilemmas and power relations surrounding the research of sensitive issues in a conflict setting, and explains the methods adopted for dealing with the cultural and social invisibility of women in closed, self-protective communities.

Chapters six to twelve are based on the findings of the oral data that were collected in interviews, and are used to explore the forms and meanings of 'resistance' from the perspective of former prisoners. Each chapter corresponds with a different field or domain of penal power, and explores the different facets of, and the contexts for, strategies of resistance devised by prisoners. Nevertheless, while each field of resistance is treated as relational to a corresponding element of penal power, they are also understood as intersecting facets of the punitive framework. Hence, chapter six commences with an explanation of their campaign in terms of a continuum of resistance. Chapter seven accounts for the tactic of territorial reappropriation in the prisons, and the strategies of self-defence and self-management adopted by prisoners. Chapter eight explores the meanings of agency and identity as critical strategies in the formation of alternative subjective positions as political prisoners and as non-compliant subjects of penal discipline. Chapter nine examines the multi-layered and complex strategies which were adopted for reversing the customary hierarchy and lines of authority in relations with staff and the administration. Chapter ten

accounts for the significance of the management of the bodies of the prisoners, as a factor in the prisoners' resistance to the political and penal conditions of detention, and as a focus for the restoration of 'good (gendered and disciplinary) order'. Chapter eleven explores the reformulation of the prisoners' resistance to penal 'reforms', with their emphasis on neo-liberal and managerialist approaches to 'normalising', that is, depoliticising the contexts and conditions of imprisonment. Chapter twelve extends the framework of prison resistance to consider the importance of prisoners' relations outside the prison in sustaining their campaign.

The conclusion returns to the principal questions outlined in the discussion above, and summarises the interplay amongst them; firstly, women political prisoners' consciousness of the sometimes contradictory aspects of their gendered and political penal positions; secondly, their ways of resolving these through a resistant identity; and thirdly, the relationship between everyday resistance and their broader political objectives. It considers the significance of these struggles to the prisoners' consciousness and experiences of penal punishment, resistance and survival.

Chapter 1

The Origins of Women's Political Imprisonment in Northern Ireland

From its inception, the Irish penal system was defined by an historical duality; as a mechanism for punishing crime, and as an element of a coercive apparatus against political disorder and resistance to colonial rule (McConville, 2003). With the creation of the state of Northern Ireland in 1922, imprisonment continued to be shaped by measures such as internment and emergency powers, in response to actual and perceived subversion. Following the resurgence of political violence in the late 1960s, Northern Irish penalty underwent further expansion as an integral aspect of containing 'terrorism'. This chapter explores two further questions which historically shaped penal relations in Northern Ireland, and which were at the centre of the formations of prison punishment and resistance with which this thesis is concerned. The first concerns the contested emergence of political imprisonment as a recognised, distinctive penal category. The second concerns women's penalty, which has generally been treated as a separate question, and consequently as peripheral to the broader scholarly debates about political imprisonment. It is argued that this ambiguity framed the administrative marginalisation of women who were confined for politically-related offences between 1972 and 1995.

Irish penalty: the historical context

The emergence of the penitentiary in Britain and Ireland occurred in the context of eighteenth-century political, epistemological and scientific revolutions, although punitive or corrective custody existed for centuries before (McConville, 1981: chapter one). During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, punishment was transformed by the emergence of the modern state administration and a national economy, and industrial and social revolution and urbanisation (Rusche and Kirchheimer, 1939; Ignatieff, 1978). The political and ideological struggle to reform the criminal justice system centred on the establishment of a corrective apparatus which addressed the social challenges of social breakdown and crime in newly urbanised, industrial-capitalist societies (McConville, 1981; Ignatieff, 1983; Foucault, 1991; Gattrell, 1996). The gradual curtailment of the use of the

death penalty and the abolition of other punishments such as whipping, the stocks and the pillory, gave a greater role to imprisonment as the most common mode of punishment. This shift in emphasis from corporal and expressive 'sovereign' modes of punishment, to carceral and disciplinary correction, has also been linked with the reconceptualisation of the relationships between the state and the individual (Foucault, 1991). Prior to the widespread use of the prison, the public enactment of corporal and capital punishment marked the body of an offender, in an expression of sovereign censure, and to symbolically restore order to the body politic (Gatrell 1996). Imprisonment, in contrast, engaged the ideal of a rational, free-willed offender, who had abrogated the social contract, but was thought to be ultimately responsive to deterrent penalties and personal reform. While there was no universal consensus as to the most successful way to reform the system of punishment, by the mid-nineteenth century, the fundamental principles of penal punishment - fixed sentences, individual reform and proportionate punishment enforced through the penitentiary - prevailed. The establishment of a rationalised carceral apparatus, which comprised new social institutions such as the workhouse, asylums and prisons, confirmed the moral and political ascendancy of productive punishment and discipline in modern capitalist societies (Foucault, 1990: Melossi and Pavarini, 1981).

However, scholars of Western incarceration have critically questioned the fidelity of a schematic model of the 'great confinement' to specific national experiences, arguing that it overlooks differences in capitalist-disciplinarian infrastructures, and localised customary practices towards correction (Porter, 1990: 9: Morris and Rothman, 1998). Paradigms of the prison as an aspect of social adjustment to modernity (Ignatieff, 1978: Melossi and Pavarini, 1981), or as a mechanism of class subordination (Rusche and Kirchheimer, 1939), or as reflecting a shift from coercion to labour discipline (Foucault, 1990), are less conclusive when applied to historical conditions in Ireland (Carroll-Burke, 2000). In nineteenth century Ireland, the administration of the criminal justice system was shaped by the imperatives of restoring law and order in the context of rising crime and the constant threat of agrarian uprisings against land clearances and economic dislocation (Mokyer, 1985: Carroll-Burke, 2000). This instigated the expansion of the prison system and police forces, as well as the use of public order measures for the protection of property, and the curtail-

ment of political activities, civil disturbance and subversion. Where theories of modern incarceration resonate with the Irish experience is in the argument that it was part of a powerful drive to police the poor, although the pattern of policing the poor was shaped by the 'the crisis of legitimacy which political authority experienced in Ireland ... and the moves taken to counteract them by the English government' (Carroll-Burke, 2000: 19).

The first major administrative reform to the Irish penal system occurred in 1826, following the incorporation of a variety of privately-run penal establishments under a centralised inspection and regulation system. This followed the construction of the Richmond penitentiary in Dublin in 1818, and the eventual replacement of the earlier, irregular system of bridewells and local gaols by the mid-century with a more modern penal estate. From the outset, there were extensive pressures on the prison system because of widespread social distress, and the lack of centralised funding up to 1877 (Hayden, 1988: chapter two). Transportation remained the most common form of punishment for criminal offences until its cessation in 1857, so that imprisonment held a 'minimalist place ... as a punishment for criminal offences in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century' (Carroll-Burke, 2000: 50). Where reforms were introduced to the Irish prison system, historians noted the enthusiasm for the 'Philadelphia' system of solitary confinement, association in silence and segregated labour as 'superior' methods for instilling moral discipline consistent with 'rational' penal reform (Hayden, 1988: 29; Carroll-Burke, 2000: 52-59). On the whole, such innovations were short-lived in their pure form, and deteriorated into squalid conditions, overcrowding and harsh disciplinary regimes (Hayden, 1988: 31-32).

Whereas the first half of nineteenth-century penal administration in Ireland can be characterised by a general inertia and the disinterest of government (Kelly, F., 1988: chapter three), Irish penal experimentation in the second half of the century was claimed to have produced exemplary models of penal reform (Carroll-Burke, 2000). After the replacement of transportation with the convict system in 1857, a system of graded imprisonment was introduced by which a prisoner worked through different phases from solitary confinement to 'intermediate' regimes, which enabled them to earn remission and early release for good

conduct. Entry to these prisons was selective, and they were not available for ‘traitor felons’ or agrarian agitators. The short-lived equivalent for women to intermediary prisons were refuges, which were organised along religious lines, with separate institutions for Protestants and Catholics (Tomlinson and Heatley, 1983: 31). In 1858, Mountjoy female prison was opened, with a capacity for five hundred women, and was fully equipped with ‘all the facilities necessary for moral regeneration’, including solitary cells, nursery and punishment wings, kitchens, workrooms, chapels, exercise yards, a hospital and staff quarters (Lohan, 2002: 752). The regime at Mountjoy placed an emphasis on personal modesty, obedience, and labour and training in the domestic arts, to prepare women for motherhood and domestic service. Furthermore, the imperatives of purifying labour, personal reform and conformity to the regime were woven into the system by which inmates earned privileges, such as schooling or qualifying to work in the prison laundry, after a year of confinement (Ibid.). These establishments also supported complex relationships between class discipline and philanthropic consciousness, as the institutional training of women prisoners was intended to prepare them for employment in domestic service after release, to maintain households, or for assisted emigration.

Political imprisonment and penal innovation, 1857-1921

The claim to political status as a separate category offends against two principles of British criminal justice administration. The first is that ‘political crime’, as a distinct legal entity, has historically been conceived of as repugnant to the British constitutional tradition, on the grounds that violence or sedition should be dealt with by the normal, criminal law. Just as importantly, the reluctance to invoke separate legal categories for ‘political offences’ (and by implication for ‘political prisoners’), is derived from the political dangers of conceding the principle that some cause other than criminality may have stimulated protests and disorder (Townshend, 1983: 58-59). Secondly, political status has been historically rejected as admitting a form of exceptional or differential penal treatment. The principle of uniformity of treatment that prevailed in penal administration for much of the nineteenth century was predicated on the desirability of reforming convicts, and preferential or differential treatment was deemed to detract from that end.

According to Radzinowicz and Hood, the emergence of movements who broke the criminal law for political ends between 1840 and 1914, notably the Chartists, Fenians and Suffragists, compelled the authorities to address the questions of separate regimes in ways that raised contradictions in the drive for centralisation and uniformity in the nineteenth-century penal system (Radzinowicz and Hood, 1979). The Treason-Felony Act of 1848, enacted in response to the Young Irelanders' rebellion of the same year, as well as to Chartism, established a new class of offender, the traitor-felon, from a combination of the previously separate offences of 'high treason', which was punishable by death, and 'felony', which was punishable by transportation or imprisonment with hard labour (Ibid., 1437). The act was applied again to Ireland in the 1860s, when the leaders of the insurrectionary Fenian Brotherhood were transferred to England, away from their sympathisers. By this time, the Royal Commission of 1863 had established a rigidly uniform, 'convict' regime which could be modified by 'progressive stages', commencing with 'severe penal labour' and advancing towards modifications in work and conditions according to the good character and behaviour of the prisoners. The Fenians regarded themselves as political prisoners and refused to accept convict discipline. In 1867, a commission of enquiry into allegations of ill-treatment of 'treason-felony convicts', including Fenian prisoners, noted the poor diet, inadequate medical care and inhumane punishments for non-conformity, but avoided the question of political status (Ibid., 1438-1444). While the Commission led to some concessions being made to Fenian prisoners, it concluded that the convict system should resist any alteration that included separate treatment. Following continued allegations of the mistreatment of Fenian prisoners, the Devon Commission (1871) recommended that separate treatment could be introduced on the basis that their offences were 'of a special character, implying ... no moral degradation' (Ibid., 1448). In the view of the Commission, the Fenian leaders occupied a separate class, as convict life offended not only their political principles, but their sensibilities as educated men suffering association with 'criminals' and 'the degradations of the convict regime' (Ibid.).

The principle of differential treatment was only gradually introduced. While the Prison Act (1877) created a separate category of 'first class misdemeanants' for those charged with sedition and seditious libel, this measure was largely unused. The Prison Act (1898)

eventually created three divisions of prisoners, and placed the responsibility for classifying prisoners in judicial hands. The first and second divisions were available for non-recidivists, where 'there was evidence of good character', and their offending was 'a merely temporary deviation from the paths of honesty', while the third class was for recidivists and habitual criminals (Radzinowicz and Hood, 1979: 1458). First class misdemeanants were treated like unconvicted prisoners awaiting trial, and their regime resembled 'a rather rigid form of internment', with severe restrictions on their movements but with separate cells, a better diet, no requirement to perform prison labour, permission to continue their trade or profession and visits and mail (Ibid.).

Two strands of analysis have considered the development of differentiated regimes for political prisoners from the late nineteenth century. In the first, Radzinowicz and Hood suggest that officialdom was pressurised by the reformist constituency to respond to the view that political offences were of a 'special character' that implied 'no moral degradation' normally associated with convicts (Radzinowicz and Hood, 1979). The second strand, outlined by Garland (1985), and Carroll-Burke (2000), who did not consider political imprisonment separately, suggest that the practical recognition of the political character of certain prisoners was accommodable within the general drive towards refining the monolithic character of convict regimes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Carroll-Burke (2000) argues that the transition from uniform treatment to individualised and knowledge-based discipline, claimed by Garland to have occurred in the late nineteenth-century, occurred in the Irish penal system as early as 1853, on the grounds that:

... it was power politics in the narrower sense, and not the broad constraints of culture and law, which best explain the differences between the English and Irish cases (Carroll-Burke, 2000: 18).

None of these accounts implies that carving out specialised disciplinary or separate regimes was a progressive development. Garland argues that the technologies of 'individualisation' introduced, from 1895, modified systems of classification according to positivist perceptions of moral and criminal 'types' (Garland, 1985: chapter one). This marked,

according to Garland, the belated sedimentation in the United Kingdom of structures of penalty which relied on medical and reformist interventions for creating finer degrees of moral gradation and techniques of individual discipline than had previously been the case (Garland, 1987: chapter one). Radzinowicz and Hood, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of coercive laws and powers in recasting significant aspects of the moral and disciplinary precepts of nineteenth century imprisonment. Both approaches emphasise the combined importance of internal administrative initiatives and parliamentary responses in viewing reform as both politically pragmatic, and welded to a willingness to link morality and class in advocating distinctions in penal regimes. However, the principle that no such legal personality as the 'political prisoner' existed was formally preserved. The capacity to extend political status through 'pragmatic' administrative adjustments, rather than legislative formality, remained a source of historical contention in Ireland.

As Ireland advanced towards revolution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the prison system became the foremost 'ideological location in the struggle over British hegemony in Ireland' (Hayden, 1988: 19). In Ireland, where the question of separate regimes arose again with the incarceration of nationalists and suffragists in the 1900s, the first class regime was unevenly applied and largely informed by the political struggle between the Home Office in London, who wished harsher regimes to be enforced, and local administrators and prison governors, who were more mindful of the sensitivities connected with political prisoners (Ward, 1997: 86-95). Moreover, women played important roles in nationalist, feminist, and labour struggles during the period, and women who were imprisoned after the Easter rising in 1916 took part in hunger-strikes and protests to secure political status (Coulter, 1993: Ward, 1997: McCool, 1997: McConville, 2003: 461-3: 498-502: 538-549). During the War of Independence (1919-1921) women maintained communications and relief operations and organised welfare structures for prisoners and their dependants, provided safe houses and supplies, gathered intelligence, carried dispatches, hid weapons, and acted in combat roles. The independence movement split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921), or 'partition' treaty, which established the jurisdictions of the Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) and Northern Ireland, and former comrades, including the women's wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Cumann na mBan,

became antagonists in the Civil War of 1922. Hundreds of women were imprisoned and interned for political activities during both conflicts (McCoole, 1997).

Internment and political status, 1921-1962

The partition of Ireland split republican ranks and a minority, on both sides of the border, continued their campaign to institute a united, independent republic. Republicans who had not taken the road into parliamentary politics in the 1920s re-formed the IRA out of the remaining radical elements, and conducted bombing campaigns and assassinations of police and civil servants in Ireland and Britain in 1921-22, 1938-39 and between 1956-62. These 'border campaigns' were curtailed by the security forces acting with the authority of coercive legislation and internment (Lee, 1993: 219-224; McGuffin, 1973: 37-77). Internment was originally legislated in the United Kingdom in the Defence of the Realm Act (1914), and the relevant sections governing detention for 'sedition' were known as the 'Irish Clauses' (McGuffin, 1973: 137). After partition, the government of Northern Ireland incorporated the power to intern into the Special Powers Act (1922) and used detention during the three border campaigns and the Second World War. During this time, both the governments of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State subscribed to the essential principles of criminalisation, which were to deny political status and impose the criminal category and discipline on convicted and interned IRA prisoners.

The criminalisation of republicans generated resistance in the form of hunger strikes, 'strip' protests (the refusal to wear prison uniforms), refusal to do prison labour, insistence on recognition for their political status and structures, and segregation from other prisoners, which they viewed as a continuation of the precedents established under the British administration during the revolutionary period (Lee, 1993: 221-222). These protests did gain some elements of political treatment during each period of internment. However, 'political status' amounted to loosely-defined concessions which were dependent on the prevailing political climate and the degrees of public support for their cause. During the phase of internment in Northern Ireland between 1938 to 1945, for example:

All the gains of the past, in terms of being accorded political status, were disallowed and had to be fought for again ... improvement was achieved only by hunger-strikes and non-cooperation (MacGuffin, 1973: 73).

Armagh women's prison in Northern Ireland housed eighteen republican women internees during the Second World War, and one during the border campaign of 1956-62 (McGuffin 1973: 81). Most of the female internees were young women who were arrested in groups. Their conditions were austere. They were initially refused differential status and embarked on an abortive hunger strike for better conditions. A mutiny in the prison was suppressed in 1943 (Ibid., 82). During the third phase of internment in Northern Ireland (1956-62), the government reverted to the position that tactical repression, alongside a policy of non-recognition of the political status of republican 'criminals', successfully controlled serious political crime. However, the near-elimination of the IRA in the 1950s derived as much from their disorganised and largely discredited campaigns as from the effectiveness of internment (MacStiofáin, 1975: 89-92). Despite this, confidence in the belief that a combination of widespread police powers and internment were decisive factors in eliminating violent political dissent influenced government policy in Northern Ireland again in 1971 (Lowry, 1976: 175).

Internment, 1971-1975

Internment was introduced in 1971 by the government of Northern Ireland in response to widespread civil disorder and the escalation of republican and loyalist paramilitary violence. Its introduction was conceded by the then British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, who had misgivings about its constitutionality and its long-term effectiveness, after representations from the Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, and General Sir Harry Tuzo, the Commanding Officer of the British army forces in Northern Ireland. From the military perspective, the army required an opportunity to capture the leadership of the

IRA, and to detain suspects for intelligence-gathering purposes (Lee, 1989: 433).¹ The military assessment emphasised the longer-term gains of ending 'no-go' areas, and the opportunity to stifle the influence of the IRA in Catholic working class communities (Kennally and Preston, 1971: 122). The mass arrests on August 9, 1971, captured three hundred and fifty four men, but failed to apprehend the IRA leadership, who had been forewarned of a sweep (Adams, 1996: 188). Fewer than sixty detainees had connections with the republican movement, the others being community and civil rights activists, and many detainees were released within days. Just six detainees were from Protestant districts. Allegations of the ill-treatment of detainees prompted the investigation of the Compton Enquiry (1971). Compton acknowledged that 'tough interrogation techniques' had been used, but the committee 'reached the thoroughly unconvincing conclusion' that while many of the techniques constituted physical ill-treatment, 'they did not amount to brutality' (Hillyard, 1978: 130). The majority of the committee concluded that the techniques might be unlawful, but robust intelligence-gathering and detention techniques were justified by the need to obtain fresh intelligence to combat terrorist organisations. The Compton inquiry was thus widely regarded as part of a succession of government commissions which retrospectively sanctioned internment and custodial mistreatment, on the grounds of strategic urgency and need to instal the rule of law.

The first internment of a woman under the Detention of Terrorists (Northern Ireland) Order (1972) occurred on December 29, 1972, when Elizabeth McKee, 19, was arrested in a house raid in Belfast for assisting the escape of a male IRA volunteer from Lagan Valley Hospital. By June, 1973 there were six female internees in Armagh prison, along with the rapidly rising number of women remanded and sentenced for public order and scheduled ('terrorist') offences (Irish News, January 17, 1973: Irish Independent, June 23, 1974: NIPS, 1972

¹The IRA split in 1969 into two branches, each comprising military wings, namely, the Official IRA (OIRA) and Provisional IRA (PIRA) respectively, and political wings, the Official Sinn Féin and Provisional Sinn Féin. The thesis uses the terms 'IRA' or 'Provisionals' to refer to the Provisional IRA, who were the dominant republican paramilitary force, and 'Sinn Féin' to refer to Provisional Sinn Féin, unless otherwise stated.

until 1976).² A total of thirty one women were interned between 1972 and 1975 (Appendix One, Table Two). The internment of women commenced a renewed phase of counterinsurgency along three lines, which were intended to avoid the retrograde effects of internment in 1971 (Kitson, 1977: 295). Firstly, as the failure to apprehend the IRA leadership was attributed to the 'lack of appropriate intelligence', there was more extensive military surveillance of political organisations and activist groups (Ibid.). Secondly, the 'strategic detention' of women was initiated in order to neutralise the women's section of the IRA, Cumann na mBan, both as a reserve paramilitary force and as supply and support network. The army command in Northern Ireland subsequently pursued a strategy of general surveillance intended to apprehend younger women involved with republican organisations, even if they were not proscribed, as a deterrence against possible recruitment. Thirdly, the detention of women (and juveniles) was argued to be a necessary preventive course of action in order to thwart the IRA strategy of introducing 'lilywhites', or previously unsuspected new recruits, into the field. This course of action was justified by the claim that their dangerousness was reinforced by the fact that they had previously escaped the attention of military intelligence. In order to sustain the consistency of this position, a retrospective 'career' on the part of detained women was constructed. McKee, for example, was claimed to be 'a high-ranking officer of the Provisional Army' (Irish News, January 2, 1973). The internment of women and juveniles also raised speculation about a renewed and more widespread campaign of detention (Irish Independent, January 3, 1973: Irish News, January 20, 1973).

The legal apparatus of political detention

Internment posed two immediate operational problems for the penal and criminal justice systems. Firstly, it caused severe overcrowding, especially as the prison population had

²Although the various prison services in the United Kingdom are obliged to produce an annual report on the administration of prisons within their jurisdictions, the political emergency and the introduction of internment and Direct Rule meant that only one report on the prisons in Northern Ireland was produced for the years from 1972 to 1976 inclusive. This report is referred to as the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), 1972 *until* 1976.

increased fourfold between 1968 and 1975, and eightfold in the case of women.³ The consequences for prolonging violations of the civil rights of detainees were exacerbated by the inability of the criminal justice system to process their cases. Secondly, although internment was legal in a formal sense, in that it was 'a legislatively-authorized emergency measure' (Lowry, 1976: 184) its implementation posed dangers for arbitrary and illegal treatment, and was 'essentially counter-productive' (Ibid., 194), motivating increased political violence and aggravating Nationalists' sense of alienation. Moreover, the medium to long term reliance on emergency powers was unsatisfactory in that it required the derogation of the United Kingdom from aspects of the European Convention on Human Rights to which it was a signatory (Hogan and Walker, 1989: 37; MacFarlane, 1990: 34).

In 1972, the British government prorogued (or discontinued without formally dissolving) the parliament for Northern Ireland and transferred the powers of government to Westminster. On assuming Direct Rule the British government retained the power to intern on security grounds under the terms of the Detention of Terrorists (Northern Ireland) Order, (1972), which came into effect on November 1 of that year. Under the new regulations, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could make an 'interim custody order', which allowed detention for 28 days, but which could be extended indefinitely on the recommendation of the Chief Constable (Hogan and Walker, 1989: 86). Detainees were treated as remand prisoners in custody. As an additional safeguard, an Advisory Commission was appointed to hear representations from internees. The Commission was limited to an advisory role, which meant it could recommend but not authorize releases. As it lacked full judicial powers, it also lacked key judicial safeguards. Detainees had very limited rights of counsel, as their lawyers could only help to prepare written submissions but not attend hearings (McGuffin, 1973: 133). The hearings admitted less stringent standards of evidence against defendants than required for criminal trials. Evidence for the prosecution was anonymously submitted, and respondents were often excluded from all or

³The prisoner population was 727 persons in January 1968 and 2,659 in 1975 (Murray, 1975: 73). The daily average prison population for women was 12 in 1968 and 95 in 1975 (NIPS, 1972 until 1976).

part of their hearings (Hogan and Walker, 1989: 86-87). There were very few successful challenges to detention orders (Lowry, 1976: 185).

The longer term administration of detention was addressed in the Emergency Provisions Act (Northern Ireland), 1973, which adopted the recommendations of the Diplock Report (1972). The Diplock Commission had been set up to consider 'arrangements for the administration of justice in Northern Ireland ... in order to deal more effectively with terrorist organisations ... otherwise than by internment by the Executive' (Diplock, cited in Hogan and Walker, 1989: 28). The act broadened the scope of arrestable offences within a comprehensive and elastic definition of 'terrorism' as:

... the use of violence for political ends and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear; [A] 'terrorist' means a person who is or has been concerned in the commission or attempted commission of any act of terrorism or in directing, organising or training persons for the purposes of terrorism (Section 31 {1} Emergency Powers Act (Amended) 1978).

The implications of the act for extending powers of arrest, detention and conviction, were twofold: firstly it made a wider range of activities into 'terrorist' offences, which required lesser safeguards than those available under normal criminal law. Secondly, it gave the army and police wider authority to arrest and detain individuals, because the essence of the law was that the context of an arrest could be used to determine whether an offence was scheduled. Thus, offences like rioting or being in the vicinity of a political demonstration or security incident could be prosecuted under the act. Moreover, the implementation of the act acquired specific dimensions for detaining women by bringing the political activities in which they played a significant part under a broader rubric of political offences. The expansion of the women's prison population during the 1970s, which was made up of a significant number of juveniles and first-time offenders, largely reflected convictions for offences under sections of the act concerning breaches of the peace, such as wearing 'para-military-type dress', resistance to personal or property searches, and similar acts of non-cooperation with the security forces (Appendix Two). The broad reach of Section 21 of the act (and subsequent amendments and enlargements) included membership of a

proscribed organisation, for which the maximum sentence was five to ten years. A positive intention to 'belong' included taking part in parades, collecting money and organising welfare connected to prisoners, and charges could be applied retrospectively. Other sections of the act covered more serious offences relating to the combat roles in which women predominated, such as couriering, transporting and concealing arms, and laying incendiary devices in commercial and other premises. The act also embodied the recommendations of the Diplock Commission in establishing a juryless court, presided over by a single judge to hear 'scheduled' cases. Confessions were the principal evidence in approximately 80 per cent of 'Diplock' cases, which led to a high rate of self-incrimination and raised the rate of conviction (Walsh, 1983: 72-78; Hogan and Walker, 1989: 115).

Normalising emergency powers

According to Hillyard, legal reform under Direct Rule did not eliminate coercion, but 'reconstituted the problems of political violence' in legal-administrative terms (Hillyard, 1987: 288-292). O' Dowd et al. similarly argue that the reformulation of enhanced powers of arrest and detention afforded a hegemonic transition from the 'defeat of terrorism' in the context of military and constitutional emergency, to the 'normalisation' of coercive powers from the mid-1970s (O' Dowd et al., 1980). Three linked policies framed the transition: 'Ulsterisation', 'normalisation' and 'criminalisation'.

'Ulsterisation' described the delegation of powers to indigenous police and security forces and bureaucratic structures, administered through the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Executive office of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but under legislative authority from Westminster. Ulsterisation in the prison system involved moving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the administrative structures of the NIO. One of its first tasks was to draft personnel from the prison systems of England and Wales, and Scotland, to staff the rapidly expanding prison system, and to recruit local personnel, the overwhelming majority of which was drawn from the Protestant/Unionist community (NIPS, 1978: 8; NIPS, 1980: 11).

'Normalisation', in its pure meaning as a counterinsurgent tactics, describes the shift from using primarily military tactics to restore civil order to containing political violence across interconnected social spheres (Kitson, 1977: 281-298). A more critical analysis has described the range of legislative, political and administrative changes from the mid-1970s in terms of transforming or 'normalising' the conflict in Northern Ireland, by securing a consensus that the extension of emergency powers was a legitimate exercise by government to 'control terrorism' (O'Dowd et al., 1980: Boyle et al., 1980: Hillyard, 1987: 279-312). According to this perspective, the expansion of coercive state power followed the direction of 'reformed repression', by which exceptional powers became embedded in the administration of law and order. This position reflects the Gramscian argument that 'normalisation' supports the rise of the authoritarian state with apparently minimal instrumental force, the masking of dominance through the establishment of a consensus between rulers and subordinated groups (hegemony), and the decline of civil sovereignty (Gramsci, 1971: 57-80). Hegemony, however, does not imply the absence or displacement of suppressive power, but relies on a 'combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally' (Gramsci, 1971: 80). Normalisation thus works through the alliance of adjacent but different modes of enforcement, which work towards the goal of domination. Viewed from this Gramscian perspective, O'Dowd et al. observed the introduction of repressive powers into different aspects of the civil sphere in Northern Ireland through the construction of a veneer of formal democracy over the realities of military-political management (O'Dowd et al., 178-202). The emergence of 'reformed repression', moreover, relied on the ideological reconfiguration of political violence, and the negotiated construction of a political consensus towards 'defeating terrorism' (Ibid.). More concretely, 'normalisation' referred to the policy of legitimising the primacy of the 'rule of law' by denuding violence and lawbreaking of political meanings or rationales, and relegating the origins and causes of political violence to the status of a 'sub-war'.

Criminalisation extended from the strategy of normalisation by relegating the actions of paramilitaries to the sphere of criminality (O'Dowd et al., 1980: 189-195: Curtis, 1984: Hillyard, 1987: 296-299). Just as the authorities addressed the status of the conflict by maintaining that it was aggravated criminality, those charged with offences connected with

it were, by implication, engaged in aggravated crime. Political offenders, it followed, should be dealt with in the sphere of criminal law, rather than being granted exceptional 'concessions' or moral victories, such as political recognition. As discussed in the rest of the chapter, successive inquiries into political security situated the prison system at the centre of endemic political disorder, and proposed fundamental alterations to prison regimes to bring them into line with broader changes in the security apparatus.

Modernising the Penal System: the Gardiner Commission

This section discusses the modernisation of the penal infrastructure, which included the proposed construction of a new women's prison, as part of the long-term reorganisation of the prison system in the new counterinsurgent context. It focuses on the combined roles of the Gardiner and Murray commissions in creating the basis for penal policy and regimes respectively in Northern Ireland (Gardiner, 1975: Murray, 1975). The Gardiner Commission (1975) was convened to discuss broader changes in the administration of criminal justice in the context of emergency legislation, but quickly situated the prison system at the centre of broader normalising objectives in promoting the rule of law, and countering subversion:

The prison system in Northern Ireland has a most important role to play in the maintenance of law and order. We do not believe that it is fulfilling that role adequately at present and, to be blunt, we were appalled at certain aspects of the prison situation (Gardiner, 1975: para. 100: 33).

Gardiner's analysis of legal and security reforms was bleak: within some sections of the public, tolerance for 'terrorism' and 'subversion' had become endemic, it was argued, and therefore the legitimacy of the legal system needed to be re-established through instrumental reforms (Gardiner, 1975: 3). The core argument of the report was that the 'proper objective' of a penal policy for countering political violence was to eliminate sources of instability within the prison system, and in doing so, diminish external support for politically motivated prisoners. Gardiner is worth quoting at length, as his view of penal

reform amplified the reasoning behind the criminalisation policy:

Because they are attempting to destroy Northern Ireland as a political entity, terrorists who break the law - which in Northern Ireland gives greater protection to the accused than in most disturbed communities - are not heroes but criminals; not the pioneers of political change but its direct enemies ... The same is true of those who engage in subversion; who participate in attempts to undermine the authority of government or change its policy by forceful or obstructive means. Strong penalties already exist for those who devise or employ such tactics ... Yet the most effective protection against development of subversion *lies elsewhere; in the recognition by government that it must act with speed to demonstrate its determination to sustain its authority ...* Terrorism and subversion ... can only be defeated, or guarded against, by the energetic pursuit of measures against them by the Government, and - equally important - of continued, *parallel progress in other fields of social, political and economic activity, especially in community relations as a whole ...* (Gardiner, 1975: 5-6: emphasis added).

Gardiner's description offers a comprehensive definition of the role of prison system as central point in a field of legitimisation, acting in conjunction with other areas of the legal and administrative apparatus. It also concluded that in the event that the crisis of legitimacy could not be reversed in the prisons, neither should they become an unrestricted site of subversion either. Therefore they should, if necessary, be primarily involved in the function of containing paramilitarism. The most immediate problems identified by Gardiner included the obsolete prison infrastructure, which was inadequate for maintaining order and security, and consequently had to be redesigned or improved. It must be noted that the sole focus of Gardiner's considerations was the compound camp at Long Kesh, which held male internees and sentenced prisoners, although the recommendations were intended for the whole prison system. Prisons of the compound type presented, to Gardiner, the major hazard for maintaining security and containing internees, detainees and sentenced prisoners. Their main disadvantage was the almost 'total loss of disciplinary control by the prison authorities within the compounds', leading to the problem that 'rehabilitation work is impossible' (Gardiner, 1975: 33). Furthermore, the 'limited manpower' of the staff meant that 'the layout and construction of the compounds make close and continued supervision impossible' (Gardiner, 1975: 33). Because there were no facilities for work or recreation,

each compound was:

... virtually a self-contained community which keeps the premises it occupies to such standards as it finds acceptable and engages, if it so wishes, in military drills or lectures on military subjects (Gardiner, 1975: 33).

The most significant proposal for the 'normalisation' of the prison system was to remove political category status and regimes at 'the earliest practical opportunity' (Gardiner, 1975: 34). Political status (officially called Special Category Status) operated between 1972 and 1976, following a hunger strike by republican prisoners.⁴ Politically-identified prisoners gained *de facto*, but not *de jure* conditions, such as the right to wear their own clothing, receive mail and parcels above the legal statutory minimum, associate with their political peers, and not to do prescribed prison work. Apart from these arrangements, prisoners were subject to the prison regulations, so that they were liable for punishment for breaches of the rules, as well as orders and legislation covering parole, temporary release, visits and other conditions. The introduction of the policy had been officially justified because the use of internment between 1971 and 1975 had created an anomalous prisoner category of unconvicted detainees, who were nevertheless legally required to have access to resources and conditions not available to convicted 'criminals'. Thus, it was officially explained that special category status resolved the constitutional ambiguities that had arisen because of internment. Gardiner argued that the introduction of special category status was 'a serious mistake', and cast doubts on whether the 'surprisingly liberal interpretation of Prison Rules was legal' (Gardiner, 1975: 34). The report argued that there was no justification for granting 'privileges' on the claim of 'political motivation', and, furthermore, it was 'unfair to ordinary criminals' (Ibid.). More disturbing, according to the report, was the potential of

⁴The official term for the recognised status which was applied to political detainees between 1972 until 1976 was 'Special Category Status', although this was almost exclusively used in official business. 'Political status' was preferred by prisoners and their supporters. The term political status is used in this thesis in the context of its use by prisoners. Special category status is used to refer to its usage in an official context.

the political factions to destabilise the prisons, as their prisoners were:

... not [as] closely controlled as they would be in a normal cellular prison. Discipline within the compounds is in practice exercised by compound leaders, and they are more likely to emerge with an increased commitment to terrorism than as reformed citizens (Gardiner, 1975: 34).

Gardiner presented a flexible and widely-cast strategy for eliminating the structures of political prisoners. The design of prison compounds was to be modified to improve internal security in the short term, while prisoners were to be eventually transferred to new establishments based on conventional cellular designs, with appropriate wing and perimeter security, supported by the implementation of 'normal' discipline. The other conventional, cellular prisons, such as Armagh women's prison and Belfast prison, were also to revert to 'ordinary' prison discipline and order. Moreover, Armagh and Belfast prisons should be closed and replaced by modern prisons. The recruitment of more staff was recommended by increasing their pay and allowances, and by raising special grants to attract experienced officers from the prison services in Scotland, and England and Wales, in order to assist in the transition to 'normal' penalty.

The architectural technology of normalisation: the Murray Commission

The Murray Commission, which also reported in 1975, took up the task of providing the architectural blueprint for Gardiner's penal principles. It considered the construction of the new, high-security prison estate, of which the construction of a new women's prison was to be a part. The urgency of replacing the existing prison estate was intensified by rioting at the Long Kesh compounds and Armagh women's prison in October 1974, as well as the successful escape of prisoners from Belfast prison in 1971. The Cunningham inquiry (1972) into that escape had reported that the nineteenth-century prisons were 'just about as unsuitable ... as could be found anywhere' for prison order, and recommended 'the construction to modern designs of a more secure prison ... to avoid escapes and enhance

security' (Cunningham, 1972: 1). Similarly, Armagh women's prison, which was constructed in 1852, suffered from severe problems with congestion, considerable deterioration of its physical fabric, extensive problems with order and security, and an anachronistic and inefficient regime.

The Murray report recommended the expansion of the prison estate based on the projected rise of the prison population, in the short term because of the detention of prisoners for politically related offences, and in the long term, because Northern Ireland was likely to experience rising crime and imprisonment in common with other jurisdictions. Noting that the increase in the prisoner population was largely accounted for by prisoners detained for scheduled offences, Murray also envisaged that a combination of military containment and the administrative and social management of political violence would eventually stabilise the rate of growth of the prison population, so that:

... by 1980 the Province will have returned to more peaceful conditions than have obtained over the past six years ... [But] even under these more peaceful conditions the prison population will not return to its 1968 figure of seven hundred plus ... A prison population of two thousand in 1980 is a reasonable possibility (but no more than that) (Murray, 1975: 75).

Notwithstanding the fact that far from diminishing by 1981, widespread political disorder had actually increased because of events in the prison, Murray's projections proved to be surprisingly accurate.⁵ However, the report also emphasised the need to meet the immediate stresses and demands on the existing infrastructure, and to create sufficient prison places in the event of unpredictable turns in civil order:

[Any] spare advance accommodation would be very useful in an emergency ... In view of the events of the last six years and the appalling increase in the prison population, I think there is only one sensible policy ... to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst (Murray, 1975: 79).

⁵The daily average sentenced population in custody in 1980 was 2,514 male and 69 female prisoners (NIPS, 1980).

The construction of two maximum security prisons was proposed: HMP Long Kesh (or the Maze), a high-security, cellular prison, was proposed to replace the communal compounds on the adjacent site.⁶ HMP Maghaberry was intended to be a permanent, high-security prison to replace Belfast Prison for men and Armagh prison for women. The Maghaberry complex comprised two blocks of cellular accommodation for four hundred and thirty two males, with a separate blocks in its own compound for a female prison for adults and young offenders, Mourne House.⁷ Both establishments were designed to maximise operational containment, and efficiency in terms of security, surveillance and rapid responses to disturbances.

Situated twenty five miles west of Belfast, HMP Maghaberry was envisaged as the showcase institution which would most effectively materialise 'an appropriate balance ... between the needs of security and control and the desirability of forward-looking regimes' (NIPS, 1986: 1). The physical environment was intended to redress existing problems with establishing order and discipline 'on the basis that a positive regime [was] an integral part of good security' (NIPS, 1988: 10). The complex was intended to house a range of different types of prison regimes for a highly varied population of prisoners - adult female prisoners, whether politically affiliated or not, female juveniles, adult male 'ordinary' (criminal) prisoners and 'penitent terrorist' prisoners, who had resigned from their political structures in the other prisons and chosen to serve their sentences in the 'ordinary' regime.

The most contested aspect of the Murray enquiry was that Mourne House was intended to accommodate the different female prisoner populations in the same establishment. As there were no special facilities for female young offenders in Northern Ireland during the 1970s, they were accommodated in facilities run by religious orders, or occasionally brought to

⁶The Maze prison is referred to as 'H-Blocks' or 'the Maze', although republicans also use the term 'Long Kesh'. Long Kesh was the original name of the hastily refurbished prison compounds on the site of an abandoned army barracks in 1971 to hold male internees. It was replaced by a cellular prison with distinctive H-shaped blocks to which all political prisoners were eventually transferred. It is referred to hereafter as the Maze.

⁷HMP Maghaberry describes the entire complex, while Mourne House refers to the separate compound and prison for all women prisoners.

facilities in Scotland (NIPS, 1978: 20). The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) argued that the location of the women's juvenile and adult prison in a maximum security prison would impose excessive amounts of security and austerity on categories of prisoners who did not require it, and that the proposed establishment lacked the supportive environment of more personalised institutions (Belfast Newsletter, October 1, 1975). NIACRO also objected to the lack of flexibility in the system for categorising prisoners, and the criminogenic effects of narrowing prison provision and foreclosing on alternatives to custodial sentences:

The Government's proposals would inevitably involve the accommodation in a maximum security prison of a substantial number of prisoners who would be perfectly well suited to a low security prison ... Accordingly, the proposals involve an unnecessarily large maximum security prison (NIACRO, cited in Murray, 1975: 57).

The proposal to put all female prisoners into one establishment was countered by arguments in favour of holding high-security categories of women and men in the same maximum security complex (although in separate buildings), and maintaining separate, low-security facilities for non-political prisoners elsewhere (Ibid.). However, these alternatives were overruled by arguments from the NIO that the introduction of varied, flexible regimes for supporting rehabilitation would offset the debilitating influences that might arise from mixing higher and lower categories in one establishment. The Commission concluded in favour of official assurances that accommodating the whole female population in the same establishment was sustainable, because security in certain parts of the new complex could be 'appropriately' and 'flexibly' downgraded according to security status. The problems and cost of recruiting duplicate staff in two different prisons, as opposed to one, was also advanced by government officials as a reason for the soundness of the proposal (Murray, 1975: 48). In accepting the argument that the potential problems with inappropriate accommodation and security arrangements in the women's prison would be resolved, through largely unspecified methods, the Murray Commission deferred to economic expedience and prevailing priorities of security, over the diverse needs and requirements of the different female prisoner populations. HMP Maghaberry eventually opened on March 18, 1986, eleven years after the Murray Commission (1975), six years after the

original schedule for completion and at the cost of £32 million (H.C. Debs., November 17, 1986, col. 551).

Mourne House: the contradiction between 'gendered' and 'secure' imprisonment

Mourne House was designed according to prevailing, gendered ideals which surrounded women's imprisonment, with wings laid out as small 'domestic' units, to promote therapeutic and domesticated regimes:

Maghaberry houses all women inmates sentenced and untried, and one unit within the prison is used as a young offenders centre for women. The new prison provides facilities of a high standard including single cell accommodation with internal sanitation for up to 56 prisoners, a purpose built hospital, a gymnasium, chapel and library. Accommodation is in the form of two-storey houses which are each divided into self-contained units housing up to 7 inmates. Each unit also has its own kitchen and association room equipped with colour television and record player and a cell equipped for accommodating a mother and child (NIPS, 1986: 1).

The female prison was 'substantially a replica of the Scottish prison at Cornton Vale' (May, 1979: 149). By the time Mourne House was completed, its prototype, Cornton Vale, had attracted considerable criticism for recreating a 'total regime', with its emphasis on disciplinarian intervention and psychiatrised modes of punishment that were consistent with the prevailing ideologies of correctional regimes for women (Carlen, 1983: Dobash et al., 1986, chapter six). As with Cornton Vale, the inmates at Mourne House were organised into small 'family' groups, and subject to an intensively disciplined regime and high levels of surveillance. The layout of individual cells along small passageways and corridors, and the positioning of glass-enclosed offices at the end of each wing for staff, was intended to 'design out' opportunities for illicit political association, and render prisoners more susceptible to prison discipline than they would be in their collective structures.

In this context, the architectural arrangements and gendered punitive ideals were combined at Mourne House to progressively maximise discipline and security, and simulate an environment for normative feminisation (Carlen, 1983: Dobash et al., 1986). Its

‘innovative’ design was intended to combine a strong security perimeter with ‘exemplary’ health, educational and recreation facilities, integral plumbing in cells (ending degrading slop-outs), and an environment which ostensibly achieved the balance of ‘security’ with ‘a constructive and tolerable regime’:

... the idea was that relaxed regimes should be established within secure perimeter walls for all within the establishments, high-risk inmates being treated virtually the same as everyone else (May, 1979: 21).

Mourne House materialised a fundamental disjuncture between prevailing penal thinking on secure confinement, and the reforming promise of a ‘constructive regime’ based on a modern, well-equipped prison, run along rehabilitative lines and advanced by proposed changes in the work culture and organisational climate:

[Having] coped with a period of growth in the 1970s which is probably unparalleled in the Western world in recent times, at times in accommodation which on any view was highly inadequate ... [there are future plans] to continue to maintain a prison system of a high standard, with an appropriate balance being struck between the needs of security and control and *the desirability of forward-looking regimes* which give prisoners the opportunity to prepare themselves to resettle successfully in the outside world (NIPS, 1986: 2-3: emphasis added).

The disjuncture between ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘security’ reflected the ambivalent status of women in the penal enterprise, which was most evident in the incoherence of policies for women’s imprisonment. From the outset, the specific or different needs of women prisoners, irrespective of their political status, were subordinated to centralised administrative concerns with enhanced security and counter-subversion in the prison system. For women political prisoners, the regimes and conditions thought to be appropriate for those ends were homogeneously conceived in relation to problems that arose in the male establishments. Although Mourne House was presented as a progressive penal experiment, the regime was not convincingly conceived with rehabilitation or resocialisation as its principal operational ethos, especially for non-politically affiliated prisoners. Attention was rarely called to the conditions of women prisoners in reports of

the prison inspectorate, while the annual reports issued by the Northern Ireland Prison Service devoted, at most, a few paragraphs to their welfare up to the late 1990s. Rather the language of penal 'modernisation' was more assured about physical security in the new prisons, than the prospects of establishing 'constructive regimes'.

While these issues are treated in greater detail in the following chapter, this chapter argues that penal 'modernisation' did not just entail the technical and political realignment of the penal apparatus, but that penal 'reform' became a surrogate element of an overdetermined emphasis on security. Such elements of progressive penal thinking as influenced policy were integrated, however unintentionally, into a narrow paradigm of 'constructive regimes' and normative precepts of 'appropriate' correction for women. As such, the planning and implementation of penal policy followed what Carlen called 'a systematically gendered socio-penal configuration' which translates the social marginalisation and controls that are applied to women into 'gender-specific and disproportionate pain to women in custody' (Carlen, 1998: 47). In this context, the multiple bind of women prisoners in Northern Ireland entailed their absence as specific subjects of inquiry into penal policy, as well as the subordination of 'rehabilitative' and 'constructive regimes' to the primacy of security. However, as the following chapter discusses, although women political prisoners were secondary considerations in the development of political imprisonment, they were nonetheless vulnerable to gender-specific interpretations of the risk they were perceived to present, and no less subject to gendered forms of mortification, constraint and discipline and punishment.

Chapter 2 Inside the Carceral Network, 1972-1995

This chapter gives an account of women's political imprisonment from the interment of women in 1972 up to 1995.¹ It proceeds from Gormally, McEvoy and Wall's functional teleology which posits three distinctive, and in their terms, discontinuous phases of political penalty in Northern Ireland (Gormally et al., 1993; Gormally and McEvoy, 1995; McEvoy, 2001). These are 'reactive containment', between 1972 and 1976; 'criminalisation', between 1976 and 1981; and the ostensible 'normalisation' of penal relations from the early 1980s to 1998.

However, as the previous chapter indicated, the emergence of a carceral strategy in relation to women political offenders evolved from a series of reactive political and institutional responses to their role in political violence and 'offending', and equally, from significant structural and ideological ambiguities as to what constituted an adequate penal framework for women. Both historically and in the phase of penal 'modernisation' connected with the political conflict, the punitive or disciplinary determination of penalty was informed by highly uneven, partial and contradictory developments with regards to women's imprisonment. Therefore, while Gormally et al.'s framework is retained, this chapter interposes the distinctive punitive and disciplinary assemblages relevant to women political prisoners when accounting for the development of political imprisonment in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Gormally et al.'s model, which connects 'actual historical events' to 'the specific relationship between government and prison management', privileges the agency and strategic interests of the state in the evolution of penal policy (Gormally and McEvoy, 1995: 285-287). This thesis is also concerned with the contested character of the enforcement of penal norms. Accordingly, the different 'eras' of penal punishment are argued to have produced characteristic modes of penal re-enclosure, or practices for

¹Strictly, the chronology of women's political imprisonment during the 'Troubles' incorporates convictions for civil disorder from 1969 to the release of the last women political prisoner in February, 1999, under the terms of the Belfast Agreement (1998). However, the chronology here is structured in accordance with the periods of imprisonment served by respondents who were interviewed, and therefore, the timespan of the thesis is slightly narrower.

returning political prisoners to its disciplinary authority. These tactics produced parallel forms of resistance on the part of prisoners. 'Reactive containment', and successive administrative phases are, therefore, accounted for in terms of the development of penal regimes under prevailing penal policy, and the forms of resistance that arose within those contexts.

Reactive containment in Armagh women's prison, 1972 - 1976

Reactive containment was characterised by the counterinsurgent character of detention, proceeding from internment, the introduction of special category status, conviction under emergency legislation and military security in the prisons. In the aftermath of internment the prison service was unprepared for the soaring intake of remand, interned and sentenced prisoners and was 'faced with acute problems of accommodation, staffing, education, training and discipline' (NIPS, 1972 until 1976: 5). By the early 1970s, women prisoners lived two to a cell on 'A' and 'B' wings of Armagh prison, sanitation was inadequate, and the slopping out system operated. The overcrowded conditions were exacerbated by the fact that female prisoners had to share facilities with, as well as be segregated from, two male regimes composed of the overspill of internees and remands from Belfast prison, who remained in Armagh prison until 1973, and a boys' Borstal which had been on the premises for decades, until 1975. Resources were allocated to male prisoners as a priority, which curtailed women's access to sanitation, exercise and recreational facilities. The boys' Borstal was situated on the ground floor of one wing, while female remand prisoners occupied the ground floor of another. Sentenced female prisoners occupied the first floors and internees were housed on the second floors. A third 'C' wing, with twenty places was added in 1975 on the old breaker's yard. Before the completion of 'C' Wing in 1975, there was no accommodation for mothers with babies, or support programmes for pregnant women (Irish News, April 16, 1979). The Red Cross reported the 'overcrowding and the lack of privacy' in the prison, and noted that conditions continued to deteriorate as internment took on 'a semi-permanent character' (Irish News, November 1, 1973: Rees, 1985: 138-141).

Until the influx of prisoners charged or convicted for politically-related offences, the regime for women had not substantially deviated from the paternalistic, disciplinary ethos of a penal institution which had primarily functioned to house socially vulnerable, petty offenders (McCafferty, 1981: 17). There was continuous friction between the prisoners and the administration from the earliest stages of political imprisonment over the austerity of conditions, notably the poor quality of prison food, and inadequate recreation, laundry, cooking and sanitary facilities. In 1972, the Republican Internees Council alleged that the women in Armagh prisoner were 'being maltreated' (Irish News, January 18, 1972). The installation of male prisoners in the jail meant that women prisoners were confined to recreational facilities on one floor, which comprised a small room for the use of all female prisoners. The exercise yard was a 'small muddy patch of ground' and women prisoners said they were subjected to 'verbal abuse and obscenities from the soldiers' patrolling the perimeters. Numerous requests to the Governor for improvements were 'unavailing' (Ibid.).

Disciplinary assemblages: diet

Questions of diet and health remain central to the punitive matrix in prison, as the rationing and scarcity of goods and services is an inherent part of the enforcement of discipline, entailing as it does a loss of autonomy over basic self-provision (Sykes, 1958: 6). The diet at Armagh prison was frequently criticised by women prisoners, partly on the grounds of its inadequate nutritional value, and partly over the broader, symbolic contentions connected with the provision of basic commodities in prison. In a 'comm.' or illicit communication to a sympathetic Nationalist newspaper, the sentenced female republican prisoners complained of:

... badly cooked cabbage three or four times a week, sloppy potatoes and poor quality meat. The food is usually served cold. Milk has been reduced from one half pint per day to one eighth of a pint, this is hardly sufficient (Irish News, September 25, 1972).

Because the allocation of food recreates the pains of penal deprivation, it precipitated one of the earliest and most basic forms of confrontation in Armagh prison, when prisoners threw food on the floors of the cells, or refused to eat it. Prisoners' complaints were either trivialised or the matter was administratively resolved by 'rational' improvements to provision, organising other administrative agencies to ratify the conditions of the regime or accommodating grievances into the complaints procedures (Sparks et al, 1996: 164). For example, the Armagh Prison Board of Visitors inspected the food following complaints, and said it was of a high standard in quality and quantity.² The Chairman of the Board remarked that although they had spoken to male and female prisoners, there had never been complaints about the food, and 'only a few trivial complaints had been brought to the governor's attention' (Irish News, May 14, 1971). In the following years, the prison service continued to emphasise that the 'the standard of food and the quantities offered to prisoners remained high, with daily variation of menus' (NIPS, 1978:16), and was 'of good and nutritious standard, ratified by the medical staff' (NIPS, 1980: 18).

Food protests were incorporated by prisoners into broader strategies for establishing their presence as a political body through the use of short, tactical hunger strikes which were directed at a range of political grievances against internment, in support of the transfer ('repatriation') of prisoners from British prisons, and as part of coordinated protests with republicans in other prisons (Irish News, September 21, 1971: Irish News, October 27, 1972: Irish News, November 26, 1974). Five women participated in a hunger strike in 1972, which was initiated by male republican prisoners, and lasted five weeks before winning special category status. Furthermore, food allowances were embedded in the political economy of discipline and regulation. While dietary restrictions were not imposed as punishment for disciplinary infractions in Armagh, access to mail, visits and food parcels was removed. Prisoners with political status, who supplemented the prison diet with extra food parcels from their families, had these confiscated or withheld as punishment for breaches

²Under the terms of the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1954, the Secretary of State was obliged to appoint a Board of Visitors to every prison to oversee its workings and participate in adjudications (i.e. punishment proceedings) as necessary. Each board consisted of at least two Justices of the Peace and, in the case of women's prisons, at least two women. Other members were drawn from designated panels such as trade unions and the voluntary sector.

of the prison rules (Irish News, March 6, 1973).

Medical provision

Medical provision in the Northern Ireland prison system was provided on 'an agency basis', staffed by GPs from local practices and supplemented with locum staff during the evenings and weekends (May, 1979: 58). The prison medical service was the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services, whose Senior Medical Officer consulted directly with the Director of Regimes of the Prison Service. A male doctor was assigned on a part-time basis to Armagh prison, and a nursing sister was employed there on a full-time basis as well as medical orderlies, or discipline officers trained in basic medical care (May, 1979: 60-61). There was no regular system of inspection of the Northern Ireland prison medical system, although 'satisfactory' levels of provision were occasionally noted in general reviews (May, 1979: Home Office et al., 1979: Home Office, 1987)

According to Sim, the distribution of health facilities in prisons reflects the utilitarian principle of 'less eligibility', where care is provided 'in a way which [does] not better or indeed equal the care that those beyond the walls received' (Sim, 1990: 12). The relatively lower cost of provision on an 'agency basis', as opposed to having a permanent medical service, was the predominant consideration in organising prison medical services in Northern Ireland (NIPS, 1972 until 1976: 13). Sim has also argued that positive medical relationships are militated against in prison because the provision of treatment complements penal discipline (Sim, 1990), especially where medical orderlies are disciplinary officers who perform medical tasks. Republican women prisoners highlighted multifaceted problems with access to medical care:

Medical conditions are, to say the least, inadequate. Medicine is handed out by one medical officer, from the top of the stairs. If a prisoner cannot go down to receive treatment, then she does not get any. Some prisoners have refused treatment because of the attitude taken by this particular officer (Irish News, September 25, 1972).

Furthermore, apart from questions of provision, some of the reasons for the inaccessibility of basic medical care to political, and women prisoners, can be discerned from the background of medical orderlies. In defending its system of providing medical personnel, the prison service argued that:

... these men have statutory nursing qualifications prior to entering the prison service, and a great majority had nursing experience in the *army* (NIPS, 1977: 12: emphasis added).

Official response to the concerns of prisoners also tended to be couched in narrow terms of progressive provision and gradual 'improvements' in allocating and managing resources:

From the earliest period inmates were medically interviewed and clinically examined within 24 hours of remand (NIPS, 1972 until 1976: 13) ... The ratio of medical officers to inmates in any one establishment compares favourably with the ratio of general practitioners to the population in Northern Ireland, as does the response time to sudden illness or injury both during normal working hours and silent hours (NIPS, 1977: 12).

This initial 'medical interview' and 'clinical examination' to which the first report refers took place as part of reception to prison, a process which has been connected by Goffman (1991: 27) with the 'mortifying' rites of passage into prison, and described by Carlen (1998: 43) in terms of the exposure of the bodies of prisoners as sites of the 'state's power to punish', and by Sim (1990: chapter five) as an example of the subordination of prisoners to multilateral disciplinary, medical, psychiatric and surveillant analysis. As with the other aspects of prison conditions, medical provision was also continuously subjected to criticism about its shortcomings from civil liberties and prison welfare organisations. As prisoners increasingly resorted to strategies of public exposure, prison medicine was inserted into broader debates about the political accountability of the prison system, and continued to inform official sensitivities about 'persistent, unfounded allegations of brutality and neglect' in the provision of medical services (NIPS, 1980: 16).

Education and training

Educational provision in Armagh was shaped by paternalistic perceptions about appropriate provision for women prisoners. The educational service had initially provided training and prison work in cooking, needlecrafts and laundry, in line with the prevailing rehabilitative aspiration for women, which aimed to advance their domestic skills in preparation for appropriate gender roles after release (Dobash et al., 1986: chapter seven). A very small number of prisoners were involved in the available work of tailoring, laundry and cleaning because the overwhelming majority of women were interned or had political status, and not obliged to engage in prison work. The prison system was not obliged to provide work or education for the high number of remand prisoners, unless they were minors. Academic tuition was introduced after representations by political prisoners, as a significant number of juvenile prisoners had been incarcerated while they had been studying for school and college courses. They pressed through the chaplaincy, welfare and external organisations to be allowed to continue their academic studies. Others viewed access to appropriate prison education and alternatives to prison work as a right which corresponded with their political status. By the mid-1970s, the educational programme in Armagh consisted of 'remedial subjects', physical recreation, shorthand and typing, dressmaking, handicrafts, Irish Gaelic, and politics and history classes (NIPS, 1972 until 1976: 15).

In the late 1970s, prison education reverted to a primarily vocational programme because of 'steady diminution in the number of special category prisoners and the introduction of the young offenders centre within the prison' (NIPS, 1979: 31) Academic courses for public examinations were 'largely replaced' with remedial subjects in numeracy and literacy, 'to combat the educational retardation which was seen as a direct result of the truancy and behavioural problems' of young offenders (NIPS 1979: 31). However, an alternative explanation for the decline in academic courses was that it was due to 'activities of the protesting prisoners who ... withdrew from all educational programmes' or were deprived of educational 'privileges' for participating in protests against the removal of political status after 1976 (NIPS, 1980: 19). From 1977, most of the educational pro-

grammes were withdrawn as 'non-effective'.

Counter-disciplinary formations and political status

Special category, or 'political' status was introduced in 1972 in the context of a truce between the British government and republican paramilitary organisations. The new arrangement was viewed by the government to be a pragmatic settlement which offered prison administrators some flexibility and respite from potential confrontation in the prisons, and practically addressed the problems of containing prisoners, given the inadequacy of the conventional facilities available (Rees, 1985: chapter six). The official designation 'special category status' intentionally retained the meaning that the policy did not grant political recognition to prisoners, and that it could be revoked in the event of future conflict in the prisons. In practice, it was viewed by the administration as an exceptional set of allowances and privileges, such as those covering mail, parcels and visits, the segregated association of loyalist and republican factions, and the right not to wear a uniform or engage in compulsory prison work.

With the introduction of political status, republican women prisoners formalised their structures into the Provisional IRA 'A' Company (Armagh) in 1974. 'A' company, was divided into three sections named after women volunteers who had been killed on 'active service'; Ethel Lynch from Derry (1974); Vivienne Fitzsimmons, Downpatrick (1973); and Julie Dougan, Portadown (1972) (Irish News, November 23, 1974). It was recognised by the governor and staff as the political structure through which political prisoners formally mediated with the authorities. Their Commanding Officer (O/C) mediated disputes, negotiated with the governors on behalf of prisoners, and maintained an ethos of internal discipline and community by allocating the work of the company, conducting roll calls, wing inspections and political meetings. Their self-organisation also helped to minimise the presence of officers on the wings (D'arcy 1981: 59-61). Segregated political association was made possible by the construction of 'improvised passageways' and

‘makeshift’ wooden partitions ‘separating the different factions’ (Times, March 12, 1975). However, the ‘staff remain[ed] alert’ and ‘staff and the authorities had closer contact with inmates’ than in Long Kesh (Ibid.).

A prisoner wishing to claim political status applied to the paramilitary organisation of her choice and either satisfied the requirement that she was acting under orders, or that her terms of sentence qualified her for consideration as a member. The political structures produced what Sykes identified as ‘rank and file specialists’ who played formative roles in consolidating the segregated and resistant orientation of ‘A’ Company in Armagh (Sykes, 1958: chapter five). Internees initially took specialist roles, partly because they were the most visible group in the public consciousness, having been described as victims of state harassment by their own organisations which were ‘opposed to [the] internment without charge or trial of *our* women’ (Irish Republican Bureau, January 19, 1973: emphasis added). The first women internees installed systems for identifying incoming peers and making contact with them. As internees had relatively greater access to visits and postal communication, they organised lines of communications and petitions to the outside through a series of ‘comms.’ which outlined the central contention of republican prisoners, namely that they ‘refused to recognise the attitude of the authorities, as they had not been charged or put on trial’ (Irish Independent, June 23, 1973).

Convicted prisoners with determinate sentences adapted relatively quickly to the principles of realigning the prison regime to their objectives. Like the internees, they were coordinated within their prisoner structures across the prisons, and organised in accordance with the standing orders and directives of their respective organisations as political affiliates in prison. Republican O/Cs tended to be drawn from the sentenced prisoners, and were normally appointed from the outside by the general army council. They in turn appointed staff from the prisoners, such as a second-in-command, welfare officer, quartermaster and education officer (D’arcy, 1981: 59). As sentenced prisoners entitled to political status, their role as representatives of the prisoners was legitimated by protocol between the political groups and the administration.

Modes of re-enclosure: mundane discipline and punishment

Republican historiography asserts that ‘the system was effectively railroaded into working along with the prison structure’ in Armagh prison (Iris, 1984: 1: 4, 17). This lays claim to a greater degree of autonomy than occurred in practice. In reality, the women’s political formations tended to develop more tacitly, and in accordance with the quality of reciprocal relationships that could be established with senior and discipline staff. The problem was aggravated by structural influences and constraints. The implementation of special category status relied on the discretion exercised by successive governors over precisely what conditions or modifications to the regime were consistent within the terms of ‘political status’, or which of the prisoners’ demands exceeded them. Of equal importance was the extent to which a governor’s authority held sway over discipline staff who were reluctant to relinquish their positions of influence over prisoners. Vigorously opposed to the introduction of political status, an increasingly militant Prison Officers’ Association (POA) had begun to express their opposition to the policy through work stoppages and industrial action, and by using covert forms of obstruction such as refusing to handle correspondence written in Irish (Gaelic), ostensibly because of the potential dangers posed to members by smuggled intelligence or weapons.

Additionally, the insularity of prison life, and the fact that political prisoners were still formally bound by the prison rules, gave rise to inescapable tensions and conflicts. Prisoners referred to a catalogue of petty harassments and infantilising practices. The cell lights were outside the cells, and prisoners, who were locked in their cells at night had to ask to go out to the toilet. At mealtimes, the guards would count the spoons before and after meals. Food was put out on trays, to be taken back to their cells for consumption. Small ‘privileges’ such as permission to use flasks to hold hot beverages, were removed as punishment for breaches of discipline. As prisoners supplemented the prison diet with food parcels, delays in their delivery gave rise to inevitable charges from prisoners about interference or theft by staff.

The province of distribution is also a complex matrix of other penal powers such as domination and discipline. After mortification, it is 'largely the privileges system that provides a framework for personal reorganisation' (Goffman, 1991: 51). Food, time, personal privacy, emotional and physical autonomy are subject to a range of conditions, including conformity and, as such, reinforce 'the pains of indeterminacy' and magnify 'the losses experienced by all prisoners' into 'losses specifically associated with indeterminate sentences' (Walker and Worrall, 2000: 30). In this context, the distributive and disciplinary realms of penal authority merge in subtle, but significant ways. In particular, they open up prisoners' resistance to rationing and everyday deprivation to the realm of penal control in which minor, 'vexatious', or 'irrational' infractions become privileged sites of discipline and punishment. Prison regulations are extensive and meticulous in their prescriptions of infringements, and the potential for arbitrary and opportunistic punishment for minor infringements in women's prisons has been noted as a cause of stress and confrontation (Carlen, 1983, 1998; Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). Serious offences usually constitute the smallest category of recorded infringements by far in women's prisons, whereas the areas of critical concern have been with the looser and more discretionary categories of 'minor' offences which cover behaviour and demeanour (Home Office, 1995; Quinn, 1995; Carlen, 1998: 124-128). Women in prison are charged more frequently, and given proportionately higher punishments for lesser infractions against the prison regulations, than male prisoners (Home Office, 1995). In this context, critical attention has been turned to the ideological and structural supports which legitimise the primacy of mundane correction in the context of related, and equally loosely-defined, standards and expectations which pertain to disciplining women. The gendered disparity in internal punishment systems has been interpreted by Carlen in terms of the differential application of social norms, where women are perceived to be less violent than male prisoners, leading to the 'habit of imprinting authority on women', and where the punishment of minor infractions reflects the 'higher standards of behaviour' expected of women (Carlen, 1988: 86).

These analyses cumulatively suggest that punishment in women's prisons is vested in routine and commonplace policing of prisoners' behaviour, and ties together the discretionary authority held by discipline and senior staff, pre-emptive interception of

'minor' infractions, and preconceptions about the nature of 'disorderly' women. They also suggest that the capacity for localised contention occurs across a range of social interactions that are on the margins of formal disciplinary mechanisms. In this context, the low levels of formal punishments awarded for offences against the prison rules in Armagh from 1972 to 1976, appear to deviate from established patterns of gendered discipline (Appendix Three: Table 1). However, these modest figures have to be explained in the context of the withdrawal of prisoners from interaction with staff during the operation of special category status. Indeed, levels of punishment were higher the year before its introduction in 1972, and only began to rise again after political status was removed (Ibid.).

The relatively low levels of recorded punishments between 1972 and 1976 appeared to confirm the conclusions drawn by senior prison administrators that special category status placed considerable constraints on detecting and intervening in substantial, underlying levels of disorder (Gardiner, 1975). An alternative explanation suggests that the low levels of formal punishment may have reflected the relative success of the principle of disengagement operated by political prisoners, which minimised the conflicts that arise from interacting with prison staff, who had fewer opportunities to monitor individuals, detect infractions, recruit informants, or exercise other conventional forms of establishing influence over prisoners, especially in women's prisons (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: Marquart: 1986). As McKeown (2001: 27-48), has argued in relation to republican male prisoners, and Crawford (1999: 35-52) with respect to loyalists, politically organised prisoners had recourse to a self-subscribing disciplinary code and community which acted as surrogate disciplinary and ethical influences. Whilst this view of counter-authorising inmate structures in relation to women prisoners is problematised in chapter three, it is noted here that political status did not exempt women prisoners from other regulatory or punitive influences. Rather, the cumulative effects of formal punitive mechanisms and discretionary regulation, the economy of resourcing and, as the next section discusses, the use of overt institutional violence, framed an holistic basis of antagonism between women political prisoners and the penal administration.

Modes of re-enclosure: punitive responses to resistance

At least one major disturbance in which a number of women prisoners in Armagh were reported to have been injured occurred each year between 1973 and 1975. Other allegations of assaults and the mistreatment of individual prisoners also filtered through to the public domain in the period. In 1973, a failed escape attempt by three women was followed by a punitive and violent response against the escapees and other prisoners (Irish News, March 5, 1973). The escape had been collectively organised and prisoners on A1 Wing had created diversionary incidents to distract staff and army personnel. Prison staff were joined by joint army/police riot control units, who restored order by violently returning all prisoners to their cells and imposing a general lockdown. More disturbances continued after the escapees were apprehended, as prisoners protested against the treatment of the escapees, who had been badly assaulted. Accounts of the incident also indicated the tenuous balance of authority on questions of security between the army and police and Hugh Cunningham, the governor, who had unsuccessfully intervened to stop the assaults on prisoners. As with later disturbances, the events were obscured by the minimal information available from the NIO, which tended to describe events in terms of the tactical restoration of security:

Efforts were made to persuade [the prisoners] with normal prison discipline and it was subsequently necessary for prison officers to use a minimum amount of force (Irish News, March 6, 1973).

A number of allegations emerged in the ensuing public controversy, notably about the random and excessive use of force against a large number of uninvolved prisoners, and the role of male police and military personnel in violent assaults against women prisoners. Paddy Devlin, then MP for the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), alleged that the governor of the prison had failed to restrain army personnel and staff, claiming that he 'had the situation under control after the escape attempt was stopped, yet he continued to direct severe punitive measures against the prisoners' (Irish News, March 8, 1973). Devlin's requests for immediate visits to the prison by a team of doctors and solicitors, and for disciplinary action against staff who were responsible for 'excessive violence', were

turned down by the NIO (Irish News, March 8, 1973).

On October 16, 1974, a series of co-ordinated disturbances by republican prisoners occurred at Long Kesh, Magilligan and Armagh prisons. The governor and three female officers at Armagh were taken hostage by republican (and one loyalist) prisoners, but were released unharmed after fourteen hours. During the subsequent lockdown, which lasted three days, military personnel moved into the prison and cut off the electricity and water supplies (Iris, 1984: 1: 4, 17-18). The disturbance started after republican prisoners in Long Kesh burned their compound down. The women's request to confirm news about the male prisoners, some of whom were relatives, with a Sinn Féin representative was refused, and at a prisoner's company meeting they decided to disrupt the prison with a riot, and 'cause as much damage as possible to the jail' (Iris, 1984: 1: 4, 18).

Male juvenile and female prisoners at Armagh were treated according to perceptions of their common disruptiveness, 'immaturity' and secondary social status. Republican women prisoners had previously drawn public attention to the mistreatment of juveniles in the Borstal at Armagh, and were considered by staff to have encouraged the juveniles to stage protests over their conditions. In September 1975, they intervened after the juveniles had been drilled intensively in the exercise yard as punishment for fighting (Newsletter, September 29, 1975). In the ensuing disturbance, three juveniles and four prison officers were injured, while a woman prisoner was reported by the NIO to have acquired 'self-inflicted injuries' (Irish Times, September 29, 1975). The civil liberties group, the Association for Legal Justice (ALJ) later said that the injured woman 'had been left on her cell floor bleeding for two hours and her wound required 30 stitches'. The official statement from the NIO 'did not state these facts', nor disclose an official reason for the disturbances (ALJ, September 30, 1975).

Adams argues that a military approach for suppressing prison disturbances tends to predominate over more historically tenuous innovations such as mediation or negotiation (Adams, 1992: chapter five). The strategies for controlling disturbances at Armagh prison followed the more widely applied principles of riot control in Northern Ireland, which

emphasised 'aggressive containment', isolation and dispersal and 'tactical intervention' in identifying the 'principal perpetrators' (Times, March 12, 1975). The suppression of the disturbance was followed by quarantining the prison from the public domain by denying pastoral representatives access to prisoners, confining prisoners to their cells, and cancelling visits and the receipt of mail for at least three days. Requests by prisoners for external scrutiny or independent medical examination were refused. Scraton, Sim and Skidmore (1991) have argued that the use of such strategies follow classic patterns of official denial, justification, and the reversal of liability in the event of disputed causality of prison disturbances. In these instances, significant details about the origins of violence are obscured by the closure of channels of communication, and explanations other than official ones about the severity of measures taken to restore order are subject to intense official rebuttal and the delegitimisation (Ibid., chapter three). In particular, the testimonies of prisoners are reduced to official counter-claims that they are, at best, tainted by self interest and, at worst, motivated by personal or political subversiveness. Finally, the degree of violence used to quell disturbances is justified on the basis that the 'minimum use of force' is necessary, and legitimised by a consensus about the 'volatility' and 'dangerousness' of the prisoners involved (Ibid., 63: Adams, 1992).

Gendered aspects of reactive containment, 1972 - 1976

The patterns of maintaining penal order in the Armagh prison during the period of 'reactive containment' alternated between coercive and concessionary approaches. In part, this reflected a fundamental confusion of direction in penal policy, which derived from a combination of the structural deficiencies and arcane character of the penal regime for women, and the absence of clear operational principles with respect to the implementation of special category status. The ambiguity of official policy with respect to order and discipline was tellingly reflected in the view that, deprived of a 'middle ground' of conventional penal controls, prison administrators were required to resort to severe remedies to restore order. Neither were the inconsistencies of the regime reducible to the argument advanced by 'modernisers' such as Gardiner that a combined lack of appropriate security measures in the prisons, and the existence of 'exceptional' and privileged variations

in prison regimes, contributed in the long term to an unnecessarily punitive climate.

Rather, even these positions understate the gendered particularities in the construction of 'disorderly' political women prisoners, which were inferred as much from their disengagement from correctional influences and withdrawal from dependency on staff, as from their political or organisational capabilities. The development by women of their political, collective structures was shaped as much by the need for self-protection and preservation, as from political opportunism in exploiting discrepancies in the penal regime. While the confusion of the early years of political imprisonment enabled women prisoners to develop political, symbolic, and cultural resources for resistance, many distinctive constraints on their capacity to organise collectively persisted. Special category status was implemented in a much more uneven and tenuous form in the women's prison, and many of its conditions were introduced later than in the male establishments. The degree of official tolerance for their political structure was tempered by trivialising their objectives, and by official presumptions about the capacity to circumscribe their political development through ideological, behavioural and physical deterrents. Because they could not mobilise the same force of numbers as their male peers, the onus was placed on 'A' Company to confront various domains of penal control through a range of negotiating strategies, as well as confrontation. Consequently, much of their political work was practically displaced into managing interpersonal relationship with successive governors and other authorities. However, when women prisoners collectively challenged penal discipline through confrontation, the use of force was officially endorsed as a legitimate, appropriate and efficient mode of restoring order.

Criminalisation, 1976-1981

The phase of 'criminalisation' commenced with the removal of special category status in 1976 and, arguably, lasted until the ending of the 1981 hunger strike at the Maze, in which ten republican male prisoners died. Its administrative character was defined by the adjustment of penal policy in concert with re-legitimising the rule of law, the criminalisation of politically affiliated prisoners and the enforcement of standard, 'ordinary' disciplinary

regimes. The period was notable as the most intensive phase of conflict in the prisons, which brought political prisoners, mainly republicans, into their most explicit confrontation with the penal administration.

The 'criminalisation' policy was enacted in the Treatment of Offenders Act (Northern Ireland), 1976, which formally ended internment, and revoked special category status for incoming prisoners sentenced after March 1, 1976. The maximum rate of remission was raised from a third to a half of sentences served, as an additional incentive for conformity for sentenced prisoners, other than those serving life sentences, which applied uniquely in Northern Ireland. The removal of special category status had been held back for the duration of the Constitutional Convention, which ended in March 1976, having failed to find a political settlement to the conflict. Merlyn Rees, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, had previously indicated his intentions to implement the recommendations of the Gardiner report for 'phasing out detention consistent with the requirements of the security situation' and, more tellingly, 'to show that detention could be ended if there was a response from the paramilitaries' (Rees, 1985: 127).

The non-cooperation protest, 1976 - 1981

A month after political status was revoked, republican women prisoners indicated their intention to withdraw from welfare, educational and work programmes and 'any of the state-introduced activities in the prison' (Irish News, April 2, 1976). The non-cooperation strike entailed:

[A] policy of non-participation with the governor in the running of the jail. By this course of action [we] will show our disgust at the British government in trying to class anyone charged with a political offence committed after March 1 as a criminal. We will support those affected by the removal of political status until they get what is rightfully theirs. The only way open to us is to make the system within the jail unworkable. They can imprison our bodies, but not our spirits (Irish News, April 21, 1976).

On October 13, 1976, male republican prisoners at the Maze initiated a direct, collective challenge to the criminalisation policy, after the first prisoner to be sentenced after March 1, Kieran Nugent, refused to wear the prison uniform, and was placed in solitary confinement wearing only a blanket, in pursuit of the restoration of political status. Their objectives were formulated in 'five demands', i.e. for free peer association; self-subscribing recreational and educational facilities; one visit and parcel weekly; no prison work; and no prison uniform (Coogan, 1980: O' Malley, 1990: Feldman, 1991: Ellman, 1993: Campbell et al., 1994).

In December 1976, the first woman to be sentenced for a scheduled offence and denied political status, Brenda Murray, was reported to be in 'solitary confinement' in Armagh prison (Irish News, December 3, 1976). She was joined within a month by Mairéad Farrell and Elizabeth Morgan in the 'fight for the retention of political status' (Irish News, December 31, 1976). Within a year, fourteen women prisoners were refusing to engage in compulsory activities (Irish Times, September 12, 1977: Irish Times, October 11, 1978). By 1979, thirty four sentenced and four remand prisoners were on the protest, in addition to four 'status' prisoners, sentenced before criminalisation came into effect, who 'morally supported' the strikers (H-Block Information Bureau, n.d. (circa 1979)). The strikes for the restoration of political status at Armagh initially took the form of withdrawal from prison education, refusal to do prison work, refusing to interact with staff or follow orders not transmitted through their commanding officer. In the first few months of the non-cooperation strike, republican women prisoners noted that their protests had not significantly inconvenienced the prison administration:

In Armagh Jail there has been nothing like the degree of tension [as in the Maze]. Interference and communication between staff and prisoners has been kept to a minimum by *mutual consent*. [However] it was doubtful ... that these relations would continue (Irish News, October 11, 1976: emphasis added).

Modes of re-enclosure: discipline and punishment

The revocation of special category status allowed the full application of the prison rules and the reintroduction of 'normal' disciplinary procedures. Although the obligation to adhere to the prison rules had formally stood during the period of political status, it had been rendered almost ineffective by the 'shield' of the prisoner's structures. The effects of the return of formal adjudication against the non-co-operating prisoners were dramatic and contentious. After the first year of the non-cooperation strikes in Armagh prison alone, the number of recorded disciplinary infractions rose sixteen-fold, from 33 to 550, while the number of punishments awarded increased 23 fold from the previous year (Appendix Three: Tables 2 and 2b). The rates of recorded offences doubled again in 1978, to just over 1,000, and increased by a further 70 per cent in 1979 (Ibid.). Furthermore, the small number of women who were punished evidenced the concentration of the punishment system against those involved in the political campaigns. In 1977, the number of women disciplined totalled 45 for 550 infringements and 944 awards of punishments, or a ratio of 21 punishments for every prisoner convicted (Ibid.). This increased to 57 awards per prisoner convicted in 1979. In addition, new, specified offences were created as the protest continued. In 1977, a new category of 'refusing to work or wear a prison uniform' was introduced (NIPS, 1978), while in 1979, the offence of 'non-conformity' was implemented (NIPS, 1980).

The conspicuously enlarged role of the adjudication system against the protesting prisoners prompted the authorities to distance the administration from any political, instrumental motives that could be inferred from it:

For the duration of their sentences [prisoners] are members of small, enclosed communities, confined within clearly defined physical perimeters. In such circumstances, if firm control were lacking, the weak would be at the mercy of the strong and life would become unbearable for many prisoners (NIPS: 1979: 15).

In the context of increasing indiscipline, and the failure to curtail the non-cooperation strike, the authorities sought to downplay the extent of the women's prison protest:

At Armagh, some thirty women continued to refuse to work but otherwise did not actively seek confrontation with the prison authorities (NIPS: 1979: 16).

Moreover, as there had been less 'overt confrontation' in Armagh than in the Maze:

... punishments awarded *were correspondingly less* - letters were not restricted and association was not lost *to the same extent*. With the exception of association, which could no longer be free, owing to the prisoners' aggressive behaviour, there has been no change in the regime other than that self-imposed by the prisoner (NIO, 1981: 11: emphasis added).

Contradictorily, the prison service also defended the:

... large numbers of offences listed under 'other breaches of regulations' and punishments under 'loss of privileges' [which reflected] the groups of prisoners engaged in the various prison protests ... In Northern Ireland the system is faced with cohesive groups of prisoners, many convicted or held on remand for the most serious of offences, who seek to challenge the conditions of their imprisonment and the very legitimacy of the State which imprisons them (NIPS, 1981: 13).

In 1980, the number of infringements dropped by two thirds, and remained constant, although relatively high, until 1984. Although it is difficult to establish one predominant factor, a number of external as well as internal influences contributed to the apparent decrease in indiscipline. From 1980, the system of recording punishments was changed, so that the number of repeat offenders and the ratio of multiple punishments borne by individual prisoners could not be so clearly established. These changes in calculation may have reflected an increased political sensitivity about conditions in the prisons in the context of growing international pressure on the British government over the five demands. An alternative view is that the character of confrontation in the prison had shifted to informal violence and an escalating culture of retaliation on the part of both prisoners and staff (Faul, 1978: 135-137: Armagh Observer, March 24, 1979: Irish News, April 5, 1980). The decrease in formal punishment from 1980 was also related to changes in the direction taken by republican prisoners, who shifted their protest to more direct and extreme forms. As discussed below, republican prisoners at Armagh were engaged in a 'no wash' protest for much of 1980. Prisoners also suspended elements of the non-cooperation protest to coincide with two hunger strikes, in 1980 and 1981, respectively. With the escalation of the

prison protests to a far more serious and politically-contentious scale, the authorities pursued more repressive measures for quarantining the effects of disorder in the prison. In this context, the decrease in recorded punishments from 1980 does not conclusively establish a break from the momentum of conflict that had gathered in Armagh prison. Rather, the methods for establishing control reflected a shift in focus from individual punishment to more conspicuously repressive measures enacted against the protesters as a group.

The No wash protest, 1980³

The precise origins of the 'No wash' protest are obscured in the debates and counter-claims amongst prisoners, civil libertarians, republican prisoner welfare organisations and the Northern Ireland Office. The circumstances in which thirty six women were subjected to a lock down which precipitated their 'No wash' strike of ten months were reported accordingly. On February 7, 1980, a republican prisoner told the prison chaplain and her MP that she had been assaulted after being prevented by staff from leaving her cell to go to the toilet when she was ill. The following day, the NIO issued a statement that a number of women had been locked in their cells and deprived of toilet facilities, except for the 'slop-pots' (sic) in their cells (Irish News, February 8, 1980). The day after, the prison service confirmed that the lockdown was implemented following a disturbance after 'paramilitary clothing and flags' were discovered during a search of the republican wing (Irish Press, February 9, 1980). That morning, a separate disturbance had broken out when five republican prisoners were carried bodily to attend a fortnightly disciplinary hearing to account for charges of indiscipline accrued in their non-cooperation protest (Irish Times, February 9, 1980). Prisoners' relatives said that thirty three republican and three loyalist prisoners were involved, and that most had been beaten by prison staff (Irish Press, February 9, 1980). The NIO later said that there had been no incidents until midday, when the sentenced prisoners were collecting their meal while the prisoners in the other wings were locked up,

³The 'Blanket Protest' began in the Maze on October 13, 1976, when republican prisoners refused to wear the prison uniform (compulsory for male prisoners), and were placed in solitary confinement wearing only a blanket. In 1978, over 300 male prisoners stepped up the existing campaign by refusing to wash, wear clothing, or use sanitary facilities and by defacing their cells with excreta. The 'no wash' protest refers to the women's strike, which pursued the same tactics, except that they wore their own clothing. The women's strike is referred to here as the no wash strike.

and the governor announced a wing and cell search, with which the prisoners refused to cooperate (Irish Times, February 9, 1980). Male officers from the Maze had been called in to assist in the search, and it further emerged that, in the ensuing disturbance, male 'trade officers' or maintenance staff 'went to the aid of women warders when trouble broke out as 'B' wing was searched' (Irish News, February 9, 1980). The republican sentenced prisoners were shifted to 'A' wing and subject to a lockdown over the weekend. On February 12, the women started to throw the contents of their slop buckets out of cell windows into the exercise yard below them. When cell doors were opened for meals and evening recreation the women scattered excrement and urine across the landings. The prison department at the NIO later claimed that by the following Monday 'most of the women' in the whole prison were washing themselves and that the claims that prisoners were 'forced into a "no wash" protest were a fabrication' (Belfast Telegraph, February 14, 1980).

From the official perspective, access to sanitary, recreational and other facilities was available to prisoners if they agreed to conform to the prison regulations and end their protest. For ten months, over thirty women (later twenty six) were confined to their cells for twenty three hours a day, refusing access to sanitary and other facilities on the basis that it was subject to conforming to the criminal regime.⁴ Prisoners eventually took to smearing the walls and ceilings of their cells with excrement and menstrual blood, and draining urine underneath their cell doors (D'arcy, 1981: 51). They damaged the fittings and furniture in their cells, with the result that the governor ordered the removal of cell furniture, except for one iron bedstead, one mattress and one pillow. The fetid condition of the cells was compounded by the accumulation of excrement and leftover food, and because the circulation of air and natural light was blocked when cell windows were boarded up by staff to prevent prisoners from pouring out their waste. The grim conditions of the strike emerged through 'comms.' smuggled from the protest wing:

⁴While thirty six women were involved in the initial disturbance and lockdown, the no wash protest commenced with thirty four republican prisoners. This was reduced to twenty six as six prisoners were released after having served all of their sentences without parole, and two more sentenced republican prisoners went off the protest, citing health reasons (H-Block Information Bureau, n.d.).

We have been here on 'A' wing since the 15th of February, and conditions have rapidly deteriorated. We are on a twenty three hour lock up and are living in cells completely covered with excreta ... After three months of living under inhuman conditions, surrounded by our own excreta and denied basic human rights, we are suffering considerably. Our bodies are encrusted with dirt[,] our hair is matted and greasy to the touch, and the smell emanating from our bodies is really disgusting. To lie in a cell smeared with excreta is a hideous experience, but we have to endure it. It is either this or accept the label 'criminal' and none of us here on this protest are criminals. We are prisoners of war, gaoled for political acts and firm in the knowledge that what we are fighting for is just.

Our cells are dark and dreary and the fact that there are boards on the windows does not help. As a result of this, no daylight enters our cells and we have to keep the electric lights on. Very little air gets in either, so there is no way to dissapate [sic] the stench that assails us. We have one hour of exercise each day, one hour of fresh air, a chance to stretch our legs and to see the sky. This may not sound like much, but to us it is the high point of our day. Not only do we get out of our cell but we also see nine of our comrades. The same nine girls each time, but at least we have some contact with each other (Freil, 'A' Wing Armagh Prison, May, 1980).

Hunger strike, December 1980

The 'No wash' strike lasted until December 1, 1980, when three women prisoners, Mairéad Farrell, Mary Doyle and Mairéad Nugent joined a republican hunger strike that had been in progress in the Maze since October 27. The decision to escalate their protests to a hunger strike occurred after republican prisoners rejected a series of concessions on clothing and limited association as inadequate and unrelated to the question of political recognition. In an interview after her release, Farrell said that the women's decision was prompted partly by the need to 'create an additional source of pressure on the prison authorities', and also because of a 'calculated risk' that the deaths of women in prison would place 'additional moral pressure' on the government to come to an agreement with republican prisoners (Magill, October 1986: 4-5).⁵ Farrell was initially separated from the other two strikers, but soon all three were moved to a separate wing. They refused all food, but drank water and took salt tablets. By the eleventh day, all three women were moved to the prison hospital,

⁵Farrell was the PIRA commanding officer in Armagh prison from December 1979 until her release in 1986. She was influential in determining the separate status of 'A' company within the republican prisoner structures, and in directing the tactics of the women's protests in Armagh prison. She was one of the three PIRA members, along with Daniel McCann and Sean Savage, who were killed by the SAS in Gibraltar in March 1988.

by which time Farrell was experiencing difficulty in swallowing. On December 19, Farrell was informed by the acting O/C, Sheila Darragh, that the NIO had come to an agreement with the prisoners at the Maze, and the strike was called off.

Farrell, Doyle and Nugent had joined the 1980 hunger strike in the face of contrary advice from the IRA leadership outside, having earlier planned their possible entry onto a cross-prison strike at least a month before the Maze prisoners commenced theirs. Farrell had written to her counterpart in the Maze, Bobby Sands, arguing that they had already drawn the conclusion that the 'No wash' protest needed to be augmented, and that the participation of women in a hunger strike would introduce additional practical and symbolic dimensions to the whole prison protest:

As was generally expected here the Cardinal/Atkins talks were a failure.⁶ We have been making a general assessment of the No wash protest here to see if there is any way in which we could step up the protest for status. We all believe that something else, some other form of action is needed to ram it home to the Brits. So discussion at present is heavy (Farrell, Armagh prison, September 29, 1980).

The first hunger strike was aborted in December, 1980, amid recriminations from republican prisoners that the government had reneged on the negotiated agreement which had prompted them to call off their strike, and counter-claims from the government that they had substantially acceded to the 'humanitarian' aspects of the five demands, without conceding the moral principle of non-recognition. A second hunger strike commenced on March 1, 1981, which involved male prisoners in the Maze only, leading to the death by starvation of ten republicans before it was halted on October 3, 1981. The second strike also ended acrimoniously, with the prisoners having achieved some of their demands - wearing their own clothing, the restoration of lost remission, freedom of association, no prison work, extra facilities - but not the reinstatement of special category status.

⁶Cardinal Tomas O' Fiach had met the Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins, on a number of occasions to mediate a settlement which would satisfy the demands of the prisoners and the policy of the government.

Gendered aspects of prison struggle

The significance of the women's protests in advancing their status within the broader republican prison campaign was shaped in the context of, even despite, contradictory ideological and strategic constraints (Loughran, 1981; Aretxaga, 1995). From the outset, the official strategy had been to marginalise the protests at Armagh by understating the severity of their conditions during the protest, and by claiming that it amounted to a relatively inconsequential, disciplinary problem. Humprey Atkins, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced:

During the last few weeks some women prisoners at Armagh have escalated their protest by refusing to wash. There is also some dirtying of the cells, but the situation is by no means comparable with that at Maze. There is no truth in the allegations, inherently unlikely, that the women were forced into this form of protest by being denied access to toilets (Belfast News Letter, March 27, 1980).

Similarly, the initial ambivalence of the republican leadership towards their involvement in the first hunger strike had left them at risk of remaining on the peripheries of the prison campaign. The move by women prisoners to embark on a hunger strike had been opposed by the IRA Army Council, who were already concerned that the Maze prisoners commenced their action without the authorisation of the republican command. More concretely, by 1980, there were concerns that any escalation in the protests in Armagh would divert attention from the Maze, or overextend the movement's capacity to manage the external political fallout caused by the death of a prisoner (Coogan, 1980: 118). In addition, it was recognised by the leadership that the prison authorities considered the women's campaign to be more susceptible to curtailment, thereby placing the morale and momentum achieved in the previous years at risk. It is evident that republican women themselves were sensitive to their construction as the 'weak link in republican resistance' both within their own organisation and by the prison administration (H-Block/Armagh Committee, March 2, 1981). By contrast, they held that the legitimacy of their protests arose less from motives of 'solidarity with the ... H-Block prisoners', and more in self-defining terms as an 'uncompromising refusal to be intimidated ... into abandoning their

fight for political status' (Armagh Protest Committee, February 27, 1980). The attitude of the external republican command must also be seen in the context of their view that it was precisely the potent effects of a possible 'propaganda coup' which could be gained from women dying on hunger strike, as Farrell had advocated, that could equally become its undoing, especially given the effectiveness of the government's argument that the republican movement was a forcing house of martyrdom in which susceptible young or female volunteers were compelled or deluded onto starvation strikes.

However, the strikes had contributed to significant qualitative shifts in the internal political and organisational development of the women's structure in Armagh. The decision to upgrade their protests was vested in a multifaceted tactical shift towards positioning their conditions and demands in the larger public domain, as well as legitimising their role in the republican prisoner structure. More practically, by 1980 there were sufficient numbers of prisoners sentenced without political status to sustain a viable campaign. Similarly, Doyle's, Farrell's and Nugent's hunger strike was influenced by the need to sustain morale, as some prisoners had elected to come off the 'No wash' strike and conform to the regular regime. In this context, the role of the 'post-criminalisation' leadership, including Mary Doyle and Ellen McGuigan, O/C and second officer respectively between 1976 and 1978, offers evidence of tighter internal discipline and tactical perspicacity on the part of the women's prison structures, compared to the relative incoherence and factionality of the early 1970s. Farrell, who assumed command in 1979, and Nugent, who had relayed intelligence and mediated with external organisations during the no wash strike, had meticulously consolidated the objectives and momentum of the Armagh protests with those in the Maze. Their departure from the instructions of the external leadership was taken, with some reservations on the balance of preventing their exposure to official retaliation and of their determination not to break ranks with the other prisons (D'arcy, 1981: 95-97).

The evidence which attests to these events as pivotal to the growth in organisational cohesion and stature of the IRA women's group within their constituency remains circumstantial, if varied. In addition to the correspondence, interviews, biographies and reports used here, there is evidence of a growing official acknowledgement at that time of the

women's separate negotiating status, such as the report by the then Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins, to the House of Commons that the document of proposals to end the first hunger-strike in 1980 had been sent into both the Maze and Armagh prisons (H.C. Debs, Written Answers, December 19, 1980. col. 358-359). However, in the absence of greater access to the relevant papers or correspondence between republicans in the prisons and their leadership outside, the interpretation of crucial aspects of republican strategic thinking about the development of prison policy, and their resistance thereto, rely on scholarly reconstruction. Similarly, while former prisoners have published detailed accounts of internal ideological and tactical developments in the Maze (McKeown, 2001), no equivalent work has been produced about women republican prisoners, much less about loyalists. Therefore, the record of the precise role of the Armagh prisoners in shaping the thinking and practice of the republican prison campaign is incomplete.

Modes of re-enclosure: the medical management of prison protests.

The hunger strike is a 'traditional' and relatively common form of prison resistance, although its genealogy as a political tactic can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Ludwig, 1981; Ellman, 1993). The legal grounds in the United Kingdom for intervening to end a starvation strike against the will of the prisoners were embodied in the Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Ill-health Act (1913), or the 'Cat and Mouse' act, which ruled that prison officials had a duty to preserve the life of prisoners. Subsequently, prisoners who refused to eat were placed under the authority of prison medical officers as patients, and fed against their will, on the basis that their willingness to undergo 'self-inflicted' harm established their mental incapacitation. Alternatively, prisoners were temporarily released, subject to recall by order, and reincarcerated when they recovered. The last instance in England and Wales where forced feeding was used under these terms was during the strike by Dolours and Marion Price. The Prices, who had been imprisoned in 1973 with five other IRA operatives for bombing the Old Bailey, commenced a hunger strike in Holloway prison in pursuit of their demand to be treated as political prisoners and to be 'repatriated' to

Northern Ireland. The longevity of their hunger strike, which lasted for over 200 days (from November 12, 1973 to June 3, 1974), was due to the fact that they were forcibly fed, with intermittent respite while they brought injunctions against the prison authorities to prevent medical intervention. Following intense public pressure after the death by starvation of another IRA striker, Michael Gaughan, the Home Secretary agreed to their transfer to Armagh prison on March 18, 1975. From 1974, medical interventions were guided by the 'Jenkins protocols', formulated by the then Home Secretary for England and Wales, Roy Jenkins. These confirmed the powers of attorney held by prison medical officers to determine the competence of prisoners to make a rational decision to refuse medical treatment. While the rules did not permit a doctor to forcibly treat a patient, intervention was permitted:

[If] individual prisoners cause an unacceptable health hazard to other inmates, staff or the community, such measures as may be necessary will be taken to counter the risk (H. C. Debs. Written Answers, 19 December, 1980. col. 341-342).

Ludwig points out that the state has no positive obligation to intercede to preserve life, but considerable legal and political problems occur when the state's interest in assuming responsibility for the life of a hunger striker arises (Ludwig, 1981: 169). Despite the recourse to legal precedent, supported by clinical authority, medical intervention in hunger strikes in the United Kingdom was significantly informed by political calculations on the part of successive government ministers when applying the guidelines for intervention. In Northern Ireland, there had been no intervention in the 1972 hunger strikes which led to special category status being granted. In Britain, the decision to intervene in the case of the Price sisters two years later was prompted by the potential consequences of allowing women to die in custody, as well as creating a deterrent effect against such a protest being embarked on in the future (Coogan, 1980: 120).

During the hunger strikes of 1980-1981, the government similarly figured the protests in terms of discrete domains of professional competence and authority, guided exclusively by clinical and judicial judgements, in which the state intervened with the greatest reluctance. As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Humphrey Atkins, told the House of

Commons:

The prisoners will continue to be kept under close medical surveillance and will be offered any medical treatment that may be necessary. *This will be on the judgement of the doctors in charge*, acting in accordance with the ethics of their profession. Medical treatment is not forced on a prisoner who refuses it (H.C. Debs. 27 Nov. 1980. col. 556-7: emphasis added).

The NIO had also conferred responsibility for the prolongation of the blanket/no wash strikes to the refusal of prisoners to abandon their 'bizarre campaign of self-imposed squalor' (Irish News, March 7, 1980). By contrast, the government reconfigured its actions in terms of humane and legitimate responses to the prisoners' self-inflicted degradation:

Medical supervision of the protesters continues, as far as they themselves allow it. There have been no cases of illness attributable to the conditions, which the prisoners concerned have created for themselves (H.C. Debs. November 12, 1980. col. 245-6).

This position was affirmed by the European Commission on Human Rights which ruled in June 1980 that the prison conditions did not constitute a violation of the prisoners' human rights on the grounds that the protest was politically motivated (O' Malley, 1990: 24):

This decision clears away the carefully fostered belief that the human rights of the prisoners engaged in the protest have been interfered with. The conditions in which protesting prisoners live ... are caused by their own actions. The Commission has recognised this fact (H.C. Debs. 18 June 1980. col. 587-88).

Hystericisation, medicalisation and clemency: pathologising women's protests

Considerable critical attention has been paid to the reciprocal roles of medical practice, gendered governance and discipline and punishment in prisons (Foucault, 1967: Ignatieff, 1978: Porter, 1990: Sim, 1990) Historically, this relationship developed out of separate

penal and medical interventions for creating 'the well-adjusted individual out of an undifferentiated mass of criminals', which eventually acquired complementary jurisdiction over their subjects (Sim, 1990: preface). Furthermore, women have historically been valorised as objects of scientific paradigms, initially as the material and metaphorical 'other' of Enlightenment thought, and by the end of the nineteenth century, as distinctive subjects of criminal pathologisation in psychiatric and eugenicist narratives (Martin, 1989). Feminist scholarship has also pointed to the history of clinical innovation as a consequence of the psychiatric, paternalistic and surveillant practices which inscribe the bodies of women as 'hystericised' and 'disordered' objects (Martin, 1989; Russell, 1995), and which further legitimate medical and psychiatric intervention (Sim, 1990: chapter six; Carlen, 1985):

Deciphering that inscription is usually seen as a matter of determining the "cause" of the disorder ... But always the process requires a trained - that is to say a highly specialised - professional whose expertise alone can unlock the secrets of the disordered body (Bordo, 1993: 67).

Relations of power and knowledge in prisons have thus constructed women's penal identity through intersecting corrective, curative and experimental interventions. The conventional objectives of the women's penitentiary have been pursued by surveillance, scientific examination and the moral discipline of women not only for reconstructing individual behaviour but for prescribing normative gendered categories. In this sense, the 'discovery' of criminal women historically tied together 'medical discourse and the state's constitution of gender categories' (Sim, 1990: 180; Dobash et al., 1986: chapter five). Furthermore, the medicalisation of female prisoners cements the association between penal categories of dangerousness and novel forms of regulation. As Mandaraka-Sheppard notes, the arguments concerning 'disturbed prisoners', especially women, have supported the normalisation of 'psychiatric methods and psychotropic drugs of therapy into prisons which ... have resulted in abuses for the purposes of social control' and have been deeply implicated in the classification of women as 'hard core troublemakers' (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 208).

While acknowledging the considerable critical contribution which this literature makes to recognising how women prisoners are positioned in a nexus of professional knowledge, institutional discipline and social reconstruction, in it the state tends to figure as a relatively distant organising entity which licenses medical practice and provides, through the prison welfare and therapeutic structures, the domains for professional intervention. However, the interventionist interests of the government and medico-juridical domains in the Northern Ireland prison system conspicuously combined at the most serious points of crisis during the prison protests to bring them to an end (O' Malley, 1990: 117-128; Campbell et al., 1994: 242-256). As Sim has pointed out, the oppressive relations that converge around prison medicine do not simply arise from the straightforward appropriation of medical expertise to the disciplinary ethos of prisons, although that does occur, but also through the intricate convergence of professional, ideological and 'individualised understandings of deviance' (Sim, 1990: 181). However, Sim has also argued that the interrelation between penal punishment and medical practices 'becomes complete in a political sense' as prisons acquire a complex interventionist-punitive function, supported by the devolved, discretionary licence which is conferred on 'organic intellectuals' and state employees (Ibid., 180).

Just as pertinently, prison medicine played a part in deterring the continuation of the prison strikes. In the course of the no wash protests, the physical condition of protesting prisoners had deteriorated, with prisoners reporting failures in their sight, skin eruptions, dental problems, vaginal and urinary infections, digestive conditions, and weight and hair loss (D'arcy, 1981: 79-83). The authorities maintained that 'no mental or physical illnesses [were] attributable to the conditions created by the protest' (H.C. Debs. Written Answers, November 12, 1980. cols. 245-246), although, 'vigilant steps' were being taken 'by medical and other clinical staff to counteract the environmental health aspects of the "dirty protest"' (NIPS, 1980: 18). The clinical supervision of the prisoners was deemed to be adequate as 'a medical officer visit[ed] the cells at least once a week to monitor and observe the internal conditions, personal hygiene standards and inmates' health, so far as this is practicable' (H.C. Debs. Written Answers. 19 December, 1980. col. 341-342). D'arcy

(1981: 86) noted the infantilising character of relations between the prisoners and the prison doctor, who referred to their conditions as 'honeymoon disease', caused by 'nerves', and issued advice to them to 'get pregnant to clear up your skin':

The implication of the comments was that women are physically and mentally too weak to defy the government, and therefore they should give in ... and avail themselves of the selection of tranquillisers ... always ready in surgery.

There was a significant occurrence of eating disorders in the women's prison population from the late 1970s, partly as a result of the prison protests, and in the case of remand and special category prisoners, because of their abstinence from the unsuitable prison diet (H. C. Debs. Written Answers, January 22, 1981. col. 235-237). The NIO denied allegations by republican prisoners that the provision of Largactyl, a sedative used in the treatment of schizophrenia and depression, and the subject of various allegations about its use in prisons as a 'chemical straightjacket', was being used for 'experimental or disciplinary purposes' (Irish News, November 24, 1978). Rather, prison medical officers had 'complete freedom of judgement in prescribing them'. Some incidents of self-mutilation by remand prisoners were also reported (Irish Press, April 29, 1980). Between 1978 and 1981, eight female prisoners were released on license or pardoned on medical or compassionate grounds, of whom seven were serving sentences for politically related offences. In two of the four cases of release on medical grounds, 'anorexia nervosa' was cited as the principal or only illness (NIPS, 1978: 15). One prisoner subsequently died after release (H. C. Debs. Written Answers. January 22, 1981. col. 235-237). Two more prisoners resigned from the no wash strike on the grounds of ill-health related to 'severe weight loss' and various 'nervous conditions' and were transferred to the 'ordinary' wings. The medical grounds for releasing a prisoner on licence were stringently applied in cases where it was 'reasonably clear that a person was suffering from a terminal illness and that death was likely to occur soon', where a prisoner was bedridden and totally incapacitated, and where it appeared that 'further imprisonment would of itself endanger life or reason, or shorten life expectancy' (Ibid.).

Other prisoners who were not on the protest were released on medical grounds in 1980, in response to humanitarian and political campaigns on their behalf, and to stall the No wash strike which had been in progress for three months. These included Marion Price, who was released on May 1, 1980 (Guardian: May 1, 1980). Price's health was acknowledged by the NIO to have deteriorated to a point where she 'was in imminent danger of death if she remained in custody' (Daily Express, May 1, 1980). Edith Mullen, a loyalist, was released with full remission one year before her sentence expired for health reasons (Craigavon Times, June 27, 1980). The releases, and especially that of Price, aroused considerable Unionist criticism. The following year, Dolours Price was released to condemnations of the 'deliberate use of the ploy of this so-called slimmer's disease to secure their release from prison', and criticisms of the 'weakness of the Secretary of State for engaging in a trade with the republican movement', by using releases to encourage the cessation of the hunger strike at the Maze (Belfast Telegraph, April 22, 1981).

Although the early releases were granted on the basis of substantive medical and humanitarian grounds, their timing, and the legitimisation of the case for clemency within a matrix of legal, political and medical discourses, had wider implications for the differential construction of the women's prison protests. The recourse to clinical and psychiatric authority, (in order to minimise adverse political reactions to the releases), subsumed their conditions within the domain of medical rather than of political discourse. Furthermore, the emphasis on symptoms such as the 'slimmer's disease' harnessed contemporary discourses of wilful, 'self inflicted' or 'pathological' (Bordo, 1993) self-deprivation, to the historical legacy of hystericisation, irrationality and the frailty of the female body. In a broader sense, the period of criminalisation was further defined by the contradictory effects of the women's prison protests, in which the record of serial punitive, regulatory and therapeutic interventions was supported by the enhanced authorisation of medical and psychiatric discourses, the reinforcement of intrusive logics, and the elaboration of interventionist practices.

'Normalisation', 1982 to 1995

The third period of penal administration was characterised by the shift in official thinking from pursuing the 'defeat of terrorism' in the prisons towards the more hegemonic goal of managing conflict through the introduction of regime changes which would facilitate 'constructive engagement' between the political prisoners and the administration. Officially, 'normalisation' referred to the implementation of penal reforms with the objective of establishing 'further constructive progress' in modernising the prison service, and enabling the prison service to 'put behind them the disruptions and tensions created by the hunger strikes' (NIPS, 1982: 1-2). Despite the language of negotiation and consensus, the 'reforms' were considered by the political prisoners to involve renewed attempts to implement criminalisation by proxy, as, from its initial proposal, the normalisation policy was based on re-establishing political legitimacy in the prisons:

[The government has] made it clear throughout that while the Northern Ireland prison system was already a humane and enlightened one, further improvements were not ruled out ... [however] *these must not prejudice the ability of the prison authorities to run the various establishments* (NIPS, 1981: 5: emphasis added).

The basis for renewed conflict in the prison during the 1980s centred on the proposed policy to dismantle the segregated loyalist and republican prisoners' structures and integrate political prisoners into the general prison population. The second area of contention followed the augmentation of operational security in the prisons, which prisoners regarded as rescinding the concessions that had been gained by the hunger strikes. More broadly, prisoners rejected the 'rehabilitative' and incentivising ethos of the new approach as being tied to modes of governance which required individual conformity and self-reform, which implied the relinquishment of political subjectivity and the potential fragmentation of their organisations.

The integration policy

The broader penal context in which the review of segregation took place followed a series of major breaches of security in the male prisons. The Pearce inquiry (1981) into the escape of eight republicans from Belfast prison recommended the immediate implementation of substantial improvements to security (NIPS, 1981: 13). In 1983, the escape of thirty eight republicans from the Maze instigated a more radical review of security, which encompassed the technical capabilities of the prisons and significant alterations to the regime. The subsequent Hennessey report (1984) concluded that, as well as ‘considerable shortfalls’ in security procedures, there had been widespread failures on the part of staff which had led to the suborning of individual officers by the escapees (Hennessey, 1984: 3.05-3.08). Significantly, Hennessey reasoned that the continuance of ‘segregat[ed] paramilitary factions’ had ‘made it easier for groups of prisoners to plan and conduct escapes or disturbances’:

We have little doubt that prisoners in segregated Blocks are generally better able to plan and execute subversive activities of all kinds. Except on those rare occasions when opposing factions are prepared to act together in pursuance of a common objective, integrated Blocks are easier to control (Hennessey, 1984: 9.29).

Eight years later, the Colville Inquiry (1992) was conducted into the death of a loyalist prisoner in Belfast prison, following loyalist and republican resistance to integration. Colville placed the continuance of segregated association at the centre of endemic disorder in the prisons, over sixty foiled escape attempts, violence against staff, and between loyalist and republican prisoners. As with other aspects of prison discipline, Colville reasoned, political prisoners inevitably and adroitly reshaped the prison rules for ‘evidently political ends’, including the continuance of segregation for subverting prison order (Colville, 1992: 3.1.1). Furthermore, the ‘long-standing commitment’ to treatment and rehabilitation was negated in segregated conditions because the prisoners were shielded from professional intervention by their command structures, which consequently posed a fundamental obstacle to prison reform (Colville, 1992: 7.2.3).

Segregation and enhanced security at Armagh prison, 1982-1986

The implementation of the segregation policy at Armagh prison produced few, comparable levels of disorder, in part because the predominance of republican women practically ensured that they had segregated use of facilities, and because confrontations with the authorities were treated primarily in terms of orchestrated disorder, which was dealt with through the disciplinary process:

For a short time, some women prisoners in Armagh attempted to secure segregation by staging fights and intimidating other prisoners. The governor dispersed the prisoners involved throughout the prison, and the protest ended (NIPS, 1983: 10).

However, the introduction of augmented security procedures in Armagh prison was primarily defined by the significantly increased reliance on strip searching procedures between 1982 and 1986 (Appendix Four). Strip searching was in use in Northern Ireland since 1949, although its practice was generally confined to 'reception' strips and on some occasions when prisoners entered or left the establishment. This policy was reviewed in November 1982 following the discovery of keys in the possession of two juvenile remand prisoners after a court hearing (H.C. Written Answers. March 15, 1983, col. 120). As a consequence of the new policy, the numbers of strip searches rose significantly when the procedure was systematically applied at all times of reception and discharge, before and after visits, attendance at court, entry and exit from temporary and compassionate leave, inter-prison visits, and attendance at outside hospitals. The incidence of strip searching on prisoners subsequently fell in 1984, following a second 'review' in 1983, when the prison department reformulated the guidelines for its use on a 'random basis only' (NIO, 1985: 4). Nevertheless, the circumstances and frequency with which random strip searching was used continued to draw widespread criticism from humanitarian, political, professional, religious and academic sources. In this context, the NIO moved to allay their 'well-meaning' concerns about prison conditions:

It is regrettable that many grossly inaccurate, and often malicious accounts of the procedures have been and still are in circulation. The Government is satisfied that it is necessary to have recourse to this form of searching in the interests of security, including the safety of the prisoners themselves (NIPS, 1983: 10).

In the pamphlet, Armagh Prison Strip Searching: The Facts (1985) the NIO outlined its defence of the procedure in response to specific points of disquiet that were raised by successive, unofficial investigations into strip searching.⁷ Firstly, strip searching was normalised both in political terms, as being common to comparable jurisdictions in Western Europe and the United States, and in institutional terms as a rational provision for prisoners' safety and security as required by statute (NIO, 1985: 1). Accordingly, every prisoner was required under the terms of the prison rules to be searched on reception, 'and at such subsequent times as the governor may order' (Prison Rules, 1982: 9 {1}). Prisoners were to be searched in 'as seemly a manner as is consistent with discovering anything concealed' (Ibid. {3}), were not to be stripped in the sight of another prisoner, and were to be searched only by, and only in the presence of, officers of the same sex (Ibid: {4,5}). The use of the procedure was argued to be 'broadly the same' in Britain and Northern Ireland, although the type of search and occasion for use depended 'primarily on operational and security considerations', which could 'differ not only between the two jurisdictions, but also from institution to institution' (H.C. Debs. Written Answers: July 5 1983. col. 79-80).

Having sought to defend the legitimacy of strip searching, the authorities then turned to narrowing specific humanitarian concerns to security and technical considerations. In response to criticisms raised by the British Medical Association (BMA) that there were insufficient medical safeguards in place, the NIO countered that 'search procedures [were] a security requirement [and] not a medical one' (SACHRE, 1986: 34). Furthermore, it was claimed that strip searching was not an invasive procedure, insofar as searches initially

⁷For independent inquiries and interventions by non-governmental agencies see Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights [SACHRE], 1986: A Christian Response to Strip-Searching [CRSS], 1987: Howard League for Penal Reform, 1989: UCASS, 1989: National Council for Civil Liberties [NCCL], 1985. Committee on the Administration of Justice [CAJ], (1987): Irish Information Partnership [IIP] 1985: London Strategic Policy Unit, 1988).

constituted a bodily 'rub-down' and the use of a metal detector while the prisoner was clothed, and only extended to a visual inspection of the naked body 'should any further intervention be considered appropriate by the searching officer':

No physical contact is involved between the prisoner and the searching officers, and there is no internal searching or examination of intimate areas of the body (NIO, 1985: 3).

However, other official statements suggest that it was doubtful that the procedure was devoid of physical contact. Prisoners were obliged to submit to a search under prison regulations, and while the official documentation eluded the question as to what occurred if a prisoner refused, it did concede that a search was enforced 'if a prisoner refused to lift her hair or her feet or to turn over her hands' (SACHRE, 1986: 8). Moreover, in a series of testimonies to human rights organisations, a marked disparity between the views of officials and prisoners consistently emerged, with the NIO suggesting that the process was discreet, perfunctory and impersonal, while prisoners and campaigners argued that it was a degrading, often protracted and enforced (Faul, 1983: IIP, 1985: 3-4: NCCL, 1986: 28). In the course of implementing the policy over four years, some perfume, money and a 'comm.' were recovered, which 'were found in prisoners' clothing, and not their bodies' (SACHRE, 1986: 23).

The shift in policy from 'routine' to 'random' strip searching in 1983 implied, at least in theory, that well-defined criteria were put in place for identifying the grounds for authorising and carrying out strip searches. In practice, the implementation of 'random' strip searching followed almost arbitrary risk-assessments, based on the discretion of senior officers (NCCL, 1986: 15-17). The 'dangerousness' of the prisoners and the necessity for high levels of staff vigilance was repeatedly emphasised (NCCL, 1986: 21), as the NIO claimed that 'three quarters of the women prisoners in Armagh prison are charged or convicted of terrorist-related offences, including murder, attempted murder and possession of explosives and firearms' (NIO: 1985: 4). Alternatively, it was officially argued that the

number of complainants had increased because of the 'schooling and coercion' of incoming prisoners, 'as part of an orchestrated campaign' against the integration policy (SACHRE, 1986: 34).

In the long term, the implementation of 'random' strip searching amounted to a political miscalculation on the part of the prison administration, as it brought events in Armagh prison to the political foreground, and mobilised a wider range of critical constituencies than might have otherwise been willing to lend support to a campaign connected with paramilitarism. Although the conclusion was widely drawn that the context and manner in which it was implemented indicated disturbing levels of conflict and the loss of order in Armagh prison, there were other factors which supported the view that the ramifications of strip searching were wider than simply augmenting internal security. The rise in the women's prison population after 1981, largely as a consequence of the civil disorder and increased recruitment to the IRA during and after the hunger strikes, created the potential for women republican prisoners to more effectively resist integration, as well as present a more formidable challenge to prison order. Remand prisoners, who made up the largest group of newcomers to the women's prison population, were most likely to be subjected to strip searches (IIP, 1985: 6). The frequency of searches conducted on remand prisoners was also compounded by the comparatively long periods of remand, on average two years for prisoners charged with scheduled offences (NCCL, 1986: 22), and the longer sentences served by prisoners in Northern Ireland. An additional dimension to allegations of the partiality of the implementation of strip searching was the protracted strip searching of prisoners remanded on 'Supergrass' evidence.⁸ The case of Catherine Moore illustrates the structural and administrative contexts which made the issue so politically charged. Moore was widely reported to have been strip searched over 120 times between 1992 and 1994 (IIP, 1984: 4; NCCL, 1986: 12). She was one of the influx of remand prisoners into Armagh prison in the early 1980s, having been charged with ninety two offences on the evidence

⁸The 'Supergrass' controversy refers to the use by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Crown Prosecution Service of accomplice evidence by 'converted terrorists' from republican and loyalist paramilitary groups between 1981 and 1986. In the first three years of its operation, over three hundred people were prosecuted as a result of the evidence of thirty witnesses for the crown. The system was finally overturned at the Court of Appeal in 1986.

of a state witness. Given the frequency with which remand prisoners such as Moore made court appearances or received visits, even the application of 'routine' searches on exit and re-entry to their wings invariably supported perceptions that the implementation of security, and by extension the administration of discipline and order at Armagh, relied on rudimentary, excessive, nonessential and retributive practices.

Enhanced security and reform: Mourne House, HMP Maghaberry, 1986-1995

Prison reform in Northern Ireland was implemented through three strands of policy arising from a series of reviews of the prison service between 1987 and 1991. Their implementation occurred after the transfer of the female population on March 1986 to Mourne House, the women's penal unit, at HMP Maghaberry. Maghaberry prison was intended to provide a 'humane' and appropriate environment for diminishing the security and discipline problems of the past which were attributed to overcrowding and the deteriorated fabric of the old prison. The transfer to Mourne House afforded the opportunity to implement the policy of normalisation through a combination of progressive incentives for prisoners who cooperated with the regime, personal development programmes, and education and recreational facilities for fostering a participative ethos in the prison. The first review, in 1987, which embodied the main tenets of penal thinking amongst the senior administration, favoured 'constructive and positive regimes...better tailored to the individual needs of the prisoner', 'a secure and high standard of accommodation' and the provision of training, educational, welfare and probation services. The prison service intended to 'make the most of these excellent facilities by developing a regime which offers constructive opportunities to those prisoners who wish to take something worthwhile out of their sentence' (NIPS, 1987/88:1).

The second objective was to hold prisoners 'in secure and humane confinement', and to reduce the risk of their reoffending 'by encouraging them to take full advantage of the opportunities offered during their confinement' (Ibid.). The balance between care and security involved keeping individuals in custody 'with the appropriate degree of security and

control', whilst providing for 'all prisoners the necessities of life', opportunities to 'engage in constructive activities' such as work, education, and training, and to prepare them for release into the community (Ibid.). Crucially, the attainment of these objectives was tied to the aspiration to treat prisoners 'as individuals regardless of their religious beliefs or political opinions', and, 'as far as possible, to offer them the opportunity to serve their sentences free from paramilitary influence' (Ibid.).

The third element of prison reform entailed constructing partnerships between the community and the prison service, and enhancing the public accountability and transparency of its procedures. The document, Serving The Community (1991), outlined a series of recommendations arising from consultations with 'stakeholders' in the prison system, including representatives of statutory welfare and probation agencies and voluntary agencies working with prisoners and their families. Although the interests of paramilitary prisoners were raised through third parties such as NIACRO and prisoners' relatives groups, they did not nominate representatives to the committees, and republicans in particular distanced themselves from the proceedings. The main objectives of Serving The Community were to improve relations between prisoner's communities and the prison service, to enable prisoners to retain links with their families, to manage resources 'efficiently, effectively and economically', and 'to make a contribution to the achievement of peace and stability' in Northern Ireland (NIPS, 1991b, 10-18).

By the mid-1980s, the implementation of prison reforms was officially claimed to have successfully addressed the causes of organised resistance to the extent that 'there was no apparent general sense of crisis' in the prisons (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988: 167). However, the republican women prisoners contended that the regime at Maghaberry created structural inequalities between conforming prisoners on the male side and non-conforming women in relation to visits, education, association, and exercise, which marginalised them both on the basis of gender and political identification. This produced even finer points of contention as to what constituted secure and adequate provision for them, and raised fundamental questions about the overall paternalistic and 'rehabilitative' ethos that would be reinforced in an integrated regime for women:

The fact that the majority of the women in Maghaberry are Republican POWs made the Northern Ireland Office even more reluctant to treat them equally with men. Unlike the male ['penitent'] prisoners [in Maghaberry], the republican women did not change their political beliefs on being imprisoned, so they do not receive the rewards given to the non-political male prisoners (Republican Women Prisoners, Maghaberry, cited in Opsahl, 1993: 285).

The second area of contention between republican women prisoners and the prison administration arose around the continued use of search procedures in Mourne House. Although the government had been forced to retreat from its policy of implementing 'random' strip searching in Armagh prison, routine strip searches were resumed for remand prisoners after the transfer to Maghaberry prison (CAJ, March 14, 1988). By the 1990s, the distinction between 'random' and 'routine' usage of the procedure appears to have been largely semantic, as its increased use in Mourne House was largely guided by centralised security decisions and responses to events on the wings which housed the non-political male prisoners in Maghaberry prison.⁹

On March 2, 1992, a mass strip search was conducted on all of the thirty five prisoners in Mourne House, sentenced and remand, republican, loyalist and 'ordinaries', apart from one prisoner recovering from a hysterectomy. While there has been considerable dispute about the precise course of events, the following facts emerge from the available evidence.¹⁰ While awaiting their morning unlock, prisoners were informed that a full search of the wings, including full body searches, were to be conducted. Although thirteen non-politicals complied with the order, the twenty one republicans declined to cooperate, and barricaded their cell doors. At 9.30 a.m. the search commenced in the non-political wing. An hour later a number of female officers, dressed in full protective clothing and helmets and escorted by male riot-control officers, entered the first of the three corridors which housed

⁹Correspondence from the office of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland office to CAJ, April 18, 1988.

¹⁰ This evidence includes inquiries conducted by human rights and pastoral organisations (CRSS, 1993), press statements from the Prison Service Headquarters, prisoners' written legal statements, interviews with two of the prisoners involved, a prison chaplain on the premises that day, and the governor who issued the order.

the republican prisoners. Male officers proceeded to remove the barricades which the prisoners had constructed, and removed the doors to their cells. The searches appear to have been conducted with military efficiency. On gaining entrance to each cell, the male officers pinioned the prisoner to a wall or floor with their shields, while up to six female officers moved her into a disabling position. The bottom half of the prisoner's body was then fully stripped, and her body and clothing visually examined. A sheet was placed on them before the process was repeated on the upper parts of their bodies. Prisoners later testified that they were roughly handled and sat or stood on as they struggled against the search and many sustained extensive bruising and sprains. Each prisoner was then escorted or dragged down the corridor and locked into their day association room while their cells were searched. An element of psychological and emotional tension accompanied the course of events, as prisoners reported their distress at hearing women in adjacent cells undergoing strips, and because of the random choice of cells chosen as officers filed from floor to floor. The search of the three sentenced wings continued for ten hours, until 8.30 p.m. Officers broke the search for lunch at approximately 2 p.m. Prisoners who were still barricaded in their cells reported that male officers patrolled the yard, shouting obscenities and making sexual gestures to them. Others testified that officers had entered the wing singing 'Happy Days Are Here Again', and alleged that some smelt of alcohol.

All twenty one prisoners were charged with the disciplinary offences of refusing an order and making a barricade, receiving punishments ranging from fourteen days loss of exercise and association to fourteen days remission and three days of confinement to their cells. Five prisoners were also charged with assault. No member of staff was prosecuted or disciplined. An additional dimension to these events was the presence of the chairwoman of the Board of Visitors at one search. The decision to invite the presence of medical staff or official visitors as witnesses followed guidelines issued by prison headquarters in the mid-1980s, purportedly as an additional 'safeguard', but also to avoid the disputes and controversies that had occurred in Armagh. Two official visitors subsequently praised the professionalism of the officers' conduct at an unofficial inquiry conducted by an inter-church commission. According to that report, the members 'understood that the decision to conduct the search had been taken at the level of Prison Headquarters', and that

the safeguards and guidelines for security had been followed (CRSS, 1993: 4.3.2).

There are informative parallels between the mass strip search at Maghaberry and comparable events in the Canadian Federal Prison for Women (P4W) in April, 1994, when male emergency response personnel were called in to conduct a 'cell extraction and strip search' of eight women, using similar tactics of enforcement as those at Maghaberry two years previously. The controversy generated by events in Canada prompted the establishment of the Arbour Commission (1996) which concluded that extensive violations of prisoners' legal and civil rights had taken place, and indicted 'the absence of the rule of law ... both within the prison and at the regional and national levels', and the institutional negation of a 'culture of rights' in the Canadian correctional system (Arbour, 1996: 180, 249-260).

The contrasts in the political and administrative responses to these respective events are equally illuminating. The absence of similar published inquiries and the lack of disclosure of any internal investigations which might have been conducted by the prison administration in Northern Ireland meant that the source of, and reasons for, the authorisation of the search in Mourne House remains obscured. Furthermore, the tactic of collective body searches which were conducted in the prisoners' cells were of a different character than those conducted at Armagh, but, as with the previous use of strip searching in Armagh, no item which might have constituted a security hazard was found. Although the subsequent criticism of the prison service meant that a similar search was not conducted in Mourne House again, new guidelines concerning the use of the practice were not disclosed, if indeed any were established, nor were the details of any internal inquiry published, if one was held. Indeed, the following year 'more rigorous searching procedures for professional visitors' were introduced in response to the recommendations of the Colville report (NIPS, 1992: 2).

Ironically, these respective incidents occurred when both prison systems were ostensibly undergoing comprehensive reforms. The events in P4W occurred four years after a review of the federal penal system for women in Canada, which had produced what was then

claimed to be a radical shift in penal thinking towards a 'woman-centred' model of penal reform (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, 1990). Similarly, the modernisation of women's imprisonment in Northern Ireland was linked to the claim that enhanced technical security would diminish the reliance on excessively intrusive personal searches, while the 'prisoner-centred' ethos was meant to facilitate a consensual approach to discipline and conflict. While there are differences in the contexts of reform in both jurisdictions, there are germane points of comparison, notably the conflicts that arose as a consequence of implementing programmes which laid claim to 'progressive' regimes and practices, against the realities of confining what were perceived to be insubordinate, high-risk and ungovernable prisoners. As noted by Canadian commentators, the outcome of such reform programmes was that prison governance acquired a 'dual character' of extended security alongside 'prisoner-centred regimes', which rendered penal reform 'a contradiction in terms, simply changing the content of a penal regime ... [left the] wider institutional framework unchallenged' (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 197). Similarly, the continued reliance on institutional coercion, and the failure of penal reforms in Northern Ireland to establish legitimacy amongst female political prisoners, cast doubt on whether 'normalisation' addressed, or was intended to address, the basis of conflict over political status more generally, or the specific points of contention with regards to women's political incarceration.

Women's imprisonment and the failures of 'Normalisation'

In their analysis of prison governance in Northern Ireland, Gormally, McEvoy and Wall argued that the principle of normalisation was 'a sophisticated and sensible model', both for 'point[ing] the way to at least limited [political] progress' outside the prisons, and in developing a working framework with the political factions in prison without either side 'appearing to concede substantial ideological terrain' (Gormally et al., 1993: 124-125). The introduction of penal reforms, they continued, made some progress in directing some of the more sensitive, soluble prison issues away from the central political agenda, and imparting a technicist approach and language to prison administration which was consistent with the broader, macro-structural management of political violence:

What normalisation has done in Northern Ireland is to use parts of the criminal justice system, in particular the prison system, as a managerial tool to contain what is seen essentially as a managerial problem (Ibid., 125).

However, they continue, the danger of approaching political violence in the same terms as 'the economy, the health service, or transport policy' is that it:

... either ignores or designates [as] insoluble the political and structural reasons that create the problem ... [and] the cost in human terms is subsumed in the language and actions of the ostensible moral neutrality of management (Ibid.).

An alternative argument is that the policy was as much directed towards allaying wider criticisms of the prison system, emanating from various political quarters, as to its cost and inefficiency, outdated practices, cumbersome administrative structures and systems, and paucity of appropriate custodial programmes for non-political prisoners, as with redressing its substantial legitimacy deficit among the prisoners' constituencies. Moreover, the timing and scope of the implementation of reforms on life sentence reviews, prisoner transfers, eligibility for pre-release programmes or other benefits, were regarded as subsuming the self-evident contradictions of the 'normalisation' policy into a calculated political tactic for ensuring some degree of collaboration from the prisoners' organisations (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988). These critical perspectives also open up the analysis of the normalisation policy beyond technocratic questions as to its possible administrative benefits, potential for achieving shorter and longer term political progress, or the genuineness of the impetus to create a humane environment for prisoners and staff. When applied to women's penalty, for example, the shortcomings of normalisation were also related to their continued exclusion from definitions of penal change, even in the context of 'radical' reforms or the establishment of a managed framework for negotiating with political prisoners. A more far-reaching consequence of the broader shortcomings in penal policy was that many of the underlying contentions between women prisoners and the administration were left largely intact, and contributed to the distinctive qualities of political conflict in the women's prisons in the 1990s.

This chapter has described the development of women's political imprisonment in Northern Ireland as a series of dialectical relations between the administratively-defined objectives, structural influences and governing practices of penality, and collective strategies of resistance devised by women prisoners. Moreover, it has explored gender-specific penal developments in the context of inherited institutional practices, ideologies, and conventional perceptions about controlling female political prisoners. However, while noting the points of intersection between 'gendered' and 'political' punishment in successive phases of penal administration, it also observed the contradictions and inconsistencies between these categories. Chapter three relates these contradictions to the disjunctures in sociological accounts of women's engagement in political crime, and experiences of imprisonment, respectively, arguing that they cumulatively obscure the agency of women as political prisoners.

Chapter 3

Paradoxes of Women's Political Imprisonment: Sociological Narratives and Closures

Precisely because of their anomalous and subversive character within established definitions of the political, the politics of nationalist women has been eclipsed in the accounts of [the] Northern Ireland conflict. Women have been left out not because analysts have recognised their subversive potential but because, by not fitting existing discourses, they have not been recognised at all as socially relevant (Aretxaga, 1999: 4).

This chapter examines the anomalous figure of the female political prisoner. It argues that the female political prisoner posits an epistemological 'problem' within criminological and sociological discourses in three analytical domains. These are, firstly, in accounts of the role of women in the commission of political 'crime'; secondly, in analyses of the status of women in collective or political structures in prison; and thirdly, in contemporary analyses of women's imprisonment. In bringing together these discursive domains, one is presented with the critical problem whereby existing analyses of political crime and punishment rarely intersect with the body of academic research on women and penalty. Not only have women been obscured in analyses of political crime and punishment, but their imprisonment for crimes against the state is rarely considered in the prevailing debates about gender and punishment, or women in prison. The question of their marginality, in either case, is not solely due to the observation that, according to trends in the US and Western Europe, female political 'offenders' are a proportionate minority of either the female prisoner or the political prisoner populations, although this may contribute to the paucity of literature on female political prisoners (Zwerman, 1988; Di Giovanni, 1990; Churchill and Vander Wall, 1992). Rather, it posits that such empirical oversights reflect epistemological disjunctures between their political status and gendered subject position in criminological theory.

The criminology of women as political offenders

After a century of widely varying research into both women's 'criminality', and the

phenomenon of 'terrorism', the empirical data have given rise to inconsistent and problematic answers to the question of *women's* involvement in political crime and punishment. The central problem that arises when the diverse theoretical strands examined here are viewed together - positivist, social constructionist and feminist - is that they are organised around, and in turn generate, a series of binary distinctions between 'women's imprisonment' and 'political imprisonment'. The keynote paradox occurs where women incarcerated for political offences have been viewed as anomalous and elusive subjects of analysis because they have been implicitly configured, in various studies, as both marginal to the discursive category of 'political offenders', and/or different within the discursive category of 'women in prison'. Therefore, not only does the 'problem' with female political prisoners concern their 'absence' from the literature on political imprisonment and women in prison respectively, but their differences within these discourses interrogate and reshape some precepts about political imprisonment. The chapter, therefore, makes three arguments:

Firstly, that criminological explanations have produced ways of talking about women who engage in armed struggle as an exceptional and marginal category, which denies political agency and rationality to women involved in political crime.

Positivist explanations of women's involvement in political crime are founded on assumptions about their biological predispositions towards dangerous and anti-social behaviour (Lombroso, 1913; Pollock, 1978). However, social constructionist 'correctives' to this view have tended towards a different kind of essentialism which focuses on the cultural or social predisposition of women to engage in militancy, as a sign of a breakdown or rupture in the gendered social order, and as an outcome of 'sex-role' inversion or defem-inisation (Adler, 1975; Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 105-123). It is argued that these discourses cumulatively obscure the agency of women involved in political crime.

Secondly, it is argued that analyses of collective prisoner structures, viewed as consonant with political identity in prison, do not extend coherently to analyses of women's communal structures in prison.

Prison subcultural theories have been germane to analyses of political imprisonment. However, classical 'inmate subcultural' theory explicitly refers to fraternal prisoner societies and counter-authorising structures in male prisons. Accordingly, the prison subcultural tradition lends itself to the position that women are marginal to the 'gender neutral' (and implicitly androcentric) category of political imprisonment, and their gender inhibits them from assuming full political status.

Thirdly, but following on from the previous problematic, it is argued that female offenders sentenced for political offences are implicitly conceived of as different from other women in prison.

Feminist penal analysis, as a consciously critical strategy, emphasises the social and economic marginalities that influenced women's 'pathways' to imprisonment (Carlen, 1983: 1998: Carlen et al., 1985: Heidensohn, 1989), and the integration of prescriptive 'feminine' norms into the weft and weave of penal discipline for women (Dobash et al. 1986: Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: Bosworth, 1999: Hannah-Moffat, 2001). However, women in high-security regimes, or those serving long terms of imprisonment, have been rarely considered separately, nor as having a significant cultural or strategic impact on women's prison regimes (Genders and Player, 1988: Howard League for Penal Reform, 1999: Walker and Worrall, 2000). This discussion considers the extent to which feminist theory can address punitive difference in relation to women political prisoners.

The Lombrosian effect and the pathology of the female offender

The 'violent woman' of criminology is constructed out of intersecting, historically produced discourses of 'political terror' and positivist influences on theorising crime and deviance. The etiology of the female political offender originated with the positivist pursuit of a morphology of crime and social aberration in the 19th century. Cesare Lombroso's and Guillaume Ferrero's studies of the inmates of correctional institutions, Criminal Man

(1876), and The Female Offender (1895) were influential in advancing the principles and methods by which 'the etiology and nature of crime' could be discerned from biological differences and abnormalities, which predisposed individuals to criminality and related forms of social aberration. 'Criminality' could then be established by inductive processes, that is, the accumulation of evidence that confirmed the theory and 'objectively' explained the phenomenon by scientific methods of discovery, collection and classification.

Proceeding from these objectives, Lombroso and Ferreor developed a range of experimental procedures for measuring and classifying criminal traits in the inmates of prisons, asylums and other correctional institutions, systematically recording the 'different physiognomic classes' into a taxonomy of major groups including 'born criminals', 'insane criminals' and 'occasional criminals' (Lombroso, 1913). They aspired to create an archive of data and a standard method for discerning recognisable 'stigmata' of criminal proclivities that could be used diagnostically in criminal science. In meticulously recording and classifying the skull measurements, facial features and proportions, the nervous system, height, weight and other physical manifestations of the intellectual and moral predisposition of the criminal, they concluded that inmates exhibited the congenital signs of atavism, and also cultural manifestations of 'uncivilised' tendencies, such as 'primitive' self-adornment and tattooing (Pollock, 1978: 28-33). Conspicuous analogies were drawn between racial 'primitivism' and the 'discovery' and classification of the pure criminal 'type' who exhibited simian facial features, insensitivity to pain, acute visual and auditory senses and other signs of evolutionary regression (Lombroso, 1913: 47).

Political offenders were entered as a subgroup of their class of 'criminals by passion', who were characterised by a high degree of 'affectability', and who, 'under the stress of unusual circumstances' developed 'passions' that led to crimes of violence. Hence, 'while not all criminals by passion [were] political criminals, all political criminals [were] criminals by passion' (Lombroso, cited in Schafer, 1974: 134-135). The 'passion' of the political prisoner meant that he [sic] retained some of his 'moral equipment' and thus was classified as an 'occasional criminal'. Lombroso concluded that the full degenerate

tendencies were moderated in political prisoners because they possessed the 'genius of the revolutionary spirit' which distinguished them from the atavism of the born criminal (Ibid., 134). Alternatively, certain 'passionless political offenders', who were deemed to lack the sensibility of 'revolutionary spirit' were classified as 'lunatics', 'insane' and 'unbalanced individuals' (Ibid., 135). While he did not contend that political criminals were 'born' criminals, their removal 'from the governmental and social environment' was necessary because of their inability to adapt to social and political structures (Ibid., 135).

By the time Lombroso and Ferrero published their study, The Female Offender (1895), some of their arguments had been modified to admit additional mechanisms such as hereditary disease and the urban environment in the making of the 'criminal type'. However, they retained the core contention that female criminals and prostitutes exhibited recognisable atavistic and degenerate traits. Lombroso and Ferrero constructed an elaborate system for distinguishing the 'normal' female from the 'normal' male in the evolutionary hierarchy, as a template for examining the differences between 'normal' and 'criminal' women. Women's role in reproduction meant that they had a tendency to 'perpetuation' rather than 'development' and as such their maternal functions produced superior powers of endurance, atavistic intelligence, and resistance to mental and physical pain, while men surpassed them because of their active drive ('passion') in evolutionary competition (Lombroso, 1913: 110). While the physiological and psychological immobility of women accounted for their limited moral and intellectual range, it also accounted for their organically conservative and passive traits. Thus, Lombroso and Ferrero claimed that pregnancy and motherhood led to the beneficial development of 'lofty sentiments', 'complete altruism' and a far-sighted if 'amoral' intelligence in women, which produced innate restraints on their equally present predisposition towards moral deficiency (Ibid., 151).

Lombroso and Ferrero sought to explain why there were far fewer criminal females than criminal males, concluding that there were fewer degenerative physical characteristics among women criminals. As women committed fewer crimes and possessed fewer degenerative qualities than 'criminal man', a further range of explanations was recruited to

explain the deviation of criminal women from the 'monotony and uniformity' of female traits (Ibid., 122). The author asserted that women's engagement in crime was markedly degenerate because the biological restraints of 'piety, maternity, want of passion, sexual coldness and an undeveloped intelligence', (viewed as beneficial characteristics in women), had failed in criminal women (Lombros, 1913: 151). Criminal women, he concluded, were uniquely aberrant females:

What we look for in the female is femininity, and when we find the opposite in her we must conclude as a rule that there must be some anomaly (Ibid., 112).

Accordingly, the failure to repress criminal tendencies was an outward sign of innate biological perversion or inversion of their natural feminine roles. Hence, criminal women exhibited 'masculine' traits in their undesirable appropriations of male characteristics and drives, as well as physiognomic traces which were 'much more virile than feminine' (Ibid., 93, 113). The 'true' type of female criminal was found amongst women who had been imprisoned for serious offences including homicide, arson ('incendiaries'), murder in the domestic environment and prostitution. Mitigating social influences such as ill-treatment, domestic violence, forced marriages or male coercion meant that women were classified as 'demi-types' who were not wholly degenerate although they possessed physical evidence of congenital deviance (Ibid., chapter seven).

The 'true' type of female criminal was found in women who 'denied [their] guilt persistently', selfishly profited from a robbery connected with homicide, failed to confess to their crimes or explain their motives (Ibid., 89-90). For example, one 'female brigand' of the 'true type', 'who was the companion in arms of a band of brigands, one of whom was her lover', exhibited prominent and asymmetrical facial features ('a congenital division of the palate') and 'virile physiognomy' (Ibid., 93). Female brigands and assassins were, accordingly, 'born' criminals, distinguishable by their promiscuity and 'moral dissipation'.

Moreover:

... the moral physiognomy of the born female criminal approximates strongly to that of the male ... When by an unfortunate chance muscular strength and intellectual force meet in the same individual, we have a female delinquent of a terrible type indeed (Ibid., 187-88).

Even in Lombroso and Ferrero's theory, the links between female 'criminality' and 'political crime' were rarely viewed together. However, where they did occur, they deviated from male political offenders, who were partly exempted from the basest criminal categories by their 'revolutionary passion' and elevated moral spirit, while the motives of female political offenders were incontrovertibly rooted in their inferior biological and moral disposition (Lombroso, 1913: chapter fifteen).

These early criminological theories played a complex role in encoding gendered difference in the analysis of political offending. By drawing attention to the social failures of women involved in political 'criminality', Lombroso and Ferrero inadvertently revealed an important tension between biological and social explanations that threatened to disrupt their pathological model. Brown has drawn attention to the slippage between biological determinism and environmentalism in their arguments, positing that the logic of positivism was unable to be sustained in its own terms, so that it ultimately resorted to 'external non-biological causes such as bad associates, the temptations of big department stores, the failure to find a suitable occupation or, to put it simply, environmental factors' (Brown 1990: 50). Similarly, as Schafer noted, Lombroso's account established grounds for the scientific classification of political crime in terms of emotional and mental 'abnormality', as a precursor to later theories of social and sexual maladjustment (Schafer, 1974: 137). Subsequent analyses moved away from purely physiological and social-Darwinist perspectives towards causal theories which held that the inability to adjust to 'healthy', 'feminine' sex-roles characterised the 'female delinquent' (Pollock, 1978: Klein, 1979: Widom, 1980: Jones, 1991). The following section examines the emergence of social constructionist 'correctives' to positivism, arguing that these explanations reflected a transition from biology to the social essentialism that informed later theories of the women as political offend-

‘correctives’ to positivism, arguing that these explanations reflected a transition from biology to the social essentialism that informed later theories of the women as political offenders.

‘Terrorism’ theory: Placing women in pathologies of violence

‘Terrorism’ and ‘counterinsurgency’ studies gained ascendancy as academic disciplines in response to the emergence of urban terrorism in Europe in the late 1960s, the rise of liberation movements and insurgency in the colonised world, and the counter-cultural, civil rights and radical popular movements in Western liberal democracies. Dominant discourses of ‘terrorism’ emerged from conscious academic interventions in assisting state and military agencies to develop counter-insurgent policies, and their sources rely heavily, if not exclusively, on data acquired from security intelligence agencies (Schmid, et al., 1986). The configuration of political violence as ‘terrorism’ has been ‘dominated by neo-conservative intellectuals and Western criminal justice “experts”’ (Zwerman, 1988: 36).¹ Research into contemporary ‘terrorism’ continues to be centrally concerned with political violence as a problem of the liberal-democratic state (Wilkinson, 2001), and accordingly emphasises the moral legitimacy of the rule of law, and endorses the state monopoly of force, and the primacy of civil forces and a ‘criminal justice model’ in the pursuit and detention of ‘perpetrators of violence’ (Corrado, 1979: Alexander and O’Day, 1984: 1986).

The rise of violent insurgent groups in the post-1968 period, such as the Red Army Factions or Baader-Meinhof groups in Italy and Germany, and nationalist separatist movements in the Basque country and Northern Ireland, generated potent discourses about the nature of ‘extremism’ in European liberal democracies. In particular, the ‘nihilistic’ terrorism of the former groups was viewed as the product of leftist and welfare state ‘permissiveness’, and perpetrated by ‘the spoilt children’ of the affluent society (Wilkinson, 1977: 93). The

¹Not all disciplinary approaches to ‘security’ studies are neo-liberal or ‘right-wing’. See Krause and Williams (1997: xiv), for a critical definition of ‘security’ which argues for ‘a consciousness of the dilemmas within security [that] fragments its easy identification with the state’. Similarly, Buzan et al. (1998: 3) reject ‘the Cold War traditionalist position’.

emergence of female ‘leaders’ in these organisations was subject to considerable, and often intersecting, scholarly and ‘popular’ or mass media speculation (Becker, 1977: MacDonald, 1991). Reef held that the role of women in ‘quality and number’ was explained in terms of the ‘feminisation’ of insurgency movements, which altered their organisational character to incorporate ‘issues important to women’ and to eliminate ‘inhospitable or sexist internal relations and barriers to women’s recruitment’ (Reef, cited in Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 118). In the absence of apparent material, class or colonial contexts for their resort to armed violence, the participation of middle-class women in Western insurgent groups was argued to be an expression of their psycho-sexual or emotional disorders, or as arising from the misconceived revolutionary ennui of the post-war generation (Georges-Abeyie, 1986).

Notwithstanding their emphasis on *social* degeneration as a causal factor, the positivist legacy remained remarkably intact in ‘terrorism’ studies insofar as they drew on narratives of *individual* degeneracy to explain women’s participation in insurgency and political ‘crime’. Wilkinson’s account of the ‘characteristics and typology of political violence’ exemplified the position. ‘Terrorist violence’, he argued, was ‘inherently indiscriminate in its effects [and] essentially arbitrary and unpredictable’ (Wilkinson, 1977: 52). Moreover, the terrorist’s disregard for ‘all rules and conventions of war’ was a reflection of his [sic] ‘rejection of all moral constraints’, and his recourse to ‘barbarous cruelties and weapons in pursuit of his [sic] goals’ (Ibid: 53). Georges-Abeyie’s ‘theory of women as terrorists’ argued that although women, ‘except for a few notable exceptions,’ had conventionally played a relatively minor role in terrorist violence:

... female participation both as freelance and members of terrorist organisations is set to increase dramatically in the future ... Their input in terrorist acts is tied in part to feminist demands and practices ... Contemporary female terrorists are likely to exhibit male personality or physical traits. Terrorist acts by females are more instrumental and less expressive (Georges-Abeyie, 1983: 81-83).

While Oliverio has noted that the influence of these theories is largely ‘ineffective’ in

providing useful approaches for understanding political conflict, they continue to have a central purchase in 'terrorism' studies (Oliverio, 1997: 51). While not intending to revisit the enormous body of research which has been generated about anti-colonial 'insurgency', 'global' and urban terrorism or civil disorder since the Cold War, the positivist influence in 'terrorism' studies as a field of research is evident from methodological precepts which support a 'scientific' approach to taxonomies of violence (Wilkinson, 1977), the classification of 'patholog[ies] of terror' (Wilkinson, 1979: 236-245), and the delineation of the characteristics and morphology of 'the terrorist' (Alexander and O' Day, 1984: 88-95; Schmid and Jongman, 1988). The concern here, however, is to evaluate the construction of 'political crime' in ways which have understood and positioned women as the objects of academic analyses which combine elements of positivist and sociopathic discourses with essentialist analyses of gender.

The 'feminist turn' in 'terrorism': sex-role theory and women's criminality

The contemporary 'discovery' of the 'female terrorist' occurred at a juncture of revisionism within counterinsurgency studies and the emergence of 'emancipatory' or 'liberationist' theories in criminology, which focused on the emergence of a 'new breed' of 'criminal women' who were engaged in 'violent and militant' crime (Adler, 1975; Burton, 1979; Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: part six). From the late 1960s, criminological discourse was concerned with an apparent rise in women's conviction for crimes of violence, and was allied to the proposition that 'the trend in violence by women ... may be accelerated as women become emancipated from traditional female role requirements' (Ward et al., 1979: 137-8). These trends, furthermore, required explanatory approaches that accounted for:

... female criminality [as] a separate and distinct order of criminal behaviour in which cultural factors relating to sex roles in our society are of critical importance ... because crimes of violence by women directly contradict the role women in our society are supposed to play (Ibid.,136-137).

The authoritative basis for the shift in emphasis from biological to social factors was

Adler's Sisters in Crime (1975), in which she claimed that the blurring of traditional 'feminine' and 'masculine' social roles had created the conditions for the 'upward equalisation of women's violence' with that of men: 'these crimes involve a greater degree of violence and even in prison this new breed exhibits a hitherto unmatched pugnacity' (Adler, 1975: 3). According to Adler, the 'militant' female criminal emerged from the 'zeitgeist of liberation' (Ibid., 101) which converged with a 'new broad-based awareness of women's place and potential [and] developed side-by-side with the civil rights and antiwar movements' (Ibid., 25). Women's roles in radical political movements were argued to have altered from the 'traditional functions' of routine support to the occupation of positions of leadership, and to 'active, vociferous and sometimes violent' participation (Ibid., 101). Furthermore, the subcultural hubris of radical youth culture especially assimilated the young bourgeoisie into militancy as an expression of radical chic (Ibid., 21).

Adler's causal analysis of the role of women in political crime was resonant with the view of security 'traditionalists' in that she claimed that while post-war economic and social changes had created unprecedented social mobility for women, they had also created destabilising effects caused by 'the growing emphasis on competition and individual rights', the 'increased stress on affluent goals', the 'growth of nonproductive leisure', and 'greater dependency on peers' rather than family (Adler, 1975: 108). The stresses brought about by the combination of social aspirations, equal rights, prolonged education, altered job opportunities, urbanisation and 'family fragmentation' encouraged women, 'especially those who are socially disadvantaged, toward deviant means to achieve socially approved goals' (Ibid., 105).

Paradoxically, according to Adler, the post-war social revolutions, which 'virilised its previously ... docile female segments', were ultimately adverse for women. In the first instance, she claimed that in abandoning traditional feminine roles, women had 'comparatively few opportunities within the system to find others', and thus were compelled to emulate 'aggressive, masculine' drives (Ibid., 87). Secondly, the resulting fluidity of male and female sex roles made 'an anomic contribution to female delinquency by eroding the structures which have historically protected and restrained girls' (Ibid., 103).

Consequently, where previously the historical benefits of such 'chivalry' had created for women a customary respite from the full rigours of judicial punishment (Pollak, 1979), this was rapidly depleting for them as traditional protective biases were eroded. The inevitable consequence was that women would be subject to an 'upward form of equalisation' in terms of social sanction and punishment, especially where they had appropriated 'masculine' criminal roles (Adler, 1975: 89).

In rejecting 'the masculinisation of female behaviour [which] can be traced back to Lombroso', analysts of terrorism similarly turned to 'role convergence between the sexes' and the influence of 'female emancipation' on the 'emergence of women in increased numbers and influence' in 'guerrilla combat, and serious and violent crime' (Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 114). Hence, the rise of 'violent crime by women' was an outcome of 'the general radicalisation of political life' from the late 1960s, which led to the 'political mobilisation of women' by 'leftist political parties' so that:

... it was out of a pool of newly political conscious [sic] women that the leftist terrorist groups recruited some of their female members (Wiener and Eubank, cited in Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 117).

Thus, in addition to the existing social conditions that were conducive to 'terrorism' 'these factors must be supplemented by the addition of feminist demands, both logical and irrational':

Understanding the role of women in terrorism implies the recognition that women comprise a self-conscious, dynamic sector of society that often perceives itself to be an oppressed majority - a majority oppressed not only because of religion, ethnicity or national origin but also because of gender (Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 115).

Accordingly, women were attracted to militancy and violence as a means of 'fostering and

²It is notable that the view of 'feminism' in these analyses does not refer to a coherent political analysis of patriarchy nor the [then] Women's Liberation Movement, but was defined as a mass expression by women of sex-role frustration.

reinforcing demands for sociocultural change of both a socialist and feminist nature' (Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 116). Two conclusions arose from these assertions. Firstly, that 'gender-consciousness', had emerged as a possible basis for political violence in addition to the more 'traditional', 'terroristic' motives.² Secondly, the inequalities which inhered within male-dominated radical movements would inevitably lead to the lack of fulfilment of their expectations for equality in 'sharing the risks ... and profits' of terrorism: 'disillusionment comes when this process does not go far enough' (Cooper, 1979: 153). Thus, women were precipitated into further violence, which was more 'irrational', sinister and malign than male violence:

§

Women terrorists have consistently proved themselves more ferocious and more intractable in these acts than their male counterparts. [They] have been inspired to enter into terrorism for its own sake, moving rapidly into positions of responsibility for these heinous activities by using their own fatal proclivities and ability (Ibid., 151-2).

These revisionists did not radically depart from previous explanations of women's participation in political force, but posited a new elaboration of positivist concepts - their 'fatal proclivities' - with the altered social conditions and opportunities which allegedly enabled women to exercise their newly-discovered 'abilities' in the field of violent crime. 'Sex-role' rebellion as a 'social theory of political conflict' was in effect overlaid upon foundational beliefs about the socio-biological signs of abnormality in 'militant' women who:

... assert markedly radical demands for structural-functional change in regard to role sets assigned to women or to any oppressed majority or minority [which] may be viewed as masculine in character. [They] may seek success in some non-feminine realm by displaying aggression, unadorned faces and bodies, toughness or other masculine qualities (Vetter and Perlstein, 1991: 116).

Sex-role theory was intended as a critique of, and corrective to biological determinism in the analysis of 'female criminality', but it retained an equally rigid binary demarcation between 'masculinity' and 'femininity', which in effect replaced a biologically-determinist

interpretation with a gender-determinist one. The recurrent themes of the new cultural essentialism of 'terrorology' (McEvoy and Gormally, 1997) were that women who engaged in political violence were different from other women, being characterised by delinquent sexuality, ruthless and transgressive drives and 'confusion of both identity and objective - the strongest impression conveyed is that women are playing a male game using thinly disguised and poorly adapted male roles' (Cooper, 1979: 155). Although engaged in a struggle for autonomy, they were assigned to subordinate roles as accomplices to males and 'seemed unable to escape male influence in this sphere'. Indeed, the 'terrorist woman' was bound by an 'obsessive' and 'pathological ... erotomania' in her dependency on insurgent men (Ibid., 154). Therefore, their culpability was, at best, vaguely mitigated by their biological and social dysfunctionality, their sexual subordination in insurgency movements and their complicity with terrorist and violent men.

Deprived of agency or rationality, women have been rarely considered in the theorisation of political crime other than as problematic and exceptional deviations of gendered norms. Feminist analyses of war and political conflict similarly note the polarisation of values and meanings which assign primary, 'active' roles and secondary 'passive' ones to men and women respectively (Dowler, 1997: 78). Despite recent feminist analyses of the extent of women's political agency in conflict, the predominant concepts of women's role in insurgency and independence movements still create distinctions between 'the ferocious few' [female combatants] and 'the non-combatant many' (Elshtain, 1995: 163-193). As Jamieson notes, women are simultaneously absent as agents in conflict, while the criminology of war has rarely considered specific forms of the gendered harm caused by war and conflict (Jamieson, 1998). Similarly, the conflict in Northern Ireland has been represented through a 'simplistic genderised polarisation' between 'violent men' and 'victimised women' (Aretxaga, 1997: 4), which obscures how women's subjectivity in conflict is shaped by their location within an indigenous 'armed patriarchy' as well as a repressive state (Evason cited in Edgerton, 1986: 79). The representation of women as 'victims' further emphasises the processes by which women are doubly confined as a

political and gendered 'other' within discourses of political action and counterinsurgency (Theweleit, 1996: MacDonald, 1991: Aretxaga, 1997). The analysis now turns to an examination of the discourse of women's secondary agency in criminological accounts of political agency in prison.

The gendered limits of prison sociation theories

This section turns to a third domain of scholarly investigation which has conventionally been used to theorise collective and political resistance and agency in prison. Whereas the political structures in the women's prison in Northern Ireland might be viewed as resembling those elements of instrumental affiliation with which 'inmate sociation' and subcultural theory is concerned, it is argued that these theories have limited or problematic applicability to the formation of collectivist and self-defining alliances amongst women prisoners. Firstly, 'sociation' and 'subcultural' analyses lack a gendered analysis, that is, a consciously critical view of formations of masculinities or femininities within 'inmate structures', and/or their relationships with 'official' penal culture. Secondly, some correctives to the implicit androcentrism of sociation theory resort to equally problematic, foundationalist explanations of women's 'needs' or 'predispositions', which convey the secondariness and inadmissibility of women's alliances in prisons. The final section, however, returns to the structured and gendered forms of incapacitation that inhibit women's alliances in prison.

Prison sociation theory gives an account of imprisonment which emphasised 'survival' through 'making out' in the 'underlife' of carceral institutions (Goffman, 1991). The tenets of prison sociation which informed prisoner 'subcultural' theory, exemplified by Clemmer (1965), Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961), were largely concerned with identifying the use of personalised rituals as a 'way out' of the pains of imprisonment and its resulting anomie. While 'prisoner subcultural' analyses contested the concept of total institutional rule and sought to identify its 'discrepancies' (Bowker, 1977), these accounts commonly proceeded from the basis that agency was already framed by the anterior powers of carceral institutions which, at best, allowed minor or temporary forms of escape by inmates from

institutional authority. Sykes (1958) and Clemmer (1965) held that the monolithic character of institutions was compromised because the task of custody and institutional 'self maintenance' was necessarily dependent on pragmatic negotiation and the exigencies of mutual dependence between staff and prisoners. This reciprocity involved collusive or mutually self-interested relationships between the formal administrative and inmate systems. Sykes held that both the 'individualistic' (and hence alienative), or 'collectivist' (and therefore more cohesive and successful) roles adopted by prisoners, 'in response to the particular problems of imprisonment', were ultimately circumscribed or coopted (Sykes, 1958: 82-3).

A conspicuous expression of prisoner agency, in sub-cultural theory, entailed the establishment of inmate councils which mandated 'natural' leaders and 'rank and file specialists' from the informal prisoner structure to advocate on their behalf and manage relationships with authority, according to 'their' socio-cultural values (Sykes, 1958). Mathiesen held that inmate councils had an ambivalent relationship with penal order in that they afforded inmate cohesion, but ultimately worked to supplement penal legitimacy and the stability of the institution by providing a layer of self-governance, albeit legitimated by consent (Mathiesen, 1965). Inmate councils were organised within pre-established paradigms of legitimacy precisely because they formalised and consolidated existing reciprocal relationships. Hence, as Sykes concluded, inmate councils were 'counter-intuitive', in that the solidarity acquired by prisoners in the totalising environment of the prison merely mitigated 'the pains of imprisonment' by elaborating a duality of discipline which was coextensive with formal authority.

Crawford's studies of loyalist prisoner structures in Northern Ireland, largely influenced by sociation theory, considered the duality of discipline in their prison structures (Crawford, 1999). Paramilitary structures insulated members from the symbolic condemnation of prison staff, and allowed socialisation to take place in a comparatively free environment, provided they relinquished those aspects of individual interest which were susceptible to the alienating drives of imprisonment (Ibid., 33-34). In effect, Crawford argued that paramilitary organisations in prison constituted 'consensus communities' in which inmates

accepted the authority of their own leaders, and ‘consequently, the alienation experienced in conventional regimes was almost completely avoided’ (Ibid., 34).

While Crawford usefully raises the instrumental function of political prisoner structures in preserving distances between prisoners and institutional disciplinary structures, his analysis overstates the extent to which the prisoner’s ‘realms of autonomy’ amounted to a fully detached, separate and discrete social system in the prison (Crawford, 1999: chapter three). Crawford does not fully address the dynamics of convergence with the formal regime or the lack of equilibrium emphasised by Sykes and others, despite the observation that political prisoner structures necessarily formed some alliances with staff and prison officials, (even if they were subversive), within dual lines of political and official control in prison. His account reverts to the contractarian side of sociation theory which reconciles this relationship in terms of the exchange of a ‘consensual, liberal, and permissive’ regime in Long Kesh which ‘resulted in comparatively negligible incidents of rule-breaking’ (Crawford, 1999: 33-34). There is little scope in this theoretical approach for analysing the instances where discretionary realms of autonomy were revoked to a significant degree *because* of the perceived influence of prisoner collectives, as actually occurred in Northern Ireland. Crawford did not account for the realignment of prisoner structures in Northern Ireland as a form of resistance to being broken up by the revocation of special category status, and thus failed to explain the contingency of prison ‘sub-cultural’ existence.

Furthermore, as described in chapter two, while the legal recognition of special category status provided the basis for considerable degrees of self-organisation, this did not amount to a totally separate and discrete social system for the women’s political structures. Rather, on significant matters that required negotiation on behalf of the prisoner body, the model of a ‘regime-within-a-regime’ was proposed to signal the proximity between the mandated leadership of the prisoners and the prison authorities. Moreover, the integrity of the women’s political structures was particularly susceptible to perforation, and the degree and

scope of official recognition of their status was contingent upon other 'informal', customary, and normative gendered constraints. In effect, the special category status legitimised certain modes of negotiation, rather than granting political prisoners 'autonomy' or 'freedom'.

The 'prisonisation' of women and the 'feminised' limits of agency

The application of 'inmate socialisation' theories to women's prisons followed from the concern of inmate subcultural theorists with the underground and illicit nature of 'inmate codification' and the reconstitution of 'group norms that are directly related to mitigating the pains of imprisonment' (Ward and Kassebaum: 1966: 6). Women's prisonisation theory proceeded from the observation that their inmate structures were constrained within the limits of reciprocity, by serving both the prisoners and 'custodial ends for the staff as well' (Ward and Kassebaum, 1966: 30). Following Sutherland and Cressey (1960), Ward and Kassebaum held that inmate structures in women's prisons were maintained through 'a system of friendships, mutual obligations, statuses, reciprocal relations, loyalties, intimidation, deception and violence' (Ward and Kassebaum, 1966: 30). Furthermore the inmate code primarily operated through 'self-policing', as formal controls were 'negligible compared to control by prisoners themselves' (Ibid.).

Giallombardo's Society of Women (1966) and Heffernan's Making It In Prison (1972) sought to establish whether a corresponding female code for 'doing time', previously observed in men's prisons, existed in women's prisons. Their concern was with how rituals of initiation, 'doing time' and 'making out' acquired specific dimensions and meanings in women's prisons. As in male prisons, the 'supplementary inmate system of production and exchange' in women's prisons functioned through an elaborated division of labour which created a 'sense of counter-power [within the] organised inmate system' (Heffernan, 1972: 74). Heffernan emphasised an economic underpinning to inmate solidarity by relating prisoners' attitudes or 'inner orientations' towards the 'economic exchange system' to their predisposition to engage in or maintain the inmate code. However, while Heffernan concluded that 'the code' was implemented through the

distribution of goods and favours in women's prisons, the relationship between social stratification and power in inmate systems was not economically reductive (Heffernan, 1972: 151). Rather, she emphasised its interplay with 'the development of a family unit', [which] provided 'a rationale for a multiplicity of close relationships ... as well as legitimating dependency and dominance roles' (Ibid., 88).

While Heffernan noted the interdependence of economic and personal transactional 'subsystems' (Ibid., 160), Giallombardo (1966), and Ward and Kassebaum (1966) emphasised the reconstitution by women prisoners of subaltern 'family' units and domesticated arrangements as the nexus of economic, social and emotional ties. Ward and Kassebaum's Women's Prison (1966), examined the reconstitution of gender roles within the 'subcultural' category of 'female homosexuality', which they perceived to be 'at the centre of the culture and social structure of women's prisons' (Ward and Kassebaum, 1966: introduction). Proceeding from the observation that 'homosexuality [in prisons] is either not mentioned or disguised under terms such as "relationships"', their study sought to place 'female homosexuality' at the centre of 'inmate codification', by contending that sexual roles were central to the organisation of women's identification and structures in prisons (Ibid.). The 'conjugal' character of women's relationships in prison were prompted by 'the need for stable patterns or expectations and frames of reference' (Ibid., 31). Similarly, female 'subcultural patterns' were grounded in ineluctably passive and conventional drives, borne out by the prisoners' need to reconstruct 'pseudo-family' units as an outcome of 'women's psychological needs ... psycho-sexual needs and symbiotic needs' (Ibid., 73).

In dispensing with the motives of political self-interest or rational, contract-based adaptations noted by Heffernan, Ward and Kassebaum reverted to explanations of the subjective and individualistic characteristics which prefigured women's capacity to make and retain strategic alliances. They measured the 'stability' of women's inmate cohesion by investigating the adherence to, or deviation from, principles of 'the [male] code' on informing, theft, involuntary disclosure of information to staff, and the ability to conceal information or suffer punishment at the expense of the self, and compared their data against the strength of male prisoner codes. They 'found' that women 'broke the rules' of the

inmate code more frequently on all counts, and that the circumstances in which women would turn 'snitch' and risk exclusion were more extensive than commonly acknowledged (Ibid., 32-35). Accordingly, women's adherence to 'the code' was weaker than that of men, as they did 'not feel bound to maintain group solidarity by no-ratting rules' (Ibid., 53). As female codification was susceptible to individualistic and subjective interests, their structures were accordingly unreliable and more prone to fragmentation than those of men. Women's failure to uphold 'the code' (or their rejection of it) thus corresponded with their underdeveloped 'criminal maturity', and reflected broader social influences on women's pathway to crime, as 'women in our society are not prepared to "play it cool"', 'take it like a man' [sic], refrain from 'copping out' or 'use force to fight for one's rights' (Ibid., 67-68).

Although Mandaraka-Sheppard's study of the dynamics of conflict in women's prisons appeared two decades after prisonisation theory, her analysis consciously addressed 'the predominance of [the] belief that the cohesion among male prisoners was more collectively organised in its opposition to staff, compared with women' by arguing that obstacles to women's agency were ingrained in penal punishment and discipline (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 18). She proposed that 'differential role expectations' in the disciplinary regimes, as well as the predominance of 'feminised' controls, created 'structurally determined differences and opportunities' for inmate cohesion (Ibid., chapter three). Mandaraka-Sheppard emphasised the institutional role in the 'escalation of friction' and consequent 'spiralling effects of punishment on inmate violence' (Ibid., 84). The dynamics of conflict in women's prisons were 'frequently' caused by, and extenuated through, 'overzealous rule imposition', based on 'preconceived ideas of a troublemaking prisoner', assumptions about the guilt of the offending prisoner, 'failure to question the veracity of staff', and 'disproportionately severe punishments', which aggravated 'already poor relationships' in women's prisons (Ibid., 83-88).

Mandaraka-Sheppard held that prisoner agency was circumscribed by pre-emptive controls in women's prisons. The specifically 'feminine losses' caused to women in prison

included isolation from family and children, and a greater sense of the invasion of their personal privacy than that experienced by men. These factors tended to generate strategies of withdrawal and ritualistic compliance, or defiance and individualistic rebellion (Ibid., 121-122). During infrequent phases of organised rebellion (in protest at the stoppage of mail, or visits), the prisoners' protests were quickly dispersed:

... due to mistrust which prevailed among the women prisoners, it was not easy for them to form a group which could stick together in their common grievance against the authorities ... The women prisoners lack group identification and comradeship. One can observe anomie in their formal system, in that the inmates are confused as to what rules to abide by (Ibid., 136).

Accordingly, because women were predisposed to quickly revert to individual self-interest or disengaged anomie, their 'inmate' solidarity was more tenuous and unreliable. Furthermore, they were held to be unable to engage with the 'legitimate' grievance system as 'men prisoners have more resources than women prisoners to cope and play the bureaucratic-instrumental roles already learned outside' (Ibid., 140). Hence, the exercise of even legitimate forms of solidarity were circumscribed, which predisposed prisoners to engage in subversive and informal modes of 'insubordination', generating even further surveillance and pre-emptive interventions (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 140-141).

The importance of Mandaraka-Sheppard's analysis is the attention she draws to the influence which the formal and informal punitive mechanisms in women's prisons exert on constraining prisoners' alliances. Her analysis concludes that women's collective alliances are disrupted because women are enmeshed in punitive, surveillant and deterrent mechanisms in prisons. She argues that they are prevented from surmounting their atomised condition because the extensive and capillary nature of punishment and deterrence in women's prisons means that pre-emptive interventions are far more readily extended to their infractions. Subsequently, they develop modes of 'resistance' which are limited in scope and style, or revert to individualistic and petty forms of rule-breaking. Women in prison cannot or do not effectively exercise collaborative agency because of institutionally

determined forces, rather than 'innate failures' on their part, she concludes. Rather, collective alliances in women's prisons are constantly susceptible to co-option, dispersal, punishment and control. This alignment between gendered correctional strategies and the formation of penal constraints has been explored in other feminist analyses of women's punishment, which are now discussed.

Women's political imprisonment: feminist perspectives

The final discussion considers how the female political prisoner avoids easy categorisation in the analysis of women's imprisonment. The confinement and conditions of long-term, serious or political women prisoners have not informed theories of women's penalty to a significant degree. However, this absence does not simply reflect an empirical oversight, but amplifies ongoing debates about the social function of women's punishment, the shifting character of regulation in women's prisons, and the degrees of social harm that accrue to women's penalty relative to the nature of their crimes. The following section considers the occlusion of political women prisoners from these analyses. However, it also considers significant points of convergence between gendered and security controls which establish potential points of continuity in the penal punishment and discipline of women, while also accounting for their specific formations in relation to the confinement of women political prisoners.

Since the 1980s, feminist penology has retained as a central analytical paradigm the primacy of poverty, profound social marginality and exposure to gendered violence and controls as explanations for women's 'pathways' to crime and punishment (Carlen, 1983, 1988, 1998; Heidensohn, 1985; Faith, 1993). Carlen consistently stresses the 'meaning of women's imprisonment' as originating with gendered controls and social disenfranchisement, which both precede women's imprisonment and are reconstituted in penal regimes for women. Accordingly, the meaning of women's imprisonment as a social institution references 'both penal discourses and extra-discursive practices' (Carlen, 1983: 15). 'Offending women' suffer multiple burdens of social marginalisation, being seen as

'outwith family, sociability, femininity and adulthood ... they are often seen as being outwith "real" criminality too' (Carlen, 1983: 155). Hence, penal regimes extend a very specific form of social control 'especially tailored' for the disciplining of women who are 'deemed not only to have broken the law' but to have transgressed their roles as 'women, mothers and wives' (Carlen, 1983: 59). In advocating that the analysis of 'women's conformity, law-breaking, and punishment' should retain a continuous engagement with active processes of criminalisation 'constituted within ideological and material circumstances', Carlen argues that women offenders retain agency or exercise volition in a socio-political sense:

... not only because they "find themselves" outwith conventional classes and gender controls, but also they *choose* criminal means in attempts to apply individualistic remedies to the social inequities stemming from class exploitation, sexism and racism (Carlen, 1988: 17: emphasis in the original).

The preferred usage by Carlen (1983: emphasis added) of the term '*women in prison*' retains the repressive meaning and character of marginalised women's passage through different institutional controls. Faith similarly holds that the social dimensions and meanings of women's imprisonment reference:

... the dominant discourses which define, classify, regulate and set penalties for deviance. [The unruly woman] is socially constructed as undeserving of the "protections" of the woman who is confined within the parameters of gender conformity' (Faith, 1993: 1).

Accordingly, women's recourse to crime is embedded in their responses to the magnitude of social conditions which produce offending, underlined by discriminatory practices whereby *certain* women are more vulnerable than others to criminalisation:

... no single theory (feminist or otherwise) can adequately explain three major features of women's lawbreaking and imprisonment; that women's crimes are, in the main, the crimes of the powerless; that women in prison are disproportionately from ethnic minority groups; and that a majority of women in prison have been in poverty for the greater parts of their lives (Carlen, 1992: 53).

Carlen thus holds that a 'stubborn matrix' of ideological, social and economic exclusion prefigures the carceral 'victimisation' of women (Carlen, 1994: 133). The appropriate objects of analysis of women's imprisonment, therefore, begin with the material relationships of classed, gendered, cultural-political and racial domination, 'which are not reducible to each other' (Ibid.). Furthermore, analyses of internal penal practices which are not grounded in these material relationships afford only partial accounts of women's imprisonment (Ibid.).

Accordingly, the woman of feminist penal discourse is understood in the context of interlocked matrices of social marginalisation and victimisation: 'for the most part, women prisoners represent the extremes of social exclusion' (Prison Reform Trust, 2000: xv). Moreover, following the disturbing increases in women's incarceration during the 1990s, penal reformers have been compelled to renew their emphasis on the aggregate social harm caused to imprisoned women, relative to the social harm caused by their crimes (Carlen, 1998; Prison Reform Trust, 2000). Considerable emphasis has been placed on the general fact that women in prison are infrequently serious or violent offenders, and the majority are imprisoned for property or drugs offences, or prostitution:

... there can be little doubt that women are less likely to commit crimes than men, they are less likely to commit serious crimes and their offending careers are shorter (Prison Reform Trust, 2000: 8).

The incarceration of women casts into relief the extensive social costs of women's imprisonment, on the basis that their 'patterns of offending remains very different from that of men' and pose 'lower levels of risk to the public' (Ibid., xii). As nearly half of women in custody have primary responsibility for childcare, the cost of women's imprisonment 'has wider and longer term social repercussions' than individual deterrence (Ibid: xiii). Women, moreover, are seriously disadvantaged in the criminal justice process and systems of punishment that are 'designed for men, rather than women' (Ibid., xv). In the course of committal, they are constructed 'within the discourses of domesticity, sexuality and pathology ... [as] needy, greedy and sick' (Worrall, 1990: 85). Within such constructions of

social inadequacy, dependency and subordination, they are portrayed as 'victims' with 'generally chaotic lives', and officially constructed as 'harmless people' so that they may 'undergo a transformation in which they are imprisoned for their own, rather than the public, good' (Carlen, 1983: 86).

The observation that 'instead of harming others they harm themselves' has been generally linked to the argument that, 'on none of its possible definitions would the majority of women [in prison] be seen as dangerous' (Ibid., 115). The relative 'harmlessness' of offending women is deployed to underscore the case for reducing the severity of their regimes, and their decarceration:

... a greater proportion of women could be held without physical security restrictions as ... the majority of women entering the prison system do so without having committed a serious offence and without being a risk to the safety of the public ... However, none of this is to deny that there are some women in prison who have committed serious offences and have caused harm to their victims, [but] these women represent a small proportion of all those entering the prison system (Prison Reform Trust, 2000: 8).

In spite of the political efficacy of social harm arguments in the advocacy for penal reform, the relative silence about the minority of women sentenced for 'serious offences', or who have been deemed 'a risk to the safety of the public', reiterates their marginal status within discourses of women's penal punishment. Most studies of women in prison have primarily focused on low security regimes and on prisoners serving short- to medium-terms of imprisonment, and have rarely considered women serving long sentences in high-security regimes separately. As a consequence, the specific experiences and adjustments by women to 'the indeterminacies' of long-term imprisonment (Walker and Worrall, 2000) are overlooked as an additional axis of difference in women's penal regimes (Genders and Player, 1988; Howard League for Penal Reform, 1999). This omission reflects, in part, the political priorities of giving prominence to the materialities of women's offending against the upward cycle of women's penalisation that has been in evidence since the 1980s. A shared tactic of penal reformers (Prison Reform Trust, 2000), and reductionist or abolitionist positions (Carlen, 1998: 134), has been to emphasise that the standards

of risk assessment, deterrence and retribution that have been the predominant political response to the rising crime rate have not been based on the 'realities of *women's* law-breaking' (Ibid: emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, these arguments introduce obvious impediments to positioning female serious offenders within either the 'facts' of women's pathways to imprisonment, or the norms of an aggressively punitive law and order discourse, other than as potent and exceptional figures of 'violent and dangerous women' (MacDonald, 1991; Lloyd, 1995):

[As] the official agenda focuses ever more sharply on the protection of the public from 'dangerous' offenders, it is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the realities of female offending and increasingly destructive in its effects (Prison Reform Trust, 2000: xv).

As the implications of social harm arguments for analysing women's agency in crime and punishment are the subject of ongoing feminist penological debate, the following discussion focuses on two separate strands of feminist analyses which concern the construction of the 'difficult' and 'dangerous' women of penal discourse.³ Firstly, it examines the susceptibility of women political prisoners to the forms of behavioural monitoring and gendered discipline that have been conventionally exercised against the 'difficult' female prisoner of penal discourse. Secondly, it considers the transitional points between gendered discipline and the enhanced security that characterises the penal

³In particular, 'social harm' analysts have been charged with glossing over women's volitionality in the commission of crime, and ultimately denying them agency or subjective complexity, in their haste to 'position criminal women as more victims than aggressors, more sinned against than sinning, more to be pitied than to be blamed' (Allen, 1998: 66). Daly and Maher (1998: 6-10) argue that 'victimising' narratives are 'reductionist' and inadvertently reinforce a 'traditional victimology' which evades 'crucial questions of agency and responsibility in women's (and men's) lawbreaking'. Daly (1998) contends that they 'blur[...] the boundaries between the harming and harmed', while Bosworth argues that they support the depiction of women in prison 'as a community of victims rather than a collection of victimisers', and reflect 'an anachronistic ideal of passive femininity' (Bosworth, 1999: 5). However, Carlen (1983, 1994, 1998, 2002a, 2002b), Howe (1994), and Hannah-Moffat (1995, 2001), vigorously defend the position that women in prison 'are too frequently victims' of a multitude of material and structured oppressions that constitute the 'social harm' they experience (Carlen, 1994: 133). The implications of these debates for theorising women's resistance in prison are taken up in the next chapter.

governance of the 'dangerous' woman of penal discourse. In considering the coextensive relationships between gendered controls and 'progressive' securitisation, it is argued that the experiences of political women in prison intersect with existing analyses of other women in prisons, but also reflect specific formations of penal punishment in relation to their security status, and their 'political' subject position.

Governing 'difficult' women in prison: the 'feminisation' of penal controls

The development of women's penal correction has emerged in relation to conventional constructions of the 'difficult' women of penal discourse, who are deemed to be replete with personal inadequacies, and culpable of serial gendered and social transgressions, and to present pernicious behavioural problems, and lack adequate personal means for achieving their own rehabilitation. Consequently, 'good order' in women's prisons reflects the integration of gendered behavioural imperatives into every aspect of the disciplinary, regulatory and rehabilitative structures of prison regimes (Dobash et al., 1986; Bosworth, 1999). Penal regimes assimilate and reproduce existing social prerogatives which prohibit women from straying from docile femininity while institutionalised. Pre-emptive and deterrent vigilance against rule-breaking by women in prison is intimately harnessed to a broader logic of restoring women in prison to normalised 'feminine' roles. A central function of discipline and punishment in women's prisons, therefore, is to deconstruct or rearrange what are perceived to be the prisoner's undesirable social habits and practices.

As a consequence, the principles of compulsory domestication and the exposure of women to the beneficial influence of reconstituted personal and 'community' relations have been central to the ideology of rehabilitating women in prison since the inception of the penitentiary (Zedner, 1995; Dodge, 1999). Carlen (1983) and Dobash et al. (1986) critically observed that discipline and surveillance in women's prisons are mediated through the reconstitution of 'family-type' relationships, and enforced interpersonal dependency on staff. They hold that the officially-endorsed simulation of 'family-type' regimes in Compton Vale Prison, Scotland, which was the prototype for Mourne House, Northern Ireland, generated 'repressive' effects, in that the physical division of prisoners into small groups 'made

for easy physical and social control' (Dobash et al., 1986: 186). Carlen further argues that the 'familiness' of 'progressive' regimes combines:

... the denial to prisoners of sociability and adult womanhood with the organisation of the women into small family units, to ensure a mental and bodily surveillance which denudes the prisoners' daily life of all dignity and independence (Carlen, 1983: 111)

Moreover, the domestication of penal controls effectively works to create more pliable surrogates for alternative forms of prisoner communities, in part because the culture of personal intervention is so 'successful' that:

... it would take extraordinary strength to resist the degree of control, surveillance and manipulation directed at preventing the foundation of such bonds or at breaking them once formed (Dobash et al., 1986: 186).

From domestication to securitisation in women's penal regimes

More recently, however, observers of women's prison regimes have noted the increased emphasis on enhanced security across all categories in women's prisons (Carlen and Tchaikovsky, 1996: Carlen, 1998: Walker and Worrall, 2000: Hannah-Moffat, 2001). While commentators have long noted the uneasy accommodations between the dual functions of 'security' and the 'safe custody and care of inmates', the prerogatives of security are increasingly prevailing over, although not eliminating, previous concerns with domestication and docilisation in 'ordinary' (low-category) regimes. In England and Wales, the 'security drift' has been driven by the resurgence of a 'new punitiveness', which is associated with a paradigm shift in criminal justice and penal policies from 'therapeutic' and rehabilitative goals to austere, retributive and deterrent regimes (Garland, 1996). Carlen noted the intensification of security in women's prisons during the period as confirming a shift in emphasis from the 'complex of concerns relating to domesticising and feminising ... women prisoners' during the early 1980s, to the security consciousness of the mid-1990s, when:

... the main custodial priorities were related to the maintenance of tight security and the creation of more punitive prison environments (Carlen, 1998: 30).

The security drift in women's prisons is argued to have had its origins in the oblique, indirect implementation of security policy in response to escapes from Whitemoor (1994) and Parkhurst (1995) prisons for men. In an historical mirroring of developments in the Northern Ireland system, the restructuring of security in prisons in England and Wales following the Learmont Inquiry (1995) was based on assessments of physical risks posed by male prisoners, but led to the transplantation of enhanced security procedures to women's regimes:

... even though women prisoners pose much less of a threat to the public than do male prisoners, in the 1990s they have been made to submit to the same harsh security measures as have their counterparts in male prisons (Carlen, 1998: 27).

Thus, securitisation entailed the assimilation of regime-based deterrents and controls into women's prisons on the basis of a universalised and inappropriate application of security policy rather than an assessment of the actual requirements for women's establishments (Carlen, 1998: 132-5; Walker and Worrall, 2000). However, as Carlen points out, the problems derive not only from the monolithic application of security policy and procedures, but also from the more recent deployment of 'dynamic' security practices. 'Dynamic security' is claimed to involve the precise, surgical use of surveillance and incapacitation procedures in individual contexts, as a means of avoiding indiscriminate, blanket security. Yet, while official reports are:

... replete with arguments that the secure prison will be one that is based upon dynamic, rather than repressive security [that is] ... cemented by the product of good relations between staff and prisoners, meaningful activities and an effective structure of privileges and incentives ... [The] main problem with dynamic security ... is that attempts to put it into practice have been either nullified or swamped by straightforwardly repressive changes (Carlen, 1998: 123).

To Carlen's cogent evaluation of the misapplication of security practices in prison systems where women prisoners are already systematically marginalised, can be added the further observation that security in women's prisons is dynamic *because* it works in tandem with, and reinforces, other structural imbalances and normalising practices:

This *combination* of high-level security, great distance from family and communities, and few choices for daily activity or movement, together with individual reasons for despair, results in lethargy, claustrophobia, depression, self-injurious behaviour and suicide (Faith, 1993: 139: emphasis added).

A further transitional point in the blurring of gendered and security controls concerns the downward percolation of security practices where higher-category remand women are confined in low-category women's prisons. With the exception of the small group of sentenced women in Britain who are classified as the highest security risk and housed in H-Wing, HMP Durham, the provision of facilities for serious women offenders has been applied in an ad-hoc fashion, alternating between the adaptation of units in existing male high-security prisons on a temporary basis, or quarantining prisoners remanded for serious offences in lower-category women's prisons.⁴ The conditions at H-Wing, HMP Durham, which held convicted IRA women prisoners and other Category A women prisoners since 1974, and remains the only such facility for women prisoners in Britain, exemplify the problems with the former strategy. In their inquiry into conditions on the wing in 1989, Lester and Taylor reported the 'depressive appearance' and cramped environment of the wing, the 'manifestly insufficient' provision of exercise facilities, restrictions on access to educational and workshop activities and the unnecessary application of regular strip-searching procedures (Lester and Taylor, 1989: 10). Lester and Taylor continued:

Women in H-wing are being treated less favourably in important respects than they would be treated if they were male, long-term, sentenced Category A prisoners, as regards some facilities and services, and it is strongly arguable that their unequal treatment is unlawful (Ibid., 11).

The report concluded:

[The] women of H-wing are subjected to a poverty of environment unacceptable in a prison system committed to the civilised and humane objectives defined for the Prison Service (Ibid.).

The alternative option has been to house remand prisoners in lower-security, women-only

⁴ Prisoners who are remanded on charges related to political offences are held, pending sentence, in enhanced regimes in women-only, lower-security facilities. Those sentenced are automatically classified as Category A prisoners.

institutions. However, the presence of republican remand prisoners in HMP Holloway women's prison, for example, has generally led to the blanket application of maximum security regimes, as their presence has generally caused staff to apply standards of security and vigilance to the detriment of lower-category prisoners (ICC and ICJP: 1990: Lloyd, 1995). In either case, the treatment of Category A or high-security women prisoners exemplifies the anomalies of transferring such prisoners across gendered and security categories.⁵ These occur because assessments of their needs, their capacity to escape or other relevant security concerns are subordinated to the availability of suitable facilities. Furthermore, their confinement in either male high-security facilities, or low-category women's prisons, leads to further isolation and marginalisation.⁶ Moreover, the security drift in evidence in women's penal regimes more generally reflects an equally problematic and contradictory range of responses in implementing 'category-appropriate' security measures, but has produced significant modes of conversion between 'domestication' and the drive towards enhanced security. Whereas the previous discussion has explored the penetration of security controls into 'ordinary' women's penal regimes, the following section explores the apparently converse phenomenon - the integration of conventional 'gendered' penal controls into high-security women's regimes, in order to argue that gendered and security controls converge in the penal punishment of women political prisoners.

⁵The case of Roisín McAliskey, an Irish prisoner who was remanded in custody for sixteen months in November 1996, illustrates the anomalies further. McAliskey was arrested in Belfast on the basis of an extradition warrant in relation to the IRA bombing of British army bases in Germany, and transferred to Holloway prison in London, which had no facilities for housing Category A prisoners (British/Irish Rights Watch et al., 1997). She was accordingly transferred to a special secure unit at Belmarsh, an all male prison. As McAliskey's health deteriorated, and because she was pregnant on her arrest, she was returned to Holloway prison, where she was held in isolation as the only Category A prisoner. McAliskey was strip searched seventy five times in the first three months of her remand, and although the governor of Holloway prison petitioned for her to be allowed access to the exercise facilities, the request was turned down by the Home Office. McAliskey was released in March 1998, without any case for extradition being heard.

⁶ This analysis does not advocate the obvious 'solution' of constructing purpose-built units, which may yet emerge as a response to this problem, as it is doubtful whether this would ameliorate the prevailing emphasis on securitisation more generally, and would be unlikely to resolve the persistent problems associated with balancing 'care and control' in women's prisons.

Governing 'dangerous' women in prison: the ecology of special incapacitation

Female political prisoners are constituted as posing atypical, but nonetheless subversive, deviations from the norms of the woman of penal discourse, being distinguished by their critical and resistant disposition towards authority, orientation towards non-conformity, motivation towards undermining prison order, and ideological consciousness of the conditions of their confinement. More particularly, they are thought to undermine the mechanisms of docilisation and close correction by consciously conveying a subjective distance from authorities and other prisoners, avoiding the self-abnegating effects of collaboration with the prison regime, and being schooled in the strategic and self-preservational aspects of organising separately. In this context, the institutional designation of the dangerous female prisoner as 'violence prone', 'escape prone' or 'disruptive' informs the logic of 'special incapacitation', which is characterised by small-group isolation, the infusion of intelligence-gathering and counterinsurgency strategies into the correctional system, pre-emptive interception and extensive surveillance: 'its purpose is to contain and monitor primarily (though not exclusively) women political prisoners' (Zwerman, 1988: 32). Their segregation in isolated wings, and the operation of regimes-within-regimes, are also as much features of a conspicuously political policy of containment, as they are concerned with avoiding the contamination of 'ordinary prisoners':

Dispersion of these prisoners across the prison system is inadvisable because of the risk of association and politicisation of non-political prisoners - [thereby extending] the 'prisoner-terrorist' link (Flynn, cited in Zwerman, 1988: 36).

Such penal policies are grounded in risk assessments which are resonant of pathological discourses, as:

... descriptions and inferences about the terrorist's mind are unequivocal in assuming incurable pathology, and emphatic in warning about the futility of social or rehabilitative approaches to their incarceration, especially for women (Zwerman, 1988: 36).

Accordingly, the 'terrorist-prisoner' [sic] possesses characteristics that include 'personal engagement', 'rationality', 'verbal skills', 'extended family and community ties', 'highly developed organisational and conceptual skills, and a capacity to resist institutionalisation' (Flynn, cited in Zwerman, 1988: 36-37). Indeed, it is precisely the perceptions of competence, self-reliance and imperviousness to 'traditional forms of both punishment and rehabilitation', such as the influence of staff or regime-based privileges or forfeitures, that are deemed to set political prisoners apart from other women prisoners, and to cement perceptions about their disruptiveness:

... traditional forms of rehabilitation, e.g. work, training programmes, recreation and therapy cannot have any positive impact on the political terrorist, in that s/he will not use these as avenues for personal growth, but rather as opportunities to criticise the prison and its authorities (Zwerman, 1988: 37).

As conventional forms of rehabilitation and deterrence through punishment are considered to be ineffectual, the alternative recourse has been to focus on 'special incapacitation' as a matrix of environmental, legal and regime-based controls. Significantly, the techniques and logic of special incapacitation are harnessed to existing gendered penal precepts:

... when the dimension of gender is added to concerns about the incarceration of the political criminal, the authoritarian element ... is heightened (Ibid.).

In this context, the 'special incapacitation' of women involves a specific ecology of small-group containment which combines technological and environmental techniques for fulfilling high degrees of individual surveillance, with a variant of gendered and group enclosure ('familiness'). Regimes for female political prisoners combine the intensive surveillance, intimate regulation and vigilance that are extensions of conventional practices in women's regimes, with regime-based adjustments and strong physical security features consistent with 'special incapacitation'. Women political prisoners are thus placed in a situation of dual containment, being considered to be 'women prisoners' for the purposes of correction and discipline, and 'political prisoners' for the purposes of security and control.

If, as Carlen argues 'prison is for punishment' and is 'the most compelling symbol of the state's power to punish' (2002: 159), then the controlling and legitimising function of the prison acquires a conspicuously repressive logic in the context of political imprisonment. 'Containment' is applied here in the general criminological sense that a question of crime or disorder is deemed to be so extensive in scope or intractable in character as to be defined as irresolvable, so that the principal approach has been to manage the problem by containing or minimising its criminogenic effects (Feeley and Simon, 1994). In penal practice, it is characterised by the technological enhancement of the security fabric of the prison, the development of special regimes which maximise the control and surveillance of 'dangerous' individuals and groups, the controlled flow of prisoners throughout the premises, and highly restricted access to facilities (Ibid.). The precepts of containment additionally imply the ideological or 'pragmatic' construction of political prisoners as being impervious to conventional medical, welfarist and correctional interventions which are directed towards individual reform, which in turn facilitates and normalises securitisation as the primary penal objective. This is not to argue that prison administrations dispense with psychiatric, medical or 'social-contract' mechanisms, or reforms to regimes, especially where their implementation is guided by the utility of reinforcing security. However, it is to suggest that containment and group controls provide an additional correctional layer in the punishment of women political prisoners, and in practice frequently ensure that the regulatory, 'docilising' objectives of women's penal regulation are qualified by the priorities of repressive deterrence and extensive securitisation.

Difficult and dangerous women

In her analysis of the judicial treatment of women who have been charged with serious, violent crimes, Allen has argued that the meanings attributed to the offences and defendants are 'typically manipulated, modified and reconstructed' to 'neutralise[...] the assertion of the woman's guilt, responsibility or dangerousness' (Allen, 1998: 55). Accordingly, they undergo a series of elaborate discursive reconfigurations which systematically delete 'all that would mark [their] action [as being] by an intentional and culpable subject' (Ibid., 56).

Female defendants in these circumstances are discursively 'tamed, sanitised, and rendered harmless' through the deployment of psychiatric, medical and social assessments which are entered as mitigating narratives in ways that 'alter the material and moral significance' of their offences, and which are 'either absent or untypical in cases involving males' (Ibid., 55-56). Rather than seeking to confirm the 'chivalrous' disposition of the criminal justice system, Allen identifies the subtler, prejudicial processes which reinforce the abnormality of the violent women, and cumulatively contribute to:

.. a simple denial of the woman's mental engagement with her behaviour, as if such an unreasoning and unreasonable condition were a quite natural state of womankind (Ibid., 57).

The suppression of women's agency in the commission of political crime takes a similar, if more convoluted, trajectory in successive sociological narratives, but these are equally involved in displacing their motives into the realms of pathology, irrationality, overwhelmingly emotional responses to perceived social or political injustices, or psychological or social maladjustment. However, a curious bifurcation occurs in accounts of the 'causes' of women's political violence. In the first instance, the figure of the exceptional individual who singularly embodies a range of psycho-social deviations is invoked so that alternative causal explanations, political rationales, social experiences or other plausible interpretations are elided. Positivist approaches construct the female political offender as a pathological exception, a rare social and physiological phenomenon who eludes easy categorisation either as a woman or as a criminal type, and therefore embodies the most 'degenerative' examples of both. The putatively corrective successor to this tradition applies rigidly normative categories of social or 'sex-role' adaptive theory to reify the 'sociopathic' attributes of the maladjusted or rejectionist woman.

At the same time, these analyses admit some qualifications which seek, if not to exonerate these offenders, to at least enter mitigating, 'victimising' explanations, such as their subordination within their political organisations, or the relegation of their political protests

in prisons to the marginal and gestural realm. In either case, the capacity of women to exercise rational agency is rendered inadmissible, either by outright denial, or because they are differently admitted to the economy of, if not legitimised, at least intelligible 'terrorist' violence. What is also clear, however, is that explanations of their 'victimisation' are still harnessed to sociological accounts which require the signifier of a readily-identifiable, highly culpable offender. As Allen notes:

At the very moment where these narratives seem most to require a definitive moral subject, as the responsible author of the crime, these women's status as such [victimised] subjects is emphatically revoked (Ibid., 57).

In turning from the 'causes' of women's involvement in political violence to analyses of their potential agency in prison, we similarly see that they disrupt the conceptual unity of the categories of political agency and gendered subjectivity in prison. Part three of the chapter explored the limited relevance of prison subcultural theory to analysing the collective agency of either women, or political women, in prison. Moreover, with the exception Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986), the application of sociation theory to women's prisons turned on foundationalist explanations of women's inherent passivity and lack of solidarity, which denuded women's prison collectives of sustainable or conscientising force.

The fourth section argued that the emphasis in feminist penology on social harm, victimisation and social oppression, while germane to women's political penalty, nevertheless could not be a primary explanatory framework. However, feminist critical analyses of the social organisation of penal punishment and deterrence, and their relationship to the prescriptive norms of prison discipline for women, created an analytical bridge for positioning political offenders within feminist criminological analysis. It was concluded that the fluid networks of security and gendered controls frequently blur the boundaries between the regimes for 'difficult' and 'dangerous' women of penal discourse. It was argued, therefore, that the experiences of women political prisoners intersected with those of other women in prison through serial, overlapping systems of heightened securitisation and mundane, gendered regulation at the micro level.

However, some outstanding questions remain to be explored in relation to the specific formations of agency and subjectivity among women political prisoners in Northern Ireland, notably the material and ideological construction of their penal subjectivity and the conditions of struggle and resistance on the prisoners' part. The next chapter maps this relationship in terms of a series of productive and dialectical interchanges between penal strategies of control and prisoners' tactics of resistance, and addresses the material differences in punitive formations which created the specific conditions of resistance on the part of women political prisoners in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 4

The Dynamics of Punishment and Resistance in Northern Ireland's Prisons: A Theoretical Framework

This chapter constructs an explanatory framework which brings together the continuities and discontinuities in punishment and resistance in Northern Ireland's women's prisons from 1972 to 1995. It follows from the arguments mapped out in previous chapters which point to the resistance by women political prisoners as being imbricated in power relations that reflected, and were constituted within, an alignment of the state, the prison, and political and gendered punitive frameworks. This chapter seeks to build from these arguments a range of theoretical positions from which to view their resistance, struggle and consolidation as they were framed within a wider domain of political conflict. Political conflict casts into sharper relief some dimensions of penalty in Northern Ireland that prompt an extension of existing analyses of state power, the prison system and the subjectification of prisoners. As chapter one noted, the state's investment in the political and discursive integrity of the prison system was explicitly harnessed to restoring the legitimacy of the rule of law, and to confirm that the 'normal' functioning of the legal and security apparatus was generally viable. In order for the project of political imprisonment to function smoothly, the prison system required multifaceted, mutually reinforcing systems of closure which involved political demonisation, enhanced powers for punishment and containment, and justificatory principles for the exceptional measures taken to counter crises in the system.

A second significant characteristic is that the political prisoners were more explicitly involved in organised and personal resistance than has been usually been observed in prison studies. Therefore, penal resistance is examined here as a complex dialectical process, which was inseparable from the multifaceted gendered, structural and ideological frameworks that shaped and reshaped penal punishment. This chapter focuses on four characteristics of the cycle of punishment and resistance, arguing that it emerged from a series of interpenetrating formations that were dialectical, productive, gendered, and situated. The dynamics of penal power and resistance are viewed dialectically, where they

are framed as ongoing and contingent processes of conflict and struggle between the political prisoners and the administration. This is initially explored through the crisis of legitimacy in the prisons that preceded and followed the implementation of criminal status.

The dialectic of penal struggle

Politically identified women prisoners in Northern Ireland, in concert with their male peers, in the republican and to a lesser and different extent, loyalist prisoner structures, maintained a continuous and dynamic struggle for the conditions and status as political prisoners.¹ *Continuous* refers to the sustained and collective character of disruption and resistance between 1972 and 1995, as outlined chapter two. The prisoners' campaign through the different phases of penal governance from the 1970s is distinguished by its longevity and relative coherence, and by the versatility of the prisoners' strategies of opposition. This is in contrast with the more familiar modes of short-lived prison mutinies or acts of defiance by individuals or small groups, which have engendered reactive and usually successful, official suppression (Scruton et al., 1991: Adams 1992: Bottoms and Sparks, 1995).

Dynamic refers to the dialectical momentum in the formation and reformation of prison policy and practices through different phases of coercion and 'accommodation', and the corresponding ways in which political prisoners confronted and renegotiated these realignments. As Lawrence McKeown observed of the male republican prisoners, the prison conflicts were characterised by interconnected relationships between 'continuity and change, structure and agency, and action and reflection' where:

Continuity and change and structure and agency can be said to be very closely intertwined ... [with] structure providing for continuity [and] agents being the dynamic for change. From the prison authorities' point of view, their goal was the imposition of a 'normal' prison regime [for the attainment of continuity] ... For republicans, their goal was to resist all such attempts to criminalise them and to bring about change in the prison regime and political policies that governed it (McKeown, 1998: 46).

¹ While loyalist organisations inside and outside the prisons also embarked on protest action for the restoration of political status after 1976, they were initially divided about the policy, and also had to distance their protests from any implicit support for republicans.

In McKeown's analysis, the dynamic of the prison conflicts centred on the struggle by prisoners to develop realms of autonomy and disengage as far as possible from the official regime. However, the prisoners' struggle was productive, rather than simply reactive, in that by working to establish their political identity and presence in prisons, they exercised a range of strategies for confronting various disciplinary and punitive penal techniques for producing 'docile bodies' and 'political penitents' (Foucault, 1990: Di Giovanni, 1990). McKeown thus emphasised the dynamic processes of precipitating 'ongoing change within the continuity of the prison struggle', as prisoners 'switched tactics according to what suited the particular issue, period or objective' (McKeown, 2001: 225). During the prolonged engagement over twenty-three years, the prisoners alternated from collective self-management during the period of internment, to physical protest and direct confrontation during the 'criminalisation' era, and:

At other times it took the form of subversion of the prison rules as displayed in the segregation and prison work issues; in dramatic flouting of the prison's 'security' as in the mass escape in 1983 [from the Maze/H-Blocks]; the use of litigation through legal challenge to the governor's internal system of adjudications; and, in the 1990s, primarily through dialogue and engagement with the prison authorities (Ibid. 222).

The dialectics of struggle occurred along a range of potential points of difference between the prison administration and prisoners. As Sparks et al. (1996: 34) noted, the maintenance of control and order in prisons recruits versatile and complex mechanisms which include violence and coercion, but also incorporate 'countervailing impulses towards accommodation, co-operation and sociability, so that the dialectic between the potentialities for order and disorder is more nuanced and intricate than at first appears':

To speak about the problems of order and control in prisons today raises questions of power, of unintended consequences, of the impact of modern managerial techniques, and the relationship between social structure and personal agency that prison studies has yet to confront adequately but which are the very stuff of modern social theory (Ibid., 62).

Viewed like this, prison regimes constitute a complex set of interests that are involved in the construction, and reconstruction, of penal 'order'. As Garland and Young argue, penal punishment has too frequently been conceived of as a 'singular, unitary phenomenon whilst

disregarding the plurality and complexity of its empirical supports' (Garland and Young, 1989: 11). This narrow paradigm of punishment 'inadequately references an institutional complex which supports a very wide range of social implications and effects' (Ibid.). Penal punishment, therefore, does not have a unitary meaning but creates in practice 'a shifting patchwork of compromises and arbitrary decisions' (Duff and Garland, 1994: 5).

This mutability and contingency undermines the apparent seamlessness of penal sanctions and powers, it is argued. Sparks argues that totalising views of penal control 'delimit[...] in a large measure the very arena within which penological debate must take place' (Sparks, 1994: 26). Moreover, an:

... emphasis on the imposition of order by relentless force glosses over many important complexities of prison life and effaces some significant variations in the social organisation of different prisons (Sparks et al., 1996: 35).

As order and control do not occur 'equally, always and everywhere' (Bottoms and Sparks, 1995: 51), penal power resembles a normalising complex that seeks to pursue pathways of least resistance in the pursuit of common objectives of good order, rather than taking the form of unreconstructed punitive determinism: 'any sociology which disregards this normative dimension and treats it as mere rhetoric is liable to misunderstand the nature of [penal] institutions' (Duff and Garland, 1994: 3). This emphasis on the heterogeneity of penal powers was claimed to distance the analysis from the 'critical pessimism' of 'totalising' theories of punitive instrumentalism by charging 'radicals' such as Cohen and Taylor (1972), Cohen (1985), or Scraton et al. (1991), with privileging episodic violence and confrontation as evidence of the general repressiveness of prison life, without reference to persuasive or consensual influences in the reproduction of regimes, so that:

... just as prisons sometimes provoke rebellions and riots so do they also (and more often) generate their own peculiar yet 'ordinary' and 'mundane' form of life (Sparks et al., 1996: 36-37).

In following the logic that the tenor of everyday penal relationships is characterised less by

confrontation than by conformity (of either a consensual or hegemonic nature), 'revisionist' commentators pursue modes of inquiry which attempt to re-engage the admissibility of 'legitimacy' for producing better order in prisons (Bottoms, 1983: Bottoms and Sparks, 1995: Sparks et al., 1996):

What kinds of penal change would be necessary in order to address the legitimacy deficit as it currently stands? Are there, indeed, any conditions under which prison management could reliably call upon a recognition of legitimacy by prisoners (in the sense of being "justified" in terms of their beliefs ...), as distinct from mere acquiescence or dull compulsion? (Bottoms and Sparks, 1995: 53).

Bottoms and Sparks were referring here to the problems that are incurred when good order is disconnected from consensus and legitimacy in penal practice. Their analysis is ultimately concerned with the conditions in which these discrepancies might be rebalanced, for example, through establishing social contracts between prisoners and the authorities or devising mechanisms which advance a strategic consensus with the confined (Sparks et al., 1996). The approach is rooted, in part, in the revival of neo-liberal and contractarian governance following the publication of the Woolf Report into prison disturbances in English prisons (Woolf, 1991). Woolf recommended the introduction of redistributive 'social democratic' reforms in which, for example, discretionary privileges should be promoted to guaranteed rights in exchange for the consensus of prisoners, and implemented as part of the goal of meeting their legitimate expectations. Such consensus was viewed to be 'fundamental to the stability of the system' (Woolf, 1991: 46). Although not uncritical towards Woolf's instrumental recalibration of legitimacy towards the maintenance of order in prisons, Sparks et al. retained as a central aspect of their case the argument that:

... many of the dimensions of prison life which we detail ... are unintelligible without reference to implicit (albeit not necessarily consensually shared) conceptions of legitimacy amongst prisoners and staff (Sparks et al., 1996: 87).

Nevertheless, while aspirations such as justice and legitimacy were part of the purview of liberalising prison regimes, they were also imbued with the prerogatives of extending the moral threshold of consensus in such a way as to identify and isolate detractors from the new contractarian order:

The achievement of justice will itself enhance security and control ...While not preventing all disruptions, they would marginalise those who claim they must resort to deeply damaging and costly disturbances on the grounds that there is no other way to have their voices heard (Woolf, 1991: 14).

Normalisation and its discontents: the [il]legitimacy of consensus in Northern Ireland's prisons

Similar legitimising aspirations were a feature of the transition towards the 'normalisation' of the Northern Ireland Prison Service. The policy document Serving The Community (1991) set out, in impeccably contractarian terms, the prison service's objectives for fostering stability and order in prison regimes, by implementing:

... positive and constructive regimes which will encourage prisoners to exercise self-discipline and to act in a manner conducive to good order for their own benefit, the benefit of everyone working in prisoners and ultimately the benefit of society on their release ... We shall enable prisoners to retain their dignity and self respect ... by working to create a climate which will assist prisoners in developing a sense of personal responsibility... [and] by giving reasons, where possible, for our actions (NIPS, 1991b: 9-11).

A general criticism of making the social contract the basis of legitimisation is that there is a tendency to preclude the *political* goals of imprisonment in the analysis, that is, the state's dividend in putting 'normality' into effect in prisons. Contractarian theories allude to, but only tentatively draw on, what dominating elements or combinations of consensual, hegemonic or coercive influences are exercised towards this objective, or whether or how 'legitimisation' might bind together these different strategies of power. The continuity between 'order', legitimacy and consensus was fundamentally fractured in the context of Northern Ireland's penal governance, primarily because legitimisation was a political

strategy for retrieving the authority of the state and the 'rule of law' from any possible imputation of political compromise (Gardiner, 1975). Legitimacy and 'good order', instead, were bound together in the policy of criminalisation, which insisted that political prisoners were 'terrorists' who had been engaged in aggravated criminality. Because the policy imposed the status of 'criminal' on prisoners who regarded themselves as political prisoners, the new regime intentionally compelled them to recognise the legitimacy of penal authority, and by extension, of the state. However, as chapter two noted, the possibilities of achieving conformity to the prison system was unlikely to be forthcoming, as long as prisoners were implicitly or explicitly required to consent to the ideological precepts of criminalisation. Alternatively, Gardiner's (1975) emphasis on criminalisation as a radical measure, to be reinforced coercively if necessary, appeared to anticipate the probability that criminalisation would establish neither legitimacy nor consensus.

The criminalisation policy crystallised the struggle for power and legitimacy between politically identified prisoners and the state (Beresford, 1987: O' Malley, 1990: Ellman, 1993: Campbell et al., 1994: Feldman, 1991). In Foucauldian terms, criminalisation was a technology for inculcating the values of political legitimacy alongside the disciplinary repertoire normally at work in the prison system. This force functioned through a series of practices for reorganising the emotional, subjective, and communal ties among political prisoners, and converting them into atomised, docile subjects of discipline (Foucault, 1991). Prison discipline was developed as a form of moral entrepreneurship, which was invested both in reordering them as conforming prisoners and as political penitents. In response, political prisoners cultivated different levels of resistance against the discursive organisation of their motives as 'terrorists' and 'criminals', and to prevent a series of disciplinary closures towards those objectives. Thus, the dialectics of prison struggle was centrally connected to struggles over legitimacy and subjectivity, as they occurred various vernacular forms and everyday 'rituals of resistance' (Hall and Jefferson, 1976).

Political prisoners were not just concerned with challenging the principle of 'criminalisation', but also with the proliferating regulatory powers that the policy brought

about at the micro-levels of penal administration and practice. Furthermore, the struggle over legitimisation did not unfold in straightforwardly binary terms between, for example, the state and prisoners, or the prison administration and prisoners, but involved a layer of mediating, professional or correctional 'subsidiary authorities' (Foucault, 1991: 21), who operate to unify prisoners and the state in 'common', consensual objectives (Miller and Rose, 1990). The roles of various welfare, medical and administrative agencies, which may have extensive autonomy and which may have rival or contradictory agendas that seem to erode the unity of the state's and bureaucratic interests, can nevertheless be understood as establishing and reinforcing institutional power through prolific modes of 'government at a distance' (Foucault, 1979, 1980: Miller and Rose, 1990: Sim, 1990: Garland, 1996). All of these agencies presented an intricate set of 'fronts' which the prisoners negotiated with, challenged, or disengaged from, according to their perceived association with the interests of the state. This underlines the complex range of political and practical engagements by the prisoners with the processes of legitimisation, as they shifted and re-emerged as tactics of control or 'accommodation'. Thus, the former republican hunger striker, Lawrence McKeown, argued that a central condition of engaging with the administration, especially from the late 1980s, was to retain a 'unity of purpose' and principle by not allowing their policy of 'pragmatic engagement' with the administration to compromise their pursuit of political recognition, nor to dilute the political dimensions of any new arrangement with the administration (McKeown, 2001: chapter nineteen).

A related problem with the contractarian strategy is the presumption that social exchange is unencumbered by coercion or asymmetrical power relations. The political theorist, Iris Marion Young, has criticised 'distributive justice' as a discourse which uncouples, even obscures, the connection between the distribution of resources and systems of discipline and power (Young, 1990). Distributive justice has been extensively problematised as being commensurate with 'institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions' (Ibid., 38), in the realms of employment and patronage (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 80-97), in the paradigm of welfare distribution, in terms of the historical exclusion of women from the contractarian

political framework (Pateman, 1988), and for the ways in which distributive systems in women's prisons establish vertical lines of dependency and disempowerment (Carlen, 1998: 32-33; Bosworth, 1999: 144-147). The aspiration to harness good order to consensual 'legitimacy' ultimately retains a voluntaristic view of prisoners' engagement with authority, in which the prisoner, having an assured structure of rights, will refrain from further resistance. This critically excludes the use of force relations or the instrumental dimension of penal reform as a means of re-legitimising the state's right to punish (Jenkins and Player, 1994: part one).

Subverting distributive justice

From their initial incarceration, women political prisoners adopted the position of utilising the system of distribution to challenge the notional thresholds of 'legitimacy' in the prison environment. This reflects a dominant exchange view of 'legitimacy' which refers to the apparent confirmation that prisoners voluntarily subscribe to prison rule in exchange for the benefits of good order and justice in prisons such as 'regularity and efficiency of service delivery', 'perceived distributive and procedural fairness of treatment', and 'human qualities in the nature of routines' (Bottoms and Sparks, 1995: 45). These measures were chronically lacking in the early expansionist period in Northern Ireland's prisons during the 1970s, and although they were gradually addressed in the following decades, as noted in chapter two, this was not achieved without contention.

Furthermore, the specific material conditions and contexts in which prisoners represented their needs and gained 'concessions' highlights the wider influence of regulatory, deterrent and other subordinating forces that frame the distributive economy of prisons. It is also critically indicative of the gendered effects of these powers as to *which* particular resources, goods and services remain conditional, or are subject to brokering, and how this influences prisoners' approaches to negotiating with the administration (Bosworth, 1998: 7). Similarly, the utility of distributive justice opens up, rather than resolves, the question as to whether prisoners recognise if 'concessionary' approaches disarticulate other inequities and points

of conflict. The strong elements of political utility in official attitudes reinforced the political prisoners' view that concessions were gained less as a consequence of the administration's largesse, than as an outcome of their own disciplined demands. Republican women prisoners regarded the achievement of better conditions as an indicator of their political effectiveness, for example, because their progress in accessing resources was part of a broader strategy of 'socialising' the prison staff and administration to address issues of 'justice' and 'fairness' on the basis of their collective and political demands. Therefore, their actions over conditions and resources achieved the unexpected outcome, from the perspective of contract-exchange theorists, of strengthening their oppositional standpoint, rather than pacifying it. Finally, 'distributive' justice arguments tend to presuppose a 'passive' standpoint, or a modest or 'pragmatic' set of expectations on the part of prisoners, that was not in evidence in Northern Ireland's prisons:

... given the fact of their imprisonment, most prisoners have quite a precise sense of what they can and cannot legitimately expect (Sparks et al., 1996: 303).

Such assumptions obscure the complex interests and degrees of investment, on the part of prisoners as well as the administration, in establishing a working relationship (not a shared consensus) which goes beyond mutually recognised rights and responsibilities. If order and legitimacy are presumed to be mutually sustaining conditions for enhancing stability in prisons, they can equally become elaborated sites for conflict and repression. Giddens' view of the dialectic of power, which forms the basis of recent critical approaches to the 'problem of order' in prisons, proposes that power is negotiable *only* provided that some shared standard pertains between parties (Sparks et al., 1996: 60). However, the ambiguity as to what constitutes a 'shared standard' leaves open the possibility that the different parties may attach opposite symbolic, subjective or strategic meanings and values to any arrangement, or use them to consolidate their antagonistic positions. The proposals to engage prisoners in reforming their attitudes by substituting the language of 'privileges' for the language of 'rights', as the prison administration in Northern Ireland proposed, was not liable to be successful if that route amounted to a denial of the political symbolism of any concessions that were gained. On the contrary, the prisoners rearticulated the notion of

'rights' specifically within the framework of their claimed status as political prisoners, and not just in terms of 'fairer treatment'. Politically motivated prisoners clearly understood the official motivations behind the drive to inculcate conformity and 'consensus'. In this sense, the drive for legitimisation through its various phases, from the removal of political status in the 1970s to 'accommodation' in the 1990s, emerged less as a successful counter-strategy to the political structures in the prison, and more as a mode of power which underlined the broader basis of prison conflict.

Penal normalisation, discipline and coercion: critical debates

A key area of contention in the debates on legitimacy in prisons centres on theoretical differences about the proximity or otherwise of coercion to other mechanisms for securing order, such as discipline, regulation or negotiation. The question as to where normalisation 'ends' and coercion 'begins' reflects important distinctions in thinking about what powers or hegemonic processes are involved in legitimising penal authority, and precisely what relationships (if any) normalisation may have with force relations. Theorists who have examined prison crises and situations where violence has perforated the fabric of prison order have been castigated for emphasising the probability, even inevitability, of the collapse of the fragile consensus between prisoners and prison administrators, and for pessimistically modelling the primacy of control as inherent and endemic in prisons. Abolitionists such as Mathiesen have attracted stringent criticism for presenting an apparent theoretical cul-de-sac by representing legitimisation in prisons as 'nothing but the ruses of statecraft whereby a bankrupt system seeks to perpetuate and protect itself' (Sparks, 1994: 25-26). Radical analyses of the fluid and dialectical directions of penal coercion have been dismissed as 'negative', 'ideological', and more tendentially as 'naively' and unwittingly conceding to even more authoritarian elements of prison control on the basis that, 'precisely *because* prisons are [deemed to be] inherently non-legitimate and hence unruly, they are ungovernable except by judicious use of compulsion and sanction' (Bottoms and Sparks, 1995, 52: emphasis added). These arguments have emerged out of case-specific studies, where different degrees of 'crisis' have been noted from the

cultures of control in the different institutions that were the subjects of study (Scruton et al., 1991: Adams, 1992). Furthermore, the issue is not solely academic, as official inquiries into prison disturbances have foregrounded the disposition in different establishments towards the use or misuse of discretionary power, or the prevalence of authoritarian reflexes which may have been the outcome of institutional limitations, poor resourcing, low staff morale and inadequate managerial direction (Woolf, 1991: Quinn, 1995).

It is questionable whether 'radical', 'reductionist' or abolitionist perspectives are as bleak or unconstructive as they have been characterised. As far back as 1972, Cohen and Taylor's analysis of the adaptation of male prisoners at HMP Durham to long term imprisonment, stressed that there was 'no such thing' as total power in prisons (Cohen and Taylor, 1981: 141). Analysts of prison conflict have been careful not to present their findings as *prima facie* evidence that prison relations are closed systems, or that the most serious episodes of violence or maladministration necessarily reveal the 'authentically' repressive character of prisons beneath a veneer of legitimacy (Scruton et al, 1991: Adams, 1992). Critical anatomies of power and struggle in prisons (or what Bottoms (1993) calls the 'radical pessimist' tendency) have, however, observed the mutuality between various mechanisms of penal regulation and systematic domination and suppression in prison (Sim, 1990: Carlen, 1983, 1998). Sim's study of prison medicine demonstrates how medical practice adheres to the hierarchical organisation of disciplinary regimes in prison, and intersects with punitive, classificatory and repressive aspects of prison order (Sim, 1990). Similarly, feminist analyses have noted the contingency of 'normal' gendered discipline and the recourse to physical restraints against those who are classified as 'unruly' women prisoners (Shaw, 1992: Hannah-Moffatt, 2001). Carlen described the use of severe but legal procedures, such as handcuffing and strip searching, as visible examples of the embedded, punitive features of prison, and as consolidating the link between the 'penal hammer' of coercion and the 'bureaucratic screw' of regulation and discipline (Carlen 1998: chapter three).

These critical commentaries validate the marginal, less tangible and frequently officially-denied elements of prison punishment and subordination which are manifested in the concrete, lived experiences of confinement. They reflect the tendency of coercive and asymmetrical power relations to become insinuated into the prison routine, reinforce mundane and often invisible controls, and occasionally lead to outright conflict (Mandaraka Sheppard, 1986). In analysing the conditions in which normally 'negligible' sources of contention erupt into visible crisis, theorists of institutional violence make the point that force relations are not necessarily detached from other normalising effects, and consequently riots or conflict may connote more than the uncharacteristic interruption of an otherwise seamless norm of discipline and consensus.

While Garland (1987), Garland and Young (1989), Bottoms (1983), Bottoms and Sparks (1995), and Sparks et al. (1996) rightly indicate the plural hegemonic and disciplinary devices that maintain 'order' and legitimacy, they do not bring violence and coercion back into the framework as a constituent, even when latent, aspect of the normalising repertoire of penal relations. Sparks et al., for example, hold that the outbreak of violent conflict has a partitioning effect on the nature of the problem of order in prisons:

... so that the problem ceases to be simply a mundane perennial one for prison administrators and becomes a *special problem, often with significant political resonances* (Sparks et al., 1996: 2: emphasis in the original).

Thus, while 'high-profile disorder' is 'rarely totally distant' from the question of order, it presents a 'special problem', and is of an explicitly different nature to 'the perennial problem of securing and maintaining order in prisons' (Ibid., 2-3). A number of arguments proceed from this position; firstly, that violent disorder is separable to a significant degree from the low-level conflicts and tensions that form the general pattern of maintaining order. The second is that any outbreak of disorder of a certain, although unspecified, magnitude constitutes an extraordinary breakdown of systems normally maintained by other means. Thirdly, order in prisons is generally made intelligible through normalisation and discipline, to which violence and coercion is the antithesis. It follows that within this paradigm out-

right violence or administrative coercion would breach the boundaries of normalisation, and enter into a significantly different set of relationships, underlined by the illegitimate use of force (Bottoms, 1983; Sparks et al., 1996). A final, and implicit, position of this analysis is that institutional violence occurs primarily as a reaction to disorder instigated by prisoners, rather than being an underlying, contributory factor to a cycle of conflict in prisons.

These debates prompt further questions as to the specific points, and in what circumstances, the failures of normalisation may lead to conflict, and what the theoretical and practical effects might be of any transition from one mode of punishment, say discipline, to another, such as coercion. Furthermore, it raises questions as to whether different modes of control work separately or in alignment. An example of the interpenetration of normalising and coercive powers occurred during the 'conflict era' in Armagh Prison from 1976-1981. The transition to physical conflict connected to the no wash and hunger strikes had been preceded by a significant extension of other types of controls, notably the formal disciplinary system, for curtailing the campaign of non-conformity to prison discipline. The collapse into conflict and repression occurred at the point when the various legal, disciplinary and normalising procedures were exhausted as strategies for restoring penal control. This period, then, manifested what Foucault called the 'tactical polyvalence', or multilateral character of penal punishment that occurs:

... on the two levels of their tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure), and their strategical integration (what conjunction and what force relationship[s] make their utilisation necessary in a given episode ...) (Foucault, 1990: 102).

Foucault is directly concerned here with the instances in which different forms of repression produce their own resistances, which is discussed below. However, he also alludes to the possibility that shifts across punitive economies, between one mode of control and another, can occur at particular temporal junctures when specific aspects of the

apparatus of control come under strain. This implies that institutional repression relies on a flexible accumulation of disciplinary, coercive and regulatory powers. In drawing together the possibilities that prison disorder connects mundane and perennial problems of order with the 'special problem' of visible conflict, Vincenzo Ruggiero's concept of 'intermittent emergencies' more usefully characterises the continuities between disciplinary practices and the periodic resort to coercion over successive phases of engagement with protesting prisoners (Ruggiero, 1995). 'Intermittent emergencies' also describes the links between the use of severe physical deterrents against a pre-identified set of troublesome prisoners and a general environment of conflict and antagonism, and thus foregrounds how confrontation may be as characteristic of prison regimes as 'consensus'.

The penal environment and regimes in the Northern Ireland prison system did not remain static between 1971 and 1995, but followed what Carlen called the contingent character of prison order which entails 'ever-innovative, ever-revisionist and ever-transformative' adaptations to 'the effects that changing political and social conditions have on the penal system' (Carlen, 1998: 42). In the context of constant challenges from prisoners, the regimes in the Northern Ireland prison system had to 'constantly redirect themselves towards the maintenance of permanent closure' (Ibid.) around political legitimacy and the orthodoxy of criminalisation. Instead of viewing penal order as a stable category, then, this analysis stresses penal 'reordering', and instead of legitimacy, the processes of re-legitimisation that characterised the penal dialectic. However, this thesis also aims to identify how these struggles occurred in terms that recognise the position of women political prisoners as disciplinary subjects *and* as potential social actors. The following discussion focuses on the productive dimensions of punishment and resistance, and considers their intersection with gendered penal controls to produce a specific paradigm of prison struggle.

The productive and relational dimensions of penal struggle

A central domain of struggle experienced by women political prisoners concerned the conditions in which they converted their position from one of subjectification to agency. This analysis traces the emergence of the prisoners as agents through the linkage that Foucault makes between power and resistance, which posits that institutional or dominating power is subject to alteration through struggle (Foucault, 1990: 92-102). Similarly, Foucault extended the concept of power from one of 'prohibition backed by sanctions' to more fluid and extensive social transactions. He posited that power relations are firstly, ubiquitous, in that they emanate from all points in a social 'field'; secondly, that power is productive, or capable of being exercised by all social agents; and thirdly, that power is contingent, because forces of domination tend to create the conditions for counter-flows of resistance to emerge (Ibid.).

Notwithstanding the value of Foucault's theory of productive power for considering the potential of subordinated groups to exercise agency, this thesis is also concerned with the conditions in which women political prisoners emerged as agents within a well-defined punitive network. Although Foucault's concept of fluid and plural flows of power potentially allows subordinated groups to regain agency, it has also created epistemological gaps in describing how women political prisoners are positioned either as socialised agents, or as disciplinary subjects. Theorists of the state and feminist critics, for example, have respectively argued that Foucault's paradigm of power and agency loses sight of the material dimension of state power, and the socially situated and gendered practices of power which constrain social action (Poulantzas, 1980: Giddens, 1984: Fraser, 1989: Hartsock, 1990: McCannell and McCannell, 1993). These critiques have shifted the Foucauldian analysis towards the conditions and contexts in which struggle and resistance are constrained or enabled. This discussion, therefore, accounts for power relationships in prison as productive, i.e. capable of creating contingent and open-ended consequences, and relational, i.e. where the exercise of power is bounded by, and mediated through, gendered and institutional frameworks, while recognising the tensions between Foucauldian, feminist and materialist positions.

Power and agency in prison struggle: a Foucauldian perspective

According to Foucault (1990: 95), resistance plays a key role as an ‘adversary, target, support, or handle’ in power relations. Foucault posits that acts of power and acts of resistance are symbiotic, in that the potential for resistance is always present at the frontiers of authority:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and ... this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (Ibid.).

Here, ‘power’ is described in terms of a set of strategic possibilities that can be exercised by everyone, rather than solely by those who occupy privileged positions, and which can emanate from the social margins as well as from administrative centres (Foucault, 1990: 92-102). Consequently, power is not monopolised by political or administrative elites, but can also be deployed by subordinated groups. This endows prisoners, for example, with some capacity to resist. This is not to suggest that all groups are equally situated in a field of social relations, but neither should relationships be viewed in terms of static and perpetually asymmetrical positions of domination and subordination. In viewing social relationships as continually in the process of reconstruction, his theory of power opens up space for asserting the contingency of administrative or structural privilege. Accordingly, as chapter two noted, as the prison authorities were unable to maintain continuous ‘order’ and stability, ‘good order’ tended to resemble the ‘provisional recovery of control rather than a systematically successful exercise of authority:

... one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination (Foucault, 1980: 142).

Foucault’s concept of political power diverges from state or structural determinism by drawing a distinction between government as the apparatus of the state, and governance,

which refers to the ways in which peripheral forces are drawn into power relationships, and which may act in conjunction with the state:

By power, I do not mean 'Power' as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of citizens of a given state ... power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisations; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them (Foucault, 1990: 92).

Accordingly, governance is exercised through the integration of 'small-scale, regional and dispersed' sites of social regulation into a centralised, bureaucratic apparatus (Foucault, 1979). Foucault further argued, that, far from being reducible to the apparatus of the state, governmentality, or the will to govern, is exponentially reproduced through:

... an ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power (Foucault, 1979: 20).

Viewed like this, institutions such as the prison are vested with cumulative interventionist, bureaucratic and governing powers that sustain their punitive function. The state apparatus, however, acquires more permanent organisational forms in otherwise dynamic relations of power through 'strategic codifications' at particular historical junctures, and in relation to particular objects of governing power:

In [my] research on prisons ... the target of analysis wasn't 'institutions', 'theories' or 'ideology' but *practices* - with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment ... It is a question of analysing a 'regime of practices' - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect (Foucault, 1980: 5: emphasis in the original).

From this argument that (state) power and governance are established through deploying a

variety of punitive, regulatory and normalising *practices*, it follows that Foucault assigns considerable significance to marginal and everyday social relations as key sites in the exchange of power and resistance. Because ‘power generates resistance’, governing practices are liable to produce resistance precisely at the junctures in which they are installed:

... but this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat (Foucault, 1991: 96).

This, hypothetically at least, validates the capacity of disciplinary subjects to redirect dominating forces through emancipatory or subversive tactics, and acknowledges the inventive range of actions that might be understood as ‘resistance’. In Foucauldian terms, the contradictions that emerge from forces of domination create the very conditions in which subordinated groups deploy counter-hegemonic practices. As a consequence, prisoners’ responses to various regulatory techniques, however interstitial and liable to fail, become worthy of serious theoretical consideration as forms of resistance.

What is more problematic, however, is the ambiguity here as to what concrete transformations can be achieved in this scenario. It follows from the concept that ‘power creates other kinds of power’, for example, that institutional authorities should also be able to mobilise various strategies to counter resistance. Similarly, the transitory character of domination (and of resistance) ensures that the ‘strategic field of power relations’ is on a constantly shifting course (Foucault, 1990: 102). While Foucault alludes to a dialectical play of power through ongoing and dynamic struggles, the cycle of social struggle never comes to a finite conclusion. Rather, ‘resistance’ here amounts to pragmatic, incremental shifts or gradual adjustments that do not accomplish radical or long-lasting changes:

...[t]he overthrow of these ‘micro-powers’ does not, then, obey the law of all or nothing; it is not acquired once and for all by a new control of the apparatuses nor by a new functioning or destruction of the institutions (Foucault, 1991: 27).

Reinstating the 'State'

Foucault's view of social struggle has not been wholly endorsed by theorists who problematise the neat symmetry between practices of domination and subversion, without reference to the differential positions of the social actors involved. In the view of state theorists, the emphasis on *practices* of power and resistance invokes the predicament of structure and agency that Foucault evades. His model of diffused formations of power, it is argued, decentres the state as a privileged entity in the organisation of punitive and corrective apparatuses (Poulantzas, 1980: 49-92). Foucault's emphasis on 'decentred' power was intended to create a conceptual break from the binary view of domination and subordination 'as an irreducible opposite', and to suggest that social struggle was conducted from various points outside of, as well as within, institutional settings (Foucault, 1991: 73-103). However in getting away from accounts of 'massive binary divisions', Foucault does not always clarify the ways in which *state* power is invested in local sites of conflict. The 'absence' of a strategic 'centre' of power, while broadening the analysis of social struggle, means that the question as to how the state may attempt to establish or reinforce political legitimacy through institutional practices is not fully addressed (Poulantzas, 1980: Jessop, 1990). Foucault may have conceived of governance as originating in social intercourse and as accumulating towards a normalising rationale of social 'discipline' and political order. However, as numerous commentators have pointed out, this does not sufficiently account for the privileged position which the state persistently tends to acquire in processes of normalisation, nor with the ways in which state power gains cohesion in the social reproduction of discipline (Jessop, 1990: 48-79: 338-369; Garland, 2001; Mathiesen, 1997). This absence (or rejection on Foucault's part) of the primary role of the state in institutionalising repressive or hegemonic powers is particularly conspicuous in the context of political conflict. As a consequence, Foucault's theory of normalisation does not account for the adjustment of the legal, security and civil apparatuses in pursuit of 'a representative State laying claim to national sovereignty and the popular will' (Poulantzas, 1980: 73), which, as chapter one noted, has been a central concern of critical scholarship on conflict in Northern Ireland and elsewhere (O'Dowd et al., 1980; Darby, 1983; McEvoy, 2001).

Thus, a notable criticism of the Foucauldian paradigm of power arises from his oblique references to the ways in which normalising and regulatory practices instal the legitimacy of the state. However, state-centred theories tend to presuppose the prior organisation by the state of the political space in which power (and resistance) are exercised (Poulantzas, 1980; Jessop, 1990). On the other hand, theories of the state do not tend to address the often inconclusive or 'imperceptible' relations between agents or dynamics of penal punishment and resistance. What remains less clear, however, is how the various forms of resistance might deflect power back onto 'the entire network in which they are caught up' (Foucault, 1991: 27), without a clear purview of the multifaceted punitive and antagonistic character of penalty in the context of political conflict.

Furthermore, the observation that Foucault's view of 'power' oscillates somewhere between structure and agency, and lacks an analysis of socially-situated, mediating subjects, remains a critical problem (Fraser, 1989). Feminist critics have argued that by removing the sources of power away from centres of domination towards an unstable field of capillary relations, he uncouples its character and scope from a recognisable material, institutional or structural basis (Fraser, 1989: 32; Hartsock, 1990). In penology, Carlen (1994), and Howe (1994) hold that Foucault constructs an overgeneralised theory of penalty that obscures the multiple dimensions of subordination that sustain the punishment of women. Fraser further identifies the adverse political implications of radically decentred power which partitions classed, gendered and other sites of subordination into discrete, marginalised zones, 'where every regime creates and sustains a distinctive set of cultures, practices and truths' (Fraser, 1989: 31). Consequently the Foucauldian concept of power has acquired a 'catchall' meaning in which 'the potential for a broad range of normative nuances is surrendered':

... it is harder to know what to make of Foucault's extreme reticence on normative and programmatic matters, his reluctance to consider how all these various struggles might be coordinated, and what sort of change this might accomplish (Fraser, 1989: 34).

Even on its own terms, then, the notion that 'power generates resistance' does not fully account for the various forms of agency that emerge from networks of political domination.

Foucault laid claim to the strictly relational character of power by arguing that agency is always in the grip of power, and that 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1990: 95). While struggle can occur 'everywhere', the forms that resistance may take are bound to pre-existing discourses and structures. The notion that resistance is always and already constrained within dominant structures and discursive forms appears to contradict the transformative drive implied by his theory of resistance. Thus, these two juxtaposed propositions about the conditions of resistance - the open-ended character of productive power, and the confinement of resistance to reactive forms in which strategic innovation is already prefigured - are unreconciled.

Despite his emphasis on the potentiality of 'resistance', Foucault did not develop a theory of resistance to account for the capacity of prisoners to construct alternative identities or oppositional practices out of their discursive and material conditions. While he observes that forms of resistance may necessarily take on the idioms of existing or dominant discourses, there is no account in his work of the new directions which oppositional practices might open up for altering the centre of gravity of power relationships, or how prisoners might reappropriate some elements of these frameworks for alternative purposes. The following discussion, therefore turns to feminist engagements with Foucauldian theories of power, subjectivity and the body, in order to account for the relational forces that shape the conditions of women's agency and resistance.

Retrieving the missing body of Foucauldian thought: feminist and critical interventions

A key area of critical engagement with the Foucauldian paradigm of power has focused on his theory of the body as a primary object of power relations in the project of modernity (Scarry, 1987; Sawicki, 1991; McNay, 1992, 1994; Shilling, 1993; Grosz, 1994). Foucault held that with the emergence of social institutions such as schools, the prisons and asylums, the body was reconfigured as an object of empirical, disciplinary, punitive and other corrective interventions (Foucault, 1985, 1990, 1991). The body thus became a defining matrix of modern governance because it unified the will to govern with the inscription of social and cultural codes for disciplining the unruly drives of the body, and reordering its

productivity:

...the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it. They invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (Foucault, 1991: 25).

While the body's status as an object of inquiry and verification has been central to the criminological project since the inception of the discipline, it was revived with renewed critical vigour in the 1990s as a field of explanation for political, social and cultural power. However, in spite of the promise that 'the body' held as an explanatory site for the social reproduction of various classed, 'raced', gendered and other forms of power, feminist and critical engagements with 'the Foucault effect' on its analysis were not straightforward (Bordo, 1990, 1993; Ramazanoglu, 1993; Deveaux, 1994). Foucault's theories of institutionalisation and the disciplined body were held to be impoverished and generalised because of his inattention to the construction of women as disciplined or regulated subjects (Sawicki, 1991; McNay, 1992, 1994; Deveaux, 1994; Howe, 1994). Thus, it is argued, it was not always possible to determine precisely how specific punitive or regulatory systems were themselves historically shaped in relation to different 'subjects' of punishment, and how and why these interactions created qualitatively distinctive disciplinary regimes. Therefore, the full dimensions of productive 'power' - 'its' agile recruitment of customary social practices, or ability to integrate itself into existing forms of domination - were not fully accounted for even on their own terms.

These interventions shifted the critical terrain, within a Foucauldian framework, towards the gendered and material conditions of subordination. A key feminist critical response to the problematic absence of women as the subjects of discipline in Foucauldian theory, for example, entailed reading women's bodies back into disciplinary structures and social practices. Accordingly, Foucauldian theory was reshaped to account for the ways in which the regulation of women, for example, recruits informal, discursive and cultural sanctions (Bartky, 1988; Sawicki, 1988, Ramazonoglu, 1993; Deveaux, 1994), or observes the social injunctions that compel women to regulate their own bodily practices (Bordo, 1990:

Stanko, 1996). Feminist engagement with Foucauldian theory, therefore, has foregrounded the differential dimensions and meanings that punitive 'powers' take on in specific embodied experiences, and socially situated practices.

The political anatomy of the imprisoned woman

The bodies of prisoners retain their status as central sites of penal punishment. Foucault identified three dominant 'techniques of penal power' which act upon the bodies of prisoners in the punitive apparatus. These are: 'sovereign' powers which target the body through the politicised enactment of corporal punishment; 'disciplinary' powers, which regulate the body within legitimated spheres of conduct; and 'juridical' powers, which incorporate individuals into the representational or symbolic order of punishment (Foucault, 1991: 131-3). The relationships between these powers and their influence in assigning punishment has been subject to scholarly debate. The Foucauldian paradigm of the shift from sovereign, symbolic economies of punishment - epitomised by the gallows - towards the panoptic network of disciplinary and administrative modes of power - embodied in the penitentiary - has been interpreted as a straightforward shift from punishing the body in pre-penitential systems, to punishing the 'soul' in prisons (Merquoir, 1985: 85-107). Moreover, it has been contended that Foucault held that the severity of sovereign power diminished following the rise of penitential discipline, and that the imposition of pain became a marginal and secondary function of the penitentiary (Bottoms, 1983). Foucault did trace the shift in styles of punishment from marking the body to re-habituating the body, but did not claim that this shift necessarily implied that the pain of incarceration was insignificant. Rather, he stressed the interrelationship between corporal and regulatory technologies of punishment, arguing that it was not that the extremity of individual suffering had diminished, but that the meaning and goals of punishing the body had altered:

Punishment had no doubt ceased to be centred on torture as a technique of pain ... But punishment like forced labour or even imprisonment - mere loss of liberty - has never functioned without a certain additional element ... that certainly concerns the body itself ... In fact, in its most explicit phases, imprisonment has always involved a certain degree of physical pain (Foucault, 1991: 15-16)

By extension, a second area of contention occurs where it is held that 'sovereign punishment' can be, and is, cancelled out by disciplinary power in contemporary punitive systems (Bottoms, 1983: 172-4). Bottoms's reading of Foucault, for example, argues that there is a suppositional distinction to be made between discipline as the 'voluntary' training of the body, and sovereign power as the coercive targeting of the body, which makes them discrete and separable domains (Ibid., 177). Furthermore, this distinction occurs not only ontologically but spatially, because the 'inducement of proper behaviour and the subjectification of the body to disciplinary techniques', requires 'an administrative apparatus', and is 'weaker' in non-custodial settings (Ibid.). Sovereign and disciplinary spheres are further separable, in Bottoms's view, from the 'juridical sphere' or the symbolic order which mandates the 'representational technology to punish' (Foucault, 1991: 131), and which is normally deployed in general and extra-institutional forms of social stigmatisation (Ibid., 178).

Feminist theorists have contended that such analyses partition the effects of social sanctions that are generated outside of legal institutions, such as racism, sexism or homophobia, but are reproduced within them, and overlook disciplinary precepts which are not necessarily embodied in laws or institutional codes, but are systemic and functioning as perceptible regulatory influences in the lives of women (Smart 1989, 1992: Worrall, 1990: Cain, 1990: Ballinger, 2000). Furthermore, they hold in abeyance the practical and ideological interrelationships between surveillant, regulatory and coercive sanctions, which function coextensively. Bordo, for example, has noted the socio-cultural reinforcements that sustain the female body within wider social 'vulnerabilities and anxieties', and the corollary techniques for producing the 'useful' female body, and which together constitute a distinctive 'political anatomy' of the governance of women (Bordo, 1993: 181).

Penologists have also applied a concept of the 'political anatomy' of the imprisoned female to the mutually sustaining punitive, regulatory and discursive methods that are incorporated into a composite domain of women's penal punishment. As Stenson points out, disciplinary, juridical and sovereign powers coexist in contemporary formations of governance, and from a feminist perspective, each modality reinforces the other (Smart, 1992: Cain, 1994: Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2000: Stenson, 1998). With the female political prisoners, these different grids overlapped and reinforced each other in complex ways. The disciplining of women as political prisoners involved the use of various methods for breaking down the body and dismantling their physical integrity, before reconstituting them as 'docile bodies'. The violence that this frequently entailed supports the observation that 'sovereign', corporal powers persistently reinforced the disciplinary economy of the prison. Finally, the use of these methods was inseparable from the ideological, patriarchal, and sexual anxieties that supported the construction of female political prisoners as a conspicuously transgressive category.

The limits of bodily resistance

While one feminist approach has explored the synthesis of penal powers which sustains the subordination of women in prison, a second approach has turned to concepts of 'technologies of the self' to explore the status of women's bodies as instrumental and symbolic resources for resistance (Bordo, 1990: 1993). Proceeding from the observation that bodies are vehicles for social agency, as well as sites for domination, Bordo has argued that individuals seek to recover elements of autonomy by exercising power over their own bodies (Ibid). Drawing on the anthropology of the hunger strike as a weapon of the weak (O' Malley, 1990: Feldman, 1991: Scheper-Hughes, 1992), Bordo's (1993: 139-164) discussion of anorexia nervosa amongst women as a form of symbolic resistance to feminine imperatives illustrates the limits of self-deprivation as a practice of 'emancipation'. While regimes of fasting and self-denial enabled her subjects to exert some form of control over the flesh, their actions ultimately 'colluded with the forces that sustained their own oppression' and were 'utilised in the maintenance and reproduction of existing power relations' (Bordo, cited in Howe, 1994: 201). Similarly, as discussed in chapter two, while the

resistance of republican women prisoners was intended to negate the prescriptions that laid claim to control their bodies, their actions reinforced the 'pathologisation of female protests' (Bordo, 1993). As a consequence, bodily resistance cannot aspire to a 'free field of autonomy', but reflects a range of 'pragmatic narratives' of refusal in the context of embedded material and ideological constraints (Bordo, 1990).

The very indeterminacy of these forms of resistance, and their eventual cooption, underscores the elements of risk and unpredictability that are implied in Foucault's concept of open-ended struggle. Cooper argues that the possibility of gaining a strategic advantage, and the indeterminate outcome of social struggle, are important aspects of the 'mode and motivation' for resisting (Cooper, 1995: 3). Cooper's definition of 'power in struggle' emphasises both the productive and relational meaning of power as 'the means by which people struggle *as well as* the form and character of state authority', without dispensing with the structural frameworks within which such struggles take place (Ibid., 1: emphasis added). Not all acts of refusal, she continues, can be styled as 'resistance', but neither are they always negative or reactive. Rather, the productive character of social struggle incorporates the various initiatives taken by the confined, as well as those who occupy positions of authority, although these are liable to adverse or unforeseen consequences:

... while different forces can exercise power, they neither own nor fully control the power they deploy. For not only is the terrain on which they struggle already skewed, but as well their interests, subjectivities and agendas are formed and re-formed as a result of power practices (Cooper 1995:3).

This reflects an important aspect of the prison campaign, in that while not all of the prisoners' acts of resistance were transformative in themselves, they contributed to its longer-term achievements, while also generating short-term losses and defeats. Some forms of protest elicited profoundly negative outcomes, notably the refusal to conform to interventionist techniques, such as strip-searching, or committing assaults on prison staff, which were met with superior physical force. Furthermore, as Cooper points out, 'resistance' has become a highly expansionist term in contemporary theory, which 'far too

frequently' links reactive and spontaneous, as well as intentional, modes of refusal together indiscriminately, without regard to their complex, collusive relations with the very conditions they act against (Ibid., 3). Thus, she concludes, 'change, struggle and resistance' must be analysed 'according to their substance, [and] not simply their form'. The question as to how different oppositional acts might be described as 'resistance' in the context of pervasive structural power is evaluated in the following discussion.

Situating agency and resistance: revisiting the paradox of women's imprisonment

A key problem in considering agency and resistance in women's prisons involves the difficulties in trying to understand the conditions in which women are sustained in structures of penal punishment, while at the same time identifying how they might retain agency in opposition to penal domination. Therefore, any account of power and agency confronts the paradoxical nature of women's imprisonment. Women's experiences of prison are paradoxical because they are understood to be firmly enmeshed in punitive, surveillant and deterrent practices which are vigilantly exercised against minor digressions from feminised norms, as well as prison discipline. At the same time, and relative to the first observation, while discipline in women's prisons is disproportionately exercised through informal and discretionary controls, it is frequently through localised, everyday practices that women in prison create opportunities for exercising agency, and begin to construct counter-disciplinary positions (Bosworth, 1999).

As discussed in chapter three, much of the analysis of women's imprisonment has focused on the coextensive relationship between micropractices of control and punishment and the rationales for developing 'appropriate' prison regimes for women (Carlen, 1983: 1998: Dobash et al., 1986: Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). Similarly, accounts of women's agency in prison stress that 'resistance' is curtailed to opportunistic practices that are deemed to lack a coherent framework, and are ultimately dispersed by pre-emptive vigilance, or similar means. More recently, Bosworth has argued that while 'racial', gendered, classed

and other norms sustain practices of punishment and regulation, prisoners consciously use these social positions against the homogenising influences of prison discipline (Bosworth, 1997, 1999). Using Butler's concept of gender as a social 'performance,' Bosworth argues that while women prisoners may appear to adhere to conventional or conformist codes, their meanings are appropriated by prisoners to subvert compulsory standards of 'appropriate' behaviour (Butler, 1990: Bosworth, 1998, 1999). Similarly, women in prison deploy other axes of subjectivity or identity standpoints as cultural capital to 'strengthen and expand [the] possible meaning and terrain of femininity' as a strategy of resistance (Bosworth, 1998: 10). Hence, prisoners' deployment of their social difference is critical to the dynamics of resistance, as:

... it was also through their (cultural, ethnic and sexual preference) variety that women managed to challenge some of the universalising restrictions of imprisonment (Bosworth, 1998: 10).

The appropriation by women in prison of their gendered and cultural differences makes available a series of socio-cultural practices that enable them to 'co-opt elements from the dominant notion of "femininity" to reinforce their own sense of self, and to challenge aspects of the penal regime' (Bosworth, 1999: 156). Here, Bosworth follows Foucault's argument that technologies and discourses of power are never complete but generate some internal contradictions, or 'traces', which enable prisoners to seize opportunities to exercise agency, however marginal or unequal (Foucault, 1990: 93-97). While women's 'passivity' is primarily shaped by their subjectification in prison, the possibilities for constructing alternative meanings of identity and agency are not entirely closed off, she argues (Bosworth, 1999). This appropriation by post-structural feminism of the political and strategic importance of everyday practices is consistent, in one respect, with previous feminist approaches to penal power. That is, it suggests that, rather than discounting the microspheres of regulation as the underside of penal punishment, it is most frequently this less visible terrain that forms the punitive foundation in women's prisons, and presents a basis for the recovery of agency by women in prison. As Worrall observed, women in prison:

... are effectively offered a contract which promises to minimise the consequences of their criminality by rehabilitating them within the dominant discourses of femininity (that is, domesticity, sexuality and pathology). Despite these programmes of feminisation, such women, *it is argued*, attempt to resist such construction by exploiting the contradictions of official discourses (Worrall, 1990: 163: emphasis added).

Here, Worrall adopts a more cautious approach to theoretical strategies that seek to correlate practices of the self, or 'gender as performance', with a comprehensive explanation of resistance. Theories of resistance in the microsphere have been extensively criticised for their overdetermined claims to effect changes in systematic, institutionalised practices of power, whereas their effectiveness is limited to disclosing the disjunctures, contradictions and normalising drives of social 'discourses' (Howe, 1994: 166-177). Brown views the focus on the microsphere as 'sharing with identity politics an excessively local viewpoint', which either valorises essentialist, liberatory discourses, or disregards the ways in which identities are imbricated within power relations, and are therefore experienced through them (Brown, 1995: 49). This confirms, she argues, the tendency of post-structuralist approaches to suspend questions of 'larger power relationships':

... the contemporary vogue of resistance is more a symptom of postmodernity's crisis of political space than a coherent response to it. Resistance goes nowhere in particular, has no inherent attachments, and hails no particular vision; as Foucault makes clear, resistance is an effect of and reaction to power, not an arrogation of it (Ibid.).

Similarly, in a series of influential articles, Pat Carlen has sought to rein back what she views as the premature theoretical optimism of Foucauldian and feminist theorists of penal resistance (Carlen, 1994, 2002, 2002b). Carlen argues against insular theories of resistance that privilege small bubbles of victory over the structural, punitive power of prisons; 'which exists and persists independently of the best attempts of (some) prisoners to defeat it via strategies of resistance' (Carlen, 1994: 137). Here, Carlen directs a twofold criticism against 'claims to theoretical innovation' from 'adding in theories' that 'seem to have focused much more on racism, sexism and the social regulation of all women than on the specifics of state

punishment for female offenders' (Carlen, 1994: 132: emphasis in the original). 'Adding in' theories, she continues, lead to a 'specialising out' of 'the specifically penal powers, penal functions and penal dimensions of such relationships' (Ibid., 134). Carlen has been consistently sceptical about the 'nominalist essentialism' which tends to emerge from making a distinct theoretical objective of penal resistance as arising out of standpoint theory, social 'difference' or identity politics. Rather, she argues:

[The] full recognition of the complex power relationships and penal practices within which *women's imprisonment* is constituted as such is no more to *deny* women prisoners the power to resist than it is to *endow* them with that same power. For the effects of theories do not occur *sui generis*. They depend rather on the political calculations and conditions in which they are realised (Carlen, 1994: 133: emphasis in the original).

Carlen has reserved her most cogent critiques for those elements of the 'insistence on resistance brigade' (1994: 133) who have sought to recover the experiences of female lawbreakers and prisoners from definitions of 'victimhood' by insisting on their 'survival', recovery of 'agency' and exercise of 'resistance'. Her contention centres on the concern that penal resistance discourse 'lacks a theory of penality', or a sufficiently holistic paradigm of the various forms of oppression to which women prisoners are subject outside of prison, while insisting at the same time that these same forms of oppression inform their subjectivity in prison (Carlen, 2002: 167). Penal resistance theory also fails to recognise how apparently 'progressive' or 'reformist' trends in penal regimes, which appear to produce the very interstitial conditions in which women activate their 'agency' or 'resistance', actually support the exponential growth in therapeutic and individualising controls (Hannah-Moffatt, 2001, chapter five). Thus, in its efforts to move beyond previous victimising discourses in feminist criminology, current resistance theory is unwittingly engaged in a revisionist enterprise which 'underplay[s] those aspects of custodial power which are necessarily activated and enhanced by prisoner resistance' (Carlen, 2002: 167).

These criticisms point out some major problems for current prison resistance theory. Firstly, by raising the predicament of structural determination over social agency, they invoke the

tensions and difficulties between ‘materialist’ and post-structuralist positions with regard to the systematicity, or otherwise, of penal power, which is far from resolved in prison sociology (Howe, 1994). Secondly, they point out that resistance theory frequently underplays the extent to which internal challenges or alternative discourses are neutralised through productive, versatile forms of ‘carceral clawback’, and absorbed into the fundamentally punitive function of imprisonment (Carlen, 2002). The third problem concerns the fragility of claims to a ‘resistant subjectivity’ in the context of the inevitable re-enclosure of prisoners’ agency within hegemonic, repressive, ‘therapeutic’ or other forms of penal governance.

However, some further issues arise from these critiques of ‘resistance’ as a valid approach to interrogating penal power. While punishment and oppression are abiding features of penality, ‘penal punishment’ cannot be defined outside of its structural, historical and correctional functions, nor from successive ideological and interventionist frameworks which are conceived of in relation to its fundamental ‘problem’ - the ‘appropriate’ confinement of prisoners. This suggests, as both Carlen (2002) and Hannah-Moffat (2001) themselves show, the instability of penal punishment as a fixed or unitary phenomenon, as penal regimes are constantly engaged in reauthorising and relegitimising their own punitive logics.

In one sense, these critical interventions resonate with the fundamental concern of earlier generations of penologists, which is whether agency in prison is always and already circumscribed within predeterminedly privileged penal structures. But taken together, they eventually point towards a dialectical framework which foregrounds, rather than invalidates, the role of resistance as a key element in the concrete, material causes of penal punishment, as well as the forms it takes. In this context, penal power does not develop ‘independently of prisoner’s strategies to defeat it’ (Carlen, 1994: 137), nor are punitive practices or regimes fully developed and instrumentally coherent prior to their enforcement. While Carlen is talking about returning the principles of critical engagement back from concerns with ‘difference’, which endlessly defers the fundamental issue of ‘punishment’, it is argued here that ‘punishment’ cannot be conceived of as an undifferentiated force, but

must be evaluated in terms of the situated causes and contexts for punishing specific prisoner populations. Consequently, rather than being a diametrically opposed critical concern to analysing the structural conditions of penal power, an emphasis on situated, local resistance is intrinsic to evaluating the 'political conditions and calculations' (Carlen, 1994: 133) of penal punishment.

Furthermore, the relevance of punitive difference, that is the differential targeting of a specific group of prisoners, not only reinforces the relational dimensions of penal power, but establishes the specific forms and conditions in which it is resisted. Penal regulation, punishment and legitimisation were dialectical *and* relational where the state's power and authority to punish was continuously challenged on both political and gendered fronts in Armagh and Maghaberry prisons. In this context, Foucault's point about the contingency of authority supports the continuity of prisoners' resistance in the face of the recuperative powers of the prison system, the versatile strategies that were used on both sides, and the recourse to ever more repressive or desperate tactics, without implying an equivalence between the antagonists. Moreover, the modes and styles of punishment used, and the timing of their enforcement, suggest the material and gendered contexts in which 'carceral clawback' is achieved when penal power is contested by women political prisoners.

Nevertheless, these critiques raise significant problems where 'resistance' lacks precision as a definition of oppositional practices and outcomes. The predicament for resistance theory centres on how, as well as whether, 'resistance' can effect structural transformations as well localised shifts. Bosworth's focus on 'the capacity for autonomy' in penal environments has attempted to bridge this relationship between structure and the microsphere. However, while she insists that the focus on 'small scale attempts to disrupt penal power ... is not an excuse to disregard the status quo' (1999: 130), what is absent from her analysis is a more detailed exploration of how they exert a reciprocal influence on structures of authority. Arguably, her emphasis on mundane practices already acknowledges the limited contexts and conditions of penal resistance, while also refusing the position that any emphasis on 'resistance' can be considered a denial or invalidation of penal pain. For Bosworth, there

is a significant interplay between individual knowledges and practices of the self and the development of a collective consciousness among women prisoners. In this case study 'resistance' includes the mundane acts of solidarity or defence amongst prisoners that signified their partisan or critical consciousness (McKeown, 2001), their appropriation of subordinated meanings and knowledges in negotiating various punitive frameworks (Foucault, 1980: Bosworth, 1999), and their self-legitimation as politically-conscious and confined subjects (Foucault, 1980: 72-98). These practices point to a continuum of 'resistance' which connects everyday refusals with deliberated political standpoints and collective strategies, and which enable individual resistance to be consolidated into a systematic campaign of opposition.

Resistance as dialectical, productive, relational and situated

This chapter has argued that penal relations in Northern Ireland were characterised by intersecting transactions of power between political prisoners and the penal administration. It traced some of the concerns within penology with identifying the loci of dialectical relations in prisons, noting the arguments against punitive overdetermination, as well as the significance of dispersed and hegemonic-legitimatory forms of penal power in sustaining penal order. Nevertheless, drawing on an analysis of the events outlined in chapter two, it observed the multifaceted relations between coercion and other forms of penal punishment.

Secondly, using a Foucauldian framework, it was argued that penal power is productive rather than solely repressive, noting the proliferation of disciplinary and regulatory powers in response to the innovative tactics of refusal deployed by the prisoners. It was also noted however, that punishment frequently produced unforeseen consequences, such as furthering prisoners' resilience, which in turn impelled the prison administration towards further repressive practices. This supported the argument that resistance produces indeterminate results for prisoners, and therefore does not constitute a liberatory project. Rather it reflects the Foucauldian observation that, because power and resistance are in constant interplay, many of the contentions between prisoners and the administration did

not arrive at a state of closure or resolution, but created new scenarios of struggle.

In turning to the relational formations of gendered and penal power, the argument focused on Foucauldian and feminist analyses which examined how penal power is instrumentalised through various techniques that target the body. Firstly, it was argued that formations of penal punishment are shaped by the disciplinary contexts in which they are utilised, and in relation to the disciplinary subjects on whom they are exercised. Secondly, it observed the broader constructions of 'femininity' which are harnessed to the project of disciplining and punishing women. In grounding relations of power and resistance in an 'anatomy' of women's confinement, care was taken not to make the universalising or essentialist claim that bodily difference alone accounts for punitive difference. Rather, the analysis centred on intersecting ideological, punitive, regulatory and socially-situated penal responses that were crucially activated by women prisoners' resistance. The analysis then focused on the contradictions of deploying the body as a site of resistance. Drawing on examples from feminist analyses of self-deprivation as resistance, it argued that while tactics such as the hunger strike and no wash strike were regressive, they were also powerful expository and symbolic forms of refusal.

Conscious of the ongoing tensions and difficulties between 'materialist' concerns with structural-ideological constraints on agency, and the post-structuralist emphasis on the versatility of agency, it was argued that structural influences do not necessarily prefigure all modes of social action. This chapter argues that the Foucauldian framework of contingent, ongoing and dynamic social struggle can be used alongside a model of the systematic, institutionalised, and repressive apparatus of political imprisonment. In this context, the struggle by prisoners to regain and retain agency was situated, which implies that they constructed counter-hegemonic practices and positions precisely from the contexts of discipline and punishment in which they were embedded. This situatedness, moreover, directly implies the historical and political context, institutional setting and discursive organisation of punishment which underpinned the dialectics of prison struggle.

Significantly, the debate about the scope and efficacy of resistance in prison opens up questions with which the rest of this thesis will be concerned, namely, the possible continuities between mundane challenges to the prison regime, and the structural changes that occurred in the context of organised, collective resistance by confined, political women. Secondly, in framing 'resistance' in terms of different modes and levels of disruption, a further area of concern within penological theory is opened up, namely, whether resistance is always progressive, i.e. produces 'positive' changes, or whether 'negative' actions such as mutiny, aggression and violence can be placed alongside non-cooperation and non-violent forms of resistance. Chapters six to twelve trace how these relationships were perceived by women political prisoners, from their perspectives, and in their own words. Chapter five traces the methods used to gather the women's testimonies.

Chapter 5

Researching Women Political Prisoners: Ethnographic Problems and Negotiations

This chapter accounts for the methodological and ethical approaches adopted during the field work. It considers the matrix of interests and obstacles which constrain critical research into contested events in prisons, in the equally contested research environment of a political conflict (Cohen and Taylor, 1981: chapters one and eight; Taylor, 1988; McEvoy, 2001; McKeown, 2001). The method of research takes as its theoretical basis post-structural, feminist and discourse-analytical critiques of field research as a semantically unified or subjectively coherent process, by emphasising the contingent and relational dimensions of the ethnographic encounter (Maher, 1997; Aretxaga, 1999; Pickering, 2001). Such interventions also critically engage with the explicit and implicit power positions between the researcher and the researched, as well as clarifying the importance of the various political, gendered and cultural dimensions which frame interpersonal negotiations in the 'field'.

The field work, therefore, is discussed accordingly: firstly, a discussion of the structural obstacles to conducting prison research in Northern Ireland frames an account of the problems with seeking official clearance to conduct research in the prisons, and the drawbacks that such an approach entailed when seeking access to political prisoners. Secondly, I discuss the ethical responsibilities that are incumbent on the researcher when researching women in the context of political conflict. Thirdly, these considerations shaped the openings and closures that pertained to gaining access to women former prisoners in their communities, and the strategies of negotiation that these prompted. The fourth section discusses the interview process, and places it in the context of feminist linkages between sociological practice, narration and interpretative power in writing the lives of others.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in two phases. The first took place from early February to late August, 1997. The second term of field work was conducted between March and June 1998, coinciding with the re-entry of republican and loyalist negotiators into the process after renewed ceasefires, and up to and after the period in which the Good

Friday Agreement was signed, on April 9, 1998. Some of the salient aspects of prison politics that framed the research process are outlined in Appendix Six.

Researching prisons in Northern Ireland

Prison research has been described as ‘a deeply political process’, which is framed by institutional and epistemological closures that repel critical excursions into the ‘closed world’ of the ‘dark corners’ of the state (Hughes, 1996: 61-66). In the context of political conflict, the research process also entails negotiating a grid of material and discursive obstructions to gaining access to obscured or contested aspects of the criminal justice system (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988: Tomlinson, 1999: Brewer and Magee, 1991: 16). Research into the internal administration of the prison system in Northern Ireland has been restricted as a consequence of the ‘protective’ mechanisms adopted by the government, which have been justified on the basis of the need to protect employees from exposure to harm, and because the authorities could not officially countenance such research due to the potential implications for ‘national security’ (Gormally and McEvoy, 1995).

A second layer of ‘safeguards’ is provided by emergency legislation designed to constrain the dissemination of information which purportedly ‘aids terrorism’ (Hogan and Walker, 1989: 155-162). The legal apparatus also potentially criminalises some research activities under the regular secrecy provisions as well as anti-terrorist legislation (Ibid., 158). State agencies are also actively engaged in shaping public discourse about the legitimacy of ‘counter-terrorist’ policies (Chomsky and Herman, 1979), and in official strategies of news management, disinformation and the neutralisation of oppositional opinion in Northern Ireland (Curtis, 1984: Schlesinger, 1984: Miller, 1994: Rolston and Miller, 1996: Tomlinson, 1999). The legislation also supports an official culture of non-disclosure, which deters civil servants and senior administrators from speaking to researchers by the widespread, if often informal, ethos of official reticence, for fear of demotion or removal from special duties (Stalker, 1988: 87).

Moreover, a generalised culture of critical disarticulation, born out of the ‘moral-political

layering' of conflict research, can also exert informal constraints and elicit self-censorship (Nordstrom and Martin, 1992: 3). 'Conflict research' is often categorically divided into 'legitimate' research enterprises, which uphold the legal and discursive norms of 'peacekeeping', and 'illegitimate' concerns, which allegedly issue moral support for paramilitaries and their supporters (Taylor, 1988). Furthermore, the research process may place oneself and others in physical danger, which contributes to an unsettling personal and intellectual environment. In this context, researchers have to consider how to resist becoming implicated in the norms that are already systematically organised in the research field, and formulate theoretical and methodological approaches which confront the processes by which the research field is already skewed by political and power relations.

Negotiating institutional access

Like McKeown (2001: 4), and McEvoy (2001: 371), I conducted interviews with political prisoners after their release, because the possibility of gaining access to serving prisoners inside the prison 'was remote'. In 1997, I wrote to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) with a request to visit the prison and to interview staff. I enclosed an outline of my research, my institutional connections and a number of options which indicated my willingness to cooperate with any conditions concerning security or other arrangements. I did not seek official endorsement for the research project itself, because its purpose, to examine the culture of punishment and resistance in the women's prisons, was not likely to be sanctioned. However, I was equally concerned not to conceal this aspect of my research, nor to misrepresent it in the hope of getting access to HMP Maghaberry or to staff without their informed consent. I did not receive a reply to my letter, nor any written acknowledgement that it had been received. I followed the letter up with telephone enquires as to the fate of my request, and I was assured that it was 'on file'. Despite the courteous probing by one official for further information about the critical orientation of the research, I was circumspect about agreeing to the formal submission of questionnaires until I could ascertain whether I would get any further than that stage. Like McKeown (2001: 4), I was also unwilling to allow the detailed screening of the objectives of the research which, by its nature, was likely to be subject to lengthy delays, before being eventually turned down.

However, I was already aware that NIO-sanctioned access would have invariably excluded me from prisoners' organisations, or access to former prisoners in the community. I was also aware that the serving prisoners would not have consented to being interviewed in the prison. In October 1996, before I went into the field, I had received a letter from the republican commanding officer in Mourne House outlining why the republican group declined to allow me to interview them. They said that they had recently cooperated with an unspecified research project, and were 'angry' and 'disappointed' with the misrepresentation of themselves and their perspectives (Correspondence, Maghaberry O/C, October 1996). However, she did support my stated intention to contact the republican prisoners' organisations. During the fieldwork in 1997, it was indicated to me that this refusal was also influenced by larger concerns connected with the ongoing political process, which had led to a change in the prisoners' previous strategy of seeking to publicise individual cases or collective grievances against the prison administration. This was because the tenuous political climate in the prisons during 1997 and 1998 influenced ongoing negotiations between senior prison service and NIO officials and the prisoner groups about a variety of concerns, including rights of access to their political representatives, special temporary releases, compassionate parole, transfer from British prisons, and other individual cases. I had a meeting with prisoners' representatives who had returned from visiting the women at Maghaberry in 1998. Consequently, the problems with accessing serving prisoners were created in part because of their negotiating priorities at a particularly delicate stage, as well as their desire to protect their interests and political profile from 'outside' interference, while permitting limited information to be mediated by their representatives.

Some months after my initial approaches to the NIO, I contacted other, more sympathetic administrators within the prison service directly, and was given clearance for an escorted visit to Maghaberry prison, where I interviewed some officers, and arranged to interview others outside of the workplace.¹ Their reasons for participating in the research were

¹I was able to film the defunct Armagh prison, to which I made two visits, the second with former prisoners who identified cells, passageways, and other architectural pockets which prisoners described in the interviews. These visits lent a material and phenomenological texture to the oral and documentary accounts.

varied, and are discussed below. The strategy of accessing personnel in the security forces in Northern Ireland by 'getting around' institutionalised obstacles blurs some of the conventional distinctions between 'overt' and 'covert' research, and requires particular ethical approaches and perspectives (Brewer, 1990). The solutions to gaining access to personnel in the criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland have been variably 'resolved' either by recruiting sympathetic internal respondents, or conducting research with personnel outside of the workplace (Brewer and Magee, 1991: McEvoy, 2001: Walsh, 1983: 19). Exclusion from official agencies has both necessitated, and reinforced, the decision to make clear choices about working outside of official lines of authorisation, interviewing across official and political divides (Feldman, 1991: 11), or tentatively using existing institutional openings, such as prison visits, to contact individuals (McKeown, 2001: 4). Similarly, Hobbs argues that while he gained the trust of his respondents as 'both the insider and the researcher', his role as a participant observer of East End criminal networks did not exclude the necessity of having to make a firm choice as to 'whose side [he] was on' (Hobbs, 1988: 15-16). While former political prisoners-turned-researchers were able to lay clear claims to being regarded by respondents as 'a safe pair of hands' (McKeown, 2001: 5), this did not eliminate considerable personal dilemmas about revealing 'disagreements and schisms within the community or republican prisoners' (Ibid., 8). Alternatively, researchers have taken personal risks or broken the law in order to become participant observers of events which are otherwise closed to public scrutiny. Margaretta D'arcy's, Tell Them Everything (1981) is, to date, the most comprehensive 'insider' account of the women's prison protests. D'arcy, a feminist activist and journalist, refused to pay the fine that was imposed on her for public order offences during a women's vigil outside Armagh prison in 1979. She was imprisoned for three months in Armagh in 1980, where she elected to 'join' the no wash strike. As a protesting prisoner, she served her whole term, and on release wrote her account of the Armagh protests.

Whatever forms of 'covert' research are conducted, this does not exempt the researcher from considerable responsibilities and dilemmas in ensuring ethical transparency and informed consent. 'Covert' research is especially counterproductive in Northern Ireland, where disclosure can have lethal consequences for participants, which makes it incumbent

on researchers to be receptive to the risks, to avoid exposing either oneself or respondents to danger, and to ensure the safety of research data. The strategies for negotiating mutual solutions to the risks that were borne by women in participating in research in a conflict setting are now discussed.

Researching women in the conflict zone

The field of conflict research produces a range of demarcations and prohibitions for the researcher as well as the 'researched', and prompts particular ethical and methodological predicaments associated with crossing divides. According to Feldman (1991), and Sluka (1992), the geography of conflict in Northern Ireland entails the militarisation of social space by the state, and the reciprocal recolonisation of territory by confessional communities. However, the 'conflict zone' in these accounts is problematically conceived of in terms of territorial antagonism between the state and (male) paramilitaries as 'defenders of the community', while levelling out other strata of power and violence. The policing of community 'discipline' by paramilitary organisations, for example, has reinforced other forms of gendered regulation (Lentin, 1997; Dowler, 1997), suppressed the realities of violence against women within communities in conflict (Rooney, 1995), and reauthorised patriarchal order through severe physical sanctions such as punishment beatings or shootings, and expulsions for 'anti-social behaviour' (Bloomfield, 1998).

As numerous feminist researchers have noted, it is incumbent on ethnographers not only to recognise the ways that women negotiate the material risks that are part of their daily experiences, but to confront the potential which the researcher's presence has for disrupting or even unravelling their strategies (Dowler, 1997; Maher, 1997: 207-222; Pickering, 2000). In seeking to speak to women former prisoners in republican and loyalist communities, it was necessary for me to defer to the complex realities of the pervasive presence of the security forces, (their 'withdrawal' from the streets because of the political process notwithstanding), the embedded routinisation of self-surveillance, and the inescapable necessity for collective reticence about engaging with researchers and other outsiders. As security concerns were woven into the daily practices and consciousness of

interviewees, and researchers, they also created the necessity for establishing mutually agreed locations in which to conduct the interviews. I left it to respondents to nominate the place in which we would meet, in the knowledge that their access to districts outside of their confessional territories was difficult and undesirable. Most of the respondents chose to be interviewed in their homes, at local community facilities or in their places of work. Others preferred locations outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. Even being interviewed at home did not prevent the curiosity and alertness of respondents' neighbours to the presence of an unfamiliar face at their doorstep.² The choice of location also took into account a habitual reflex in respondents to limit the circulation of information about their participation in research. None of this is to imply that any respondent was engaged in concealing or denying their participation to their community, but, in responding to the normalisation of self-awareness and extended networks of community protection, some individuals expressed a desire to exercise control over 'their own business'. Concerns with personal safety were not the only factor in choosing the location. Time, money, and the demands of childcare and work meant that personal resources were in short supply, and it was important that respondents should not incur any greater costs in participating than was already given.

As Maher (1997: 231) observed, the very nature of ethnographic research involves participants in relations of risk, problems and exploitation, so 'it is imperative that we do not impose additional burdens or expectations on the women we research'. Nevertheless, the researcher's presence, however unwitting, is unavoidably intrusive and imposes burdens and obligations on the researched to 'take responsibility' for the safety of outsiders. Addressing the shared risks of research entailed accommodating myself to the commonsense routinisation of security both in making my way around unfamiliar territory, and in developing appropriate reactions to the presence of security forces. I used precautions such as leaving details of my destination and estimated time of return with a trusted third party, and had alternative plans for informing people of any change in our arrangements. An additional, unavoidable burden involved the care and concern of

² I was later told, to the amusement of respondents, that people had made casual inquiries about the 'student' or the 'social worker' that had visited them.

interviewees in ensuring my personal safety while travelling to and from interviews, which included arranging lifts, organising local cabs where there was no public transport, or escorting me to main thoroughfares. I also had to acknowledge my limitations. There were times when I did not feel safe, and did not proceed to a meeting. Similarly, family emergencies or other developments caused some respondents to cancel, and for one reason or another, we did not meet again. The impulse to get an interview at all costs exposes both researchers and interviewees to unnecessary risks, and further underlines the exploitation of respondents. Therefore, I stepped back when the conditions required it, and reflected and reconsidered, even letting opportunities go, if there were any potentially adverse outcomes.

‘Intervention in the field’ was necessarily redefined by reflexive ethnographic practices in which, ultimately, the researcher relies on the researched to negotiate the field. It also engages the material limits to field research which are shaped by the disparities of power, as well as concrete differences in class, age, cultural, national, confessional and other attributes. These elements are considered in the following discussion of interviewing former political prisoners in the community.

In and out of the community: negotiating access to women in the community

McKeown has observed that embarking on qualitative research with former prisoners in the community in Northern Ireland is contingent on the researcher’s insider or outsider status. The mutual bonds brought about by common experiences of imprisonment enabled him to establish relationships with his respondents through a shared ‘conceptual framework ... a familiar language and awareness of nuances that an “outsider” might miss’ (McKeown, 2001: 5). Nevertheless, the ‘insider position’ creates its own predicaments because, in belonging to one closed community, a researcher’s access to other closed groups, such as the prison administration, former staff or other prison communities, may be foreclosed (Ibid., 8). As an outsider, I had anticipated some of the difficulties that arise in accessing political prisoners in the community. As McKeown comments:

Because of the nature of their politics and the organisation they belong to, any 'outsider' approaching them for research is first referred to the Republican Movement for clearance. Should the Movement advise against participation, the research ends before it has even begun. In those instances where approval is given to the study, the researcher is usually directed towards a number of pre-selected prisoners or ex-prisoners. The process can be a lengthy one with no guarantee that the people whom the researcher most wants to interview will actually agree to participate (McKeown, 2001: 3).

My initial entry into the former prisoners' circles generally corresponded with McKeown's description. I had introduced myself in an introductory letter to the Sinn Féin Prisoner of War (PoW) Department, and thereafter, to a range of community organisations outlining the objectives of the research, and including assurances about the confidentiality of the information. I described the main areas of interest in interviewing former women prisoners as: their experiences of everyday punishment in prison, their strategies for maintaining morale and identity, the impact of criminalisation, their political culture and structures, and their insights into specific incidents in Armagh and Maghaberry prisons. The extent to which this correspondence may or may not have been vetted is unknown to me. I was not asked to submit questions in advance by any organisation in the community, nor by any individual respondents or gatekeepers, and only one respondent, not a former prisoner, refused to permit the interview to be recorded. Two former prisoners whom I approached refused to be interviewed, although they assisted me in other ways.

The political organisations tend to refer requests such as mine upwards for a final decision, and I was eventually met by a representative from Sinn Féin's PoW department with whom I had a preliminary discussion. Following this, I was put in touch with some individual women, and in the meantime, referred to the other, community-based, ex-prisoner organisations, where I went through the same procedure. In one sense, I was initially neither encouraged nor discouraged by the central political organisations, in that while my requests were facilitated, the decision to participate in interviews lay with individual respondents. This is not to understate the invaluable assistance of 'gatekeepers', that is, former prisoners who acted as mediators in introducing me to respondents. Thereafter, I met other respondents through personal introductions from women who had been

interviewed. The period of field work also coincided with a very dynamic time for new community-based initiatives and development programmes for prisoners and their families, which were publicly funded since 1995 as part of the 'peace dividend'. In this context, I was also vouchsafed by community-based researchers who were assessing the needs of prisoners and their families, in the event that a prisoner release programme would be implemented as a consequence of any political settlement.

Negotiating common interests in the research

In the heavily researched field of the Troubles, a combination of 'research fatigue' and 'resistance from below' has been a characteristic response to intrusive journalistic or academic gazes in East and West Belfast. In my initial contacts with potential respondents, I also had to address their scepticism about engaging in another research project about 'women and the Troubles', and their concern to know 'what was different' about my research aims. The first area of contention involved issues of representation, or misrepresentation, in which respondents rejected both the social fiction of 'women-terrorists' (MacDonald, 1991: Lloyd, 1995), and the equally problematic accounts of their victimisation and subordination within their political movements (Loughran, 1983: Buckley and Lonergan, 1984: Fairweather et al., 1984: Shannon, 1989, 74-107: Rooney, 1995). Some indicated a reluctance to be recast, in the words of one respondent, as 'feminist heroes' [sic], while others made it clear that they were not interested in cooperating with 'feminist' analyses of false gender-consciousness on their part because of their previous roles as combatants.

A second problem, indicated in the comments in the correspondence with the IRA O/C in Maghaberry during 1996, was related to ethical questions concerning the loss of 'ownership' over their narratives. This was evident not only in the previous concerns about representation, but in concerns about the destination of interview material and my arrangements (discussed below) for ensuring its safety and confidentiality, and ensuring their rights of reply. None of the respondents' critical observations seemed to imply an unreasonable exercise of power over their stories, nor did I perceive them as attempts to

influence the overall research goals or to suppress any interpretations. Rather, the research process entailed developing some shared investments which were discussed at length with gatekeepers and potential respondents. Some respondents wished to establish how their experiences might inform other prison campaigns, especially with regard to the imprisonment of women, strip-searching and securitisation. Others participated because they wanted an account of the women's prison experiences to be written, although many also added that the lack of time, resources and institutional support, which I had as a researcher, constrained them from producing their own accounts. As in ethnographic research generally, other, less tangible, factors influenced the decision to participate, including word of mouth recommendations from other former prisoners; a sense of duty or responsibility about representing the prisoners' perspective; an element of curiosity to meet one of the cluster of researchers ('over funded and over here') who descended on Northern Ireland during the period to research various aspects of the 'peace process'; and an accustomed sense of hospitality and courtesy to 'well-meaning' outsiders.

Access to respondents was also eased in some groups, and constrained in others, because of the gendered, national and 'Catholic' inferences that could be drawn from my name and accent. In this sense, my 'otherness' was both related to what I was (Southern Irish, middle-class, an academic) and was not (Northern Irish, working class, political or community activist). Conversely, some of these same attributions positioned me as politically and culturally alien to Unionist and loyalist women, who felt it necessary at times to explain aspects of their political and cultural perspectives when talking about our 'common' interest in women in prison.

Access to loyalist women former-prisoners presented a different range of problems. The experiences of loyalist women have been belatedly addressed in studies of the conflict, and studies of their roles and status in political and public activism are just emerging (McWilliams, 1995; Ward, 2002). I had no political or social contacts in the loyalist community, although I eventually established contact with political representatives of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) who referred me to the Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC). Loyalist groups have been traditionally viewed as being more reticent and

‘defensive’ towards outsiders than their republican counterparts (Price, 1995: Drake, 1996). The loyalist representatives were candid in their assessment of what they perceived to be their relatively marginalised profile in public and international consciousness. The obstacles they described are in part structural, in that they lacked the formidable organising experience of the republican community; ‘the Provos have had a twenty year head start on us in terms of organisation and their publicity machine’ (loyalist representative). Others argued that the tide of opinion had been turned against them by negative media, academic and political representation of loyalism as homogeneously sectarian and reactionary. Loyalist organisations, like their republican counterparts, were also in the process of researching their prison community’s needs in anticipation of a programme of prisoner releases, and had yet to establish how many women had served sentences under the aegis of their prisoner structures. An extensive newsclippings search on my part, and a search through McKittrick et al.’s Lost Lives (1999) suggests that at least 11 loyalist women, and perhaps no more than 20, served sentences between the 1970s and the early 1990s. I was also advised that although my efforts would be partly facilitated, I was unlikely to make significant progress because of socio-cultural values within the movement which influence perceptions of women’s contribution to the prison struggle. In the end, although three women initially agreed to be interviewed, my contact then told me that they had decided to select one to represent their views in a interview. I was told:

Certainly women have been there [in the movement] and there is a place for them, I’m not denying that. But ... [unlike republican women] loyalist women will not be used as some kind of body shield or a flag-waving exercise in front of men. They will not be discredited, or abused or used in that manner. I would say that loyalist men, they are Ulster men, they will have a lot of respect and a sense of protectiveness to the loyalist women (loyalist representative).

This quotation is not intended to reflect a definitive or conclusive view about the position of women within loyalism, but rather reflects the intersection of sectarian, nationalist and gendered discourses in the construction of the political ‘other’ through the idealisation of womanhood which is common to the narratives of numerous ‘national struggles’.

The need for the confidentiality of research material and the anonymity of participants was paramount. I took care to outline in advance the precautions that would be taken to preserve the anonymity of participants and the safety of the interview material. Confidentiality and anonymity were connected with the integrity and quality of the data that were gathered, and because of the need to respect respondents' control over identification for a variety of reasons. Tapes and notes were stored outside of the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. I noted the times of commencement and completion of interviews, offered copies to interviewees, and made amendments at their request. I followed a standard method of organising interview data in published prison ethnographies, which often involves 'splicing' separate quotations from different respondents into thematic clusters, and giving the speaker a pseudonym or alias. This method was developed in the context of researching sensitive or contested events in prisons in order to preserve the anonymity of respondents who were still serving sentences (Carlen, 1983; Scraton et al., 1991). Examples of this method were photocopied and shown to respondents as a way of showing how their interviews would appear on the page. I also removed information that might identify individuals, or lead to charges being brought against them for activities before or during their imprisonment. Formally, as prisoners were released on licence under the terms of the Belfast Agreement (1998), or under the terms of their parole if released earlier, individuals are still liable to prosecution if any outstanding or fresh offences come to light. In addition, I did not ask respondents about the basis of the charges for which they were prosecuted or sentenced, details of any evidence submitted during their trials, information about other people arrested or tried with them, or whether they received bail. I also removed or modified, with their consultation, any identifiable speech patterns or personal details that might also lead to their identification. The interview data in chapters six to twelve, therefore, are all accurate quotes from the transcriptions, although certain details have been relinquished in selecting what was inserted. For similar reasons, in inserting some quotes, even the alias, status and place of imprisonment have been removed.

Towards a contingent insider perspective

A degree of 'contingent insiderness' can be plausibly claimed in ethnographic work,

provided that the researcher clearly understands that it is based on the mutual recognition that research relationships are pragmatic, partial and temporary. I was aware that a researcher may be admitted to a closed community because of certain practical benefits which the research may have for the community, 'but the researcher will not [necessarily] be taken into confidence' (Taylor, 1988: 137). I proceeded with the knowledge that academic research, however reflexive, is shaped by its finite and functional role as far as 'the researched' are concerned. However, while the shared objectives of the research may be instrumental, engaging in interviews may also have symbolic and personal value to respondents in bearing witness to events, as expressing an opportunity to shape the meaning of past incidents, as an individual contribution to a larger collective history, and as an opportunity to disclose hidden aspects of conflict and struggle.

Entry to a 'contingent insider' perspective is associated with fluid, open-ended and respectful approaches to establishing relations with respondents. 'Outsiderness' is assured when researchers do not have long-standing roots in the community. However, the provisional nature of the ethnographic encounter can open up narrative confidences that are borne out of their transient character, and may enable different or marginalised perspectives to emerge from an otherwise tightly structured socio-political culture. Neither the republican or loyalist movements are monolithic, but are made up of many different strands of activity and shades of opinion, and have robust cultures of community and political activism. Engaging with outsiders can create opportunities for exploring critical views or perspectives that would not usually be articulated, or for testing 'internal' perspectives against 'external' ones.

A 'contingent insider' is simultaneously 'inside' the margins of community experiences and knowledges, insofar as entry is allowed, and 'outside' some of the collective norms, self-protections and constraints that are necessarily created in the larger, self-protective context. As an 'outsider' moving in, I was required to create a dynamic and fluid series of lines of communication which were shaped by the realities of that status. These acknowledged the unfamiliarity of potential respondents with my background and political outlook, and therefore the lack of a 'shared history' in one sense, while also establishing common

grounds of identification, interest and trust, even if they were knowingly transient. This does not reduce the ethnographic encounter to a contractarian transaction, but enables reflexive and collaborative practices in the context of realigning power relations between the researcher and respondents. Similarly, moving back 'out' interposes other ethical responsibilities for continuing to comply with the prevailing rules of disclosure. I took extra measures to preserve the anonymity of interviewees and the security of the data as I would not have any influence over negative outcomes if they were revealed. Because I 'did not have to live here' (a frequently used phrase), it was imperative that the process of collecting data was firmly grounded in the ethics of accountability and negotiated responses and protections, so that the outcomes of research did not leave a destructive backwash after my departure.

The interviews: writing the lives of women prisoners

Just as false assumptions should be avoided about 'equalising' the power relations that inhere with ethnographic fieldwork, so also should the process of writing the lives of others be viewed as fraught with power relations. From the early 1970s, sociological 'realist' approaches adopted 'equalising' methods in life-history writing by regarding respondents as the primary site of truth and adopting techniques for minimising 'interference' with oral texts (Denzin: 1989). 'Life-history' writing, it was argued, should also facilitate an understanding of events over time from the perspective of individuals or groups directly involved in them. Moreover, this involves paying attention to artefacts, 'ephemera', suppressed knowledges and 'hidden' or subordinated cultural forms of expression and articulation which make up the lived culture of subordinated groups (Hall and Jefferson, 1976: Cohen and Taylor, 1981). Subsequent feminist standpoint theorists in turn identified the pitfalls with 'literal immediacy' as investing narratives from below with complete authenticity and verisimilitude, and as engaging in a nominal inversion of traditional power relationships between the researcher and the researched (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 48). Rather, it was argued, the core problematic lay less with adjusting techniques for gathering and presenting histories from below, than in confronting the ontological and epistemological privilege to which sociological and criminological disciples have laid

claim as 'sciences' (Jacobus et al., 1990: McLennan, 1995). The social sciences have derived their disciplinary status as inheritors of Enlightenment concepts and values of 'reason', 'truth' and 'objectivity', empirical certainty, and universal relevance which, in its historical and social effects, have amounted to a refusal to engage with the gendered, classed and colonial 'other': 'or worse, by an indifference to the other - to alterity, difference and polyvocality which are levelled out ... into a form compatible with a discourse that promotes the Western project' (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 24: Pateman, 1988, 1989: Mohanty, 1989). In this context, feminist standpoint epistemology emerged to challenge the dominant 'liberal episteme' (MacKinnon, 1989: 124), by deconstructing the humanist perspective at the heart of sociological 'truth' and directing questions of power, ethics, social location, identity and knowledge-claims at the researcher as well as the researched (Bordo, 1987: Harding, 1991).

Feminist approaches to critical life history writing, therefore, have radically reconceptualised the 'researcher' from being a privileged arbiter of knowledge to being a socialised, embodied mediator. This shift has entailed writing the researcher into the structuring and production of knowledge. Stanley (1992, 1993), and Stanley and Wise (1993), suggest that it is not enough for researchers to acknowledge their 'privileged' perspective, but that methods of gathering and representing life-histories must destabilise the researcher as 'auteur'. Stanley's model of auto/biographical [sic] praxis emphasises collaboration rather than objectification, on the basis that this involves a critical exposition of the power relations in the life-writing act itself. Moreover, the situated, material relationships which constitute life-writing are neither reducible to foundational identity politics nor to a textual essentialism 'which excises the "bio" or life, from "autobiography"' (Stanley; 1992: 58). The 'textual turn' in sociological research, therefore, casts the researcher as a contingent mediator of social knowledges, who may share proximate social standpoints with respondents through gendered, classed or other relationships, in ways which interrogate the differentials of power between the researcher and researched (Stanley, 1993: 41).

Standpoint epistemology and autobiographical praxis theories have themselves been the subject of criticisms for relying on reductive commonalities between researchers and the researched (Alcoff, 1996: Nicholson and Fraser, 1999), for restoring the hierarchical discrimination between 'hard' (quantitative) and 'soft' (qualitative) modes of social inquiry (Atkinson, 1990: 148: Oakley, 1998), and because of the continuing difficulties in reconciling 'empirical' approaches with qualitative research techniques in prison research (Bosworth, 1997: Leibling, 1999). The approach taken in this thesis follows Maher's succinct point that reflexive, relational, feminist research can be 'empirical' without being 'empiricist' (Maher, 1997: 227). As Carlen points out, the purpose of critical penological work is not to establish a perfect corollary with 'empirical' data, but to enable the mutual disassembly and reassembly of theory and data, so that a continuous, reflexive tension exists between them (Carlen, 1994: 133).

Prison life-history writing has also engaged in the critical enterprise of decentring sociological 'truths' by requiring researchers to engage with the structural conditions of the production of prison narratives (Christina and Carlen, 1985: Sommers, 1995). Prison life-writing has been adopted as a logical or natural solution to the various problems associated with the official suppression or contestation of prisoners' perspectives, or the silencing of their voices within institutions. Similarly, collaborative life-writing has taken place at a distance when researchers have been excluded from institutions or from continuous face-to-face interactions with prisoners, prompting the versatile use by researchers of written correspondence, diaries, prisoner's writings and autobiographies, and activist material (Cohen and Taylor, 1981: de Salvo et al., 1990: Di Giovanni, 1990: Scraton et al., 1991: Churchill and Vanderwall, 1992). As suggested in chapter three, the radical turn in writing the life-history of women in prison occurred when the analytical focus shifted from subcultural or insider accounts to more 'holistic' analyses of their lives before, during and after imprisonment (Carlen, 1983). More recently, the term 'convict criminology' has been applied to the critical sociological and political body of work produced by prisoners themselves in terms that necessarily challenge privileged academic epistemologies (Richards and Ross, 2001). Similarly, the emergent body of work by former prisoners in Northern Ireland has played a significant part in forming a critical understanding of penal structures

and relations, as well as shaping an ethics of interpretative power in prison research (Campbell et al., 1994; McKeown, 2001).

The interviews

Interviews were conducted on a semi-structured basis, in that the formal organisation of the questions was less prominent, in order to allow interpersonal connections between the interviewer and respondent, and to reflect the significance of respondents' use of language, personal perceptions and narrative style to the production of meaning. The interview schedules were designed to acquire primary data regarding the sometimes conflicting interests and roles of various agents and decision makers in the prison system. Thirty seven people were formally interviewed for the research, and additional information was acquired through telephone and personal communications. There were four separate interviewing schedules, because the structure of interviews varied according to the direct interest and roles of the respondents, and to accommodate the differences in the perspectives being sought. The interviews lasted between one hour and four hours. The four groups of respondents were:

Former Prisoners

A total of fourteen former prisoners who were confined in Armagh or Maghaberry prisons between 1972 and 1995 were interviewed (Appendix Five). Of this fourteen, thirteen had been imprisoned for politically motivated, scheduled offences of whom twelve were republicans and one was loyalist. The other, 'ordinary' ex-prisoner did not have any political affiliations, but had made links with the republican group in Maghaberry to resolve some problems with alleged bullying by staff. She volunteered to be interviewed in order to offer insights into the workings of the regime at Mourne House, and to offer her perspective of specific incidents of discipline, punishment and strip searching.

Of the thirteen former political prisoners interviewed, five were interned or sentenced with political status, and released before the introduction of the criminalisation policy in 1976.

A further five served all or part of their sentences between the introduction of the criminalisation policy in 1976 and the closure of Armagh prison in 1986. Of these, two had been sentenced before March 1976 and retained political status, but were involved in the non-cooperation and related protests in support of the prisoners who were directly affected by the criminalisation policy. The other three were denied political status because of the timing of their sentences and were directly involved in the non-cooperation and no-wash protests.

The remaining three political prisoners, two republican and one loyalist, served their sentences between the late 1980s and 1995.

Of all of the interviewees, eight prisoners served their sentences in Armagh prison only, two served in both Armagh and Maghaberry prisons, having been transferred there in 1986, and four served terms in Mourne House, Maghaberry, only.

It was decided that the sociological device of allocating numbers or codes to respondents to preserve their anonymity was inappropriate. A prisoner's number is a sign of the removal or suspension of their unique identity, and political prisoners also viewed their numbers to be offensive symbols of criminalisation. Accordingly, the former prisoners were given the names of women who had been involved in labour, nationalist or feminist movements in Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Appendix Five). Many of these had been imprisoned or interned for their political activism. The identities of respondents in the following cohorts - pastoral, prisoners' community and staff - were also preserved by referencing their occupation and the prison in which they worked, or their relationship with prisoners.

The Pastoral Group

The 'pastoral' group was made up nine respondents; four serving and former members of the Boards of Visitors during the 1970s and 1980s, one medical practitioner, one prison welfare worker in the voluntary sector with extensive connections with the republican

group in Maghaberry, and three prison chaplains who had served in Armagh and Maghaberry prisons. The role of pastoral mediators is heightened in the context of the political prisoners' disengagement from probationary and welfare services, and their rejection of the 'rehabilitative' ethos, which political prisoners regarded as being antithetical to their political status. Pastoral workers have been witnesses to the general disciplinary climate in prisons at different periods, have on occasion been present in the aftermath of specific disturbances or been allowed access to political prisoners during the no-wash and hunger strikes, and have been approached to verify prisoner's grievances or complaints about conditions, treatment and strip searching. Moreover, they have had to negotiate the hierarchical and exclusionary ethos of the prison administration, and can provide insights into the attitudes and morale of staff and administrators or the effectiveness or otherwise of procedural or disciplinary structures.

While political prisoners viewed the role of most pastoral workers as a quietest one to greater or lesser degrees, members of this group had the advantage of gaining access to the prisons when others were excluded, and did lay claim to some degrees of 'independence' from the prison system. However, the claims by members of the Boards of Visitors to be critical 'watchdogs' and guardians of prisoners' rights were contested by former prisoners. Amongst other criticisms of the 'Vee-Gees',³ their claims to independence as prisoners' advocates were compromised by the fact that they retained their powers of adjudication and punishment in Northern Ireland, although these powers were removed for their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom in 1993.

Prisoners' Community

I have distinguished between the pastoral group and the 'prisoners' community' because the latter are comprised of people from within the community, or with close community ties, who were entrusted by prisoners to look after their interests, and those of their families. As members of this group are primarily engaged with the prisoners' wellbeing and

³ So called because, 'every time you raised a complaint about anything, all you got [from them] was "Oh, very good"'.

representing their concerns, their loyalties are not divided between working in the prisoners' interests and retaining a 'professional' or administratively-defined mediating role. This group included prisoner's relatives attending 'drop in' and advice sessions at community and prisoner-welfare centres, community-based activists and researchers and those who worked in the prisoner's welfare organisations. Whilst much invaluable informal, contextual background to the research was gained from being with this group, I conducted only three formal interviews; with a legal advisor to the prisoners, with a prisoner's relative and with a community worker.

Staff

In all, eleven former and serving staff were interviewed including two former prison welfare officers and one probation officer who had worked in either Armagh or Maghaberry prisons. Although using the services of welfare workers was not prohibited by their own movements, the general trend in the 1970s and 1980s was to keep welfare workers at a distance, or selectively use them to resolve problems with their families' welfare (Hillyard, 1978: 134; Crawford, 1979: 67-68) However, from 1987, republican prisoners engaged for practical purposes with prison welfare personnel, as this was compulsory in order to establish eligibility for pre-release, temporary leave and life-sentence review programmes (McKeown, 2001: 154-157).

The rest of this cohort comprised serving and former employees of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), including four governors of varying levels of seniority, two prison officers, one respondent from the Prison Officers' Association [POA] and one middle-ranking civil servant at the NIO. As with Crawford (1999) and McEvoy (2001), access to individuals connected with the prison service was achieved through personal approaches and gatekeepers. Paradoxically, the outcomes of 'modernising' working practices and conditions in the prisons, and the controversies caused by senior breaches of prison security in December 1997, at a critical point in the ongoing political process, emerged as key motivations for officers and administrators alike to agree to be interviewed (Appendix Six). Many officers of all ranks had been stung by official criticisms of failures on the part of

staff in successive reports into breaches of prison security (Hennessey, 1984: Colville, 1992: Narey, 1998). Uniform officers were critical of a perceived culture of conciliation towards the political prisoners, and the 'downgrading' of security procedures arising out of the ongoing political process. Conversely, senior staff wished to defend their approach on the grounds that accepting the realpolitik of the political prisoners' demands and structures was a pragmatic extension of the 'humane regime' policy. The contradictory positions experienced by lower-ranking and senior prison personnel respectively, who were professionally charged with handling what had become the overtly politicised management of the prison system as part of a larger project of conflict resolution, motivated them to take the opportunity, on a personal basis, to clarify their positions and articulate their perspectives.

Ethnographic power, 'taking sides', and the limits of collaboration

While the insights and views of the latter three cohorts addressed the considerable gaps in official accounts, provided insights into the human dimensions of penal relations, and reinforced the multiple layering of power and punishment in prison, the narratives of women former prisoners are viewed as the primary objects of the field research. This is justified by the positions adopted in the ethnographic process, as outlined above, which focus on the production of oral narratives in various networks of power relations, silencing strategies, and the 'invisibility' of certain forms of agency and subjectivity in dominant research traditions. In these contexts, ethnographers have been compelled not only to confront the structural and material obstacles to writing sensitive or suppressed histories, but to make consistent decisions as to their choice of subjects, collaborative methods and interpretative practices. Viewed like this, the researcher continuously comes up against the problem as to 'whose side she is on' at all stages of the ethnographic process. Moreover, this very question is less redolent of subjective 'bias' or preference on the part of the researcher, than of the multifaceted, structural exclusion of certain subjects and knowledges from academic or political frames of reference. Equally, the commitment to 'collaborative' approaches between researchers and respondents cannot conclusively eliminate asymmetrical relations of power. As Maher noted:

Neither ... a commitment to feminist practices such as “empowerment” or “dialogical” research can override the inequalities and hierarchical ordering which inhere in researching dispossessed women (Maher, 1997: 231-2).

In these contexts, the decision to ‘privilege’ the narratives of women former prisoners consciously addresses both an ‘insurrection of subjugated knowledges’ (Foucault, 1980: 82), and the risks taken by the researched by challenging traditions of silence. This also implied working within constraints and risks for all respondents in disclosing certain views. However, in the interviews with staff, what appeared to be ‘unguarded’ or controversial comments were clearly intended as signals to their perceived detractors – the prisoners and their political organisations, politicians and other strata of the prison administration. This was not only evident during interviews, but was reinforced by differences that were being aired in the public domain in months before the Belfast Agreement (1998) was formalised (Appendix Six). The inclusion of some of these remarks does not, therefore, indicate a reckless disregard on my part for personal reputations and careers, but signals the complex internal difficulties for staff in dealing with rapid changes to the prison system, the prospect of a ‘post-conflict’ system of penal punishment and the legacy of a decade of labour conflict over new managerialist initiatives.

The oral data gathering process, therefore, was less a unified and unproblematic enterprise, than a process of consciously developed, unifying strategies. Contrary to notions of the ‘authorial presence’, the researcher’s role derives from the fact that she is ‘delegated’ by respondents to mediate their narratives. This generated an impetus to reshape the task of ‘writing about’, or even more onerously, ‘writing for’ other people, into a project of ‘writing with’ them. For this reason, there was mutual analysis between respondents and myself of the wider rationales and goals of the research. Secondly, there was scope for reserving comment, correcting propositions or hypotheses, or mutually exploring the significance of events, and reconstructing those events and negotiating their interpretation. The interview process sought to reshape ‘disclosure’ in terms of intersecting narratives of social and personal subjectivity and consciousness. These are central to the prisoners’

accounts of identity, agency and resistance, and underline their experiences of penal subjectivity and resistance. These themes are explored in detail in the following six chapters.

Chapter 6

'Nor Meekly Serve Our Time': A Continuum of Resistance¹

The following chapters explore various aspects of the penal dialectic of punishment and resistance. In presenting the versatility and depth of the prisoners' culture of resistance, the interview material is organised into various 'fields of resistance'. The first field, 'Getting in', which is explored in this chapter, traces the pathways to political imprisonment for women. It is argued that the processes of arrest, detention and trial were critical formative experiences in inculcating in female detainees an awareness of the gendered and political dimensions of imprisonment, and informed the early styles of opposition that were later refined in prison.

The term 'fields of resistance' also implies a series of oppositional practices to various practices of penal power. The notion of a 'continuum' suggests their interconnectedness, and is drawn from feminist analyses which connect 'routine oppression' and 'different forms of regulation and discipline' to 'complex clusters' of gendered and institutional power (Kelly, L. 1988). In penology, Carlen has situated the penal punishment of women in a regulatory paradigm which coheres 'modes of controlling women within both social and criminal justice systems and society at large' with 'generic anti-social controls' through a 'variety of malign institutionalised practices' (Carlen, 1998: 65). This duality implicates both the wider social organisation, as well internal, institutional practices, of the punishment of women, and is borne out in feminist analyses of the relational impact of regulatory, coercive, surveillant, disciplinary and other sanctions and controls. Carlen's analysis not only offers insights into the differential formation of social controls according to gender, class, political status, race and 'ethnicity', but draws attention to the *combination* of different punitive modalities which reproduce these social oppressions at an institutional level. She draws together the intersecting punitive practices that occur in women's prisons into a continuum which ranges from the 'penal hammer' of explicit, physical modes of (legally sanctioned) enforcement, to the 'bureaucratic screw' of

¹ The chapter title is from the republican prison anthem 'Nor Meekly Serve My Time'.

procedural subordination (Carlen, 1998: 100-145). Mandaraka-Sheppard, similarly, tracked the 'career' of disciplinary procedures in women's prisons from the point at which particular infractions of prison rules were detected, to their adjudication and the administration of punishment (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). Her emphasis on the structural dimensions of punishment and resistance connects one set of social actions (rule-breaking) with other social actions (punishment), without reducing the relationship between them to a singular explanation of cause and effect. Rather, her account of a punitive continuum provides an analysis for why alternative outcomes did not, or could not, emerge. As such, the penology of women recognises intersecting micro- and macro-structures of regulation which account for the interconnectedness of the apparently contradictory penal drives of security, care and control (Dobash et al., 1986, 146-158; Bosworth, 1999: chapters one and four).

The continuum of resistance here proceeds from this paradigm of continuity in the punishment of women, but applies the argument made in chapter four that different domains of penal punishment are intercepted and altered by prisoners. Because prisoners use as well as contest power, the continuum of resistance extends beyond the more usual conceptualisation of intersecting, negative enforcement, and posits that the resistant strategies exercised by prisoners formed a recognisable, strategic sequence. However, this analysis neither claims that resistance unproblematically inverts subordinate and dominant roles, nor implies that resistance enables subjects to detach from penal power. Rather the broader analysis is lodged in the Foucauldian, post-structural feminist and materialist arguments which find that agency implies continuity in social action, and postulates that 'resistance' is constantly framed by structural, ideological and 'material' asymmetries in a social field. Since, as Foucault argues, forces of power and resistance are in constant interplay, many of the contentions between prisoners and the administration did not produce a state of closure or resolution, but led to new and contingent alignments of power.

The thematic and theoretical organisation of the chapter also reflects the feminist and critical objective of moving away from 'victimism' towards an understanding of the

complexity of women's agency, without abstracting punishment, coercion or violence from the contexts of their lives (Kelly, L. 1988: 165; Maher, 1997; Phoenix, 1998). Kelly observed the transition from 'victimhood', through 'survival', to 'resistance' by women who experienced sexual violence as a process in which 'coping may merge into political action where individuals or groups perceive that their distress has a social cause, the solution to which can only be social change' (Kelly, L. 1988: 161-162). Phoenix described the narratives of resistance, survival and the self-constitution of identity among women involved in prostitution in terms of their 'making sense' of the paradoxes inherent in their situation, arguing that the meanings of 'survival', 'risk' and 'escape' emanate from distinctive material and gendered conditions (Phoenix, 1998). The narratives of former prisoners are organised so as to reflect the different ways in which they 'made sense' of their actions in terms of personally meaningful responses to their individual experiences, their subjectification in relation to others, and their critical articulation of the gendered and political paradoxes of imprisonment. Secondly, their accounts of events consciously convey a sense of continuity in terms of their connection to, and meanings within, other forms of agency, and as occurring across different political, subjective and collective struggles.

As the narratives are drawn from events which occurred between 1972 and 1995, it is acknowledged that neither penal policy and governance, nor the composition of the prisoner body, remained the same over twenty three years. In order to accommodate the discontinuities, the fields of resistance are organised to generally correspond to the different phases of penal administration - internment, criminalisation and 'normalisation' - which were discussed in chapter two. Nevertheless, it is also suggested that many conditions of punishment and regulation remained substantively consistent between 1972 and 1995, and thus retained sufficient structural continuity to support an analysis of a continuum of penal conflict.

Getting in: resisting internment, interrogation and detention

As discussed in chapter one, the penalisation of women in the context of 'reactive detention' acquired specifically gendered dimensions and introduced an element of punitive difference into the broader custodial strategy. 'Getting in' commences with Nora's account of her internment, which offers insights into the criminalisation of women in the context of their transition from civil disobedience to active participation in paramilitarism. Nora describes the social effects of interning women with children, and the strategies that prisoners, their families and communities devised to maintain family structures. The predicament of being 'lifted' out of her social networks connect her subjective strategies for coping with the pains of imprisonment with a broader context of familial, political and communal struggle.

Nora's story

They just came one night. They raided the house that often that you just got on with it and started again. This night they come and took curtains and cupboards and all down. I knew it was serious ... Then they took me to Townhall Street for three days, and then to Armagh. It was during loyalist strike in May 1974.² There wasn't a sign of life about, only me in this cop car with two women cops. I wasn't beaten or anything, but talked at ... talked at for hours and hours and hours. They were trying to get information on men that you knew, and they just kept on and on at you. I couldn't honestly say I got beaten up or anything, I didn't. But the very fact that you were there was bad enough.

Denying Nora access to her children was an additional dimension of the punishment of women who are deemed to be both out of place in the masculinist realm of political activity, and out of bounds of normative femininity (Carlen, 1998: 67-72). Such women are subjected to 'the different dimensions of the "anti-social control of women" [which]

²The general strike organised by the Ulster Workers Council, an umbrella organisation comprised of Unionist politicians, trade unionists and loyalist paramilitary groups, which led to the collapse of the power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland after six months.

emanate from one fundamental mechanism for keeping women “in their place” (Ibid., 67).

My husband was already interned, and I had [a number of] children of my own and [a number of] foster children.³ So that was seven kids left. My sister was already in jail at this point. There was nowhere for them. Nowadays children have rights so that can't really happen to them ... My brother-in-law took some of them, and the rest went to my mother. But the strange thing about it all was that anytime I put in for parole to see the kids, they never used to give it to me, but they gave it to my husband. They gave him access, maybe every other weekend, to come out and check on things. If I had had no parents, or my husband didn't have brothers, these children would have been left with nobody. It didn't cost the authorities a thought. When it [detention] happens to one person it affects everybody.

Her case was taken up by human rights advocates in Belfast, but Nora turned down an offer for immediate release on licence, on the basis that she was required to sign a agreement to keep the peace, which implicitly required her to accept a criminalised status:

With my case, and all of the children, it was an embarrassment ... They sent lawyers to say that that the British government was trying to work on my case, and that if I could get people to say that I'd agreed to their terms, that they could see a way of releasing me. Basically they proposed that the [Detention Review] Commission would let you out if you guaranteed you wouldn't commit any crimes.

I said I was an internee, and why should I apply for bail to get out? I told them that I didn't do anything to get in here, so I don't need anybody to vouch for me to get out. If their evidence was so strong, why didn't they take it to court and do it? No, I wouldn't say it, it would have been my principles down the chute to do it. You're not going to let anybody criminalise you by saying that we can get a bailman to let you out if you agree to their terms.

Getting to Armagh was traumatic, but once you got in you could settle. My sister was already in. My friend had also been lifted the day after me, but I didn't even know she was arrested until she arrived the next day. She was held in Townhall Street too. There was a good few younger women from Divis there, so you weren't going into a jail full of strangers. That probably cushioned it that wee bit, that you knew all these people that you had been about with, in the jail. Then I just fell into the prison life, organising your cell and so forth. You could go to classes. Most of the night time was taken up with welfare visits and arrangements for what was happening to the kids. It was a bad time family-wise, but it wasn't such a bad time that I couldn't cope ... it didn't make me depressed. You could cope with what they threw at you if you hadn't had the added pressure of neglected kids. Then you could say “well, to hell with it, I'm here now”.

³ Details removed at interviewee's request

The women in our time, it was different certainly. If I had been in prison during the strip searches, maybe because I'm a wee bit older, but I don't know how I would have handled that ... But in some ways the pattern was set then, and they were able to work upon it later, and then pass it on down. That makes sense to me, that we laid the bricks and it was followed on. And yet, you don't have any experience at the time of what to do. It's just your instinct, that when you get there you realise, "well, I can't go any further than here". You have to put up with that. You can't lie at night wishing you were out of there. Not that you didn't wish to be out of there, but [you kept it] always to yourself, in case somebody else wasn't feeling good, and you made them feel down. Always, if you felt that way, you kept it to yourself, not to lumber it onto anybody else (Nora: internee, Armagh).

Interrogation

Interrogation involves different levels of objectification for converting a detainee from being a marker of transgression and disorder into a source of information. In order to force speech from the detainee, she undergoes preparatory rituals of conditioning to her subordinated and helpless situation (Scarry, 1987: chapter one). The practices of interrogation, especially where they involve custodial mistreatment, integrate the body of the detainee into the state's sovereign *and* rational functions. As Foucault argued, torture affords the sovereign powers of the state a direct route through the body, while the reordering of the body within rational-disciplinary mechanisms enables it to become an object of bureaucratic processing, intelligence-gathering and the combat of 'terrorism' (Foucault, 1991). For Feldman (1991) coercion 'render[s] state power tangible, immediate and circumscribed' (Feldman, 1991: 115):

The performance of torture does not apply power; rather it manufactures it from the 'raw' ingredient of the captive's body. The surface of the body is the stage where the state is made to appear as an effective material force (Feldman, 1991: 115).

Brown has argued that coextensive relations persist between the repressive and administrative functions of contemporary governance, because modes of 'pre- and anti-modern brutality and harshness' perforate the 'punitive restraint and rationality' of the

modern state (Brown, 2002). Garland, similarly, has suggested that 'sovereign modes of state action' are elaborated in the ideological, judicial and administrative processes of contemporary governance (Garland, 1996). This 'recursive' character of sovereign power, through which liberal-democratic states 'periodically make recourse' to the tools of repression, containment and exclusion (Brown, 2002: 405), is less historically anomalous than it first appears, but 'what distinguishes modern forms of penal excess from monarchical violence ... is not the fact or absence of its brutality, but the strategies adopted for its justification, regulation and distribution' (Ibid., 417). The recursive character of repression has been identified with the 're-emergence' of coercion during successive periods of internment and the suspension of habeas corpus in Northern Ireland since 1922 (Boyle et al., 1980: O' Dowd et al., 1980: Farrell, 1980, 1986). In this context, the infringement of the civil rights and bodily integrity of detainees in Northern Ireland during the 1970s was extensively documented (NICRA, 1973: Amnesty International, 1973, 1978). Denis Faul and Raymond Murray, then Roman Catholic chaplains to Armagh prison, collected and published 'black and blue' dossiers on the incidences of custodial mistreatment of men and women at various police stations and interrogation centres in the 1970s and 1980s (Faul and Murray 1975, 1978a, 1978b: Faul et al., 1975: Faul 1978, 1983). A recurring theme in the testimonies of female detainees concern the ways in which the pervasive threat of violence in custody intersected with expressions of sexual dominance and gendered power.⁴ In one of the few analyses of the use of torture against women, Theweleit has drawn parallels between the objectification of the female body as the gendered and political 'other', and the meanings of sexual domination in interrogation and intimate body-searching procedures (Theweleit, 1996). For the respondents, their sexuality was an inescapable dimension of the experience of interrogation:

Different tactics were used against women. I remember when I was in Castlereagh.

⁴ Faul and Murray recorded cases of intimidation and verbal abuse, sexual innuendoes, psychological disorientation, assault and sleep deprivation. While none of these are gender specific, some additional details emerge in the women's testimonies, including the fact that women were shown photographs of the fatally wounded and injured, and berated by their interrogators for their 'failure' to show compassion or remorse for their alleged culpability (Faul and Murray, 1975: 56). Other women's testimonies alleged threatened or actual assaults while they were pregnant.

Getting hit didn't annoy me but it was the sexual innuendoes that did. The Special Branch men, they were saying that this is what they were going to do to you. And you knew. What was to stop them? I mean they could beat you and they could verbally abuse you. But they could have, they could have! ... and that was an extra thing they used when they were interrogating you. Even if they didn't, they made the threat of it all the time I was there (Aine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Here's how they did things. One sat really close beside me, literally touching me bodily, and the other came from behind, put his hand on my shoulder, and I swear to God he had his face up against the back of my neck, and he said, "do you not remember me?", and he mentioned my old school. I couldn't think. It was someone that I knew years ago when I was going to school. He was Catholic, obviously. But the ones who interrogated me were all Northern Irish. They sometimes had the British army. That was always the threat in the entire set up, that there was always the sexual threats they made (Meg: internee, Armagh).

The IRA Training Manual, or the 'Green Book' warns volunteers that:

If captured[,] the enemy forces will not hesitate to use extreme methods of both physical and psychological torture to extract information on yourself and/or your organisation. The Army expects that Volunteers won't disclose information on themselves and others (The Green Book, cited in O'Brien, 1995: 351-2).

Accordingly, if arrested or interrogated a Volunteer was obliged under IRA General Army Orders to 'refuse to give any account of his (sic) movements, activities or associates, when any of these have any relation to the organisation or personnel of Óglaigh na hÉireann', and 'refuse to make or sign any statements' (Ibid., 355). The minimum penalty for a breach of these orders was 'dismissal with ignominy', unless the disclosure was so serious as to amount to a charge of treachery, which carried the penalty of execution. Female detainees appear to have been deemed by interrogators to be the 'weak links' in the IRA because they were susceptible both to stringent paramilitary discipline and to those patriarchal elements within their organisations that positioned women as objects of defence and protection. War and conflict heighten the position of women as 'an element of male communication' and exchange 'where manly men regard their masculinity as compromised by the abuse of "their" women' (Seifert, 1994: 59). Hence, the tactic of using the exchange value of women in custody as the potentially weakest point of entry to the primary source of (male)

paramilitary power was consistent with the military objective of undermining the operational effectiveness of the IRA's active service units and chains of command through demoralisation and tactical intelligence-gathering (Kitson, 1977: 281-291):

There was also an element in Castlereagh (detention centre) that thought, say, if a girl was lifted with a couple of men, the mentality was that she was the weak one. Their thinking was, "move on her first". But nine times out of ten it was the women were the strongest. And you got to know what way they were thinking and what they were doing. Even in Castlereagh, when they were coming around to us, and I knew that they were thinking that "she is the weak link here". But I wasn't the weak link (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

They were always picking on the women thinking "she's going to break". This is what they actually do now when they're raiding a house or arresting a man: they're lifting the wife too. They still have the mentality that the women are the weak link, or can be used as one (Meg: internee, Armagh).

What they said to me in Castlereagh was, "if you don't sign or if you don't confess you're going to go away for a long time. You're going to take the rap for this. You're going to be looked on as the ringleader". It was laughable. But it was that type of psychological thing they were waving about you (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

The trial process

A women's demeanour in court may contribute to assumptions about her guilt and transgressiveness if her behaviour or responses are not viewed to be appropriately remorseful, compliant or receptive to reform. In particular, women charged with violent offences can be subjected in the trial process to non-judicial and arguably, materially detrimental, standards of assessment. Studies of trial proceedings by Smart (1989, 1992), Worrall (1990), Allen (1998), and Ballinger (2000)⁵, support the argument that the extra-judicial considerations, such as a female defendant's sexual relations, parenting competence, and other assumptions about her social competence or 'respectability', exert a prejudicial effect on the interpretation and summary of the evidence. Republican female defendants entered into a double

⁵ These studies have not sought to establish empirical or statistical conclusions with respect to establishing an adverse influence on the length or severity of sentenced awarded.

bind of non-compliance when they followed the practice of refusing to recognise the courts, enter a plea, or testify in self-defence, in accordance with their 'abstentionist' policy of refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the court. The lack of compliance with the proceedings of the court tended to support the prosecution's case that the defendant's silence was conclusive evidence of a high degree of paramilitary involvement. Consequently, the rates of conviction for prisoners who refused to recognise the courts were high (Boyle et al., 1980: 61). The rituals of vocal and sometimes physical resistance to the judicial procedures of the court had a symbolic rather than material effect as they were 'deeply interwoven with the political struggle for legitimacy' and were directed 'primarily at their own internal constituency' (McEvoy, 2001: 140-1). The practice of non-recognition declined sharply after 1976 in line with a more pragmatic shift towards engaging in a legal defence strategy, and to avoid the potentially detrimental effects of losing experienced operatives (McEvoy, 2001: 145-7). Nevertheless, non-recognition was also designed to have practical consequences for prisoners and their organisations in inculcating in volunteers:

... a sense that their prison resistance had begun, and that they had a responsibility to continue the struggle [and to minimise the] risks of significant military or internal security information coming out during the trial (McEvoy, 2001: 143).

Internees also attested to the ways in which they were prefigured as transgressing gendered and social norms in the course of detention and judicial proceedings. The corollary effect was that they also developed practices which minimised their compliance with the Detention Review Commission.

When you were in for so long, they asked you to go to the Commission. These were held in Long Kesh. You needed a barrister. I had appeared in a documentary and I had said some things like "the answer to British occupation is if they don't get out, blow them out". So, on the day my barrister said, "they've got TV screens in here". You know, you just don't think that they're going to go back into these things. And lo and behold, all this stuff that I had said, they showed it on the television. So I was re-detained as a danger to the public. There was nothing you could do about it - there

was no right of appeal. I was brought back twice, and it was renewed both times. The last time it had just been renewed coming up to Christmas time, and I got out on the Christmas Eve, quite unexpectedly (Internee, Armagh).⁶

When they brought me in front of them, for the first time, they brought us there by helicopter, into the 'Kesh. There was a big ring of British soldiers, with their weapons poised, and I got out of the helicopter ... and they took one look at me and I think they were disgusted. But the Commissions themselves were a farce, an absolute farce. I refused constantly to recognise the Commission, but I had a bit of pressure put on by certain solicitors there: "you should recognise it, just to get out" (Eilis: internee, Armagh).

Meg was involved in an incident at her hearing in which she tore down the screen concealing the identity of the military intelligence officer who was giving evidence against her:

Well, the whole thing was a joke! You just sat there, and there was this Commissioner who sat up there. There was this screen and somebody would sit behind this screen giving evidence against you. It was ridiculous (Meg: internee, Armagh).

Resistance at the gateway

The rituals of reception to prison are directed towards stripping away the unique histories of incoming prisoners, and reassembling them into atomised subjects. Moreover, the prisoner's records or previous reputation will also determine the degree of 'thoroughness' and vigilance with which these mortifying and alienating practices are conducted. Even during the period in which special category status was in operation (1972-1976), incoming political prisoners claimed that they encountered various levels of official denial that their political structures existed or were recognised by the administrators, citing disputes with reception officers who allocated them to an overnight cell in the 'ordinary' wings. They were only transferred to the political wings after they were interviewed by the governor. For Meg, an internee, the humiliations of reception were intended to induce individuals to relinquish their claims to political status. She refused to strip off on reception: 'I would

⁶ Name removed at interviewee's request.

only tell them if I had distinguishing marks'. The women then had chlorine baths, in tepid or cold baths, 'but I was in such a state after three days in Castlereagh, I didn't mind' (Ibid.). After the introduction of special category status, reception officers were ordered to compromise on this requirement, so that incoming political women were given 'a cursory search'. Prisoners intermittently attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to adopt the practice of refusing to cooperate with the reception strip search, and of demanding that officers put the clothes of the prisoners back on them. Anna and Winnie explained their experiences of reception:

When you go into reception, it's very strange. There were usually about four screws there waiting on you, all women. The men do the circle. You went in, were told to strip and get washed. You were thrown into a bath with a globby lice soap. Then I was taken in and a sheet put 'round me, and checked for scars and marks. There was no doctor there. The sheet was taken off. That was another intimidation tactic, because nobody likes to stand there naked in front of a complete stranger, and they check you for scars or moles, and this is all written down. The morning after you see the governor, you were taken and photographed. They checked the colour of your hair, eyes, if there was [sic] any facial scars, and that was all written down on your record (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

You do feel quite small. Armagh is one of the old Victorian jails, massive high walls and ceilings. When you walked through that door, you felt about two inches high. You were surrounded by total strangers who literally despised you for what you are, and you could feel that. You were against everything that they stand for. You know as soon as you walk through the gate that that whole system [was] there to break you down as soon as humanly possible. It is frightening. Anybody that says they walked into Armagh feeling cocky are liars, because it is an intimidating experience ... It would be like me walking up the Shankill Road with a sign around my neck saying I was a Catholic (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Winnie was committed to Armagh after political status had been revoked and the republican sentenced prisoners had already spent a year on their non-cooperation strike. Her insistence on her political affiliation and request to be taken to the sentenced republican wing indicated that she was electing automatically to join the protest, which the administration was attempting to curtail:

The tactics they would try to use when you first went in to Armagh, they knew from being at the courts what way the land lay as far as you were concerned, if you were going to work and conform, or if you were going to go on protest. So rather than let you associate with protesting prisoners on reception they would put you in a cell on your own the first night. It was an intimidation tactic, because you hadn't the back-up of the rest of the women. It was to see whether or not you would conform, because the next morning you were sent for to see the Governor. He would [outline the rules]; "you have to work from such-and-such a time", and "you are allocated privileges ... and what are you going to do?" It was your choice to tell him politely where to shove it, or conform (Ibid.).

The question of self-nomination to the political prisoners' structures was still subject to some ambiguity after the women's prison population was transferred to Mourne House, HMP Maghaberry in 1986. As discussed in chapter one, the regime at Mourne House was intended to diminish the influence of the political factions in the new prison by means of a 'liberalised' regime, which endorsed the principles of personalised governance as a means of weaning individuals away from the influence of their political structures. Nevertheless, persistent tensions arose as a consequence of the imprecise and discretionary arrangements under the general objectives of the 'Normalisation' policy, which allowed senior prison staff some practical discretion in engaging with paramilitary structures and leadership, while deferring the formalising of their status in political or legal terms. Hanna described how she negotiated the ambiguities between formal policy and discretionary authority on the matter of recognition during her reception to Mourne House in the early 1990s:

You have to go through a strip search. They try to undermine you, and try to get you onto the non-political wings, where the criminals ... frauds and stuff like that are [sic]. So I had to turn around to them and say "I'm a political prisoner and I want to go on the political wing". "We have no political wings here", was their first reply. So I said, "I want to see my O/C". That's a no-go area. So they asked me did I know anybody in the prison. Obviously I knew every prisoner that was in the jail. So I named them all off. After about half an hour, I was straight onto the wings. Walking onto that wing, it's just a great feeling, because you always heard so much about these women. And about prison - you always tried to imagine what prison's like. But from day one, once the others start calling out "Tiocfaidh Ár Lá" (Our Day Will Come),⁷ and "go on, girl", you just know you're a political prisoner (Hanna: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

⁷ The political slogan of the republican movement.

Although her entry into prison as a political prisoner was negotiable within a framework of informal official obstructions, the political prisoner's subsequent concerns lay with her incorporation into her own political structures. Political prisoners underwent a double initiation to prison, because, after being processed through the official channels, they had to be debriefed by their own political officers. Debriefing was the extreme and formalised aspect of inculcating and 'clearing' new members to the political prisoner structures. It involved a secondary cross-examination by the prisoner's commanding officer to acquire details about interrogation techniques, ascertain the thinking of military intelligence, and to establish whether any information about operations, the identity of other volunteers, or organisational structures had been revealed under interrogation:

It was the longest hour and a half of my life - shaking. Because when you go into prison someone comes and gives you a breakdown. Somebody comes in and speaks to you - goes through the whole thing, day by day, or what they (interrogators) asked you, what you said. They need to know the information about what they're thinking in Castlereagh. And you're trying to convince them "I didn't say anything, I didn't say anything". And that's the most I was frightened of, that our own people wouldn't believe me (Hanna: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

The procedures of 'getting in' have been extensively noted by penologists in terms of their depersonalising and phenomenological effects (Goffman, 1991), or as preliminary, instructive rites into penal subjectivity (Heffernan, 1972). While these are pertinent to the experiences of women detained for political offences in Northern Ireland, functionalist or phenomenological analyses largely assume an uncontested passage into institutional alienation. This chapter has explored the negotiation and subversion by republican women prisoners of their initial encounters with penal discipline. It connects their resistant practices with preceding formations of resistance during their arrest, trial and interrogation. Their preliminary challenges to imprisonment followed from a sequence of experiences which inculcated a sense of opposition to the political, gendered and disciplinary conditions of their sentencing and confinement. This is not to suggest that they entered the prison with

a fully-developed consciousness or foreknowledge about resistance, nor that possible strategies for resisting penal power were readily available. Rather, it points to the potential junctures between gendered and political consciousness and the subsequent development of various forms of resistance to confinement. The following chapter explores these influences in the early formations of their political structures in prison.

Chapter 7

'Making Space for Ourselves': Territoriality and the Reconstitution of 'Community'

Prisons, as well-defined disciplinary structures, are often considered to be impervious to constructive appropriation by their inmates, although studies have affirmed that prisoners have a profound awareness of the punitive topography of institutions.¹ This chapter explores the 'territorial' strategy that was used by political prisoners to mark segregated, self-disciplinary and self-referential social structures in prison. It explores the tactics of demarcation and exclusion which enabled republican women prisoners to establish internal disciplinary and cultural systems, manage relations with other prisoners, and exclude staff and loyalist prisoners.

Territoriality and penal power

Since its inception as a social experiment, the penitentiary embodied an idealised, 'rational' architectural arrangement for providing a suitable environment to inculcate moral reform and accomplish the complete regulation of its inmates (Bentham, 1995). Although in practice, the 'ideal' surveillant and regulatory environment of Bentham's panopticon was rarely actually constructed (Hirst, 1995: 245-246), the concept of total and all-encompassing correctional enclosure has tended to prevail in seminal theories of the relationship between architectural and human correctional mechanisms. For Goffman, the 'total' institution establishes a clear internal jurisdiction over inmates by intricately partitioning temporal, spatial and social functions in order to sustain the hierarchical ordering of social relations, with:

¹ The common argot for the psychiatric units in women prisons includes the 'Muppet wing' or 'Fraggle Rock'. See also Dobash et. al. (1986: chapters eight and nine), for references to the metaphors of psychic and physical penetration used by prisoners in Cornton Vale Prison, Scotland, as well as the correspondence in Sim (1990: 169) which refers to H-Wing HMP Durham as a 'submarine'. Respondents in Carlen (1998: 105-6), as well as the women interviewed here, make specific references to the 'strip cells' as a zone of sexual humiliation, and as a physical and psychological barrier through which prisoners have to pass when travelling off the wings.

... all acts conducted in the same place and under the same single authority ... the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials ... [The] various enforced activities are brought together under a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution (Goffman, 1991: 17).

At a broader level, the 'binary character of total institutions' reinforces the dichotomy between 'external social systems' and the 'asylum' as a purposively discrete and segregated social sphere (Ibid., 18). Foucault's characterisation of the 'total and austere regime' also envisages a formal architecture of control which takes the form of a ubiquitous panoptic 'centre' that subjects inmates to constant surveillance, supervision, discipline and punishment at the 'peripheries' (Foucault, 1991).

Although Foucault's concept of the dispersed arrangement of surveillant and disciplinary power opens up the possibility that panoptic control is not seamless and unitary, he nonetheless retains an implicitly fixed, centre-to-margin relationship between the regulatory structure and the disciplinary subject. However, as discussed in chapter three, for feminist and critical theorists the relationship between institutional mechanisms of control and the localised correction of the prisoner are qualitatively specific and socially differentiated. Hence, the design of penal environments based on prevailing correctional definitions of the needs and character of their inhabitants has supported specifically gendered technologies of social control. The post-war generation of modernised women's prisons, of which Cornton Vale in Scotland has been studied most extensively, incorporated environmental innovations based on small-scale wings and modular cell layout, which enhanced the close proximity of prisoners and staff and enabled the closer scrutiny and regulation of prisoners (Carlen, 1983; Dobash et al., 1986). The proposed construction of New Holloway women's prison, London, on the clinical model, emanated from decades of penal ideology which positioned women prisoners as objects of psychiatrised and medicalised jurisdiction (Sim, 1990: chapter six; Rock, 1996). Similarly, as discussed in chapter one, the environment at Armagh women's prisons in Northern Ireland supported an arcane correctional ethos, while the construction of Mourne House,

HMP Maghaberry, reflected the complex and problematic combination of a 'community-based' regulatory environment within a maximum security structure.

More recently, radical geographical theory has contested the technological determination of institutional 'spaces' by positing that penal environments are socialised 'territories', defined by complex and dynamic interchanges of power and agency and plural forms of occupation (Driver, 1985: Philo, 1989: Rose 1993: Duncan, 1996). As 'power is as deeply imbricated in discussions of space as it is to discussions of knowledge', the physical environment and social imaginary of prisons are also objects of struggle and resistance (Stewart, 1995: 616). That prisoners collectively reshape their environment has an extensive genealogy in prison literature, which has observed the violent seizure by prisoners of penal space through riots and disturbances (Scruton et al., 1991: Adams, 1992), the adaptation of communal areas into zones which support illicit economic activities and 'fraternisations' (Giallambardo, 1966: Heffernan, 1972), and the use by political prisoners of the prison yards and wings for political organisation (Davis, 1971: 36: 1988: 61-62: Seale, 1991: 296-322: Jackson, 1970: 48-52, 212-221), 'teach-ins' and assemblies. Because establishments which confine political prisoners are particularly politically and ideologically charged sites, the spatial politics in Northern Ireland's prison system were informed by an extensive territorial dialectic. The 'territorial strategy' engaged various forms of political occupation as prisoners extended physical control over their own blocks or wings, and established an alternative social and political imaginary and practical functioning of the prison environment. While McEvoy (2001: 108-136), and Feldman (1991: 265-269), have foregrounded the intimidation and violence which were used to expel discipline staff from loyalist and republican wings in the Maze, it is argued here that their strategies for accomplishing territorial autonomy were more fluid, and often entailed extensive levels of mutual and opportunistic forms of contestation and interchange amongst staff and prisoners (Corcoran, 1999).

Constructing a political community

In the early 1970s, the practical determination of establishing consistent and coherent control over politically affiliated prisoners in Armagh prison was obstructed by two combined factors. Firstly, the complete segregation of political prisoners was difficult to achieve because of overcrowding and the deteriorated fabric of the prison, leading to a reliance on remedies such as sub-dividing the wings, an extensive staff presence, and the restriction of access to work, exercise and visiting routines to prevent the association of interned, sentenced and remand prisoners. As discussed in chapter two, these arrangements formed the initial basis for organising to improve conditions. The second factor was the commitment of incoming prisoners to create constant reminders to the authorities of the politicised character of their confinement, and to acquire conditions which were commensurate with their political status. Eilís, a former internee, noted that the initial drive to organise collectively followed the military discipline and factional segregation that were in practice at the compounds at Long Kesh. However, the transposition of these practical and symbolic elements to Armagh prison implied that the 'traditional' republican prison structure was tenuously adapted to the specific context of the detention of women:

Before we gained political status, you had that attempt to maintain control over us. But with more and more women coming in, plus the fact that on 'A1', there was no more room, they had to open up and give us political status anyway, so it was only a matter of time. So they didn't really oppose it too much, because if you counted us up, there was nothing they could do about it. We had our own system in place. [Name withheld] was in charge, and there was our officer system, and she would have been naming who mediated with the governor on anything. My brother was inside and they had refused to wear the uniform, so that was a natural decision that you weren't going to wear any uniforms, that you weren't a criminal, as they called us. (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

As discussed in chapter two, the prisoner's structures provided a sustainable, counter-hegemonic regime which was grafted onto the normal disciplinary routine, mirroring its rituals and occupational disciplines, while imparting to its members an alternative significance and rationale:

As a internee, you didn't know how long you were going to be there, so what you needed was a routine, and you needed your plans and you needed to carry them out. You weren't going to adhere to the prisons system's routine, so you formed an alternative regime, which they ended up having to come to terms with. What that involved was a prison structure. We had our O/C, a public relations officer, and somebody in charge of people coming in. There was a good system going. And to this day I still admire it, because at one stage there was two hundred and thirty-odd women, and still our own system worked (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

It became very militaristic after a while. For instance, we would have fallen-in every morning, and the O/C and the Adjutant went around and checked your cells and made sure it was spotless. The screws could never walk in and say things like, "that one over there has not done their duties". We had floors that were like skating rinks, they were so highly-polished. And they went in and they checked one of the cells, down behind the furniture. It was like being in the army or the navy, with the O/C checking that everything was just so. We did that every single day. Every day we fell-in when you got out for lunch at 12.30, and then you were dismissed, and the food trays would come up. And just before lock-up, all the women would stand outside their cells. The O/C ... would have brought everybody to attention, and you were dismissed, and went into your cell for lock-up for the rest of the night (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh)

A time and space continuum persists in correctional institutions as a central technology of regulatory control. For Foucault, the radical atomisation of the prisoner is ensured by an inventive economy of surveillance, the spatial distribution of inmates, and the precise division of time into ordered activities (Foucault, 1991). These techniques inculcate a submission to routines, alienation, and behavioural alteration, towards the objective of producing remoralised, docile bodies. Thompson observed similar alienating effects in the organisation of a 'time and work discipline', which rationalises customary experiences of work and leisure, colonises productivity through the imposition of new routines, and subordinates individuals to 'useful' and 'reforming', compulsory occupation (Thompson, 1991). Faced with months or years of routinisation, prison time and its occupational imperatives were realigned, especially by republicans, to the goals of personal and political development. In this context, the emphasis on education within prisoner-run political cells was not only concerned with ideological inculcation or preserving internal discipline and morale, but with focusing individuals on their future roles in the republican movement after release:

I used the prison system, my time, to my advantage. I did my exams out of it. I was at school when I was arrested. I finished off my 'A' levels in jail, did a couple of other courses, and planned what I was going to do on getting out. So, I think I was quite focused in that way. I set up our own library. We used to read anything from Mills and Boons to Angela Davis and Jackson, Che Guevara.² We used to think we were really revolutionary! But, at the same instance, most of the women were very, very focused with what they wanted to do. The whole political awareness - it was amazing to see it develop (Eilís: internee, Armagh)

In jail what can be used against you is your ignorance. Republican prisoners realised that very early on, and decided to use the education not as a support thing, but to widen our horizons and to broaden ourselves. By broadening themselves politically and everything else they were actually strengthening what they believed in. For a lot of them before, it was an idea, but they never actually looked at where the idea came from, or how it was formed, or even why they were doing what they were doing. When we went into jail and started to become educated and started to understand what was happening, and looking at the parallels and so on, it actually strengthened our beliefs ... Prisoners who had gone on to University would have given lectures in different things. Somebody else would have studied something else, and given lectures on that. It was educational and it broke the monotony, literally. Later on it progressed, but at that time it was making the ones that weren't so aware of why they were involved in the first place, more aware. (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

According to Anderson, the myths of 'community' are mediated through the reinvention of 'tradition', which is in turn made plausible and intelligible through the formalisation, ritualisation and repetition of cultural practices (Anderson, 1991). The construction of 'imagined' national or political communities cements the fiction of collective unity, and supports the claim to exclusive territorial occupation. In this context, the 'Gaoilteacht' emerged in the prisons as a distinctive politico-cultural 'space' through which political cohesion and cultural continuity could be transmitted.³ Republican prisoners organised self-instruction in the Irish Gaelic language, Irish history, political theory and military operational training. The use of Irish was thought to be a useful tool for allowing

² See Davis, A. (1971, 1988), Seale, B. (1970), and Jackson, G. (1970).

³An area in which the Irish language is the primary oral medium is known as a Gaelteacht, which translates as 'Gaelic place'. As Irish Gaelic was largely self-taught in the prisons, it developed into an 'impure' or distinctly local 'dialect', Gaolge, which lent its name to the republican zone by combining the arcane English word for prison 'gaol' with the Gaelic suffix '-teacht'.

intelligence to be transmitted without being intercepted by staff (McKeown, 1996: 46).⁴ During the period of special category status, these activities were defined by the prisoners as prison work, and placed beyond officially authorised supervision. During the later protests against criminalisation, they continued to practice them after they had withdrawn from educational programmes, and when any unauthorised or unapproved activities were liable for punishment as breaches of prison discipline.⁵

We taught each other Irish, with the protesting prisoners in total lock-up, like they did in the Blocks. They managed to communicate when they were all totally locked up, and to teach each other the language (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

We had parades in the yard, because before we went on the 'no wash', we were allowed out for a couple of hours of association. That was keeping your republican identity. We had our Easter parades and other commemorations on the republican calendar. We used to practise marching and drills for weeks and weeks. And the ones that were actually doing the parade, because we were marching in the yards, which was in breach of the rules, were put on "hard time" because of it. It was like a display for the rest of the prisoners. On the day we did it, we were in uniform, and had the colour party, and we went out and did it. We all lost a month's association and a month's remission, but that didn't make any difference because we knew we weren't getting any remission anyway. So it really didn't make that much of a difference. For a conforming prisoner, losing a month's remission would have meant you were in jail longer. Because we knew from the outset that we were going to end up doing all our time, it didn't worry us (Winnie: sentenced prisoner on protest, Armagh).

Excluding the punitive other: the limits of organised group violence

The history of prison conflict in the course of the 'Troubles' demonstrates the extent to which organised, preemptive violence and disturbances were integrated into strategic phases of the prison campaign (O'Malley, 1990: Feldman, 1991: Campbell et al., 1994:

⁴ Some staff did learn Irish to ascertain what the prisoners were communicating, and a senior female governor in Mourne House, Maghaberry was said to be an accomplished Irish speaker.

⁵ During the blanket/no wash and hunger strikes, the prisoners on lock-up taught each other Irish Gaelic by shouting the vocabulary and grammar through the vents on their cell doors, with the words and phrases being repeated by occupants of the other cells.

McKeown, 2001: McEvoy, 2001). However, organised physical resistance or group violence in women's prisons is relatively undertheorised, in part because theories of penal conflict 'characterise the traditional prison regime as the embodiment of masculinity' (Newton, 1994: 198). The problem of understanding conflict in women's prisons is further compounded by the 'enormous' definitional problems and institutional and theoretical silences in accounting for the differences, contexts and meanings of women's engagement in violence (Daly and Maher, 1998: Shaw, 1995). Shaw argues that the problems with identifying the sources of violence and disorder in women's prisons arise from the general tendency in official accounts to attribute the primary causes of prison disturbances to 'the characteristics of the prison population' in question, rather than the complex 'social and situational events' that contextualise them (Shaw, 2000). Moreover, systematic differences in the construction of women's violence mean that their aggression or anger are frequently (and retroactively) reduced to 'individualised and pathologised accounts' (ibid., 63), which obscure the complex history of relationships and events preceding an outbreak and the role which the institution itself plays:

But for women in prison, there are *additional* problems because of the greater willingness to see aggressive or violent behaviour by women as "unfeminine" and (almost) by definition pathological (Shaw, 2000: 64: emphasis in the original).

The few, existing accounts of group violence in women's prisons attest to their relatively reactive characteristics as spontaneous, but short-lived, responses to group punishments and perceived injustices, or arising out of boredom, provocation, constant security checks and the arbitrary implementation of the prison discipline system against trivial infractions (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986: 135-136: Quinn, 1995), from defensive physical reactions in the course of collective cell and body searches, or incidents in which specialised riot-control officers are deployed to enforce orders which have been refused (Arbour, 1996). As discussed in chapter two, violent disturbances occurred in the women's prisons in Northern Ireland during the period of special category status (1973, 1974), during the non-cooperation and no-wash strikes of the conflict era, and in Maghaberry prison (1992). The record of pre-emptive violence and disorder shows the overwhelmingly negative conse-

quences of the use of violence by women, including collective punishment, injuries to prisoners, the introduction of more stringent security procedures, and the curtailment, on security grounds, of the publication of inquiries into these events. Three of the women involved in the failed escape (1973), and the hostage-taking incident at Armagh prison (1974), described the nature of the problem of engaging the administration with a collective show of force:

They (male police officers and army personnel) just stuck the hose through the cell door and the force of the water, it just went all over. At that stage you were able to get your fingers around the spyholes and we were just about able to hang onto the door. They batoned us; my fingers were up with swellings from my knuckles the whole way along. I was black and blue (Meg: escapee: Armagh).

A couple of girls got out and they went up the stairs, but they couldn't go anywhere because it had all been blocked off with wood. So they actually had their protest, and they all got hosed. They did this to the whole wing. They (uniformed staff and special support unit) were just going mad all over the place (Anna: involved in the hostage-taking incident, Armagh).

You always knew it (official violence) was a possibility, but it wasn't always foremost in your mind. You didn't think about it, because if you had then you couldn't have persisted, if you thought every waking minute, "I can't bear this, and I can't get out" (Meg: escapee, Armagh).

The expulsion of the political 'other': strategies of mutual exclusion by loyalists and republicans

The dynamic of group cohesion in prisons is driven in part as a response to perceived and actual violence from other prisoners and staff. In women's prisons, as in men's, group cohesion is enforced through excluding individuals who do not cohere to group identification, expelling informers, and removing 'layers of pollution and stigmatisation' from the prisoner body (Feldman, 1991: 268). Social hygiene amongst women prisoners is enforced through personal censure and forms of condemnatory violence against those sentenced for 'unacceptable' crimes, such as crimes against children, in which instances the assault of a prisoner reasserts commonsense and gendered sensibilities of group 'justice'

(Carlen et al., 1985: 157-158; Bosworth, 1999: 111). Political prisoners in Armagh prison also validated the use of 'preventive' or 'defensive' violence as a 'necessary' means of reinforcing their own political and interpersonal cohesion. Republicans organised protective alliances by partnering more experienced prisoners with those who were viewed to be more vulnerable, as a safeguard against intimidation. This tactic also implied the reciprocal intimidation of staff:

There were two got picked on all the time, so we split them up ourselves. I moved in with [name withheld], and [name withheld] went in with [name withheld], so the bigger ones went in with the smaller ones. [Staff] thought twice about kicking the cell doors in and dragging them out 'cos they knew there was somebody there that would take them on. It was trying to work out things like that. But again, we changed it around, putting the less confident ones in with the ones who'd be a bit more confident with themselves, and back them up. It made them a bit more, not ferocious, but determined that nobody was going to get the better of them. Whereas if there was two of them that was constantly getting beat, they'd wear each other down (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

The rationale of self-defence established a dual logic of external protection from physical assaults, and for ensuring moral differentiation from, as well as sustaining political antagonism towards, loyalist prisoners:

We were on the wing with the Ogilby murderers.⁶ Coming up to the Twelfth and about then we used to get a bit of hassle from them.⁷ Everybody tried to give you a bit of hassle, but it was a case of proving your point from the beginning, that nobody was going to push you around, and that included them. They were at the bottom end of 'A1' wing, we were at the top end. We chose to keep separate from them. Another (non-political) prisoner was there at the time, who got the Queen's pardon for killing her father. The day she was pardoned, I was in the toilet, and I came out and was standing washing my hands, and [a loyalist prisoner] says to me "what do you think of [the other woman] getting the pardon?" I says "fair play to her". She said to me,

⁶ Ann Ogilby was killed by loyalist women during an interrogation in a UDA club in July, 1974. The case gained notoriety when one of the defendants referred to the incident as a 'romper', taken from a children's television programme 'The Romper Room'. One man and eleven women were jailed for the killing, including the UDA's female commander. This case accounted for the largest entry of loyalist women into the prison system.

⁷ The annual commemoration of the victory of the William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne 1690, which takes place on July 12th, and is celebrated by Protestants and Unionists.

“Oh you watch out for her, she’s evil”. I says to her, “she killed her father who was abusing her. You battered a woman to death with a breeze-block. Piss off out of my face or I’ll put yours in the toilet”. That was the mentality, so we kept our distance from them completely ... To me, it was my own principles and standing up for survival and for what’s right. And when you got onto the wing and into the unit as republican prisoners, it was that comradeship, because you always watched someone’s back in every circumstance. There were a few incidents, loyalist prisoners chancing their arm and pushing it. They sort of inadvertently fell into baths and things. But it was a case of, “don’t chance your luck, because if you hit one, you hit them all”. Because you could have the whole lot of them hitting on you. It was always that show of us against them. You attack one, you attack them all. That was everybody, right across the board (Sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

The construction of loyalist prisoners as the penal and political ‘other’ reflected the psychic effects of the loyalist paramilitary strategy of demoralising republican paramilitaries by targeting Catholic ‘civilians’ as well as ‘combatants’, as well as the iconography of symbolic, random terror connected with groups such as the Shankill Butchers, and the Ogilby case (above) (Feldman, 1991: 59-65; Taylor, 1997: 187).⁸ Such distinctions between ‘combatants’ and ‘non-combatants’, or between the ‘sectarian’ basis of loyalist strategies and motives and the ‘politicality’ of republican ones, are problematic and perhaps semantic, but were nevertheless significant reinforcements of difference to republican respondents. The objectification of loyalist prisoners, which included observations about their physical appearance, (some loyalist women were prominently tattooed), their ‘intimidating’ demeanour, ‘aloofness’, and ‘sectarian’ exclusionism, and references to the offences for which they were committed, extended from the larger political-confessional mythography of the conflict. Rather than viewing these comments as being straightforwardly sectarian, however, it is suggested that they derive from the larger political imaginary and relational practices of conflict, which were elaborated in the context of the threats and dangers presented by proximity to the political ‘other’ (Feldman, 1991: 4). Nevertheless, as Feldman suggests, such antagonism does not sustain ‘relations of uninterrupted linearity’ (Ibid.). Rather some limited forms of familiarisation between loyalists and republicans emerged in the context of the encompassing experiences and the patterns of socialisation (enforced or voluntary) arising from confinement:

⁸The ‘Shankill Butchers’ were a group of UVF members who were involved in the abduction, torture, mutilation and murder of nineteen Catholics between 1972 and 1979.

Then the UDA women came in. They were in for the Ogilby murder. There was about eight of them, and then you had the UVF crowd, that was it. And you could see a total difference. The UDA ones tried to communicate that bit more, but the UVF were staunch loyalists (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

UDA prisoners came up for Irish classes. One wanted to learn Irish, so she came up to one of our officers to learn Irish from us. She also wanted to learn Irish history because she said that [in] the history she had been taught, there was big gaps. So she came up to our education officer, and she taught her Irish history and Irish language (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).⁹

Although there were occasions during the period of special category status when male loyalists and republicans agreed on combined strategies, there is little evidence of any corollary working relationship between women prisoners, except as a defence from mutual victimisation.¹⁰ The loyalist rationale of disengagement and segregation was related to the fact that their numbers at any stage were very low (there were no women prisoners with formal attachment to loyalist groups by the 1990s). Loyalist prisoners were ‘impeded by the political difficulties of aligning themselves with republicans to achieve progress on the same issue[s]’, and consequently ‘focused almost exclusively on segregation, separation from the enemy’ (McEvoy, 2001: 104). Furthermore, the exceptional presence of women in loyalist active service units and prison structures, their minoritarian status as a prisoner group vis-à-vis both ‘ordinary’ and republican prisoners, and the ambivalent levels of community and political support for them, presented clear motives for their insularity. Louie explained:

Once you’re in prison, a lot of the prisoners know exactly what you’re there for. There’s two ways they’ll treat you; they’ll either treat you with contempt and completely ignore you, or they will basically acknowledge you’re there and just get on with it. At the end of the day with the female side, the attitude was, “you’re there for a reason, and just get on and do it.” There’s a lot of things first in your mind, and that type of thing was secondary ... I wouldn’t say they [other prisoners] were

⁹The education officer was one of the IRA’s elected officers, or ‘staff’.

¹⁰Chapter two described two such incidences; during the hostage-taking in Armagh in 1974, and in the disturbance in 1980 which precipitated the republican no wash strike, when three loyalists were also injured by staff.

awe-struck at all. I think shock would be the word. Curiosity. Sometimes you'd get into conversations or a few debates about some issues and if you could hold your own, then OK. God help you if you made a mistake (Louie: sentenced prisoner, loyalist).¹¹

Interviewer: Did you ask to have facilities separately from the republican prisoners?

Yes. They declared war on me. This is an enemy. I was not prepared to sit down and speak to people who were butchering my people on the streets. There wouldn't have been any engagement, no. As for association with the non-political prisoners, that did not arise. Although, sometimes when you would ask for segregation and it wasn't issued, there was a form of self-segregation where you could keep yourself to yourself and say, "no, this is the direction I'm taking", and if anybody else is there you just don't recognise them at all. They don't exist (Louie: sentenced prisoner, loyalist).

Stresses within the prisoner structures

According to D'arcy, a feminist activist who joined the no-wash protest, the IRA prisoner structures in Armagh operated according to exemplary democratic principles of open discussion and collective decision-making:

I was very impressed by the way these meetings were conducted. There was time and confidence for everyone to put their viewpoints before the vote was taken (D'arcy, 1981: 101).

A note of caution has to be introduced to D'arcy's account, as it lays claim to an inherently collectivist style and non-hierarchical character of political structures connected with feminist, environmental or radical opposition movements (Enloe, 1983: Assiter, 1983: Liddington, 1989: Roseneil, 1995). Aligned to this view is the critical juxtaposition of horizontal and egalitarian modes of organising and empowering the disenfranchised against the centralised and hierarchical organisation of institutionalised power relations. The characteristics of the former include an emphasis on group democracy, challenging asymmetries of power within the group, leaderlessness, sharing skills and collective responsibility. These principles are intended to form the 'centreless' base for radical

¹¹Certain identifying details, including the prison in which Louie was incarcerated, are omitted.

political development, and translate into more effective modes of organisation, precisely because they are claimed to undermine the hierarchical structuring of power and lines of command of governing and social institutions. Such arguments have, in turn, been subjected to criticism of their essentialist precepts about women's inherently pacifist characteristics (Carroll and Welling-Hall, 1993), and their putative claims about women's unwillingness to participate in authoritarian political or militaristic organisations (Howes and Stevenson, 1993).

It would be difficult to conclusively argue that the women's prison structures were not constrained within the vertical command structure and ethos of the IRA, or its prison structure. By the end of the 1970s, the usefulness of the traditional 'military' discipline and hierarchy of the republican structure to the complex and protracted prison protests was increasingly called into question by prisoners themselves. The internal organisation of their prison structures gave way in the late 1980s to a 'destructuring process', which involved the development of 'supportive', 'cooperative' and 'proactive' modes of collective decision-making (McKeown, 2001: 136-7). There are additional aspects to this transition from the rigid demarcation of roles to the collective ethic, noted by D'arcy, with respect to the women's situation. As discussed in chapter two, the hierarchical command structure was inadequate for responding to the everyday and specific regulatory interventions that characterised the women's penal experience, and therefore their organisational roles and functions were necessarily reshaped by these constraints.¹² Moreover, the republican leadership had obstructed the women's attempts to legitimate and position their structures during the crucial period of protest against criminalisation. Thus, the evolution of a collectivist style and set of practices emerged from the exigencies of their potential marginalisation within both the republican movement, and the specific disciplinary influences to which they were subjected in the prison.

¹²The position of women within loyalist prisoner structures are more difficult to trace, partly because of the very few documented experiences of their imprisonment, which is also reflected in the low rate of response by loyalist women in this study. Crawford argues that loyalist prisoner structures varied according to their history, recruitment of membership and operational structure, with the UVF retaining 'a more autocratic command structure, with no elections and with officers in control of appointments', while the UDA operated 'the most flexible and democratic system' (Crawford, 1999: 30).

Similarly, while McKeown has accounted for incidents of expulsion or resignation within the IRA structures at the Maze, I came across no evidence of internal punishments imposed upon women prisoners by their peers.¹³ However, their internal disciplinary ethos, which was potentially as demanding and rigorous as the formal prison regime, implied that prisoners were exposed to informal pressures to relinquish aspects of their individual autonomy to the internal, collective consensus. There were internal conflicts within the republican grouping in Armagh during the mid-1970s over the stringent internal discipline and the leadership's style, and what was perceived by some prisoners to be the political and social dominance of the Provisional IRA republican grouping. As well as the problems of factionalism and resistance to dominant trends within the republican group, the causes of internal conflict were also related to the interpersonal rivalries, and the difficulties which arise generally from prison life:

I was approached by two women who said, "we would like you to be with us". Some of those were people that I had worked with outside, but when they went inside, decided that they weren't going to fall in with the republican group, and were going to have their own group. They stayed away from the main group. But that wasn't for me, that sort of dissension. It didn't do anybody any good or make their sentence end any quicker. It's what you believed in. You were staying with your doctrine, and weren't going to be side-tracked with what somebody else thought you should. My beliefs were republican straight down the line. And what was happening with these women had nothing to do with the wider picture. Whatever happened these women, whether they didn't like the O/C or what, I didn't want to be part of that. My republicanism didn't embrace that sort of splinter attitude ... because if you don't try and keep together, you've had it. If you start letting the stresses fragment it, forget it, there's no point in doing anything. If you didn't stick together, they might have won. It just sort of worked out, and nobody bothered with the three or four others (Nora: internee, 1970s).¹⁴

These claims to cohesion raise the problematic figure of an idealised, 'highly-conscientised', and 'moralistic prisoner' who maintains an irreproachable political distance

¹³ The 'resignees' from the strikes in Armagh between 1976 and 1980 were not reported to have been disciplined by the republican movement, but their withdrawal from the protests were explained as occurring for health reasons or pressure from the prison authorities (Belfast Telegraph, September 1, 1978; Irish News, April 9, 1980; Irish News, October 7, 1980). However, some individual respondents did subject them to the criticism that in resigning, they had made their personal position worse.

¹⁴ The women concerned later became members of Republican Sinn Féin, which broke from Provisional Sinn Féin in 1986 over the decision to end the policy of abstention from participating in electoral politics.

from the 'divisive' influences of other prisoners (Goffman, 1991: 165-166). They also obscure the 'individualistic', 'unorthodox' or resistant behaviours that may be perceived to contravene the broader group ethos, as well as exclude the diverse or alternative forms of self-validation that are not available within the structure. Individuals did avoid other prisoners, withdrew wholly or in part from the group as a coping strategy, or decided to serve their term without being involved in the more 'political' activities. One sentenced prisoner reflected on the isolation and the loss of support which she risked by situating herself on the margins of the IRA structure:

I suppose you had to conform in a sense, as well ... I'm trying to be objective about this because I personally had some bad experiences in prison. I would have done my own thing and that's not accepted, you know. I purposely, unlike most of the prisoners, stayed on my own. I didn't double up. I had the choice. I read an awful lot. I went to classes. I had been doing 'A' levels before I got lifted, so that kind of thing was a focus ... I wasted my fuckin' time in jail, the four years I was in, in a sense. Well, not wasted, that's wrong, I was probably a bit more introspective or whatever, and kind of reflected more on stuff. I mean if you talk to women who probably done time from the late 70s, early 80s, they'd be more politicised or more focused, and knew what they wanted. But ... and it's my opinion, most of us, all of us, internees and all ... fuck, it was murder-pitch at times (Sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

In detracting from the orthodox account of republican solidarity, this respondent pointed to the structural and gendered obstacles to establishing a cohesive organisation in the 1970s. These included the lack of political experience amongst many of the prisoners, the absence of women in authoritative positions within the republican movement, the lack of a coherent strategy for supporting younger prisoners and women in prison, and the pervasive influence of social conservatism before political influences such as feminism informed an analysis of power from within the prisoners' structures:

I think women had a harder time in jail. The very fact that we weren't politicised, we weren't politically aware. Again, I'm generalising. We hadn't got the cop-on and the maturity. There was a lot of infighting and backbiting. There wasn't the kind of strong united front that there would appear to be in all the accounts you'd be given. It wasn't that bad either, but underneath it, we could have used our time more productively, if we had more experience, and we could have been more focused. It

doesn't matter what your physical surroundings are, you're still doing time. You're still locked up with people, you still have all those problems. The fact [is] that we were not politicised, and because we had all this time on our hands ... When you have time on your hands, and you don't know what direction you're going in, and you're not really focused, that can create some problems. You are doing your time hard that way ... We were just the products of conservative backgrounds, this Catholic, republican, very conservative, right-wing ethos about women's role and that. We were bringing that inside. And you had all these issues coming up there. And because we couldn't really articulate what was going on, I think there were major problems (Sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

In this chapter, I argued that the reconstitution of community in prison was linked with a series of spatial practices of appropriation and self-legitimation. However, the forms and degree of collective agency that the prisoners achieved were contingent on the latitude that was formally available under administrative policy. The practices of constructing a collective organisation were initially based on familiar forms of boundary setting in prison, such as group violence, self-defence, exclusion and moral validation, which do little to productively alter the larger penal, regulatory frameworks precisely because they are refractions of it. Neither, however, was the early prison community reducible to a reactionary microcosm of the penal environment. As discussed in chapter twelve, for example, these early formations were pivotal to the development of more politically sophisticated, versatile and authoritative structures, capable of maintaining collective discipline in a subtler governing environment. Furthermore, the levels of segregation that they practically achieved magnified the perceptibly gendered aspects of penal control. The following chapter, therefore, turns to an analysis of relations between staff, the administration and prisoners, in order to explore the gendered and political meanings of collective boundary setting.

Chapter 8

'We Are Not Criminals': Reconstructing Political Identity

Categories of identity ... become both potential sites of resistance to the universalism of penal control, and sites of possible conflict within the prison population (Bosworth, 1999: 111).

Political identification, it's also justification for what they did. They know that the world sees them as murderers or bombers or what have you, which are very negative things, and a bit of that has been conveyed to them in various ways. I think that while they can reinforce the political motivation to themselves, they almost, in a way, can excuse themselves, sort of validate what they did, and sanitise it to themselves (Official Visitor, Maghaberry).

This chapter discusses the relationship between the construction of penal identity and resistance. It explores the prisoners' articulations of identity in terms of a resistant consciousness, born out of penal experience, and in terms of a broader reaffirmation of political, historical and community identification. It then explores the paradoxes of sustaining these broader positions in the domain of political imprisonment defined by a dominant masculine experience. Finally, it explores the political women's articulations of commonality with non-political women prisoners.

Penologists have long recognised that a core site of contention in prisons converges on whose definition of penal subjectivity prevails. However, the analyses of identity in the sociology of prisons, while correctly pointing to the deterioration of psychological integrity during long-term imprisonment (Cohen and Taylor, 1981), the erosion of personal autonomy and intensive stigmatisation (Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1991), or the distortion of parental, familial and social identities amongst other deleterious effects of imprisonment (Coulter, 1991; Clarke, 1995; Jamieson and Grounds, 2002), largely emphasise the negative institutional determination of identity. The penological tradition of conceptualising identity has compelling reasons for qualifying any claims to the radicalising or resistant effects which confinement may have on prisoners. As discussed in chapter three, such critical restraint is evident in the work of the 'adaptive' and 'sub-cultural' theorists who emphasise the circumscribed boundaries within which

prisoners expressed solidaristic or common subject positions, and in the later feminist analyses of the profound structuring of gendered and punitive subjectivity. Furthermore, the violent repression of prison protests in Britain, France and North America in the late 1960s and 1970s disclosed the extent to which radical or collective positions were as frequently deterred from becoming sustained spheres of opposition, as they succeeded in providing a basis for resistance (Jackson, 1970: PROP, 1976: Seale, 1991: Scraton et al., 1991: Churchill and Vander Wall, 1992: Adams, 1992: 88-90).

In Engendering Resistance (1999), Bosworth re-engages with the long-standing debate about identity and resistance in prison, arguing that identity provides an important explanation for the ways in which prisoners reshape power relations in confinement:

[W]ithin the inmates' limited ability to control the ordering of relationships in prison, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and offence become categories through which women define a prison identity (Bosworth, 1999: 110).

Two positions proceed from this analysis. Firstly, as penal punishment frequently reinforces various forms of social differentiation (such as 'race', class, sexuality, gender or nationality), prisoners develop a consciousness about, and come to use their subject positions, or 'identities', in constructing alternative forms of agency in prisons. Secondly, it follows, according to Bosworth, that identity and agency in women's prisons are intertwined and mutually constitutive, denoting:

... both their specific subject positions or agency, and their ability to act. To have agency is to preserve the ability to negotiate power and to resist (Bosworth, 1999: 130).

As these relations are continuously imbricated within the regulatory and punitive demands placed upon prisoners, 'identity' does not resemble an essentialist position from which prisoners resist regulation and control (Bosworth, 1999: 98). Rather, identities are formed and reformed in a continuous interplay between 'socio-structural locations ... and the

manner in which individuals perceive themselves' (Ibid.).

Identity and resistance in the context of penal constraints

However, as discussed in chapter four, the proposal that 'identity', as a loosely-aligned category of oppositional reflexes, resistant consciousness or identity politics, can constitute a valid basis for radically altering the material basis of penal power, has been contested. Rather, Bosworth's detractors emphasise the structural and material forces which continuously reshape penal 'subjectivity' and 'agency', and by implication, the versatile institutional constraints that eventually engulf various 'resistances'. This chapter incorporates both 'materialist' and feminist post-structuralist approaches to the narratives of the prisoners in order to create a framework for understanding identity as contingent and relational, as experienced through collective as well as individual subject positions, and as subject to regulation, discipline and control by larger political and penal influences. These positions cumulatively imply the contested dynamics of forming a resistant identity in the context of institutional enclosure. Jennie (199-200) similarly alluded to the process of 'becoming' a political prisoner by referring to the 'naiveté' of the prisoners and their 'ignorance' and confusion in the early days of forming a political structure, while Anna observed that their identification as political and resistant prisoners emerged out of the politicisation of everyday acts of resistance:

We didn't know about how to work things like that until we were there. It was gradually by trial and error. I think that it was really strict routine with us (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

In classical structuralist theory, the construction of a social identity involves processes of differentiation, that is, the objectification of the other and the affirmation of the self (Barthes, 1973: Douglas, 1984). In the context of conflict, identification involves an overtly dialectical process of self-definition against dominant constructions of the self. More recent analyses, influenced by post-structuralism, apply extended, relational

dimensions to the construction of identity to take account of multiple points of difference and the complex social positions which a subject occupies. In her study of women involved in prostitution, for example, Phoenix observed that her respondents deployed multiple and paradoxical explanations of themselves as survivors as well as victims, as successful entrepreneurs and as commodified bodies, which conveyed their serial positions as being 'trapped in a series of victimising situations', yet deploying 'successful survival strategies' (Phoenix, 1998: 123). These paradoxical narratives, she continues, are rendered plausible and coherent 'within a distinctive identity ... when assessing who poses a specific threat or danger, who provides safety and security and who can or cannot be relied on as an ally' (Ibid., 125). This does not foreclose the possibility, her work implies, that respondents will deploy problematic, essentialist accounts of their simultaneous experiences of victimisation and survival. However, while political prisoners also articulated their experiences of victimisation, politicisation and resistance in immediately-grasped terms 'as republicans' or 'as loyalists', as 'political prisoners' or 'as women'; 'it is difficult to imagine' such a primary claim of the self to be 'unmediated by cultural meaning and representation' (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 136). Rather, the social, political and gendered meanings of resistant identity also emerged from the structures of perception and articulation that were available within the prison setting.

In Northern Ireland, the introduction of the criminalisation policy in 1976 redirected prison conflict onto more conspicuously ideological and hegemonic grounds, and further clarified to the prisoners the necessity of resisting 'criminal' subjectivity. For Winnie, the refusal to take on the subject position of 'criminal', and her claim to political status, extended from the historical and ideological basis of republicanism, and she describes the deepening ('politicisation') of her oppositional motivations through the experience of imprisonment:

With what I was charged with and because of my views which were republican, I seen myself as a political prisoner, and there was no way I was going to conform to the British government's idea that because of my beliefs I was a criminal. So, it was just a case of following through from that. Certainly, I had thought about what was happening in the jails because the prisoners play a very big part in our society. It's like most things; if you haven't been in jail yourself, there's a relative or somebody belonging to you [who has], so there's always been a very close association with the prisoners. And because of my views, I didn't see any of the prisoners as being

criminals. I didn't like the badge being put on them, and certainly nobody was going to put the badge on me. And it wasn't through any sense of being very politically aware, because I would be lying if I said I was. But I had very strong republican views which do not necessarily go hand in hand with being political, if you know what I mean. But it offended me; it offended my sense of pride and dignity as a person, and if I had conformed, I would never have been able to look at myself in the mirror in the mornings. Conformity starts with accepting the label. Like a lot of other people, I had a lot of friends and family who were killed over the years because of the Troubles. And it was a case of, if I had conformed, not only would I be belittling my own integrity, as far as I was concerned I would be belittling their memory as well (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Meg, Áine and Anna argued that the enforcement of a 'criminal' category and the denial of their political status, was a transparent tactic on the part of the state to 'defeat terrorism' via the prisons. Moreover, their refusal to submit to criminal status consolidated their sense of themselves as elements within a broader struggle, and of establishing a position from which they elaborated a critique of the failure of penal ideological and disciplinary techniques:

Then again it was a political decision with the government ... because Thatcher was giving concessions like jobs and all that, to try to make things normal on the outside, and on the inside to criminalise anybody that disagreed with it. It was all part of the struggle. The whole system was part of the struggle (Meg: Internee, Armagh).

They knew they had to defeat the prisoners. Normalisation was meant to make you controlled. All of it was over the struggle - all of it *was* a big struggle. The women fought for political status and they got it. That was seen to be working, and don't forget that (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Part of the idea to take away the status was to make it a more or less strict regime to deter these people, because imprisonment wasn't a deterrent. There were a lot of women back in for a second time, so they seen it wasn't acting as a deterrent to these people. So they made the rules even harsher as a deterrent, really (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

I wasn't going to be changed while I was in prison (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Political imprisonment has undoubtedly had a significant effect on the experiences of working-class republican and loyalist communities in Northern Ireland, and this has

informed a wider consciousness about criminalisation as a form of collective stigmatisation and punishment. A definition of prison struggle as part of a historically-embedded and collectively-shared experience continuously appears in the prisoners' narratives as a complex set of rationalisations for embarking on, and sustaining, their campaign. Respondents frequently described their motivations in terms of a communal imperative - which paralleled the experiences of violent conflict by their communities outside - and as an historical imperative - by which their prison struggle affirmed the continuity of republican resistance. For Winnie, conformity would have denoted both a personal failure and a betrayal of these obligations. In the context of these potent social and historical motives, the prospect of penal punishment was understood as a rational risk of political involvement:

You knew what the story was if you were going to end up in jail. It just wasn't on the periphery of your consciousness. You were doing what you were doing and you never thought about the actual details, until you actually went into the jail and the door shut on you. Then you thought, "I'm in jail" (Nora: internee, Armagh).

I don't really understand their thinking. They [the authorities] don't realise that when volunteers first join the struggle they know that they're either going to go to prison or they're going to die. Why did they think that any sort of measures that they bring in are going to stop people? (Meg: internee, Armagh).

Engendering political identity: narratives of shared struggle and narratives of gendered difference

I've never been penalised or stopped from doing something because I was a woman. In fact I was encouraged to, and I was afforded every opportunity. I know myself, on a personal level, there was an awful lot of respect there. But the contradictions were huge, I mean, they were huge (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Despite the assurance of women former prisoners in validating their situation within a genealogy of prison resistance, they were continuously engaged in resolving their contradictory allegiances and subjectivities as 'women in prison', and as political actors in relation to their male peers. The role of women in paramilitary organisations has been one

of the more contentious areas of feminist engagement with republicanism. While the feminist movement in Northern Ireland, as with feminism generally, cannot be understood as a homogeneous entity, the problematic question of women's allegiances to a nationalist, 'patriarchal' and violent movement created significant divisions within the feminist movement, especially over the meanings and degrees of support which they should lend to republican women prisoners during their no wash and hunger strikes in Armagh. Organisations such as the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement (NIWRM) were prominent in condemning the dual circumscription of women through 'state patriarchy' and through paramilitary violence against women. Others contended that the radicalism and conscientisation of women during the civil rights period had been diverted into auxiliary or subsidiary positions within all political organisations in Northern Ireland, including paramilitary structures (Edgerton, 1986: 74). More damningly, the Armagh prisoners were argued to have aligned themselves with paramilitary organisations that were also complicit in the subordination of women within an 'armed patriarchy' (Ibid.). The feminist group that most actively supported republican women prisoners, Women Against Imperialism (WAI), contended that the movement had a natural alliance with liberation and anti-colonial struggles. That these differences occurred and persisted in Northern Ireland is no surprise given the different analytical perspectives within the international feminist movement between a radical feminist and anti-militaristic analysis of patriarchal violence and militaristic power, and anti-colonial feminist positions in support of armed struggle waged by liberation movements (Enloe, 1983: Morris, 1993: Elshtain, 1995: Roseneil, 1995: Lentin, 1997).

While the debates within and between feminism and republicanism over the issues of political violence, the Armagh prison protests and strip-searching have been explored in detail elsewhere (Loughran, 1983: Buckley and Lonergan, 1984: Fairweather et al. 1984: Ward et al., 1986: de Brun, 1988: Shannon, 1989: Connolly, 1994: Aretxaga, 1997), the issue of women's position within republican ideology and strategy developed in relation to a number of influences. Firstly, the intersecting questions of gender and the 'national struggle' were broadly framed by the historical phases of political and ideological development

within both movements generally, and specifically by the emergence of women's activist groups within republican communities.¹ A gradual engagement with feminist analyses within republican ideology and policy commenced with the founding of Women Against Imperialism (WAI) in 1978 as an autonomous organisation located in West Belfast, which was concerned with 'safeguarding the advances made by women in the struggle for total liberation', while being 'opposed to the British presence in Ireland and supporting the liberation struggle' (APRN, July 8, 1978). In 1980, Sinn Féin opened a Department of Women's Affairs (later Sinn Féin Women's Department), and published a policy document, Women in the New Ireland (1981), which sought to forge alliances between republicans and feminists on the grounds that 'women's liberation is an integral part of national liberation' (Iris, November 1981: 57-59). However, at the launch of the policy at Sinn Féin's annual conference in 1981, its first coordinator and former political prisoner, Rita O'Hare, argued that 'the struggle against the oppression of women has yet to be understood and then incorporated into overall republican policy' (Ibid., 60). According to Kathleen, women in the IRA shared the organisation's initial hostility towards the feminist movement as 'pro-British' and 'middle-class', arguing that the women's movement appeared to fail to address the complex realities of political and social oppression experienced by working-class women at the epicentre of the conflict:

It all depends on what adjective you use that gives you your perspective, feminist-republican or republican-feminist. But I had massive problems with the themes of feminism, because I saw it as more post-feminism. It was as if something happened to a load of middle-class women in the late '60s, early '70s that I just couldn't relate to at all. Being a feminist for me was resisting, like what we were doing in the jail. And my decision to become a Volunteer was actually to do with my *feminist* background, rather than the other way about. The thing that actually influenced my decision to become a member was the women on the ground, the women who were running their homes single-handedly, running their kids, going to the jails, and were

¹ This refers specifically to the challenges mounted from within the feminist movement from Black, lesbian-feminist, working-class and colonial feminist perspectives over the bourgeois, Westerncentric, heterosexist paradigms that were inferred from the universal category of 'womanhood', and to subsequent theoretical and analytical developments with regard to 'difference' and 'intersecting oppressions'. Equally, while the dilemma of 'republicanising feminism' and 'feminising republicanism' remained a problematic and contested area of political debate, the women's prison protests had demonstrated very publicly the consequences of Sinn Féin's failure in the 1970s and 1980s to address and support these questions.

very instrumental in the political campaigns on the streets. And to me they were the resistance of the republican movement (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry: emphasis in the original).

Nevertheless, the dual structuring of their position supported a sense of contradictory allegiances as ‘republican prisoners’ and ‘as women’ (Ibid.). Respondents commented on the structural obstacles to achieving a distinctive position within the cross-prison organisation that were borne out by the protectionist attitudes of male prisoners, and normative expectations of the role of women within the republican movement. For Eilís, legitimising their roles as women acting politically entailed engaging their own practices within the prison structures, and challenging implicit preconceptions that they would have a peripheral, auxiliary status within a centralised command structure directed from the Maze prison:

You had a growing realisation, “we are here because we made our own decision to be part of the whole struggle”. But we have a single movement. What you had at the time was ‘comms’ coming from the ‘Kesh, giving directions. At one stage we called a big meeting in Armagh saying, “hold on, that’s all right, a number of directions being given, but we also have a voice here, and we also have decisions to make as well” ... So we got a very slow but sure realisation that women are an integral part of the struggle, and it was like a strength. There’s also the contradictions, but comradeship too between ourselves and the men. We always had, not tensions, but we were extremely aware of asserting our rights, our autonomy, not just falling into their command structure as well. We might have been all IRA Volunteers, but, and the but was significant, we deliberately had our own publications, our own writings. We had our O/C as contact, our O/Cs rather than their O/Cs being spokespeople for us all. We always made sure that we were represented. Even though they’ve never done anything to misrepresent us, we felt it was extremely important for us (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

The escalation of their protests to the no wash strike and the first hunger strike in 1980 was a crucial turning point, as it confronted the broader republican movement with the legitimacy of the women’s prison structure, and established the political visibility and meaning of their prison protests in the public domain. Nevertheless as Winnie argues, this was frequently resisted by the republican leadership:

It was a pushing and shoving sort of thing. We decided through discussion and everything else to try to escalate it [the protest campaign]. The Army Council outside wouldn't allow us. But we wanted to escalate it, because we thought we weren't doing enough to help the men up on the 'Blocks. We thought if we escalated it because we were women, we could be used as propaganda for the better. Like most things, you can say it's sexist or not, men are seen to be able to take it, the women aren't. This was the way we were thinking. We fought very hard to get [clearance from the Army Council], and they wouldn't allow us to do anything. So we were very frustrated because we weren't allowed to escalate anything. At that time the men in the Crumlin remand were getting hammered. So it was a case for us of, "we're sitting here with no visits, no parcels or anything like that. We're losing our remission, but we're not doing anything else." It was as if they were out there fighting for us and we weren't doing very much for ourselves (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

But then the word came that when Bobby [Sands] went on hunger strike, the no wash would end in all the jails. So when I went over, we were on a no work protest. The women had been on hunger strike the previous December, while they were still on the no wash, but during this hunger strike it was decided that it would be better if the women did not participate on it. I think probably at that stage, they knew they were really going to be up against a very tough type of regime, and while I don't think there was any kind of belief that women would not go through it or anything, maybe it was felt that the administration would manipulate it. The women reluctantly agreed not to participate then (Elizabeth: remand, Armagh/Commanding Officer, Maghaberry).

Loyalist women prisoners were positioned within even finer grids of difference, both within an experience of penalty that was primarily articulated by republican women, and within overwhelmingly masculinist loyalist structures. Opposed to criminalisation and claiming political status on the same ideological grounds as her male peers, Louie nonetheless consciously rejected gender as relevant to her position within loyalism:

The difference between loyalist prisoners and republican prisoners is that war was declared on us, we did not declare war on anybody. War was declared on us. We have been victims of created suffering. It is a case that we were politically motivated to stand our ground and say, "we've got to protect ourselves and our areas." We are not terrorists. That's the way it would be seen. We are political prisoners, and should be treated as such. There's a reason behind it and the reason was basically the protection of our heritage, culture, and identity ... I would actually say that we have the greatest respect and high regard for our political prisoners, and they make the decisions. The decisions that are made by loyalist factors [sic] come from the prisoners. Because the prisoners are the ones who have suffered, who have given their life and they will have a very strong say in the way forward. What I am saying

is that, in one respect, there is a place for women, but they [the loyalist leadership] will not exploit them to the tune of sticking them out front waving flags and rattling a bin lid. There will be a certain amount of respect (Louie: sentenced prisoner, Loyalist).

In her explanation of women's role as loyalist volunteers and political prisoners, Louie emphasised that women's engagement in 'frontline' or combat roles disrupts the intersecting constructions of nationhood, kinship and tradition that loyalism sought to defend. The connections she makes between masculine authority, military hierarchy and territorial defence are consistent with the objectives and ethos of 'conservative', counter-revolutionary and 'defensive' paramilitary organisations (Drake, 1996). Feminist theorists of war, moreover, point to the valorisation of the gendered status quo in times of conflict, while Connell has argued that ideologies which preserve the nation, family and territory support the 'classical apparatus' of masculine dominance (Connell, 1994). Lentin similarly argued:

Gender must be the explanation of the way [militarism] reproduces the ideological structure of patriarchy because the notion of "combat" plays such a central role in the construction of "manhood" and justification of the superiority of maleness in the social order (Lentin, 1997: 7).

Furthermore, while the broader mobilisation of nationalist women enabled their role to be articulated as a legitimate contribution to the 'war effort' (Aretxaga, 1999), loyalist organisations, arguably, had not placed comparable emphasis on widespread community mobilisation until the 1990s (McEvoy, 2001: 104), nor had loyalist prisoners engaged in the 'radicalising' debates equivalent to those which had impinged on republican ideological development in the prisons (Stevenson, 1996). While republican respondents at least problematised the dilemmas of women acting politically, and ultimately challenged them within their organisations by exercising their political subjectivity in the prison protests, Louie argued that the loyalist women's strategy of non-confrontation was consistent within the broader political ethos of loyalism. Nonetheless, her critique was alert to the contiguous struggles of both nationalist and loyalist women political prisoners to situate

themselves within the intersections of gendered ideology, political visibility and organisational legitimacy.

Relations with non-politically affiliated women prisoners

It was not only towards male peers that political women prisoners felt themselves to be constructed as the 'other'; they also contrasted their positions with those of 'ordinary' women prisoners. As indicated in chapter three, women are considered to be out of place in organised prison resistance because of the taken for granted androgyny of the category of political prisoner. Equally, they are implicitly conceived of as exceptional to the general paradigm of subjectification (victimisation) that is applied to women in prison. These ontological tensions continuously shaped the ways in which women political prisoners negotiated the paradoxical and sometimes contradictory experiences of gendered and political imprisonment, and in particular, their identification with other women prisoners. When discussing their exposure to security practices such as strip-searching, for example, the respondents voiced their shared susceptibility with other women prisoners to gendered forms of surveillance, discipline, and to the sexual meanings of invasive security procedures. Others noted that while all women in prison were subject to categorisation as aberrant and socially inadequate, they were different from other prisoners in that they were treated as uniquely manipulative, and more likely to undermine or compromise prison order. Similarly, while the penal disciplinary paradigm reacts to women in prison as emotionally dependent, capricious and non-compliant, the politicals 'were different' in that their 'manipulativeness' was viewed by staff as capitalising on their political status and identity:

They would have said [that we were] intimidating other prisoners on the wing or disobeying an order, that was the classic, "disobeying an order". If we'd have stopped and said, "Hello" to somebody you were told to go back up to your cell. If we ignored them you were disobeying an order. It was totally petty. It actually frightened some of the prisoners who were just in for ordinary things. We used to stop to try to talk to them. They were scurrying away. I could understand that because they just didn't want to be locked up or brought up in front of the governor and all that. To us it was nothing, well it wasn't nothing, it was difficult enough being locked in all day. But

we could apply ourselves to different things in the cell - we were used to lock-ups. That's basically what it was. And we were used to jail struggle (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

In applying the language of victimisation to 'ordinary', 'criminal', or 'non-political' women prisoners, republican women simultaneously invoked the atomised and subordinated figure of gendered, penal punishment, and expressed their rejection of the subjectivity it implied. Jennie described the 'ordinaries' as the 'real' victims of penal subordination, arguing that political prisoners occupied a specific and relatively 'privileged' position within the prison regime:

We had this attitude that there's no way we should be in here, so who the hell were they to take it away from us. It would have been different if you had been in there as an ordinary prisoner, and had to obey the rules, and had to know what the regime was about. But we were going straight in there after fighting and reacting to the situation outside. So we just thought this automatically, we didn't give it a second thought in some senses, until we actually saw the ordinary prisoners, what they had to go through, and how privileged we were in some senses. That would be a personal thing. I had total sympathy with them. I don't think I even thought about it politically. I just thought that it was wrong that those people, through circumstances beyond their control, were in there (Jennie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

These differentiating narratives reinforced their identification as organised and consciously resistant agents. However, political difference was not incompatible with conceiving of themselves as being subject to common forms of subordination, nor foreclosing the potential for mutual recognition between political and 'ordinary' women prisoners. Nora argued that republican prisoners extended their influence to protect 'non-political' prisoners from the more casual forms of disciplinary intervention:

If anything, we were very protective, for example, [with] screws trying to make it difficult. They came in under our wing, sort of a protective wing, so the screws couldn't order them around, or order them to do something that they didn't want to do (Nora: internee, Armagh).

The serial character of political and gendered identities

These claims by republican prisoners to engage in pragmatic, solidaristic alliances outside of their political group resonate with radical democratic and feminist political theories that conceive of contingent and strategic coalitions arising out of common contexts of subordination (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Carroll, 1992; Cooper, 1995; Laclau, 1996). In an effort to think beyond standpoint or identity politics as the basis for political struggle, Young has posited that individuals are situated within, and act out of, serial 'matrices of collective oppression', which are not necessarily predicated on 'a false essentialism that normalises or excludes' (Young, 1997: 31). The category 'gender', for example, is refracted through a series of 'material-ideological facts' (Ibid., 28) that express a 'certain kind of social unity' (Ibid., 27), but is contingent, and does not 'rely a singular identity[,] and recognis[es] the varying and variable axes of oppression' (Ibid., 17). Those who are positioned within the category 'woman' do not have to affirm themselves as engaged in a shared enterprise, nor identify themselves as having common histories, experiences or identities. Rather women constitute a social collective because of their shared relationships in social practices, such as the means of production or the sexual division of labour:

... being positioned by these structures as "women" does not itself designate attributes that attach to the person in the series, nor does it define her identity. Individuals move and act in relation to the practico-inert objects that position them as women (Ibid., 29).

Applied to the imprisonment of women in Northern Ireland, the series 'women in prison' occurs across a range of positions and situations which different women occupy as prisoners, and which are disclosed through the material, ideological and punitive organisation of women's penalty. The serial character of women's punishment references the range of ways in which their differences were disclosed through a variety of interventions and practices. 'Seriality' also brings together the political and gendered axes of women's penal punishment that have hitherto been kept apart. It posits that women

imprisoned for political offences are serially constructed as different in discourses of crime, punishment and penal practice, and opens up a framework for theorising these intersecting experiences.

Young's concept of 'seriality' as a political strategy also usefully addresses the practical, if limited, examples of solidarity across political and gendered axes in the context of prison punishment. It accounts for the penal structuring of differences between politically motivated and other women prisoners, while retaining a sense of their common positioning and mutual recognition within gendered penal frameworks. The overlapping dimensions and common interest in engaging in resistance also provides an explanatory framework for the occasional alliances between politically and non-politically affiliated women prisoners, without relinquishing their political difference or entering into more permanent, and problematic, relationships. Although this thesis does not construct a comparative analysis of the experiences of the different groups of women prisoners, neither does it assume that the experiences of political women prisoners can be detached from the gendered formations of punishment in prison. Equally, seriality confronts the disqualification of women prisoners as political actors within their paramilitary structures. As identities derive from social engagement and action rather than any intrinsic relationship to pre-existing categories such as 'political prisoner' and 'women in prison', their struggle referenced the multiple meanings of resistance within these two domains. Rather than choosing between political and gendered subject-positions, women political prisoners reshaped them into plural, mutually-transformative categories. Having explored the complexity of women political prisoners' positions within gendered, political and penal subjectification, the following chapter explores the relations between staff and prisoners.

Chapter 9

The Turning of the Screw: Active Disengagement, Intimidation and the Conditioning of Staff

This chapter returns to the paradox of women's agency in prison discussed in chapter three, namely, how politically affiliated women in prison exercised sustainable forms of collective agency in disciplinary structures which customarily emphasise individualised correction. This invokes the predicament of gendered penal subjectivity by which women in prison are not understood to exercise effective, long term collaborative agency (Heffernan, 1972: Giallambardo, 1966: Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986), or where women's resistance is viewed to be most successful at the level of personal and individualised interaction, but rarely impedes the larger punitive functioning of penal establishments (Bosworth, 1999: 130-131). Equally, the exercise of political and collective agency by female political prisoners contests the androcentric precepts of 'inmate subcultural' theories, which either fail to register the specificity of solidaristic alliances in the context of the circumscribed realms of agency in women's prisons, and hence conclude that resistance is lacking or absent from their social arrangements, or advance reductive and foundationalist explanations for the apparent incoherence, anomie and fragility of women's communities in prison (Sykes, 1958: Ward and Kassebaum, 1966). Similarly, the scholarship on political imprisonment in Northern Ireland, while acknowledging the republican structures in Armagh and Maghaberry prisons, represents the question of gender (as well as applying 'gender' to women's penalty only) as an unresolved problematic in the study of political imprisonment (McKeown, 2001: 236-237: McEvoy, 2001: 8). Whereas the previous chapters examined different facets of internal consolidation and self-affirmation on the part of republican prisoners, this chapter examines the role of their structure in organising 'external' relations with the prison administration and discipline staff. In particular, it examines the complex functions and meanings of 'boundary setting' and exclusion as strategies for limiting the disciplinary and regulatory interventions which have customarily eroded solidaristic structures in women's prisons. Firstly, it is argued that 'active disengagement' or collective withdrawal from direct contact with uniformed staff minimised the interpersonal forms of scrutiny and regulation that are conventionally mediated through socialisation and

mentoring relations with staff. Secondly, 'active disengagement' sought to diminish the influence of staff as a bureaucratic-regulatory layer between the republican prisoners and senior administrative and governing staff. This supported their objective of formalising their political status, as well as extracting from the administration practical, day-to-day acknowledgement of their elected officers as the legitimate entity through which staff engaged with prisoners.

However, the regulation of staff-prisoner relations has conventionally been directed towards a broader vigilance against the illegitimate and subversive influences that prisoners might exercise over officers. The second part of this chapter, 'Violence, intimidation and the conditioning of staff', explores the more conspicuous methods of conditioning individual members of staff, and the use of collective censure, intimidation and violence against them. The discussion also explores the incidents and meanings of 'conditioning' in relation to the structuring of interpersonal relations of power in the political imprisonment of women.

Active disengagement

The dynamics of conflict and confrontation in women's prisons, as Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986), Dobash et al., (1986), Carlen (1998) and Bosworth (1998) remind us, are frequently framed within the confines of interpersonal exchanges between members of staff and prisoners. Their arguments arise from the observation that the disciplinary paradigm in women's prisons resembles a circuit of normative gendered expectations and institutional practices which reinforce dependant and infantilising relations between staff and prisoners, and which endorse highly personalised forms of correction, scrutiny and regulation. The extensive modes of formal and informal influence which female staff exercise over individual prisoners have been related to the disproportionate punishment of women for infractions against the prison rules arising out of the close scrutiny of women prisoners by staff (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986). Moreover, the primacy of loosely-defined 'security practices' creates resentment on the part of prisoners at 'petty' and 'aggravating' aspects of the regime, as well as contributing to stress, anger and disempowerment at their inability to

exercise basic personal decisions. The possibility that 'A' Company in Armagh prison could unravel because of peripheral conflicts arising out of personal contact with discipline staff was validated by the initial experiences of the regime in Armagh prison:

The cell lights were outside the cells. The women were locked in at night, and had to ask to go out to the toilet ... There were so many vindictive ways, and you knew who the staff involved were (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

We were not allowed a radio at first, and then a radio was allowed, but not a tape recorder. The radios were checked, and after three days they were handed over...The screws used to mess with the parcels. They used to mess with your letters. Sometimes you'd be waiting on your letters, and you wouldn't get the letter for three weeks. And then they'd be censored with the big black lines through them. Some of them would be vindictive about that. If something happened, they wouldn't let you know. But it would be the wee things, say when you'd be waiting for a visit. And if they interfered with the parcels, you'd know that that screw had done it. If you had a letter missing, you knew that it was taken on you [sic] (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

As Dobash et al., (1986), and Hannah-Moffat (2001: chapter three) note, the conceptualisation of 'good order' in prison is bound up with the assumption that women prisoners are susceptible to the 'beneficial' influence of individualised attention to their problems and concern. Female officers are encouraged to implement systems of formal and informal rewards and encourage compliance, while legitimising a position of control through 'mothering' strategies. Women in prison are generally not allowed to disengage from interacting with staff, nor erode the vertical lines of emotional and social dependency that are constructed through social intercourse with staff. Carlen critically observed the injunctions on individual women to become entrepreneurs of their own rehabilitation by establishing confidential relations with members of staff, in which 'the good prisoner opens up to the officer and doesn't think she is any better than the other women' (Carlen 1983: 102). Walker and Worrall noted that the obligation to 'be yourself' or to 'express yourself' is linked to self-incrimination as prisoners know that 'their actions [a]re monitored and that whatever they did would be written about in reports' (Walker and Worrall, 2000: 132). Self-disclosure, as Carlen puts it, entails a double bind because 'there is resentment and

suspicion of the women developing a private realm of consciousness, yet at the same time there are bars to sociability which prevent them developing a public realm of consciousness' (Carlen, 1983: 102). Furthermore, as political imprisonment implies intersecting subjective and collective domains of consciousness, the prisoners argued that social intercourse with staff was not only concerned with returning them to docile femininity, but was also with breaking down the political character of their alliances. Active disengagement, therefore, involved a range of mundane tactics for boycotting staff, refusing to obey orders that were not transmitted through their elected officers, and questioning minor orders from officers. In other instances, individual prisoners were assigned to make contact with individual members of staff 'in a psychological kind of way', by alternatively establishing friendly relations and then withdrawing them (Elizabeth: Commanding Officer, Maghaberry). While disengagement or distancing are more frequently connected with passive forms of resistance, active disengagement was a multifaceted tactic of constructive disobedience which involved extensive, calculated methods for refusing the obligations that are placed on prisoners to know their place and recognise authorised structures. Áine noted that their refusal to validate the most minor symbolic forms of interaction and address, such as refusing to reply to officers when their numbers were called out unless they were addressed 'properly', inverted the norms of disciplinary inculcation and 'broke down' embedded institutional practices and the deferential mores which sustained staff morale and personal integrity. Anna argued that prisoners established precedents for regulating staff behaviour by negotiating directly with the governor about procedures for conducting cell searches. She further noted that the strategy compelled staff to revise their normative expectations about relating to prisoners and to check their own conduct, and in addition, accomplished the objective of diminishing staff vigilance:

What they tried to do was enforce their rules on us. Like the screws making us call them "Miss", and making themselves one step higher than you. We'd respond by calling them by their second [family] name. It was a constant battle to see who was going to get the upper hand all the time. We did quite a few times. They did quite a lot of the times. But it was a constant battle (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

It depended a lot on who was doing the cell searching what aggravation was caused. You maybe had a screw coming in who was pretty decent. They'd have been nearly afraid, taking the stuff from your locker and going through it. Other ones would just come in and turn the place over and put everything on the floor. Then we won a concession there too, insisting that they had to put everything back. We decided we weren't going to let this happen any more. If some of the screws can come in and conduct themselves right searching the stuff and putting it back, then why is there a need for these other screws to go in and just wreck your cell. That's where it came from. Then they had to adhere to the code (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

The strategy of exclusion was also connected with pragmatic concerns to curtail the scopular and advisory role of welfare staff and discipline officers, who might otherwise acquire information about their structures and activities, or ascertain the prisoners' morale by cultivating relations with individual prisoners. Stringent adherence to their organisational structure and vertical lines of communication also preserved individuals from the problem of potential collaboration, which can occur through what Goffman calls the 'self-defining implications of even the minor give-and-take in organisations', which grants 'legitimacy of the other's line of action' (Goffman, 1991: 165-166):

You never approached a screw for anything; you always went through your [political] officers (Anna: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

It was all a power struggle, even with the welfare coming up, you always went through your O/C. She contacted the welfare, you didn't go to the screws to get them, you went to her. She got the screws to get them up. If the governor sent for you, she went in your place to find out what the craic¹ was. It was to keep that distance from them (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

As discussed in chapter two, although the political structures were nominally recognised following the introduction of special category status, the practical implementation of the policy provoked a deep reluctance from senior and uniform staff to confer legitimacy on an alternative authority and rival power structure in prison. Furthermore, the gendered and political dimensions of 'disobedience' not only escaped easy categorisation on the part of staff and senior officers, but reinforced an institutional hostility towards the prisoners'

¹ Irish slang for 'situation' or 'atmosphere'.

structures and motives. Respondents who were involved in the initial phase of political organisation during the 1970s also argued that their strategies were directed towards altering the entrenched, paternalistic ethos of the regime, in the context of the extensive administrative problems, and the inexperience of staff in dealing with a 'new kind of prisoner' (Meg: internee, Armagh prison):

The screws hadn't a clue, nor indeed did the governor, of how to go about treating us, because we would have never been in except for the political struggle. They were caught unawares, totally unawares. They did not know what to do. So, although there was a conflict because they were trying to maintain a regime that they were used to for years, we were saying, "no, that won't do, that doesn't suit". And we were putting continual demand on the regime, which were demands they had to meet, because they didn't know any different [sic] (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

It would have been a real antithesis for most of the governors. They resented having this group of prisoners telling them what to do, how to run a prison. So they were having to get used to the idea as well, having to come to terms with it. Well, they were trying to cope with the situation as well. They had prisoners who were totally new, and they had nobody to look to, either. It was a very testing period when you think about it, and it probably would have been really dead on if political status had been there after '76. They were getting their act together when, next thing, the criminalisation policy came in, and threw everything up in the air (Jennie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

According to some respondents, pragmatism and expedience also informed the extent to which senior governors recognised and engaged formally with their structure:

It was easier to manage, like what's happening now. It's easier for them to let the prisoners control the situation. It makes the screws' time easier, and easier all round, for everybody (Jennie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).²

You had their regime and our regime. But again their external one could only come in where they could keep that in place, you know? You did have situations where there were controls. You had no control over your mail coming in, you had no control over your visitors, because that's a situation that was out of our power. The likes of visits to your relatives [in other prisons] was within their remit. But for the most part, if anything was dramatically wrong, you negotiated the position within the jail. Very often they succumbed a lot [sic]. Even the warders, they would have known who to approach on our own staff, if something happened, whether there was a row between prisoners and a screw. They would have approached our staff and said,

² The interview was conducted in 1997, before the conclusion of the Belfast Agreement.

“sort it out”. But they always approached our staff. Officers couldn’t override that because it was black and white. This is the way you worked. I mean it was fairly straightforward (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

It worked for them as well. They had to work along with us. Nobody likes to be working in an atmosphere of hostility, so it worked all round for them to recognise the structures, even during criminalisation. For some reason the administration ... if they saw that working too well they had to come ’round and do something just to stop it. All through the whole struggle and all the protests there were certain ones that we had a working relationship with. They knew the reality of it, because we were going to say to them, “go and see our O/C”. They knew there was no point in coming to see us individually (Winnie, sentenced prisoner, Armagh)

Violence, intimidation and the ‘socialising’ of staff

Unlike most prisoner populations, political prisoners have substantial external support structures with which to extend direct and indirect forms of intimidation against staff, within and outside the prison. Since the Mountbatten Report (1966), a succession of initiatives have been adopted in the prison system in England and Wales to prevent breaches of security and indiscipline arising from the ‘suborning’ or conditioning of staff by prisoners. The Woodcock (1994) and Learmont (1995) reports into the escapes from Whitemoor and Parkhurst prisons respectively cited the conditioning or subversion of individual members of staff, in which Irish republican prisoners were involved, as causal factors in escapes and major breaches of security. The question of safeguarding ‘the human dimensions of security’ in Northern Ireland was reinforced by the realities of intimidation and violence against prison officers outside the prison establishments by paramilitary organisations. The lethal effects of intimidation by loyalist and republican paramilitary organisations was manifest in the assassination of twenty nine prison officers, including two women, between 1974 and 1993. These members of staff were killed while off-duty, at home, travelling to or from work, or in the vicinity of Belfast and Armagh prisons, whose perimeters were relatively more difficult to secure because they were situated in urban locations.³ Twenty seven officers were killed by republican organisations and two by

³ With the exception of one prison officer who was stabbed during the escape of thirty eight republican prisoners from the Maze in 1983, and died later in hospital.

loyalists. While the predominance of republican groups in assassinating prison officers was a continuation of the strategy of targeting public servants and security personnel from previous IRA campaigns (Lee, 1989: 219-224), the first murder of a prison officer during the 'Troubles' occurred on April 8, 1976, six weeks after special category status was revoked (Irish News, April 9, 1976). Prior to this, the Provisional IRA had issued warnings to staff recruited from the prison services in Scotland, and England and Wales that 'they were setting themselves up as a prize target', stating that 'until now there has been no hostility by political prisoners or internees towards the men whose job it was to guard them, apart from a few isolated cases' (Belfast Telegraph, January 9, 1972). The IRA also issued warnings in response to allegations of the mistreatment of prisoners by officers. In 1971 they had threatened to 'shoot a prison wardress [sic] who was allegedly ill-treating women political prisoners in Armagh Jail' (Belfast Telegraph, January 9, 1972). From the early 1970s, republican and loyalist prisoners used the sanction of 'naming', or disclosing the names and movements of individual officers to their organisations, or issuing statements alleging mistreatment by specific administrators, as an indirect and extended form of intimidation. In 1973, republican women prisoners had released the name of a male officer at Armagh prison, a 'Mr. Quigley', whom they alleged had been involved in the assault of women prisoners in the aftermath of their attempted escape. The tactic of directly identifying an officer in this manner prompted members of the Board of Visitors to condemn 'the mental anguish' caused to the officer and his family, 'especially as he has received threatening letters' (Irish News, March 20, 1973). Republican women in Armagh prison repeatedly issued public criticisms of one Dr. Cole, the medical doctor in attendance at the prison during the no wash and hunger strikes, in letters to the press and smuggled statements. While the 'naming' of individual members of staff did not always result in their assassination, the strategy opened up another set of possibilities for conditioning prison personnel. Eilís argued that use of naming and intimidation was connected with their attempts to resolve specific and intractable contentions about conditions or treatment. Nevertheless, her account also indicates that their appeals to the leverage of external violence, whether intentionally or not, was co-ordinated with disturbances in other prisons, had a deterrent effect, and was a response to staff violence:

There was always the threat of male screws. We didn't want them in but they brought them in after the escape [1974]. We may have got hurt, but so did they. And we had to have that underlying threat all the time. If they did anything on us, if they tried to overstep their mark with us, it mightn't be this week, it mightn't be next week, or it mightn't be the month after, but sometime when they weren't expecting it, we moved. The time we captured the governor proved the way that we could move as one, which we did ... After criminalisation the prisoners got a much harder time. They also still didn't break their own regime, though. A lot of it was sheer control, random, then you got the conflict, the real power, intense conflict ... But that happened in key stages (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

McEvoy (2001:112) and McKeown (1998: 286) argue that there is no direct or reductive correlation between the levels of staff fatalities and specific incidents of violence between prisoners and staff. McEvoy has argued that while some violence was 'clearly strategic' and directly related to 'the broader conflict between paramilitaries and the British state', other incidents were inspired by 'the range of institutional, personality, and other variables which could be found in any prison setting' (McEvoy, 2001: 112-3). Nevertheless, the timing of assassinations was clearly a factor in the complex causes of conflict and violence in the prisons. From 1976, the assassination strategy shifted from individual reprisals to pressurising the authorities to revoke the policy of criminalisation. Eight prison officers were killed in the first two years of the criminalisation policy, between 1976 and 1978 (NIPS, 1978: 9). The highest level of staff fatalities in one year was in 1979, when nine officers were killed by republican organisations, during the height of the blanket protest in the Maze, and the non-cooperation strike at Armagh prison, and the year before the first hunger strike (NIPS, 1980: 7). These included the first killing of a female prison officer, who was shot from a passing car outside Armagh prison in 1979 (Belfast Newsletter, April 20, 1979). The only prison officer killed in 1982 was a woman, whose death in December of that year occurred a month after random strip searching had been introduced in Armagh in November of that year. Threats had previously been issued by the Provisionals against Thomas Murtagh, the governor who had been appointed to Armagh prison in 1981, and had been at the forefront of implementing the segregation policy. Although it is difficult to establish a precise relationship between specific events in the prison and the targeting of staff working at Armagh prison, it is clear that the cycle of violence and conflict that had developed during the women's prison protests in the previous years supported a very high

degree of antagonism and retribution between staff and prisoners:

The only time the staff felt vulnerable was when they put the bomb outside Armagh jail. We heard the bomb go off, and then it came on in the news. Our immediate reaction was, "Yes!" And everybody said the same thing. And they were raging. Christ they were raging. We used to say, "it doesn't matter where you are, if we want to get you, we'll get you". We would use tactics like that. And we always had this conviction that we would win. And we would say that to individuals, "when we win, you're snookered, 'cos I will hunt you and personally lock you up". It wasn't a case of it's going to take us years, it was going to be tomorrow (Prisoner on protest, Armagh).

Naturally when things were at a flashpoint outside, when there were shootings and bombings and so on, there was a great upsurge of annoyance and in some instances, animosity. It undoubtedly had an effect, because members of staff also had family members in the 'Specials' (sic) (part-time RUC) and the Royal Irish Regiment. There were individual threats made against warders in the prison. There were allegations from a number of warders. Then again, don't forget that there was one of them shot, and there were attempts made on a couple of them. I was there one day and they were shooting outside and the big deal was to get them home safely, as quickly as possible (Official Visitor: Armagh).

The killing of prison staff was politically regressive. Hillyard argues that violence against prison officers produced 'far greater unity' amongst staff by extending the legitimacy of the Prison Officers Association's (POA), as a powerful and influential organisation which was prepared to challenge the authorities, 'not only in relation to working conditions, but also in relation to the development of policy' (Hillyard, 1978: 137). During the 1970s, the POA responded to the murders of colleagues by initiating work-to-rules and applying blanket temporary stoppages on supervising visits, exercise and education, or clearing mail. Although the prison inspectorate described the 'customary practice' of temporary bans 'as a mark of respect ... and not as a protest action' (May, 1979: 114), the effects of partial industrial protests were purposefully deployed by the POA to maintain pressure on the government to implement, and retain, the criminalisation policy.

In the aftermath of the 1981 hunger-strike, republican prisoners embarked on an apparent shift of tactics from random violence against staff to 'breaking down the human

contribution to security', by suborning or conditioning individual officers as a preparatory strategy for the eventual escape of thirty-eight prisoners from the Maze in 1983:

In this they were largely successful. It seems they began a policy of conditioning staff in order to reduce their alertness. This they did by lowering the tensions ... and avoiding, where possible, confrontations with staff (Hennessey, 1984: 14).

The Hennessey Report (1984) subsequently pointed to the subversion of uniform officers as a principal contributory factor in the escape, adding that inadequate levels of training and management had contributed to lax habits and poor attitudes amongst staff which had led to lowered standards of security in the Maze prior to the escape. The Colville Report (1992) identified the continued influence which loyalist and republican prisoners exercised collectively on staff throughout the 1980s as a major threat to security, concluding that, after eight years of conflict over the introduction of segregation, the 'suborning of staff' remained 'a horrible reality' (Colville, 1992: 7). Moen argues that the preferred term for staff conditioning amongst republicans, 'socialisation', introduced a broader meaning than the usual, instrumental definition of 'conditioning' allows, by attempting to shift the ideological structuring of relations between staff and prisoners (Moen, 1999). Socialisation involved the inculcation of individual officers and administrators into the normality of the prisoners' worldview, attitudes and expectations, by utilising 'mentoring' or 'advisory' tactics that are normally the province of staff, against them.⁴ In this sense, socialisation did function to reduce staff vigilance and helped to acquire intelligence from officers. Another former republican prisoner, McKeown, has described the socialisation offensive in terms of alternating tactics of appeasement and confrontation, physical assault on officers, and deliberately confronting governors and senior officers in a 'verbally aggressive manner' (McKeown, 2001: 118). While the number of prison officers killed decreased in the late 1980s, the number of assaults on prison staff and claims by staff of threats made against them outside the prison, remained high throughout the 1980s, much of which was attributed to the segregation protests (NIPS, 1985: 5: NIPS, 1986/7: 1). Such confrontational

⁴ This included encouraging individual officers to talk about their morale and working conditions, and 'advising' them how to confront management on these and related issues.

physical and behavioural strategies are not as readily available to women in prison, as assertiveness or signs of rebelliousness instigate deterrent intervention and correction from staff. Furthermore, relations in Armagh prison had seriously deteriorated as the disputes against enforced integration had become interwoven with conflicts over the introduction of random strip searching. As a consequence, the dynamics of socialisation in Armagh prison evolved within the specific contexts of conspicuous conflict, and acquired localised meanings and interpersonal dimensions in the context of the punishment of women.

Socialisation as a gendered strategy

The prospect that the personal authority of female prison staff might be subverted because individuals may adopt illegitimate forms of empathy with prisoners or relax, at their discretion, elements of security and discipline, has exercised senior administrators since the early penitentiary system (O'Brien, 1982: 180; Zedner, 1998). As a consequence, the demeanour and behaviour of discipline officers and staff towards prisoners have been rigorously scrutinised in order to prevent any disciplinary problems which may arise from undue familiarity with inmates. However, an internal contradiction in the management and definition of 'appropriate' engagement arises in prison regimes for women because 'familiarity' and 'empathy' between individual prisoners and members of staff are sanctioned and encouraged. Thus, the mechanisms of familiarity are integrated into the maintenance of order through their 'setting personal example, gaining prisoner's trust and instilling personal loyalty ... in theory, at least, every effort [is] to be made to encourage moral reform by a process that combine[s] an uneasy mix of coercion, encouragement and manipulation' (Zedner, 1998: 309). Nevertheless, 'the common assumption that women [are] more susceptible to personal influence' has emerged as a concern which implicates female staff as well as prisoners (Ibid.). Hence, the meticulous supervision of relations between female staff and prisoners has arisen out of a perceived need to continuously renew the lines of demarcation between 'legitimate interest' and prospective conditioning.

For Newton (1994), Lord (1995), and Zimmer (1997), these predicaments are apparent in the different strategies adopted by female staff as they negotiate the gendered occupational

structures of the 'guard role'. Excluded from immediate access to the 'traditional' ethos of rule-enforcement, and deprived of the legitimacy to present themselves through a grid of masculinist 'authority', 'physical competence' and 'personal dominance', female discipline officers integrate legitimised 'feminine' roles into their occupational performance. In doing so, they become 'more likely to have a social worker's orientation towards the job', and reinforce personal authority through 'the development of friendly, pleasant relationships with prisoners as a way of generating voluntary compliance' (Zimmer 1997: 291).

However, although Zimmer suggests that the basis on which female custodians might resist the imperatives of professional power rests on elements of mutual recognition as gendered subjects within the structures of institutional authority, prisoners may seek to pursue other alternatives out of this possibility. The political prisoners adopted strategies for confronting female officers with the extent to which their role in carrying out disciplinary and security procedures could not be separated from the gendered modes of subordination which these practices involved. May, Winnie and Kathleen explained the policy of pre-emptively challenging the personal motives of staff conducting strip searches, as a part of the broader political campaign against the practice:

At that stage we had tried to turn it 'round on the screws, because they were using it to get on top of us. We were trying to turn it 'round, and use it by saying, "you're a woman and you're doing this - you're starting this on another woman?" - portraying it more that way at that time. Because no matter what else had been done in the past, it was suiting them too much, so we were trying to take another line at it. We were told to do it this way, just to try that and see what it would make them feel, as a woman to woman thing. But they didn't. I suppose the ones that were chosen for that job just ... I don't know what type of people they were ... but it didn't change. No matter what line you went with them, they didn't respond (May: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Literally, that day of the month when you know your visit's up, you're automatically preparing yourself psychologically that you're going in there for a digging match. You know it's not going to be an easy transition; you're going in there to defend yourself. At one time I stood like that with my hand on my hips and sort of smiled at them and said, "are ye enjoying yourselves now? I always knew ye were a lot of dykes anyway", and I just put my clothes on and went out on my visit. That was just bravado. Again, a lot of women came back from strip-searching, and it took

them a while to psychologically get themselves into gear again (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

I would try to embarrass them with my nakedness. And they hated it. They hated it because we made them feel more uncomfortable with what they did (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

The failure to persuade officers to relinquish authority on the basis of gendered commonality attests to the ways in which 'doing gender' and gendered solidarity is shaped by, and constrained within, the hierarchical structuring of institutional power (Zimmer, 1997: 290-1). In this context, most of the respondents accused female officers of being unlike 'women' because they deviated from conventional constructions of 'feminine' empathy, restraint and 'justice' towards other women. Historically, random strip searching was implemented at a point when routine antagonism had become embedded in the preceding five years of resistance to the criminalisation policy. Moreover, in a prison setting, sexual censure and homophobic discourses are complex expressions of actual and potential violation. They produce levels of differentiation by identifying other prisoners or staff who transgress the highly normative gendered economy which is sustained and reproduced in prisons. Conversely, it is officially viewed as an element of other intimidatory tactics for distracting officers from their job, deterring them from scrutinising a prisoner's body when washing, or from 'patting down' prisoners. Censure also assists in reordering a shared moral and ethical value of physical and psychological integrity. In the prisoners' accounts above, the visual objectification of their bodies by other women amounted to an illegitimate transference to female scrutineers of the powers usually naturalised through the hegemonic 'male' gaze (Stanko, 1985). The allegations of 'collusion' by female officers with the dominant gendered, surveillant order assisted in inscribing the otherness of prison officers. The prisoners' censure also cemented other forms of political and emotional antagonism towards staff, which involved various condemnatory manoeuvres for supporting the transference of moral integrity and political authority from the staff to themselves. Some forms of personal differentiation hinged on routinised forms of bigotry, for example, in the reductive explanation offered by some respondents of the 'mercenary' and 'sectarian' motives of staff:

Again it all goes down to your self-worth. You knew what you were there for. We weren't there for money, for glory, you're not there for anything else bar your principles, and believing in fighting for your country, which makes a big difference. In retrospect, the screws were there for the money, solely for the money. They were like Judas, they could be bought for money. You couldn't buy us. It was a great time of pride because of that. It was a case of, "your establishment can throw whatever the hell you want at us, but we're going to take it" (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

I think that a vast number of the staff went in to gain money. I don't think they really see it ... in fact, I'm quite sure that very few of them get job satisfaction. Because there's nothing, there's no aim for them beyond containment. The political prisoners, because they organise their own day and their own lives, are not institutionalised, and therefore don't rely on the officers for anything ... I would say, some of the officers would certainly hold their own very sectarian attitudes, just formed the same way as the prisoners have, because they're coming from the same background, and the influences that led to the prisoners joining the paramilitaries are still influences in the lives of the officers. There is, dare I say, limited intelligence, but that's a dreadful thing to say (Official Visitor: Maghaberry).

The offensive nature of these remarks obscures the more substantive issues of the structuring of power relations between staff and prisoners in the context of political imprisonment. The recruitment of prison staff during and after internment from the armed forces and Protestant, working class communities had reinstalled the historical, classed and sectarian precedents of drawing communities with loyalist or unionist affiliations to the security structures (Farrell, 1980, 1983). Furthermore, the basic standards of training which they received, and the inconsistent and discretionary administrative approach to formally acknowledging and working with the prisoners' structures, underlined the emotional and personal costs of coping with the organised, exclusionary tactics of political prisoners. Although an analysis of staff adjustments, their conceptions of relations with prisoners, and the sectional and political influence of the POA requires a separate study, some brief observations can be made concerning the structural positioning of ordinary grade staff. A succession of official reports had pointed to the dangers of conditioning or illegitimate contact with prisoners as a primary contributory factor in the outbreak of disorder and breaches of security (Hennessey, 1984: Colville, 1992: Narey, 1998). Furthermore, the prevailing tendency of senior management to equate the low morale of some uniform officers with their obstructive opposition to reform, and the precautions taken by senior

management to diminish the problem of conditioning by turning the behaviour of officers into objects of security and surveillance, contributed to their sense of powerlessness and the loss of authorisation and control. Moreover, the complex lines of exclusion from the political groups, and the subsequent loss of personal authorisation over prisoners, were viewed by officers to have been further eroded because of the direct negotiating relationships - 'over our heads' - between prisoners and senior administrative and governing staff:

The reality is that you wouldn't get interaction with paramilitary prisoners because they've their own command structure and they won't recognise you as a prison officer ... But it's a known fact that these paramilitary organisations do co-operate very closely in prisons. They work hand in hand. They also co-operate with the officers in their own way. But actually, it's got worse. In the old days, in the compound days, there was a very good relationship. There is no relationship now. The only relationship now is that paramilitary prisoners use officers to condition them for information. And that's another point. If the officer's not there, they can't be conditioned, can they? (Prison Officer: Maghaberry)

The low levels of esteem in which ordinary grade prison officers were held came from surprising quarters. In the course of interviews, the views of senior managing staff, security governors and members of the Boards of Visitors, appeared to converge with political prisoners' allegations of the 'incompetence' of officers. Senior administrators made observations about the low educational attainments of uniform officers in support of comments about their 'reactionary' attitude and their failure to embrace the new managerial climate. For Boards of Visitors members, their limited role confirmed the malleable and functionary character of uniform staff. Ironically, the patronising observation of the Official Visitor that staff-prisoner conflict was related to their mutual recognition within the same class and social background, converged with prisoners' allegations that officers had sought to escape these social conditions by seeking a privileged position within structures that sustained sectarian inequality and injustices.

Republican prisoners also inverted standard assumptions about the social aptitude, intellectual attainment and organisational competence that usually legitimise the authority of staff:

They had low levels of education: good with their fists but couldn't string a sentence together. And when they came in to us, we used to cut them to ribbons. And you'd have had an eighteen year old talking to a forty year old as if she was a child, and the forty year old would have taken it because she didn't have the education or the vocabulary to argue back with her! They did feel inferior to us and that's probably why they kicked the crap out of us and enjoyed it so much. It was their way of getting back. We did feel superior to them. No matter what they did, such as bullying or playground tactics, it was like most bullies, they're more to be pitied than laughed at. I think that was my attitude. Some of the other ones would have cut their throats (Sentenced prisoner: Armagh).

These critical and personalised comments also constituted a perceptible series of strategies for repositioning themselves as the conscientised and politicised subjects of the prison order. Eilís argued that the political prisoners were more successful and powerful agents within the custodial environment because their resistance to institutionalisation prevented their being conscripted into the various constraints and personal compromises that underlined the 'false consciousness' of staff:

Their regime could not have coped. Our regime coped because there were a number of things we wanted out of it, and number one was that whole learning process. We wanted to politicise ourselves. At the same time too, it was very personal, we wanted to produce arts and crafts, get exams, whatever. So that's what we put in place (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

Because at the end of it, they were as much in prison as we were. Where they went was curtailed because the IRA was starting to stiff screws. So there were only certain places they could go, and they knew that those certain places could be attacked, because the IRA knew where they were. It was a case of they could have got them anytime they wanted. In that respect the high rates of pay and all the rest of it, it was as if they were compensating themselves because they couldn't get out of it. It's not like a nine-to-five job. Even within their own communities, being a prison officer is frowned upon. It's not only here [West Belfast], if you're a prison officer you'd be shunned there. So I think all the trimmings was to try and build themselves up and to build their self-esteem up (Sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Although couched in reductive, demeaning, victimising and violent terms, the censoriousness levelled by prisoners against staff powerfully convey the structural dimensions of sectarian and political differences, as they intersected with penal and gendered relations. Simultaneously, the concluding and anonymous comments cast some

insights into the disturbing realities of anger, fear, and conflict that emerge from the intensely, personalised domains of penal governance. If, as Pickering (2000) has argued, 'emotionality' is an important way of 'knowing', then the complex defensive, protective and antagonistic dimensions of the prisoners' responses are valid domains of subjectivity and resistance. The penal colonisation of the emotional domain has predominantly been understood as having invasive and victimising effects on prisoners. Feminist and Foucauldian critiques, moreover, have pointed out that this is a perverse achievement of the intimate regulation which has been endorsed and sustained in the confinement of women. The penal organisation of the emotional realm also implicated the wellbeing, personal integrity and morale of staff. The construction of their emotional fallibility, susceptibility and corruptibility, which had to be guarded against, also implicated them as a primary problem in maintaining 'good order' and security. The long-standing administrative preoccupation with 'conditioning' in the Northern Ireland prison system, then, was primarily informed by a narrow vigilance against possible breaches in the 'human dimensions' of prison security either through the 'failures' and 'weaknesses' of staff, or the intentionally subversive motives of prisoners.

Feminist and critical approaches, in contrast, apply a broader concept of 'disobedience', in the context of women's imprisonment, to codify the range of anxieties, transgressions and displacements of normative and clearly-defined roles that arise from resistance to voluntary association with prison staff, or other 'beneficial' and authorised influences. In this context, the relations between staff and prisoners were not reducible to a functional or instrumental understanding of 'conditioning'. Rather the transgression of these relationships emerged from the very conditions of the disciplining and regulation of women political prisoners.

This chapter has explored the social construction and meanings of solidaristic techniques for reversing some elements of the economy of personalised correction which conventionally characterises the penal punishment of women. However, in doing so, it has

raised some further questions about the limits of such tactics, and the capacity of penal punitive systems to shift from behavioural to coercive strategies for reinstating 'good order'. The following chapter explores the complex role of the bodies of prisoners as targets of punishment and instruments of resistance.

Chapter 10

'Our bodies are weapons of war': A penal dialectic of the body

They used our bodies against us. That's the only thing they had against us was our bodies. I suppose that was a threat too. Not only did they take your freedom away, they actually took the right of your body away. They have a say about that, when you can change, when you can have your clothes on. So you didn't even feel your body was yours (Hanna: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Throughout the prison campaign women prisoners sought to retain autonomy over their bodies through various forms of resistance to discipline, punishment and routinisation. As the disputes over criminalisation hardened into overt conflict in the prisons, the bodies of the prisoners shifted to a central position in the prison struggle. This chapter examines the relationship between the punishment of the prisoners' bodies, and prisoners' use of their bodies as resources for resistance. As Foucault reminds us, the body is a two-way conduit of power where 'after investing itself on the body, [power] finds itself exposed to a counter attack in that same body' (Foucault, 1980: 56). This dual meaning emerges where respondents described their bodies as objects of deterrence and political retribution, as 'weapons of war', and as instruments of resistance. The basis of the chapter follows from the arguments in chapters three and four that the punished bodies of women political prisoners, (and subsequently, their resisting bodies), emerged in relation to intersecting, normative constructs of gender, law, violence and criminality. The first part of the chapter discusses how the prisoners in Armagh were compelled to deploy their bodies as resources of resistance during the 'no wash' strike of 1980. The second part discusses the enforcement of 'random' strip searching in the women's prison after the hunger strikes in terms of a reassertion by the prison administration of its privileged jurisdiction over the bodies of the confined. The concluding discussion considers the gendered implications of state violence in imposing 'closure' on the insurrection of women.

The gendered body of prison resistance in Northern Ireland

The idea that prisoners used their bodies symbolically, instrumentally and strategically at different junctures in the prison struggle is probably the most extensively discussed aspect

of the Northern Ireland prison protests (Coogan, 1980: D'arcy, 1981: Beresford, 1987: O' Malley, 1990: Feldman, 1991: Campbell et al., 1994: Aretxaga, 1995). The no wash and hunger strikes of 1980, in particular, dramatised the importance of the bodies of the prisoners as sites of conflict between penal power and legitimacy and the political subjectivity of the prisoners. Feldman argues that different phases of the prison protests corresponded with the development by the male prisoners of innovative techniques for utilising the body against the prevailing organisation of the regime, so that:

Each stage of politicisation and ideological attainment corresponded to a radical deconstruction and reassemblage of the body ... [N]ew political representations and insights emerged that could be traced directly to the technical and semic [sic] reorganisation of the prisoner's body (Feldman, 1991: 204).

The conditions under which women protesting prisoners were able to establish a corresponding radical praxis of the body were more ambiguous. Aretxaga faults Feldman's representations of the prisoners' bodies 'as instrumentalised against the technologies of domination first applied to them' in terms of a gender-blind account which 'belie[s] the question of subjectivity' (Aretxaga, 1995: 125). The analysis in this thesis suggests that the bodies of the protesting women prisoners were specifically defined through discourses of disorder. The suppression of their prison protests was connected with sexual difference because distinctive forms of punitive closure emerged in response to the sexual, gendered and politicised anxieties which their entry onto the stage of prison resistance provoked. This links the ideological construction of the confined, protesting women prisoners with the culture and strategies of discipline and punishment that directly engaged the body. Thus, while Feldman connected radical practices of resistance with the emergence of progressive phases of ideological development amongst the male prisoners, there are important areas of analysis that have to be brought into consideration in order to explain how the bodies of resisting women prisoners emerged as signs and instruments of the penal crisis during this period. These differences commence with the preceding formations of punishment and discipline which constructed women prisoners in relation to their gendered and political transgression. As discussed in chapter two, each point of transition in the women's prison

campaign - between reactive containment and open conflict over criminalisation, and later against 'normalisation' - opened up new opportunities for the administration to apply novel and intensified forms of intervention. These included the attempts to erode their political structures through an extended use of individual adjudication and regulation after 1976, the physical and disciplinary containment of prisoners on the no wash and hunger strikes of 1980, and the enforced submission of remand and sentenced prisoners to compulsory visibility, following the introduction of random body-searching after 1982. The second consideration entails breaking with customary conceptions of the abject and passive, 'feminised' body in prison, by interpreting the use by prisoners of practices of the self in terms of their transition from subjectification to agency. This is not to impose their complex technologies of the self onto an irreducibly resistant body, nor to imply that the body was the sole source of resistant practices. Rather, this analysis examines how these practices emerged out of a specific interplay of suppression and resistance that privileged the body as a site of conflict.

The origins of the no wash strike

The issue that precipitated the no wash protest in Armagh prison, which lasted for ten months in 1980, was the refusal by prisoners to attend their disciplinary hearings to hear what punishments they had received for the disciplinary offences they had incurred by refusing to conform to the 'ordinary regime'. This had led to a series of confrontations between the (male) governor and the prisoners which broke into open conflict when members of staff were ordered to bring prisoners by force to their disciplinary hearings. However, Áine and Winnie also argued that the underlying source of contention was their refusal to conform to the codes of personal deference and compliance that normally sustain the social hierarchy of prison regimes, which precipitated the closure of tenuous and paternalistic thresholds of tolerance for their structures:

So there was a bit of aggro. We decided that the ones that were put on report would refuse to see the governor. You had to go to the governor, the governor wouldn't go to you. They refused to go to the governor so he had to come up to them ... It really went against his grain having to come up, because he had to do the report at the cell door, while you were lying on the bed totally ignoring him. It was a victory for us, because he came up to us, we didn't go down to him. It was this type of "on-off" all the time, with us trying to get one over on them, and them trying to get one over on us. That was constant (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

It was because [the governor] couldn't give way, and we wouldn't go up to see him. That's what I took out of it, because as far as he was concerned we were belittling him by making him come and see us, and he was going to prove differently, so he was! The main thing was his authority was confounded, and his idea of himself was offended, and he was determined to make an example of us, and that was that (Áine: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Winnie, who spent nine months on the no wash strike before being released from prison, continues:

A prisoner took a dose of diarrhoea and had asked the screw to let her out of her cell to empty her chamber pot ... They opened [her] cell door and one of the screws made some crack about she could shit anywhere. So she threw [the contents of the pot] over her. She was immediately put on report. Again, we refused point blank to go and see the governor. If he wanted to adjudicate us, he could come up and do it. So that day we were all standing in 'B1' at the hotplate because the meal was coming up ... We heard the gate opening and thought it was the special category prisoners coming back. But it wasn't, it was the riot squad coming through. We were completely surrounded. They were heaped.¹ We were quite calm, we looked around and thought, "shit, what's happening here?" One of them grabbed a prisoner, and the place just went berserk (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

We were all locked in the Association Room, and they took out the ones that had to be adjudicated. They trailed each one of us into the governor, and held her steady in front of the governor while he read out what he had awarded her - a month's lost remission and all this crap, and then took them out and threw them in the ante-cells in 'B1'. So, there was absolute murder. Everybody that was taken out was filed into a room and searched with a male screw standing at the door. They said they were looking for uniforms [of the IRA]. The whole point of them coming in was to bring the five or six prisoners that had to be adjudicated in front of the governor. That's what instigated it (Ibid.).

¹ Armed with batons and in full protective clothing.

When we got out for exercise, four of us at a time, we found the bathrooms locked. You had full chamber pots, nowhere to wash yourself. So one of us went down to Mairéad [Farrell] and she said to us, “chuck it down the wing”. And that’s how the no wash protest started in Armagh (Ibid.).

Excremental resistance: the gendered politics of defilement and alienation

A part of penal rehabilitation for women entails cultivating normative modes of femininity in prisoners who are deemed to have lapsed from that category (Dobash et al., 1986). Bosworth has argued that practices of personal hygiene and self presentation can be catalysts of struggle and resistance for women prisoners in asserting their own versions of femininity, and refusing imposed versions of docility and dependence (Bosworth, 1998), while Carlen holds that the struggle to maintain personal care and management is an elementary aspect of women’s resistance to the forms of contamination and invasion of privacy exercised most closely on their bodies in a prison setting (Carlen, 1998: 91).

Practices of deliberate self-neglect are part of the repertoire of prison protests generally, alongside nudity, hunger-striking, non-cooperation with welfare or medical staff, and environmental degradation. Prisoners also use less visible methods for obstructing the jurisdiction of prison regimes over their bodies, such as self-mutilation and suicide, drug abuse, violence and personal neglect. These reactions are frequently labelled as ‘anti-social’ behaviour, which supports the drive towards pathologisation, medical prognosis and psychiatric labelling as anti-normative and ‘sick’ behaviour (Sim, 1990: Leibling, 1992: chapters two and three). As discussed in chapter two, the women’s protests were defined through a complex of disciplinary and medicalising discourses, especially as concerns about the deteriorating health and conditions of the protesting prisoners became central to securing compassionate releases for a minority who had become gravely ill in the course of their protests. However, official clemency and medical intervention in these contexts were viewed by the remaining prisoners as strategies for weakening their protest by diverting the political focus of their protest into elaborated areas of legal and clinical jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the decision to continue the protest was motivated by the more immediate and pragmatic risks:

Even had it crossed my mind to come off protest [sic], the smug look on the screw's faces would have stopped me right away. Because there was a couple of girls came off the protest, and the verbal abuse they got from the screws, "you're only ordinary criminals now", that sort of thing. I think with a lot of the women there, the harder you hit them, the more they came back. It was a case of showing them that they hadn't got one up on you. Fair enough, they'd give you a beating and all that, but you'd recover from it and still be where you were, because they weren't going to get you off that protest (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

No disrespect to the women who had come off protest [sic], but the administration seemed to look on them as if they had broken them. They hadn't really, it was just through family things and health reasons, different reasons, the women had to come off. But there was a sense that [the administration] were trying to hold these people up to you as a role model. Like, "if you're good, this is what you can get", trying to discourage you at all from having any participation in the prison struggle. That was what they were trying to do, to criminalise you (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry).

For the women on the no wash protest, the loss of access to sanitation and opportunities to maintain basic bodily care created significant and intersecting forms of alienation and risk. As Winnie explains, this entailed not only the prospect of physical and psychological disintegration, but also led to profound forms of alienation from their bodies and the forfeiture of normative 'feminine' subjectivity:

The first time I actually had to spread my own excreta on the wall, I cried, because it was debasing. It was on the wall, and I was thinking, "Mother of God, what the hell am I doing?" It was like most things, you sort of pull yourself out ... you're doing it because you've been put into it. You didn't ask to be put into that situation, you've been put into this situation, make the best of it. But like most things, the human spirit is phenomenal at blocking things out, and accepting things as normal ... it's not that you accepted it as normal, you just accepted it. It had to be done, and that was your choice. If you didn't accept it, you went. You came off protest. It wasn't even the consequences. The way I looked at it, I had gone through two and a half years or so of a system trying to knock the crap out of me. And because this had escalated, if I had given in the system would have won. To me that's what it came down to. Call it sheer stubbornness or whatever, but there was no way the system was going to beat me (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

When we were on the no wash we were all checked. Well, not checked; the doctor looked into the cell and went out again. We were all designated as being fit during the protest. Before no wash you were called once a month to be weighed. There was no blood pressure taken or anything like that. But when we went on the no wash there was nothing. Say for instance your menstrual cycle. They took the towels and things out of the boxes and just lobbed them into the cell. This meant, because they weren't in the boxes, if there was urine or anything on the floor, it was defunct, you couldn't use it a lot of the time (Ibid.).

We used to write stories and read them out. They would have been passed around the wing. Literally anything to keep you sane, because if you're sitting in a cell that's twelve by six, with another human being, and that space is crawling from floor to ceiling in excreta, and it's dark brown, it's like being in a coffin. There's no light getting in because the windows are boarded up, and it's just like being buried alive. So you have to do something to keep yourself sane (Ibid.).

'Dirt' has an extensive application to civilising narratives in the histories of colonial, gendered and 'underclass' experience, and its imaginary is woven into racial and colonial enterprises for 'cleaning up' or eradicating 'contaminating' forms of contact with the subaltern 'other' (Douglas, 1984: Arnold, 1988: Anderson, 1995). Nineteenth-century accounts of philanthropic and sanitary reformers disclose their fascination with, and repulsion from, various forms of social defilement embodied in the immigrant and underclasses of Victorian society. Conversely, an imaginary of 'purity' has historically supported the idealisation of women in the bourgeois domestic sphere as the crucible of moral and environmental order against a rising tide of social decay (Hoy, 1996). The revival of these discourses of social horror and fears of defilement linked the historical figuration of the 'dirty Irish' with the transgressive excess of the bodies of the women protesters. These analogies were frequently employed in popular and press accounts of the Armagh women as 'the effluent brigade which has tried to prove something or other for Mother Ireland...by sitting in its own excrement' (Daily Telegraph, August 27, 1980), creating in the process a potent ideological basis for the government's position that their 'bizarre campaign of self-imposed squalor' could be ended at the prisoners' choosing (Irish News, April 7, 1980):

The staff just couldn't understand how women messed up themselves like that. To the female staff it was just beyond understanding. The [male orderlies] certainly didn't want to clean up the mess. The women, as women, couldn't understand it. The men had to clean it up, because they had to scrape and paint the walls. I knew it had to be cleared up, that the men had a rota to do so many cells at a time (Official Visitor, Armagh prison).²

Whereas the 'Blanket men' and the male hunger-strikers converted the stigma of defilement into a narrative of endurance (Feldman, 1991: O' Malley, 1990), the women's no wash protest was primarily delegitimised on the grounds of its transgression of the gendered order. As anthropologist Mary Douglas (1984) has pointed out, the cultural values assigned to 'clean' and 'unclean' objects, and the ordering of pure and tabooed spheres, are designated in specifically gendered terms. Even in the broader political and humanitarian interventions on the prisoners' behalf, the legitimacy of their protest was subjected to different interpretations about the character and meaning of the *women's* strategy of degradation. From the prisoners' perspective, their extreme form of protest connected the denial of their political 'rights' with the sexual and physical humiliation produced by the conditions of criminalisation. On the other hand, deploying such tabooed practices also played out the ambiguity frequently noted by feminist analysts of political conflict (Parker et al., 1992: Stigmayer, 1994: Jamieson, 1998) that patriarchal discourses of national or communal cohesion are invested in essentialist values of the sexual and bodily integrity of women:

Men are expected to go to jail, men are expected to fight, men are expected to die, men are expected to get battered. But when a women does this, it's something different. So *everybody* uses that. I always think that people in the struggle use that also, I mean, "our women are being treated like this". On the other hand, the oppressors could say they'll take it easier on the women as a concession (Meg: internee, Armagh: emphasis in the original).

² Specialist teams of male discipline officers were drafted in from the Maze to clean the cells with steam-cleaning equipment. The NIO denied that 'loyalist orderlies' were being used to perform basic cleaning and maintenance tasks with the incentive that they would receive remission, and claimed that male prisoners were selected because they 'were willing to do the work, are considered suitable for it, and for no other reason' (Irish News, September 9, 1980).

Aretxaga (1995, 144-145) asserts that the women's no wash and hunger strikes failed to achieve the equivalent status of the protests in the Maze because their practices of the body redefined prison protest in ways that created new contradictions:

Despite the shared political consciousness and goals of men and women prisoners, their protests had [a] different significance. While the men's protest was articulated through an intense dynamic of violence, the women's protest was crystallised around the meaning of sexual difference.

While departing from the suggestion that the women's protests did not entail a significant dynamic of violence, Aretxaga's distinction between 'sexual difference' and 'intense ... violence' raises definitional problems about the gendered meaning of bodily coercion in prisons. There are no equivalent accounts from the women's prisons of the experiences of male prisoners 'on the blanket' who were subjected to enforced antiseptic baths, or the use of the 'mirror-squat', where they were forced to squat over mirrors so their rectal cavities could be examined, nor of the (illegal) use of body-cavity searches with fingers or implements and the beating of their genitalia during these procedures (Campbell et al., 1994: 53-91, 215). Nevertheless, the persistent implication in academic and 'popular' accounts that women prisoners did not undergo the same degrees of mistreatment as their male peers played a part in converting their experiences from being regarded as an issue of institutional violence into a question of sexual, and gender-specific, violation:

The "dirty protest" is bad enough to contemplate when men are on it, but it becomes even worse when it is embarked on by women, who, apart from the psychological and hygienic pressures which this type of protest generates, also have the effects of the menstrual cycle to contend with (Coogan, 1980: 114).

The gendered determination of the women's no wash and hunger strikes was an inescapable and problematic dimension of their prison experiences because their recourse to radical practices of the body was subjected to distinctive constraints and invalidating discourses. Their protest was constantly beset with the problem of being overshadowed by the Blanket protest at the Maze. In part, this was because the symbolic and instrumental effects of the

Blanket protest were not immediately transferable to the no wash protest, and in part because of the gender-specific and socially-laden constructions of transgression that continuously influenced political and public perceptions of their strikes. The struggle against marginality in the overall campaign also reflected their ambiguous and sometimes fragile status as a legitimated presence within the republican prisoner structures. The familiar problem with their relatively small numbers also meant that the prison administration could more successfully represent their protests as hysterical, trivial, and as adding another, unnecessary layer of disruption to the principal drama being played out in the Maze:

The women were so hyped up that nothing would have annoyed them. It certainly annoyed the members of the Board and the only thing for me was the dreadful smell. It was disgusting. There was a lot of one-upmanship in it. It was a matter of, "anything you can do we can do better". It didn't amount to very much. It didn't have much effect and it didn't last very long, and it didn't have any real objective or purpose in a sense. I thought at the time that it was just a gesture ... the main gesture was *to* the republican movement (Board of Visitors, Armagh emphasis in the original).

I appreciate what the women were endeavouring to do, to get the rights to wear their own clothes and other things. And by God, when I met Humphrey Atkins,³ I made sure that he was clear that the women were looking for equality of treatment with men. But some were more equal than others (Ibid.).

I don't think the republican movement considered the women at all. The [women's] decision was inverted snobbery. If you think of it, the women went on and tried to do more than the men, when they already had the conditions to a large extent. But it was complicated by the fact that they wanted recognition for all the political prisoners. It was a mixture of the misunderstanding by the authorities that they let the thing develop, because they gave political status and then they withdrew it (Ibid.).

Strip searching: Remoralising the unruly body

The rest of this chapter discusses the continued centrality of disciplining the bodies of women political prisoners in the reconstruction of penal order after the no wash and hunger

³ Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 1979-1981.

strikes. It argues that the transition from conflict to 'normalisation' from the early 1980s and into the 1990s, coincided with the introduction of penal techniques for re-establishing surveillant and disciplinary access to women prisoners. As discussed in chapter two, conflict resumed in the prisons in early 1982 over precisely what conditions had been gained by the hunger strike (1981), and over the phasing in of the 'integration' policy (NIPS, 1981: 6). The transition from overt conflict to the period of bureaucratic-administrative normalisation created a distinctive shift in the experience of penal governance in the women's prisons. As Gormally and McEvoy (1995) and McEvoy (2001) argue, 'normalisation' was an ambiguous and administratively-defined redirection of penal policy towards enhancing the containment of political prisoners through a quasi-consensual form of engagement with the political groups. Rather than neutralising the organisational capacity of political factions in the prisons, however, 'normalisation' at best redirected the basis of engagement in the prisons into legalistic and bureaucratic forms of contention (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988), and at worst advanced an equally contested climate that underlay the disruption and organised violence over the issues of segregation and enhanced security into the 1990s (Colville, 1992; McKeown, 2001). Nevertheless, if the period of stark physical resistance and coercion appeared to have reached a critical, turning point with the conclusion of the hunger strike in the Maze, the introduction of random strip searching in Armagh prison thirteen months later led to a resumption of intense confrontation as the unruly bodies of the women prisoners became a renewed focus for restoring order and security. A different trajectory of penal governance arises, therefore, when the contexts and use of strip searching between 1982 and 1986 in Armagh prison bring to the foreground the continued regulation of the bodies of women prisoners. Elizabeth, who was a remand prisoner at Armagh before becoming IRA commanding officer at Maghaberry, analysed the use of strip searching in terms of a remoralising and disciplining turn in penal governance, because the broader objectives and timing of its introduction were linked to their resistance to integration. Furthermore, she argues, the tactic of introducing random strip searching in the remand sections in Armagh, and at the male prisons of Magilligan and Belfast, indicated a novel approach to 'dispensing' coercive methods from the Maze to the more vulnerable 'margins' of the political prisoner population. This policy was informed by the administrative determination to prevent the renewed

growth in influence of the political structures in the prison. The female prisoner population had also begun to rise as a consequence of the widespread civil disorder and increased recruitment to republican paramilitarism in the aftermath of the 1981 hunger strike, and as a consequence of the increased numbers of defendants remanded on the evidence of 'Supergrass' witnesses:

After the hunger strikes ended, there was a conscious decision taken by the prisoners to go into the system, for to try and break the system down. That was where you seen, I think, almost the parting of the ways between the way they treated the men and the way they treated the women. A major factor was the governor. He introduced strip searching and forced integration. I think that at that stage, there were only 24 of us, and they felt that they couldn't do it with the men because they were too many. And you see, they had this thing too - because they brutalised those men so much and they let ten of them die - those prisoners were now going to get out onto the wings. And they knew that those prisoners weren't going to forget that. Therefore, I think they started panicking a wee bit in the 'Kesh, that they had to give some concessions to keep the men quiet, or whatever. Whereas, they did the opposite in Armagh - a stark contrast, you know. They started being actually more brutal, with the strip searching, and the fact that they started the strip searching on the remand prisoners. Because at that stage you had a lot of remand prisoners in on Supergrass evidence, you had a bigger number of prisoners on remand than there had been in a long time. Also, it was like the pound of flesh, "we have yet to change things in the 'Blocks, but we can still get in here and come down hard on them".⁴ I think it was just part of their policy, coming down hard on the remands at that stage. They had done it with the sentenced prisoners for years, now they were starting on the remands. They appear to have taken the decision at that stage [that], "we're not going to break these people. These ones that have already been here have been through this hunger strike, maybe we should start on the new ones" (Elizabeth: Commanding officer, Maghaberry).

They came down hard on the ones they thought were vulnerable. Their idea was that from now on these were going to be the showcase regimes. They had this plan later on with Maghaberry. They'd lost the 'Kesh, and they thought if they worked a bit at us, they could still break the women. Then they could show people, "look how these prisoners can all mix together, integrated". They seen normalisation as a twofold thing, as a punitive thing for the outside: "if you're going to come into jail, don't think you're going to get it easy", and also in the sense of trying to reform you, trying to integrate you back into society again. Not that they ever did anything to try and do that - anything positive - it was all the negative side of it. I think by this stage the whole administration was of the view that they didn't know what to do. They didn't know how to cope with prisoners coming off this no wash (Ibid.).

⁴ The 'Kesh or the 'Blocks are vernacular descriptions for the H-Blocks or Maze Prison. Republicans also referred to the prison as Long Kesh.

Strip searching: engendering state violence

According to women prisoners, strip searching was the definitive example of state violence against the 'captive', female body. Their resistance to strip searching was also considered by them to be the critical contribution by women prisoners to the larger struggle against coercion across the prisons. Kathleen argues that resistance by women prisoners against strip searching was comparable to the sacrifice embodied by the hunger strikers in the Maze in 1981. In describing the mass strip search of women prisoners at Maghaberry in 1992 as 'rape', she also argues that the bodies of women prisoners were composite objects of political repression, gendered subordination and state power:

I connect strip searching to the struggle in the prisons which in essence was won by ourselves through the hunger strike. Because for the first time the whole world knew what was happening in the North of Ireland, and they knew what was going on in the jails, and the hunger strike was the culmination of all that. It was an unfortunate process where people had no other choice, and you could rationalise that and put it into a clear context, and with strip searching, I can also do the same. Because our struggle was also a part of the prisoners' demands, and they knew they were going to be met, and they [the prison administration] knew that they were losing that power as such. In that context they then introduced strip searching and that had the same effect. They were hoping that it would be done in such a subtle fashion, in the backdrop of all the other stuff that seemed to have a priority. Strip searching was kind of slipped in there, out of the blue ... I would say strip searching is a symptom or a consequence of their overall policy, but it doesn't make it any easier for me as a person to accept strip searching as such. You know having all the rationalisations doesn't ease the pain of being abused and humiliated in that context (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

I've always viewed rape as a violent act rather than a sexual one. It's the ultimate act of violence, 'cos it's all about power and control. You know, it's not about fucking ejaculation, it's all about power, and control and containment. And revenge. We were getting penalised for being political women, first and foremost. That's what that was about. And the aftermath was all about being penalised, and that mostly because we had the audacity to resist ... It's the ultimate weapon they have against us. You see a group of women who are extremely strong, highly politically motivated, highly personally motivated, and it's a way of containment, just a way to remind us that they have the power and control. It's got fuck all to do with security (Ibid.).

Kathleen's comments powerfully convey the collision of the state, sexual violence, penal power and the bodies of confined women. This relationship exemplifies the long-standing feminist critique of the role of the state in the institutionalisation of gendered violence (Franzway et al., 1989). Feminist theories of the state have sought to dismantle its idealisation as an autonomous, abstracted and rational entity by moving towards an analysis of the state as a strategic actor in mediating power relations, including gender relations (Pateman, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989). Although 'the state' and 'gender' are not always coextensive or equivalent systems, feminist theory has revealed how gendered relations are partly constituted by the state in the realms of the law and the criminal justice system, and welfare, reproductive, economic and social structures (Franzway et al., 1989; Smart, 1989, 1992; Young, 1990; Cain, 1994). An alternative approach has centred on the dual role of the state as a strategic actor in perpetuating violence against women, both by failing to intervene in crimes of violence against women, as well as by the direct involvement of state agents in inflicting violence. Crawley summarises the argument:

The state ... plays a critical role in instigating and perpetuating violence against women through both its own acts of political repression and through condoning and/or failing to prevent the patriarchal oppression of women (Crawley, 2000: 92).

Crawley further argues that the failure or refusal by the state to act in preventing violence 'is equivalent to' the commission of an act of violence 'because, in its failure to respond, the state gives the abuser freedom to act with impunity' (Crawley, 2000: 99). The coextensive character of these direct and indirect roles has assisted in defining the culpability of the state in terms of authorising or licensing frameworks which may emanate, tacitly or otherwise, alongside more active forms of state violence. This approach is concerned with revealing the distancing processes and justificatory positions which hold that abuse or violence arises from localised and unauthorised malpractice on the part of elements within police, security or penal services, and cannot be equated with the actions of the state. Furthermore, these arguments are concerned with establishing a language of accountability in the context of systematic cultures of non-disclosure and the protection of

state personnel. A central objective of the feminist criminological project has involved dismantling the climate of disbelief which surrounds violence against women across both 'public' and 'private' institutional domains. As Arbour (1996), Shaw (2000), and Hannah-Moffat (2001) have also shown, the official silences that surround incidents of violence against women in penal institutions are facilitated by the conceptual organisation of 'privacy' in terms of 'internal', institutional matters that are deemed to be outside admissible public concern, which in turn reinforce existing, finite levels of institutional accountability.

Feminist theory has been concerned with the institutionalisation of gendered power, and the occurrence of sexual violence within state institutions, since radical feminist state theory posited that sexual violence is a central organising instrument of male domination, which is supported by the state's policies and practices (MacKinnon, 1989). Brownmiller's (1974) theorisation of sexual violence as a structured, institutionalised dimension of political conflict has influenced an emergent literature on the gendering of state violence (Card, 1991; Stiglmeier, 1994; Aretxaga, 1995; Jacobs et al., 2000). Central to this literature is a critical concern with the reification of the bodies of women in the reproduction of power relations, both across social institutions and within institutional structures. It is not claimed here that there is a critical consensus in feminist theory about the convergence of gender, violence and political power, nor that these complex relations are believed to be reducible to each other. However, it is suggested that the occurrence of strip searching, and the meanings of sexual violation that were articulated by prisoners, were not divorced from the norms and practices of psychological, emotional, physical and other violences that are legitimated by assumptions of access to the bodies of women in confinement. Neither could the normalisation of these practices, nor their gendered meanings, be separated from institutionalised state violence in the context of political conflict in Northern Ireland.

This chapter has examined the role of the incarcerated female body in the continuation of penal resistance. The next chapter critically explores the resistance of women to new imperatives to conform to the prison regime during the period of penal 'normalisation', from 1986 to 1995.

Chapter 11

'Working Within the System': Resistance in the Context of Normalisation, 1986-1995

The mission statement is to maintain a prison system of a high standard, with an appropriate balance being struck between the needs of security and control and the desirability of forward-looking regimes which give prisoners the opportunity to prepare themselves to resettle successfully in the outside world. At the same time there is an obligation on the authorities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Prison Service meets its objectives (NIPS, 1986: 1).

The new strategy of empowerment softens disciplinary power while reinforcing it (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 176).

This chapter explores the emergence of resistant strategies in the context of prison reforms, implemented from the late 1980s, in pursuance of 'normalising' relations with political prisoners. It examines the incorporation into penal governance in Northern Ireland of neo-liberal concepts of personal responsibility, an enhanced emphasis on individual entitlements and 'privileges', and a nominal emphasis on equality as a means of subverting the grounds on which political prisoners laid claim to political status and difference. The discussion deconstructs the ideology and power-relations which inhere in the three central precepts of penal reform - responsibility, resources and rights. The version of 'responsibility' that applied in the Northern Ireland system refers to the 'constructive regimes' that were introduced to encourage personal development and rehabilitation, and to detach individuals from their political affiliates in prison. However, this chapter argues that the recourse to institutional violence against women political prisoners in 1992 was a direct consequence of the failure of responsibilisation.

Secondly, the chapter critically examines the enhanced relationship between the distribution of resources and inducing conformity, which provided the basis for the litigation strategy exercised by women political prisoners in the 1990s. In this context, the very precepts of the individual, 'entrepreneurial' prisoner produced the unexpected outcome of prisoners pursuing legal remedies to achieve distributive equality and group rights.

Thirdly, the adverse institutional responses to the prisoners' goals of connecting distributive rights with political rights disclosed a further contradiction in official penal discourse, as prison administrators reacted to the women political prisoners in more familiar, condemnatory terms as vexatious, self-seeking and subversive litigants.

Applying governmentality theory to Northern Ireland's penal system

Contemporary theories of governance are concerned with the expansive character of social control, as well as the deepening of individualised discipline and regulation (Miller and Rose: 1990: Garland; 1996: Dean, 1996). These formations are thought to occur through new matrices of state and non-state modes of governance, and centre on the governed subject as a complex social agent, bound within a multitude of economic, social, legal and personal freedoms and constraints (Miller and Rose, 1990). Alongside this development, largely influenced by Foucault's theory of governmentality, has been an emphasis on government as the production of prolific matrices of power and knowledge which are not necessarily synonymous with state agencies. In this context, 'government' has come to describe the 'conduct of conduct' or the 'practices, techniques and rationalities involved in the calculated shaping of human capabilities and structuring the field of possible actions' (Dean 1996: 47).

Governmentality theory has emerged alongside, and contested, the rise of neo-liberal ideals of the market state, individual entrepreneurialism, personal responsibility, and 'the free exercise of personal choice amongst a variety of options' (Miller and Rose 1990: 24). These rationalities have extensively influenced the field of penology. Briefly, they refer to the emergence of 'actuarial governance', which is characterised by the primacy of risk-management and the reduction of 'criminogenic' contamination in the prison system, or other criminal justice fields, and involves 'techniques for identifying, classifying, and managing assorted groups by levels of dangerousness' (Feeley and Simon, 1994: 173).

Secondly, organisational, resourcing and administrative relations within criminal justice agencies have been subordinated to free-market and new managerialist paradigms (Garland, 1997). This has been significantly aligned in the post-Woolf (1991) period of penal administration to a reductive emphasis on fiscal control, resource management and performance targets as measures of competent penal governance.

Thirdly, contemporary social policy has been concerned with replacing 'passive' and dependent relations between individuals and social providers with consumerist and clientelist bonds. In prisons, this has been reflected in a departure from a diagnostic, interventionist and treatment model to regimes which encourage prisoners to actualise their own reform (Garland, 1997: 191). This new emphasis directs prisoners towards 'sentence management' programmes and techniques for personal 'empowerment' by encouraging them to examine their criminal and personal behaviour, attitudes towards authority and the reasons for past actions, and motivating them to exercise 'responsible' life-choices and learn to govern themselves as preparation for release. The ultimate goal of this enterprise is to produce 'the self-confining, prudent individual whose behaviour is aligned with the goals of the prison authorities' (Ibid., 192).

Without minimising the significance of governmentality theory to penal analysis, it is important to note that it has largely been used to identify a denser meshing, if not a near-totalising paradigm of disciplinary, regulatory and coercive networks. However, governance is also characterised by the irregularities and limits which its very complexity produces, as the practical implementation of policy is often informed by unintentional and unexpected outcomes, underfunding, sectional conflicts of interest or other 'reverse salients' (Dean, 1996: 65). Thus, political programmes and aspirations are:

... rarely implanted unscathed, and are seldom judged to have achieved what they set out to do. Whilst "governmentality" is eternally optimistic, "government" is a congenitally failing operation' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 10).

Some further caveats have to be considered. Governmentality theory is in danger of assuming that the hegemony of neo-liberal governance in prisons is assured, or that the terms and technical practices of penal administration have been successfully enclosed within actuarial and managerial concepts. However, as discussed below, opposition to various aspects of the actuarial and regulatory logics of penal reforms in Northern Ireland emanated, for very different reasons, from both senior administrators and staff, as well as prisoners.

Furthermore, governmentality theory largely assumes that disciplinary power has been refined from the raw and immediate enforcement of rule or ideological inculcation, to extenuated and indirect practices, or 'government at a distance' (Garland, 1996). Not only has this been questioned in terms of the persistent recurrence of coercive and disciplinary powers in penal relations (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), but, as Garland argues elsewhere, it is questionable that the sovereign role of the state has receded in the realms of law enforcement and punishment, rather than producing and sustaining new regimes of rule (Garland, 2001).

Feminist criminological theory adds some additional, critical nuances to this scenario. In an environment which reifies the values of close regulation, self-management and 'responsibilisation' (Garland, 1996), women are, or are expected to be, exemplary self-governing citizens because women are often highly self-surveilling with respect to various norms of femininity (Bordo, 1993). Arguably, too, the innovation of subjective techniques and imperatives in the service of inducing 'responsibility' also reflects a continuation of the forms of close governance which theorists of women's imprisonment have consistently observed in historical and contemporary penal contexts. As Hannah-Moffat (2001: 163) comments:

Changes in contemporary penalty cannot be viewed in isolation from past strategies of governing. We can combine past analyses of penal discipline with the more recent accounts of neo-liberal strategies of governing to demonstrate changes in penalty, and to enhance our understanding of the interrelatedness and interdependence of various strategies and logics of punishments.

The significance of these exceptions to penal governance in Northern Ireland in the context of women's imprisonment are explored in the rest of the chapter.

Responsibilising the female political prisoner: Mourne House, HMP Maghaberry

As discussed in chapter two, the logic of penal reform from the 1980s¹ was lodged in a broader strategy of 'containing' or 'managing' dissent in the prisons. Thereafter, prison policy was directed towards three principal goals: obtaining conformity through 'consent' by engaging prisoners in a social contract; 'rehabilitation', which followed the implementation of pre-release and parole arrangements, subject to the prisoners' willingness to participate in personal development and assessment programmes with welfare and probation staff; and individuation or atomisation, which arose out of the emphasis on treating prisoners 'as individuals', and implied the relinquishing of their political subjectivity.

The turning point in fostering an incentivising ethos and a culture of 'participation' occurred in 1988, with the introduction of a series of pre-release and home leave schemes for prisoners in their last year of sentence. These were increasingly taken up by political prisoners (NIPS, 1992: 2), who had periodically boycotted similar programmes since the 1970s. Working-out schemes were also introduced in the same year for life sentence prisoners on the last nine months of their sentence before release on licence. These involved re-training prisoners for employment at a unit in Belfast prison before allowing

¹ As noted in chapter two, the precise timing of the introduction of 'normalisation' is subject to some debate. Whereas the official claim to a new direction in penal policy was announced as early as 1982 (Gormally et al., 1995), the implementation of 'normalising' policies was contested by prisoners up to and beyond the early 1990s (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988; Colville, 1992). McKeown (2001: 155-159) argued that the operation of the new policy was also reliant on the strategy of 'constructive engagement' adopted by republican prisoners after 1987. This thesis argues that, apart from integration and enhanced security, none of the 'progressive' elements of the new policy were implemented with respect to regimes for women until the move to Mourne House in 1986, at the earliest.

them to progress, after three months, to a work experience arrangement outside the prison on a 'day-parole' basis, while accompanied by a member of the welfare staff. Prisoners had to 'progress through' programmes with staff from the prison education department and probation service before their licence was granted (NIPS, 1987/88: 26). 'Sentence planning' was introduced in 1994. Under the scheme prisoners 'agreed with the Prison Service a programme of activity with built in milestones and targets' (NIPS, 1995/6: 24).² The 'intra-jurisdictional' transfer of prisoners from Britain to Northern Ireland was resumed in November 1992, and the two remaining republican women prisoners in Britain, Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, were transferred from HMP Durham to Mourne House on July 27, 1994 (NIPS, 1992: 26).

The increased number of republican prisoners applying for release and parole licenses was informed by the larger political implications of Sinn Féin's departure from its historical policy of abstention in 1986.³ The practical import of ending abstentionism was that republican prisoners were able to adopt a new tactic of 'pragmatic' or 'strategic' engagement with the administration, by seeking to maximise their terms and conditions without relinquishing their fundamental political objectives. In 1987, IRA prisoners in the Maze and Maghaberry prisons ended their boycotts of life sentence review procedures on the grounds that non-participation had kept their members in prison for their full term, which potentially weakened morale and placed additional strains on prisoners' families and communities. Individuals were also given leave to participate to a partial degree in some prison programmes, and to cooperate with welfare or probation personnel if it furthered the objectives of obtaining leave or release. Participation in life sentence review boards (LSRBs), established in 1983, presented a different set of problems because of the wider

² The figure of an 'uptake' of fifty percent for sentence planning programmes for the first year of its operation, claimed by the prison service (NIPS, 1995/4: 24), was taken from applications from Magilligan and Maghaberry male prisons. No figure was given for the Maze or the women's prison,

³ The abstention policy, by which Sinn Féin and the IRA had prohibited members from taking their seats in either of the 'illegitimate' parliaments (Westminster, or the Dail in Dublin), if elected, had stood since 1925, and was the cause of successive splits in the republican movement.

implications of committing to the probationary approach, which entailed participating in psychiatric and personal development assessments, and involved a tacit commitment to the criteria of criminalisation.⁴ In effect, this required prisoners to produce evidence of having become a 'depoliticised, repentant and remorseful individual, most unlikely to commit a scheduled offence again' (Rolston and Tomlinson, 1988: 184). Elizabeth argued, however, that the new climate of mutual engagement reflected an instrumental adaptation on both sides to broader political realities:

From the administration point of view, they wanted to defuse the jail struggle. They didn't want to give anybody a weapon as such for attacking the system. Again, you have to see it in context of what was happening on the outside. They saw that to be a little more progressive with the prison system worked in their favour in terms of it kept the smooth running of the place, because let's face it, without the prisoners' consent, the prisoners' co-operation, you've chaos. It's not a matter of telling a prisoner what to do, because of course the prisoners weren't going to do it, and they knew that (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry)

Although prisoners at the Maze accomplished a substantial number of improvements to their conditions after 1987 (McKeown, 2001: chapter fifteen), there were few substantive regime changes with respect to association, or relaxing internal security procedures in Mourne House. The official attitude to women political prisoners was that they were still 'dangerously' well-organised, prone to subverting the prison system, and intent on pursuing their objectives by mobilising external protests and focusing unwelcome media attention on the prison system (NIPS, 1988: 1). Enhanced surveillance technology and specialised security training for personnel were developed as 'an important part' of maintaining security in Maghaberry prison (Ibid.). Moreover, women prisoners were deemed to present considerable psychological, emotional and behavioural demands on staff:

⁴ The Life Sentence Review Board was composed of senior NIO officials, the Principal Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Services, a consultant psychiatrist and the Chief Probation Officer. Prisoners serving life sentences were eligible to apply for a date for release on licence, or a date for a review, after serving ten years. Their cases were decided on the length of time served, their tariff, assessments of the danger they were deemed to pose to the public, the prospect of reoffending and degrees of commitment to their political organisations.

Some prisoners have become adept in their attempts to manipulate staff to their own ends, and as they often outnumber officers in individual situations this can present real problems for officers ... [as well as] intimidation and threats while off-duty (NIPS, 1988:10).

There also remained strong reasons amongst women prisoners for suspecting that the underlying conditions of penal reform reauthorised the tenets of criminalisation by inducing prisoners to renounce their political affiliation, engage in individual rehabilitation and submit to the benevolent discipline of constructive pre-release programmes. The emphasis on personal responsabilisation was linked by respondents to extended forms of close discipline, in the context of the more efficient regulatory and surveillant environment of Mourne House. A strong element of mutual antagonism between staff and prisoners also persisted as a result of the years of conflict at Armagh. According to former officers, given the lack of specialist training, the attitudes that had been fostered during the years of prison conflict, and the lack of senior female personnel within the prison service at the time, there was a sense that sections of uniform staff sought to retrieve some of the authority they had 'conceded' in the aftermath of the 1981 hunger strike (Former Officer, Armagh/Maghaberry). There was a corresponding view that the promotion of prison order through mechanisms of 'rights' and 'choice', 'empowered' prisoners at the expense of discipline staff, and could only be rectified through stringent application of the rules (Ibid.). Therefore, the prisoners argued that the realities of the regime were more stringent than officially claimed:

When we first went to Maghaberry they isolated us in small wings. There were seven cells to a wing, wee tiny corridors, very narrow, and the cells with the low ceilings. You're living on top of people. Everything is designed for isolation in it. [They] split us up into these wings. We had no contact with the women at the other section of the corridor. There was only about 28 republicans left. We had quite a few releases, long-term releases. At one stage there was only 3 of us on the ground floor. There were other republican prisoners who were on a different wing - but they were integrated.⁵ It's unbelievable, because these were women that we were sharing cells with in Armagh, and when we went to Maghaberry, we had no contact with them except in the yard. The only reason we had contact with them in the yard was because

⁵ These were 'resignees' from the republican prison structure.

they hadn't the staff to staff two yards. They actually tried to implement a really rigorous regime in terms of small, petty things, like, if you didn't go to the yard, you got locked in your cell, which never operated before. There were only so many allowed to move at the one time. One at a time [we were] escorted down to the yard, and so many were allowed in the yard at the one time - things like that. We had to break that all down again. You were constantly coming up against different things all the time that you had to break down (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry).

All our movements were noted. If went to take a bath that was noted. They had a bath book and all that type of stuff. You were supposed to say, "excuse me officer, I've just had a bath." We'd go, "fuck that." Obviously we weren't going along with that. The cameras were all over the yards but they didn't actually get them onto our wings. Prisoners would have just wrecked them ... The red book system was in use but they didn't invoke it; they didn't call you a red book prisoner but they done everything else. This was quite cunning, if you think of it, because as soon as you're a red book prisoner your solicitor is on the case quite strongly. The case with us was that we were just shipped about that often. We could come back from a visit and find our clothes would be packed, and we'd be getting moved (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

An additional dimension to introducing 'normalised' social relations involved posting male officers at Mourne House in the early 1990s. Opposite-sex postings arose out of the Fresh Start (1986) initiative, which introduced equal access for male and female officers to a range of duties and grades. The benefits of the policy to staff were also thought to be transmitted to prisoners where the policy facilitated the idea of a 'humane regime', in which social relations outside the prison were reflected as far as possible within prisons. Moreover, the opposite-sex posting was deemed to be beneficial to discipline and order:

Mixing works very well. It lowers tensions. The mixture of female staff with male staff is felt to be beneficial because prisoners, as with anyone, will meet people from the different sexes as both figures of authority and as caring figures. It is unhealthy and artificial to have same-sex figures in prisons as authority and caring figures (Female governor, Maghaberry).

While these claims can only be borne out by a more extensive study, criminologists have suggested some grounds for viewing opposite-sex postings as inappropriate for prisoners already coping with separation from their families (Leibling, 1992: chapter seven), because they do not realise 'gender-sensitive' custodial practices with respect to a prisoner's

interest or wishes (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), or because the presence of male officers creates additional points of stress with respect to the licence over matters of dignity or privacy that are already inherent in prison (Carlen, 1998: 138-143). In addition, the policy has contributed to increased conflict and institutional violence when male special support officers have been deployed in the event of disturbances in women's prisons (Arbour, 1996). Responses from the prisoners, moreover, suggest that the existing barriers to establishing 'positive' interpersonal relations between the political prisoners and male uniformed officers at Mourne House were compounded by the prisoners' belief that the NIO was introducing a novel approach to maintaining an additional security presence. These apprehensions became clearer, as the following section explains, as a consequence of staff violence during a wing search at Mourne House in 1992.

'Humane regimes' and the resilience of coercive penal power

On March 2, 1992, the 21 political prisoners and 13 women in the 'ordinary' regime were subjected to an enforced mass strip search by female officers, supported by male special support officers, after a period in which strip searching had resumed to the level of entry to and exit from parole or work release programmes.⁶

It was terrible because that started it at about half [past] nine or quarter to ten that morning and it went on until ten o'clock that night. And we had to listen, each of us, to each woman getting brutalised and beat and abused. They [women officers] literally came in, trailed the woman off the bars or whatever, took all her clothes. There were male screws outside with Alsatian dogs, and I could hear every single detail. Everyone was in riot gear, with visors, helmets, shades, gloves, black boiler suits, and it was all done in a military fashion, like eight fall in, right arm up the back, lock left, turn right, you know it was all very strategic. That went on from ten in the morning 'til last thing at night and it was horrific. So what we did was, when they took our clothes off, we would say, "right you took them off you can put them back on again." So we made them put our clothes back on again and it was equally as bad. We refused to walk from our cell up to Association, so we got trailed up.⁷ They literally trailed us up by our arms. They're trailing us up, and your clothes are around

⁶ The background and aftermath to this incident are discussed in chapter two.

⁷ Prisoners were locked into the Association Room while their cells were searched.

your neck, your whole breasts and chest is exposed, your bra and whatever. And there's a whole gauntlet of male screws, there must have been about twenty of them on a small wing, and they had Alsatian dogs. And when they were trailing us up, it was really horrific because the dogs were barking, you thought you were going to get beat [sic], you thought you were going to get attacked. So when we were locked into Association we just wrecked it. We broke windows, TVs, broke furniture and all that. Anything at all we broke it. And that went on all day and that total aggression lasted for the whole week (Kathleen: sentenced prisoners, Maghaberry).

With the 'return' of random strip searching, the prisoners:

... realised that there was going to be a new policy here. And in a way you can see why, not that you can justify it, but the numbers of the women had risen to twenty-odd. You had a lot of women on the wing, and a lot of strong political women who would have had profiles, according to the RUC. And they [the prison administration] saw that as a kind of strengthening of our hand. It was embarrassing them, because a group of women went into the jail who were actually dictating the terms. You had hundreds of men on the other end who were conforming prisoners, who were going along with this notion that Maghaberry was the ideal jail. They had spent thirty and a half million on the jail and security, and it was the model prison and we were the disruptive element. And the politics of disruption just didn't suit the authorities at that stage so we were going to get punished for having our political structure. What better way to punish women than to humiliate them (Ibid.).

The Prison Service later defended the action on the basis that an officer had overheard a conversation during a visit in which a child mentioned that a gun had been taken into the prison. The number of wing searches had also increased during the previous year because of the discovery of drugs on the male side of the prison. All the political prisoners, who had refused to comply with the order to cooperate with full cell and body searches, were subsequently punished for breaching the prison rules. No charges were brought against officers, in spite of the complaints lodged by prisoners, and the demands for an inquiry by religious, prison reform and political groups. There were longer-term, corrosive outcomes for discipline and staff-prisoner relations, as both prisoners and staff noted the deterioration of discipline and the aggressive and conflictual environment on the unit afterwards.

According to former prisoners, the incident confirmed the coercive basis of the 'progressive' impetus of the humane regime. Similarly, in her analysis of penal reforms in the Canadian correctional system, Kelly Hannah-Moffat has perceptively linked the re-emergence of penal coercion to the failure of the responsabilising project. This punitive

relationship, she argues, converges on a new stratum of the punishable women, the ‘high-risk’ and ‘high need’ female prisoner, whose continued resistance to ‘pastoral power’ and ‘empowering programmes’ serves to authorise and legitimate special methods of punishment:

The construction of this group of women as “disruptive”, “risky”, “mentally ill” and “potential escapees” is used to justify the use of force, searches, involuntary transfers, and prolonged solitary confinement, as well as the transfer of women to segregated units in men’s maximum security penitentiaries (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 176).

Furthermore, she continues, there is ‘no contradiction’ between enhanced security practices and the expansion of ‘freedoms’ within reformed regimes, as the refusal by prisoners to be voluntarily reinscribed into novel governing strategies promotes new logics of ‘risk management’ and penal enforcement:

Risk management is constructed as the responsibility of the prisoners and the authorities ... The status of “maximum” security, or “high risk”, which results in punitive treatment, can be altered if and when *the prisoner chooses to comply with the carceral regime* by engaging in risk-minimising conducts such as participating in programmes, refraining from self-injury and from injuring others, and complying in the institution’s regulations (Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 186: emphasis added).

The enforcement of security in Mourne House in the 1990s was a consequence both of the failure to establish influence over the political grouping of women, and the continuing dearth of legitimacy which prison reforms claimed to address. In addition, the disjuncture between the objectives of ‘secure confinement’ and ‘rehabilitation’ at this point reflected the fact that these questions had been left unresolved in the Murray Commission (1975) into the modernisation of women’s imprisonment in Northern Ireland. The regime that Mourne House was meant to foster was embedded in a correctional model which anticipated that the political prisoner population would either have considerably diminished, or become one whose claims to differential status would have been resolved, politically or otherwise (Murray, 1975: pars. 74-75). The optimistic assurances of the Murray Commission that

'liberal' regimes and 'flexible' security systems would automatically emerge following occupation of the new prison, were not borne out in practice. The persisting conflicts that accompanied the implementation of regime changes were not, contrary to official claims, sourced simply in the refusal by political prisoners to engage constructively with the regime. Rather, they were reinforced by structural deficiencies in policies or practices for directly addressing the specific issue of women's imprisonment for all categories, and the persistent official evasiveness as to how a 'rehabilitative' ethos could be consistent with the realities of political imprisonment. Whilst prison reform in the England and Wales and Canadian prison systems has at least sought to address 'gender-sensitive' (Shaw, 1992: 1996), 'gender-appropriate' (Carlen, 1998) or 'women-centred' (TFFSW, 1990) policies and programmes, there has been no comparable inquiry or analysis of regime changes in the women's prisons in Northern Ireland. Although feminist and critical analyses of the contemporary layering of new forms of control through a grid of benevolent discipline, have in part been levelled at past or current misdirections in applying feminist penal reforms (Hannah-Moffat, 1995: 2000: 2001: Carlen, 1998: 2002), prison regimes for women in Northern Ireland continued to be defined by their neglect as a specific policy issue, and by the primacy of securitisation defined largely in relation to male political prisoners.

The litigation strategy: converting penal privileges into political 'rights'

In 1993, the republican women prisoners at Maghaberry filed a series of suits against the prison administration of Northern Ireland on the grounds of sexual discrimination with respect to equal access to educational, recreational, visiting and association facilities (Memorandum, Sinn Féin POW Department, 1993). They cited firstly, the adverse effects on maintaining appropriate contact with their families arising out of the inadequate visiting facilities, the lack of crèche facilities in the women's prison (although one was provided in the male prison), the lack of appropriate facilities for visiting children, and the lack of privacy on visits. Secondly, they sought legal redress for the adverse affects on their education arising out of regular closures of the education blocks and the total withdrawal of evening classes.

Thirdly, they contended that the conditions for association which were necessary for appropriate community life within the prison, and the 'mental stimulation necessary for long term-imprisonment' (Ibid.), were curtailed because of restricted inter-wing association, and because there were only seven women on each wing. This compared unfavourably with the arrangements in the male section of Maghaberry, which allowed up to eighty two prisoners to associate. Fourthly, they maintained that women prisoners had access to the exercise yard for two hours and fifteen minutes daily, in comparison with access of up to six hours daily for prisoners on the male side of the prison. Fifthly, they alleged that 'political and feminist material, books of poetry, magazines and newspapers and family photographs' were censored or their delivery was delayed by being forwarded to the NIO for classification as a security measure (Ibid.).

The latter three complaints were implicitly aimed at challenging restrictions on association with their political peers in the context of the enforcement of the integration policy. Furthermore, the Republican prisoners contended that the NIO operated 'a policy of dual political and gendered discrimination', on the grounds that they were not allowed full access to resources and facilities because, as non-conforming prisoners, they were not deemed to benefit from such incentives:

For protesting about conditions ... women have been heavily penalised individually by losing remission, spending periods in solitary confinement and having visits taken off them ... and penalised collectively by the continual denial of both inter-wing association and exercise facilities. The women feel that they must continue to raise these issues, because no-one should have to change their political ideology in order to live in a safe and humane environment, and no woman should ever be expected to accept anything less than is offered to a man in a similar position (Ibid.).

The recourse to judicial review was prompted by the decision to clarify entitlements that were within the remit of NIO, but which were applied in practice according to discretionary and security assessments, and considerations of cost. The principles of institutional triage and economy of scale, however, tended to reproduce long-standing discrepancies in provision in the Northern Ireland prison system, because they render additional expenditure

on women's prisons to be the least cost-effective and administratively 'viable'. As Young notes, the contemporary political economy reinforces elements of 'welfarist authoritarianism', which centres on the altered meaning of the 'responsible' citizen as a moderate consumer of social goods (Young, 1990: 53-58). In practice, the downward fiscal drive which is connected with rationalising targets, and identifying best-value approaches in the evaluation of needs are connected to the lowering of expectations amongst prisoners, and cumulatively reinforce existing assumptions that women demand, and therefore receive, less from the distributive culture in prison (Lowthian, 2002: 170-175):

We always have dealt in very, very small numbers of [women] prisoners in Northern Ireland. This had two effects. One is the lack of programmes because it is very difficult to employ teachers or employ specialists on contracts when you may have two today of a particular class of prisoner, and one tomorrow. You never could maintain continuity. So, female prisoners have never been an issue in Northern Ireland, as such. They've never been affected by any of the vagaries of the system, or any changes in the system (Male governor, Maghaberry).

The pursuit of their claims on the basis of gendered discrimination in relation to non-politically affiliated, male prisoners in the same prison was also intended to oblige the administration to dispense with the system of linking privileges with conformity, by formalising parity of treatment and equality of provision on the basis of gender. Nevertheless, as Kathleen argues, the litigation strategy was also intended to establish a *de jure* obligation to provide conditions commensurate with political status:

We decided to do judicial reviews, but we also knew we weren't going to win them. The judicial reviews were just a matter of asserting legal rights because we knew ourselves that if there was ever an opportunity to set precedents, we had a responsibility to do it. We were never recognised by anyone as being political prisoners, women and men. So that was a fundamental thing for us all. Unofficially they knew we had the structures, but unofficial [is] no good to you when you're taking them to court (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

The litigation strategy has to be placed in the context of structural and distributive pressures which influenced the uneven provision of resources. Access to educational and workshop

facilities were curtailed because the high level of staff absenteeism, averaging about twenty percent annually in the 1990s, meant that there were insufficient numbers of staff to escort prisoners to facilities.⁸ Breaches of security on the male side of Maghaberry meant that access to workshops were occasionally suspended for all prisoners. The administrative concern with public accountability and the effectiveness of the prison service was also allied to the commitment to justifying public expenditure through controlling staffing costs, minimising wastage and optimising the use of resources and facilities.⁹ These objectives were deemed to be frustrated by the refusal of the republican group to use facilities with loyalist and non-political prisoners, thus raising the cost of deploying them for segregated use. Furthermore, while improved psychiatric and medical facilities were introduced at Maghaberry, women prisoners reported problems in getting access to services such as breast examinations, cervical smears, or confidential services provided by women medical staff:

We were in the most secure jail in Western Europe and we were responsible for all these heinous crimes. So, obviously, you're not allowed to travel. They'd only bring you to an outside hospital if, for example, you were haemorrhaging, or having a baby. If you discovered a lump in your breasts, even then it wouldn't be an immediate thing, they'd wait a week or two before they'd bring you out (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Reshaping the litigation strategy as a disciplinary problem

Beneath the administrative resistance to the prisoners' strategy of advocacy were persistent regulatory and disciplinary concerns about their motives. Adams has noted that the trend of litigation in prisons has been viewed as 'an excess, a crisis or simply a sign that prisoners were wasting time with "frivolous suits"' (Adams, 1992: 88). From the perspective of senior prison administrators and the NIO, the legal strategy was also connected with the more sinister politicised dimensions of organised opposition and disruption. Administrators claimed that rulings in favour of the prisoners would support the

⁸ Staff absenteeism ranged from about 16 per cent in the 1980s to 21 per cent in the 1990s, and was highest at the Maze and Maghaberry prisons (NIPS, 1982 to 1996).

⁹ Prisoner costs rose from £70,000 per prisoner annually at the beginning of the 1990s (Annual Report, 1992/3: 1) to £75,297 by 1998, 'of which pay and directly related staff costs constitute[d] around 80 per cent of total expenditure' (NIPS, 1997/8: 23).

disproportionate allocation of resources to the political group at the expense of the 'ordinaries'. The insistence by republican prisoners in Mourne House on separate access to educational and occupational resources supported the official view that the litigation strategy was fundamentally about seeking more favourable treatment than other prisoners (Senior administrator, NIO). This was viewed with irony by senior staff, in whose opinion the political prisoners' drive for segregated facilities established a form of hierarchical privilege over 'more vulnerable', non-political prisoners, and demonstrated a telling lack of solidarity with them. While none of the former prisoners claimed that their recourse to litigation was inseparable from the objective of formalising their political status, they argued that their strategy was concerned with obliging the administration to provide resourcing and access to facilities without qualifying them on the basis of 'security', conformity, or cost assessments:

The whole point was to improve conditions. So we all made a decision not to shoot ourselves in the feet. We supported decisions and whatever level of support they [male republican prisoners] felt was needed, we'd give it, and vice-versa. Say for example, we had segregation and they didn't, so they were resisting screws because of that. They'd let us know that they got a shift in policies, so we'd go for the same thing, and vice-versa. We weren't going to give up our segregation in sympathy with our male comrades because on a strategic level that isn't very progressive. So we supported them whenever we could (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Elizabeth further argued that the wider implications of their actions was that facilities improved for 'all prisoners. We were doing our best to upgrade everything ... to get a better quality of life for people in jail' (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry). In turn, these different interpretations of the litigation strategy supported the view of staff that there did not appear to be a reasonable basis for the prisoners' case. Because they were already perceived to be beneficiaries of better welfare and resourcing, their motives could only be attributed to a disruptive and subversive attitude, born out of having too much time on their hands, their liking 'for a spoiler ... if it wasn't one thing, it would be another' (Officer, Maghaberry):

Prisoners are very quick to turn privileges into rights and this is part of the difficulty of the prison service in Northern Ireland, that there are a number of very bad practices which have almost become part of the institutional attitude (Official Visitor, Maghaberry).

I think the position could have been avoided by the management ... When they're going to grant and enhance a regime, they should sit down and look, before they do anything, and say, "the applications are this, have we got the resources?", rather than saying to the prisoners, "you can have it", and then ignoring the cost. This is actually how management manipulate prison officers, saying to prisoners, "you can have it", knowing full well they don't have the resources, knowing full well that prisoners will put pressure on the staff. Then they'll have to take resources from somewhere else, to give them, before the staff will take the abuse (Prison Officers' Association).

Even relatively benign challenges by women to penal norms are constructed as potential disciplinary problems. Bosworth's analysis of the formal approaches made by women prisoners to the administration for minor changes in the regulations suggests that their negotiations with staff and management had to be couched in 'acceptable' forms of assertiveness (Bosworth, 1999: 144-152). Similar problems arose in Mourne House when the republican prisoners requested that personal toiletries could be sent in to them or made available in the 'tuck shop', instead of the prison issue items. The toiletries were initially highly restricted by their contents and volume, and because of the risk of importing illicit or potentially poisonous or explosive substances. A number of specified brands were delivered, after they had been screened by security. According to former prisoners and a former Official Visitor, this concession provided another reason for staff to conduct cell searches for 'suspect items'. Furthermore, even these minor forms of interaction were likely to be perceived as a symptom of more extensive and opportunistic forms of subversion in the service of their broader political campaign:

Like down at Maghaberry, I remember the chief, who I was quite friendly with. She seemed an awfully reasonable woman who would bend the rules a bit. I mean, she really did see the women as women. Prisoners were only allowed to have so much money but she knew that hair colorants cost more than that, and was perfectly prepared for them to have more so that they could do their hair. And the number of little things like that, which I think were very positive. [She] really did see them as

individuals and as women and did a mothering role. The old [attitude] that women in prison have lost their femininity, she didn't have that. She said that sometimes strip searching was a major issue of the month and would be brought up umpteen times that month, and then maybe for two or three months it wouldn't be, and [then] it was about food or it was about work opportunities, or library facilities, and then strip searching would come up again, and she felt that there was a certain pattern. I think it was part of a plan to keep pushing at the system, you know, the group said to themselves, "now we'll take that out up there, but we'll try that here" (Official Visitor, Maghaberry).

A former IRA commanding officer in Mourne House indicated that access to governors was contingent on adopting a demeanour which established credibility and authority, while refraining from 'aggression' (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry). Similarly, because their requests were often concerned with improving day to day resourcing and conditions, the very issues that they approached staff about risked being perceived as trivial, vexatious and marginal to the larger concerns of the prison administration:

I had a session with the girl who runs the Provos. She's not a bad girl, actually. She came to talk to me because the visits were about half an hour late in starting. She'd heard the workshop might not have opened the other day. I had to say, "I'm sorry, you're lucky the other day you got the visits, because with a hundred and eighteen staff on sick leave, nothing is guaranteed." So it depends where you start from. In terms of fear of your life, in terms of fear of being beaten, in terms of fear of being starved, in terms of fear of living in manky, grotty sheets and blankets and whatever else, Maghaberry is a little heaven, but no doubt the girls in Maghaberry would say there are things going wrong ... I think Maghaberry female [prison] is a place where there is no fear, where there's dignity, where there's self-respect, a sense of worth, and so on (Governor, Maghaberry).

The crucial context to this response is that senior prison administrators felt themselves to be faced with an unmanageable series of conflicting demands from prisoners, public opinion and political partisanship on matters of law and order, as well as holding the view that their difficulties were often ignored at Executive and political levels. Moreover, while governing staff in other prison systems have been critical of an ever-expanding managerialist and bureaucratic emphasis in prison administration (Quinn, 1995), an additional dimension in Northern Ireland was that initiatives on performance targets and efficiency were regarded as abstracted procedural and administrative 'dogma', which were far distant from the complex realities of managing political prisoners. Moreover, aligned

to this criticism of bureaucratic ‘interference’ was a sense of themselves as a new breed of tough, pragmatic administrator, who had transferred from the prison systems in England and Wales, and Scotland, or risen through the ranks on fast-track promotion programmes, and were neither swayed by sectional or sectarian loyalties, nor dazzled by technocratic agendas. Similarly, many contrasted their direct and straight-talking dealings with prisoners with the machinations of civil servants at the NIO:

It’s all to do with performance indicators, lean structures - buy a book on management! I run Maghaberry prison, which I’m told is the most complex prison in the British Isles, and is such largely because it has long term sentenced prisoners, female prisoners, female young offender prisoners, it has a psychiatric prison, it has a special unit for prisoners under special protection like the Supergrasses, and so on. It’s quite a complex operation, and thirteen per cent of my staff are on sick leave. My work is cut out every day to open the prison, not cancel visits, the workshops are closed more often than they’re open, education at night has gone (Senior staff, Maghaberry).

The alienation of the middle strata of the prison administration was compounded by a resentment at the initiatives that were produced by external political factors, in particular, the complications that arose from the commitments taken directly at the NIO to altering levels of security, parole and conditions in the context of negotiations connected with the political process. Governors also deflected criticisms from more familiar objects of administrative ire, such as political supporters of the prisoners, supported by ‘the media’ and prison reform groups, as the ‘preserve of the spectators, it is not the preserve of the participants’ (Governor, Maghaberry). While most senior staff claimed they were not opposed in principle to altering correctional objectives or changing their relationships with prisoners, most of those interviewed made the observation that the ‘politicisation’ of prison policy constantly intruded upon the principle of consistency of treatment of prisoners, to the detriment of maintaining order and implementing reforms across all the regimes:

We’ve given as much as we can give. There’s not a great deal left to give. The arguments these days are things like compassionate home leave, that used to be 24 hours, we’ve pushed it to 48. We were criticised for not going to 48, so we went to 48, and we were criticised for not going to 72. I mean in Northern Ireland, the number of occasions a prisoner can be out on home leave is astonishing, it really is.

But you've got to draw the line somewhere. Nowhere else in the world could you get a multi-murderer and the day after sentence, his mother would die and we would give him 48 hours on leave, unescorted. So, I think that's why the Provos are no longer pushing for a great deal. The only thing the Provo girls push for with me, and they're quite right to, is consistency. Because we are so short of staff, you can never guarantee that the newspaper will arrive at nine in the morning or ten in the morning, the world's not going to come to an end. They would always tell me if they were going to go public on this to the press. Last week, their O/C said to me, "well, we just want to tell you we're going to go public", and I said, "fine", and she looked at me and she said, "would you not want to stop us?", and I said, "No. Your going public's not going to add to the situation, it's not going to take away from the situation, in fact you want to write to the press, just make sure it's accurate" (Governor, Maghaberry).

Penal governance and the punishment of 'entrepreneurial' resistance

Since Mathiesen (1965) identified the instrumental use by prisoners of judicial review and grievance procedures as an expression of 'ensoriousness', litigation has been viewed as a critical domain in which penal power and legitimacy are contested. Rights-based advocacy has played an important role in establishing the values of formal equality and proceduralism against the more arbitrary and personalised forms of authority, or the more coercive forms of inducing co-operation that arise in prison (Livingstone and Owen, 1993). However, while legal defence or penal rights advocacy are formally admissible and available, these strategies are shaped by discursive and structural qualifications and constraints. The potential for accessing legal assistance must be seen in the context of other forms of obstruction and exclusion such as the lack of financial and personal resources, the protracted processes of judicial review which deter the majority of prisoners, who are serving short-term sentences, and personal levels of confidence, articulation and education, which contribute to a prisoner's capacity to challenge the system.

In addition, feminist legal theory has been concerned with the normative basis of the dominant construction of 'rights' and 'equality', which have conventionally omitted women from the contractarian tradition of legal discourse (Cain, 1994: Smart, 1996). Administrative guidelines for equal treatment or provision remain imbued with (and undermined by) normative, 'gender-neutral' criteria which obscure the very differences in

women's penalty that they are meant to address (Carlen, 1998: Bosworth, 1999). Berzins and Cooper argue that 'difference' has to be incorporated into 'equality' policies, because the same means of access for women and men will not accomplish the objectives of equality or remedy discrimination (Berzins and Cooper, 1982). Carlen has argued that women in prison have been continuously negated by conventional standards of 'difference' and 'equality' which alternately:

... invoke either an infantilising paternalism ("women prisoners are different to men, they need treatment rather than punishment"), or a formal - but unsubstantiated - equality ("women and men are equal - [and] therefore ... should be subject to the same rules") (Carlen, 1998: 73).

In this context, even the most committed programme of prison reforms, which may in principle be radical, is liable to revert in practice to punishment and discipline, and to 'lend a spurious appearance of legitimacy without diminishing their fundamentally debilitating effects' (Carlen, 1998: 166).

Moreover, further opportunities for punishment arise out of the ideological shift in penal governance towards 'distributive justice', with its efforts to produce the 'depoliticised client-consumer' characteristic of late welfare capitalism, and 'reinforce[...] the one-dimensionality of contemporary policy discourse and the containment function it serves' (Young, 1990: 75). Recent critical feminist penology has observed that the assertion of rights by women prisoners leads to a new cycle of disciplining (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), as well as the elaboration of punitive logics against those prisoners who represent the 'flawed consumers' of neo-liberal, penal governance (Snider, 2002: 370). Thus, while the 'entrepreneurial, self-interested' individual exerts extensive political purchase in penal reform discourse, in practice, such prisoners are constrained within prescribed correctional imperatives, reinforced if necessary by multilateral regulatory and punitive mechanisms.

The question remains whether penal reforms in Northern Ireland can be straightforwardly described in terms of neo-liberal governance, or whether, as McEvoy argues, they were extensions of a transparently political strategy for managing conflict within the prisons as

part of the larger objective of containing political violence (McEvoy, 2001). This chapter has suggested that the contradictory core of neo-liberal penal governance, between ‘choice’ and ‘responsibility’ and a reauthorised, augmented punitive domain, acquired a particular configuration in the context of ‘normalising’ political imprisonment in Northern Ireland. It has explored the limitations of ‘resource based’ indices of penal ‘progress’ as adequate responses to prison conflict, and their role in investing penal reform with an obvious political utility. In this context, ‘normalisation’ was consistent with previous hegemonic phases of ‘containing terrorism’ within the prisons (O’Dowd et al., 1980). Furthermore, the language of redistributive ‘rights’, the formation of new clientelist-consumer relations, and an emphasis on the ‘entrepreneurial self’ were harnessed to underlying anxieties and obstructions when prisoners utilised these very discourses to resist and challenge the regime. Women political prisoners in Northern Ireland continued to be negatively constructed, not just in terms of their deviation from behavioural norms and correctional objectives, but also in managerialist terms as vexatious, opportunistic litigants, political agitators whose rhetoric of rights obscured their ‘selfish’ sectional demands, and as disruptive, subversive and violent female prisoners.

Chapter 12

'Turning this place inside out': Extending the Constituency of Prison Struggle

The thing about when you go on protest is this feeling of family. You're with your own, and as long as you're with your own, nothing can touch you (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

I would say the costs would have been greater to my family than it would have been to me. So you were also saying to yourself, "use the time", use the time for yourself, and to develop yourself. And use it with the other women, so they could develop (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

This chapter takes the analysis of political imprisonment beyond the parameters of institutional resistance to consider the parallel struggles within and outside the prisons. It explores the material and emotional supports, and ultimately the mutually politicising relations between prisoners and community, which were brought about by the extended experience of political imprisonment. A key theme in the social survival of prisoners and their families centred on the reconstitution of the 'family' as an important foundation for ensuring social cohesion and resistant continuity.¹ The concept of 'family' acquired a dual meaning in the context of prison resistance, where prisoners applied analogies of 'family' to describe their relationships with other prisoners, as well describing the politicisation of family relationships as an intrinsic aspect of their prison resistance. The discussion initially explores the politicisation of the coping strategies employed by prisoners and their families. However, the following section on political imprisonment and mothering explores the institutionalised contradictions in penal discourses of 'familiness', which both reinforce the ideal of 'good mothering', while at the same time magnifying the institutional barriers to practically achieving this end. The final section examines the ideological reorientation of republican prisoners arising out of the 'prison debates' from the late 1980s, and links it with the maturation of concepts and strategies of collective resistance within and outside

¹ While the discussion of the 'family' here does not claim to offer an alternative account of the conventional, nuclear family structure, constructed through religious, social and gendered norms, it does refer to socio-historical factors, such as the role of women in domestic and economic spheres, the effects of male unemployment and economic migration, and the impact of sectarianism on labour, housing and incomes, which shaped the networks of social interdependence among working class families in Northern Ireland.

the prisons. In accounting for prison resistance in these terms, this chapter makes the consciously feminist point that the definition of 'the prison campaign' in Northern Ireland incorporated various tributaries of struggle which redefine prison resistance in gendered and collective terms.

Political imprisonment and family survival

Imprisonment is most frequently connected with a form of social death, which is caused not only by the severance of individuals from familial supports and emotional relations, but also by the considerable stresses and hardships which their absence causes to their families outside (Shaw, R. 1992). The loss of contact with partners and children resembles an extended web of punishment which presents wider economic, familial and social deprivations for the prisoner's families, and has been at the centre of redefining imprisonment in terms of its wider collective costs. As Shaw notes:

When ... legally sanctioned punishment takes the form of incarceration, the concept of individual punishment for individual law-breaking collapses (Shaw, cited in Coulter, 1991: 21).

Political imprisonment has had far wider consequences for women than the loss of a prisoner. From the early 1970s, women in working class republican and loyalist communities took on roles as supports for the welfare of prisoners (McGuffin, 1973: 75; Hughes, 1992; Coulter, 1991; Clarke, 1995). Their role was more sustained and conspicuous in republican organisations such as the Irish Republican Prisoners' Welfare Organisation and the Green Cross Fund, which organised welfare for the families of prisoners, transport to and from prisons, and acted as mediators between prisoners and the outside. The Relatives' Action Committee, which gained international publicity for the republican prisoners in the Maze and Armagh prisons in the late 1970s, was largely organised by female relatives of prisoners. Its successor, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, skilfully presented the case for political status to a wide range of political and humanitarian constituencies during the hunger strikes. These activities allowed the entry of

working class women with little previous experience of formal political organisation into the public sphere. Women relatives also campaigned against the institutional abuse of prisoners, while being themselves susceptible to obstruction and body searches while on prison visits (Shannon, 1989: Coulter, 1991: Aretxaga, 1999). They endured social marginalisation, political harassment and impoverishment, and encountered official discrimination and humiliating treatment when making costly, infrequent and stressful visits to prisoners in Britain (Coulter, 1991: Clarke, 1995).

Politicising alienation, loss and coping

Prisoners experience separation as a double jeopardy: as personal isolation from their communities, and as anxiety and stress about the welfare of their families. While women prisoners reported many of the predicaments of being 'cut off' from their families that generally arise in prison, they also referred to constant feelings of guilt and stress about the risks from political violence that their families outside were exposed to, while they felt they were relatively 'safe' or more insulated from random sectarian attacks. These feelings of stress and anxiety were also connected with ongoing concerns about relatives' sickness, problems with their children, financial worries, and sexual jealousy or feelings of being abandoned by partners. The financial and emotional 'burden' of supporting a prisoner also induced feelings of guilt. Jennie and Eilís described the drain on the resources that their families, often on social welfare or low incomes, incurred from visiting one or more relatives in prison a week, and making up parcels of permitted foodstuffs and toiletries for them:

We crippled our families, got them in debt and danger, having to get food parcels, clothes and stuff, so we weren't too bad, you know. We were very well off, in fact. Our families had nothing, we were still okay (Jennie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

We actually restricted our own visits. For example, because we were interned, we were entitled to three visits a week. Some of us were actually taking those three visits a week. And then it dawned on you, that your mother's not just your mother anymore. Your mother is getting pulled out three days a week, to travel to Armagh

and to get back. And at that time they did not have any money, plus the time, when you came from big families as well. So we stopped the visits, we stopped the parcels because we didn't need so much in parcels. They put a terrible strain on the family, so we stopped them (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

Their concerns were also related to more practical dilemmas, such as the safety of their families while travelling to visits, the late arrival or non-arrival of visiting relatives, the strip searching of visitors or the confiscation of items left for prisoners. Many prisoners reported that the obstruction or harassment of visitors was a common cause of resentment, which led to confrontations with staff. Mary, Anna's sister, also referred to the mutual concealment and emotional masking between prisoners and their families:

... even outside for families, we were worried about how you were reacting inside, and you were worrying about how we reacted outside. The golden rule if you were on the outside was, "keep your prisoner protected". Keep their morale up if they were inside. The family thing was to keep the best side out. If something was life and death it had to be told. Part of the whole thing from the start of the Troubles was to break you. Break you inside or outside, whatever way [they could]. Families had to be strong (Mary: prisoner's relative).

As Goffman (1959) and Sykes (1958) have observed with male prisoners and Bosworth (1999: 111) with women, prisoners cope with the emotional stresses of imprisonment through masking or 'putting up a front' to family, staff and other inmates. A recurring theme in the interviews refers to multiple processes of masculification as prisoners refrained from damaging group cohesion by 'getting on with it', keeping worries and fears to themselves and not 'dragging people down', concealing their anxieties from relatives, and guarding against betraying 'weaknesses' to staff. Consequently, the prisoners established collective strategies which encouraged women to express their problems within the group, through establishing alternative, informal supports for dealing with problems of stress and depression:

You got to keep that drive or everybody went down ... There was a real mixture of activities that people constantly did, association on the corridor, visit each other in cells. We used to be very conscious if there was somebody who was too much on their own, whenever that actually happened, if somebody was doing her time a bit hard. We tried to have support mechanisms all the time, from whatever source. If the support mechanisms didn't work, it'd be woman to woman, somebody would work with that person through her bad patch, or whatever. I remember one prisoner's brother being shot. Everybody was devastated. The whole support mechanisms automatically went into gear (Eilís: internee, Armagh).

An additional dimension to the disruption of family relations and structures was the official harassment of prisoners' families, either because of their own political activities or sympathies, or because other family members were on the run. Many of the prisoners had at least one sibling or relative in prison. One prisoner spoke of the constellation of loss, separation and anxiety that arose from the criminalisation of her family:

My mother died when I was in. She dropped dead. So I got out for a few hours. That kind of thing, really, added to the strain. I was the eldest of ten. My sister got lifted six months later. My father was very conservative, went to Mass every day, Gaelic speaker, didn't drink and all that. I hadn't seen him for over a year, he'd been on the run. I remember the day, it was Easter Monday, and the screw came to my cell early in the morning. I knew there was something wrong. I thought it was my Da, because I hadn't seen him. My mother, she'd been up to see me a few days before, and she'd been down to Dublin to see my Da, and she dropped dead. So you'd all that kind of stuff to contend with. I remember making a conscious decision not to cry, taking the attitude, "life goes on." Some of the women thought about me, "she's an absolute hard bastard", because of the attitude I adopted. It was my way of grieving, to become more disciplined, more determined that this regime was not going to break me. Because, you know, you're basically on your own in there, you had to get through your time as easy as possible, whatever way you could (Sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

The pervasiveness of 'familiness' as a vehicle for personal regulation and as a mediator of control in women's prisons has been extensively discussed in penology as having overwhelmingly pernicious, negative effects. Women's relationships in prison are intensively mediated by, and through, normative discourses and expectations of gender, family and 'femininity'. Women political prisoners negotiated certain aspects of family and

domestic relations in prison within these prescribed contexts. While the notion of 'family' remains historically specific and critically contested, the prisoners' usage of analogies of family to describe an alternative 'private' sphere which referenced emotional, interpersonal and friendship ties, reflects the specific gendered, penal and political context in which they constructed methods of personal survival and a sense of community. Although feminist analysis has rightly been concerned with the deployment of discourses of the 'family' as a reactionary rather than progressive tactic, Black feminist theory, for example, has emphasised that the exigencies of racism have reshaped the Black family as a sphere of cultural reinforcement, affirmation and protection (Collins, 1990: Yuval-Davis, 1998: 1998b). The penalisation of prisoners' communities and the shared experiences of political conflict and resistance were similarly brought into alignment with the shaping and reshaping of family relations in Northern Ireland (Coulter, 1991: Clarke, 1995). Family activism on prison issues also inverted the usual public/private institutional dichotomy, on the basis of their insistence that the treatment and welfare of prisoners were not strictly 'internal' prison concerns, but public questions related to the broader conflict. Moreover, the class and cultural homogeneity of the women in the republican group contributed to their internal cohesion by providing a shared base of political values and enabling them to maintain communal identification (D'arcy, 1981):

Because in situations like that, two things stand for you. One is your beliefs, and the second is the discipline that you have around you. That keeps you going. Plus, you've that feeling of family, that you're all in it together, and when one gets battered you feel it the same way. There's a lot of comradeship there. For the years I was in Armagh jail, they were my family. My family outside were the people who came up to visit me, but inside, the women in Armagh were my family. That kept me going. But if your beliefs were ricky you were snookered (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh).

Political imprisonment and the struggle to be a mother

The obligations that are laid upon women to continue to mother and act as the principal carer while in prison are upheld by extensive social norms and expectations (Shaw, 1992). Furthermore, as Carlen points out, the imperative to be a 'good mother', 'is a distinct fea-

ture of women's imprisonment, despite the considerable institutional obstacles to allowing women to do so' (Carlen, 1998: 41). A very small number of women mothered children in prison while serving sentences for political offences, despite extensive obstacles. In Armagh, women with children experienced isolation on the mother and baby unit on 'C' wing, which was built in 1975, and faced strip searching themselves, and the 'checking' of 'the baby's pram and clothes', if they left the wing for visits (IIP, 1985: 2). Two sentenced women gave birth to children while on the republican protest in Armagh. They were denied extra dietary supplements and not given ante-natal care until these 'privileges' were restored in the seventh month of their pregnancy (WAI, 1980: 19). Moreover, women on the non-cooperation protest were effectively denied the right to remain with their children in reasonable conditions up to six months, despite stated official policy (Ibid.). The starkest choice for these was to either keep their child in 'C' wing under an 'ordinary' regime, or give up their children for care outside the prison if they wished to remain on the protest. On returning from the hospital in which they had given birth, for example, the two sentenced prisoners were told that they would have to be locked in their cells full-time with their children if they insisted on returning to the republican wing at Armagh. Both women sent their children out to relatives, and rejoined the protest.

May had given birth to a girl two weeks before her imprisonment in Armagh, and mothered her daughter there until she was one year old. As a remand prisoner, May was not allowed under the prison rules to join the sentenced republican prisoner group.² She was told that the poor state of the sentenced wings, which were in the oldest part of Armagh, meant that she could not transfer there with her baby:

I had to go in every morning to speak to the governor about getting on the other wing to be with the rest of the girls. I was kept on a totally different wing because I had the child and they wouldn't allow me onto the main wing. So I had to propose this to him every morning, and he would say to me [that] they had to [ensure] the health and

² On being sentenced, May was allowed to join the republican group in Armagh and transferred with them to Maghaberry in 1986.

safety of the child, because of the steps. Which you can't fight with, because they have so many fire regulations and other things where a child is concerned (May: remand prisoner, Armagh).

She described her emotional dilemma when she had to give her child up for care by relatives in order to join her republican peers on the sentenced wing as:

... like a death, that was the only way I could ever have described it, because the pain, it went so deep. Leaving your child for years. You were always thinking, putting in your mind that the one minute she's with you, and the next she's not. Not so much worrying about me, but worrying about the child. Thinking, "how is she going to get on? How difficult is it going to be for her?" Because she was with me in the cells continuously, she'd never been away from me once. I suppose, with dealing with all of that, you couldn't be weak, and you couldn't be seen to be weak, because if that was the case, they'd put one up on you. You couldn't allow them to trample you down or get to you so much. So then you thought, "I'll get over this, I'll get through it and I'll get on." And you did get through it, get over it and get on. But it was difficult (May: remand prisoner, Armagh/sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Themes of death, bereavement and loss were also woven through other prisoners' accounts of their relationships with their children. Kathleen's husband and two young children had moved to the Republic of Ireland when she was sentenced. She described the trauma of cutting off from her family as a necessary aspect of the emotional discipline required to cope with imprisonment:

I think the separation from the family, from my kids was particularly hard. They were living in the South, and they travelled up every week to come up to see me. I knew they were frightened and that. Knowing all that made it very hard. And I'll be honest, with the screws and all the stuff they dished out, it didn't annoy me in a sense. The more they gave out the stronger you got. It was a sense of empowerment and a sense of character that we all felt, and we all said, "OK, you've been cut off from each other. You haven't seen your family - well fuck them". That was the attitude. You definitely divorced it. I remember even when I got out and was sitting talking with my sisters. One asked me, "what do you reckon about the kids?" I said, "I'm going to say something that sounds really terrible, but I deliberately didn't think about the kids." If I had thought about the kids I would have been broke, I would have broke like a plate. So I didn't. How could you? (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Narratives of mothering were also dominated by a sense of fractured relationships with their children. Women spoke of their abiding guilt about ‘abandoning’ their children, or being torn between their choices as political volunteers and motherhood, between ‘looking after themselves’ and their desire to provide stability and continuity for their children. Some women said that they retrospectively tried to make up to their children after release, while also experiencing a continuous sense of alienation from them, as well as from their sense of selves as ‘good mothers’. While the network of support provided by female relatives in caring for their children outside was pivotal to sustaining their families while they were in prison, many women referred to their isolation on being reinscribed in the role of ‘a mother’ after release, in comparison with the ‘independence’, equality and affirmation which they experienced in prison:

My family expected me to be this mother. I didn't feel like a mother. I just seen myself as a single woman. I had to look after number one. Sometimes it's selfish, when I look back, but that's the way it was in prison. People would say, "did you not miss your kids", and I say, "No", and [they are] disgusted with me. But I say, "how can you miss something that you haven't got?". What you haven't got, you can't miss. Why sit in your cell and depress yourself with, "I could be doing this for my child, I could be doing that?" That goes out the window. Once I went into jail I put that all aside. I said, "I'm going to look after number one", because I knew my family was looking after my kids. I had nothing to worry about or anything else ... Even when I got out I pushed them away. At first it was great to see them on a visit. But they were on the outside. It's a different kettle of fish. You were sort of backing off, and I spent so much time away from them. I could not accept I was a mother. I had my own independence in jail, looked after number one, or else the girls [other prisoners]. Then all of a sudden, sitting there with two children, "what am I supposed to do here?" And the kids were all over me as usual. Then, until I had a child a year ago, that's when I felt like a mother again. Maybe because I went through the whole thing again. But I'm still settling, still to this day after two years (Hannah: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

Even by the 1990s, the stated official commitments in Serving The Community to ‘maintain[...] prisoners’ family bonds’ (NIPS, 1991b: 12) appeared particularly hollow in the light of the necessity of women prisoners to resort to judicial review in order to gain entitlements for appropriate facilities and childcare support during visits. As Carlen cogently noted:

The official concern about “families” in the women’s prisons is at best nothing more than an empathic collusion in the still-dominant ideological illusion of “happy family-ness”. At its worst, it is either muddle-headedness or institutionalised hypocrisy (Carlen, 1998: 80).

Moreover, as discussed in chapter two, the continuous subordination of most prison reforms and conditions to the larger concerns of the political process up to and beyond the Belfast Agreement (1998) (McEvoy, 2001), meant that the specific problems and needs of women political prisoners remained as marginal to the prisoner release programme after 1998, as they had been during their imprisonment.

The mutual politicisation of prisoners and their communities

From the late 1980s, the alignment of prisoners and their communities played a pivotal role in directing the prison campaign towards a broader constituency of political struggle. This was reflected in the maturation of concepts and strategies of collective resistance inside the prisons. From 1986, republican prisoners underwent a period of reflection and reorganisation which focused the broader republican movement on electoral and community politics. Prison resistance, and especially the no wash/blanket and hunger strikes, had conferred considerable moral authority on the prisoners within their communities, enabling them to emerge as a significant bloc in the formation of political strategy and ideology. Events in the prisons had played a significant role in the internationalisation of the republican cause within the left, feminist and other national separatist movements. The period afterwards saw the reorganisation of the internal command structures in the prisons. This reorientation involved the ‘democratisation’ of the prisoners’ structures, and the development, in the 1990s, of prisoner collectives called ‘coistí’, or wing committees, which were responsible for collective welfare and the strategic development of ‘pragmatic engagement’ within the prisons. The second development entailed a searching critique of the direction of republican strategy in the light of the containment of the IRA’s armed campaign by the British Army by the mid-1980s, and the implications of adopting an electoral strategy after 1986, with its additional resonances

for the enlarged role for Sinn Féin's political strategy vis-à-vis the IRA's military one (McKeown, 2001: 160-170).

The third factor involved the influence of prisoners in engaging the republican political agenda with a social and political programme for pursuing its new electoral objectives, and for establishing frameworks for a future political settlement to the conflict. These developments were allied to cultural and political advancements in the prisons. Influenced by the radical pedagogy of Augusto Boal and Paulo Friere, prisoners developed educational collectives (the coistí) wherein prisoners engaged republican ideology with Marxist, feminist and post-colonial political thinking (McKeown, 2001). The coistí also produced consultation documents for broader consideration within the movement. Their developing ideas were outlined in a series of publications which were distributed in the prisons and across republican political organisations. Prison writing was a significant aspect of the resistant culture, especially within the republican groups, which generated a significant source of articles, creative writing and political theory which appeared in the prisoner's 'house journals', An Glór Gafa (The Captive Voice), and Iris Bheag (Little Journal). The importance of these publications was their articulation of wide-ranging political analyses and policy debates. Furthermore, women prisoners used them as a forum for confronting the republican movement with the inescapable issues of the subordination of women in essays on violence against women, sexuality, abortion and reproductive rights, and economic and social inequality. As Kathleen wryly remarked: 'part of the political growing up process was getting the republican leadership to talk about vaginas' (Kathleen: sentenced prisoner, Maghaberry).

The significance of political prisons as 'forcing houses of revolution' (McConville, 2003) has been widely noted (Jackson, 1970: Davis, 1988: Yuval-Davis, 1998: Seale, 1991: Churchill and Vander Wall, 1992: McKeown, 2001). This autodidactic influence on the emergence of the republican political leadership, and the subsequent evolution in the movement towards engagement in the political process in the 1990s, has been extensively explored by McKeown (2001). While the precise relationships between political developments in the prison and the route to the Belfast Agreement (1998) were more complex and

multilateral (McEvoy, 2001), this analysis tentatively suggests that the educational movement in Northern Ireland's prisons reflected a transitional point between the insularity and isolation of the prisoners during the conflict era, and the broader ideological shifts and mutual politicisation which arose from direct engagement between prisoners and their communities. For former political prisoners, the pedagogical strategy was also directed towards the longer-term, practical goals of social reconstruction and community development after their release. Jennie, Kathleen and Louie work in prisoners' support organisations. Eilís and Annie are employed in community-based projects for women. Anna and Winnie are active in promoting cultural programmes, while Áine was involved in a community campaign to gain public funding for an Irish language school in West Belfast. However, the familiar problems with high unemployment, poverty, poor housing, low access to health and education and political, economic and social marginality continue to blight communities and to persist as burdens borne by women in Northern Ireland, 'post-conflict'. As Kathleen commented, the contradictions of women's political struggle were, and remain, 'huge'. The next, concluding chapter summarises the meanings and effects of their prison struggle.

Conclusion: 'Doing Your Time Right': Penal Pain, Resistance and Survival

Through my whole experience in jail, if you were willing just to sit back and take it all, they'd have been willing to delve it out. The only reason that people have got today what they've got is through the jail struggle ... The protests were stepping stones towards that, and I think we made a bigger impact on the outside as well. It's something you never forget, that it came from that struggle and sacrifice (Elizabeth: commanding officer, Maghaberry).

You have vulnerability, you have free will, your bodily functions made you vulnerable while you were there. You're sexless in jail. Psychologically you're sexless, because if you look at yourself as being a woman, the first thing that's associated with being a woman is being vulnerable, and you can't afford to be vulnerable when you're in that situation. So you literally become sexless. The vulnerabilities that would have made you female no longer exist. You push them out of the road as quick as humanly possible to survive, literally just to survive. It's as if there's all these wee doors in my head and I can close them or open them at will. Jail did that to me. It strips you of your femaleness, it really does (Winnie: sentenced prisoner, Armagh)

In the course of interviews, former prisoners frequently referred to a notion of doing their time 'right' to reference varied, and sometimes contradictory, areas of consciousness and self-awareness. 'Doing your time right' encapsulated, on the one hand, a unifying narrative of collective solidarity in the face of penal atomisation and alienation. On other occasions, the phrase described an ethics of conduct arising from their disciplinary fortitude in sustaining a culture of individual, as well as communal, survival of the experiences of imprisonment. In this context, doing your time 'right' embraced elements of subjective self-affirmation, as well as ideological rectitude and solidarity in struggle. Finally, the broader frame of reference for doing your time 'right' connected their deployment of strategic and political skills in altering their conditions, with the achievement of some of their wider political objectives.

On the other hand, the values of doing your time well, or at least avoiding doing your time 'hard', were not divorced from a sensibility of struggle in withstanding the pains of imprisonment and maintaining personal integrity against surveillance, correction and bodily intrusion. Rather, the infusion of these values into narratives of survival illustrated the fact that few regarded themselves as having emerged from prison unscathed and with their subjectivity intact. Neither was the concept separable from the necessity of making difficult choices between conflicting positions, in dealing with problems as 'women' or 'as political volunteers', or relinquishing those emotional attachments or aspects of the self which were connected with their penal victimisation.

'Doing your time right', then, expresses the contradictory contexts in which former prisoners positioned themselves in relation to their experiences and actions. Their narratives of resistance alternated between their positions as penal subjects and resisting agents, as perpetrators of violence or intimidation and as victims, as agents of collective transformation and as individual survivors, while also understanding them as a complex whole.

Furthermore, not only did they consciously understand the contradictions of alternating between a series of 'gendered' and 'political' penal positions, but their prison struggle also secured a transformation of these categories. Their campaign brought about *the gendering of political imprisonment* and ensured the disruption of various academic, penal administrative and political traditions of conceiving of prison conflict. In this context, rather than treating the dialectical arrangement of penal struggle solely in terms of the struggle over political legitimacy, this study stresses the multiple dimensions of prison struggle over a range of

objectives - political ideology, gendered autonomy, penal agency, and subjective integrity - and across a range of institutions - the state, the gender system, and the penal system.

Secondly, their struggle adds another dimension to *the politicisation of women's imprisonment*, which has been central to the feminist, critical penological project. Just as 'state punishment' cannot be a primary or discrete explanatory framework for accounting for women's political imprisonment, neither can 'gender' solely account for the discursive and material organisation of penal subordination that they experienced. These tensions between political and gendered difference resurface as separate, although interconnected, themes across different chapters. Thus, while chapter three closely examined the epistemological stresses between 'women's' and 'political' subjectivities, this 'anomaly' informed the disjunctures between penal securitisation and 'care', the shortcomings in policy and in penal reforms, the jeopardies of marginalisation within the penal realm as well as within their own political structures, and their problematic configuration within both feminist thinking and the wider politics of conflict management in Northern Ireland.

'Resistance' as a question of penal power

In analysing agency and resistance in repressive institutions, penologists confront a classic duality. Either one assigns incontrovertible explanatory power to the coherence of penal punishment and the recuperative powers of penality, or alternatively, one can attribute significant transformative capacities to creative, locational and mundane acts of appropriation and self-legitimation. The former position risks reducing subjectivity and agency to, at best, interstitial 'freedoms', and at worst, to a discourse of endless subjection to domination. The

latter position is open to charges of eluding the facts of penal pain and diminishing the central coerciveness of the prison.

In this context, one can position Carlen's (1983, 1994, 1998, 2002b) emphasis on the abiding punitive weight and destructive effects of the prison, and its ability to sustain its repressive logic and legitimacy, alongside Hannah-Moffat's (1995, 2000, 2001) analysis of the appropriative capacity of penal governance, which negatively converts internal challenges or 'humanising' reforms into more elaborated constraints. Thus, the transformative alternatives that might be available within existing penal discourses are always and already subject to mutating and versatile processes of 'carceral clawback' (Carlen, 2002a). These perspectives contrast with the possibilities of resistant agency and identity which Bosworth argues 'reveal the relationship between power and punishment ... by demonstrating the grounded nature of all configurations of power', and which illuminate 'how the legitimacy of the prison is constantly being negotiated by the prison population' (Bosworth, 1999: 156).

It would be mistaken to reduce the complexity of these respective positions to a new polarity in which either 'structure' or 'agency' emerge as privileged, foundational explanations. While Carlen and Hannah-Moffat rightly emphasise the hegemonic and repressive processes of penal subjugation, Bosworth dignifies the knowledge claims of prisoners in negotiating their disempowerment, while also reflecting their own consciousness of the extensive constraints on achieving personal or institutional transformation. Indeed, Bosworth's analysis concludes with an implicitly 'pragmatic' affirmation of resistance as already constrained within a paradigm of 'surviving', 'managing' and getting through their institutional experiences.

Similar differences in emphasis between structural power and penal resistance emerge in the analysis of political imprisonment in Northern Ireland. McEvoy's (2001) analysis of the 'progressive' formations of penalty gives an account of the state's management of political imprisonment as it extricated itself from explicit coercion, to the use of 'exceptional' measures, and finally to a negotiated political settlement. He delineates the forces and techniques available to the liberal-democratic state for managing political dissent and violence, and in the process reinforcing its own legitimacy. If McEvoy leans towards the primacy of the state as the principal agent of penal change, McKeown (2001), in contrast, proceeds from post-colonial theories of 'resistance of the oppressed' to stress the importance of political will and consciousness on the part of prisoners. McKeown's consciously positioned analysis, as a former IRA commanding officer and hunger-striker in the Maze, grants agency to prisoners as self-reflexive and self-authorising subjects whose experience of prison struggle enabled them to emerge as positively altered agents.

The centrality granted to the state and political prisoners, respectively, forces each theorist to relinquish a degree of complexity. If McEvoy has 'erred' towards a teleological account which sometimes obscures the importance of subaltern struggle, in McKeown there is an occasional lack of contradiction in accounting for unavoidable areas of 'collusion', as well as the self-justifications and evasions on the part of political prisoners as well as penal administrators.

In this thesis, I have tried to argue for a dialectical relationship which acknowledges the violence, hegemonic power and repression of the prison, while arguing for the effectiveness of multilateral and innovative forms of penal resistance. This argument relies on the mutuality of the conditions of power and resistance and the contingency of penal domination, without

laying claim to resistance as an escape from structures of punishment. Nevertheless, while penal power appears to be a unitary entity which enforces its own coherence, its mechanisms were vulnerable to fragmentation and some of its constituent elements - resources, disciplinary programmes, categorisation systems, and even coercion - were partly reappropriated through the exercise of resistance and agency. In this context, a more fluid and complex pattern of penal rule emerged as it was confronted and negotiated on various structural and ideological levels.

It is also acknowledged that the longitudinal scope of this study, which covers 23 years, has made the task of tracing the shifting patterns of punishment and resistance less difficult than that for students of short-term or occasional 'instances' of resistance in prison. Moreover, this emphasis on the continuity of internal prison struggles does not exclude the significance of external campaigns of violence and political mobilisation, state responses, or wider political influences in exacting change within the penal apparatus in Northern Ireland.

The contradictions of 'resistance'

If the patterns of resistance by women political prisoners maintain their own internal contradictions, they also elucidate larger penological dilemmas about structure and agency. In offering an analysis of a continuum of penal rule and resistance, this thesis suggests that the relationship between structural penal power and localised resistance may not be as contradictory as has sometimes been posited. Rather, it is argued that an analysis of situated struggle at the microsphere can be viable without relinquishing a sense of the material influences of penal structures. In addition, the model of a continuum of various 'fields of

resistance' relates pre-conceived, organised political resistance to spontaneous acts of subversion, sabotage and exploitation of the contradictions of penal discourses.

In seeking to problematise the dichotomous character of penological analyses of 'structure' and 'agency', or 'power' and 'resistance', this thesis has, unavoidably, established its own set of binary relationships. Firstly, it has relied on a notion of 'structure', which, as noted above, is based on a particular alignment of the repressive state, gendered domination and a punitive apparatus. However, it has also emphasised that power and resistance are both dispersed *and* concentrated. Secondly, it has argued that penal regimes are contested and contingent, and that resistance occurs across the penal terrain, taking place neither in one form nor on one front. However, it has also contended that theories of penal punishment and resistance commence from concrete, situated, embodied analyses of power.

Mindful that 'resistance' is a contested and elusive concept, the thesis has also addressed the ways in which different sociological traditions disqualify certain oppositional actions for 'failing' to achieve either a substantive, material transformation of conditions, or for showing 'insufficient' evidence of consciousness or intentionality. The classical Marxist trajectory, for example validates 'resistance' in terms of an objective, historical attainment of structural transformation or revolution, by which the vestiges of the bourgeois state (and its punitive apparatus) 'wither away'. The liberal or social contractarian tradition coheres around a notion of power as vested in the (paternalistic) state, and attaining a balance of interests between government and citizens through the consensual social contract. Both paradigms respectively valorise intentional social action, either in terms of revolutionary 'class consciousness', or self-interested 'rationality' as the defining characteristics of social transformation. These

explanatory frameworks either tend to render as inconsequential, or find it difficult to explain away, the accidents, errors, fatal flaws and unconscious reflexes which contribute to the sometimes inconclusive and unforeseen aspects of resistance. In one sense, the struggle by women political prisoners is closer to the Marxist transition in consciousness wherein groups move from acting 'in themselves', out of their embeddedness in common subordination, to acting 'for themselves' in achieving the transformation of suppressive conditions. However, this study has sought to explore the textures and nuances of lived resistance as it produced prolific possibilities out of the contradictory, multifaceted conditions of subordination.

Appendix One: Table 1: Receptions of all women by types of custody, showing remanded prisoners, sentenced prisoners, fine defaulters, and total females detained, 1972-1998.

Year	Untried (remand & interned)	Immediate Custody	Fine Defaulters, young offenders & others	Total Detained Women
1972	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1973	107	44	10	161
1974	115	51	11	177
1975	91	60	15	166
1976	70	38	13	121
1977	129	49	28	206
1978	81	51	19	151
1979	70	62	15	147
1980	48	43	15	106
1981	76	38	12	126
1982	114	55	18	187
1983	80	37	17	134
1984	59	33	30	122
1985	83	54	36	173
1986	78	42	70	190
1987	81	42	77	200
1988	82	33	62	177
1989	87	32	50	169
1990	80	21	51	152
1991	94	33	46	173
1992	90	31	45	166
1993/4	71	36	51	158
1995/6	80	44	46	170
1996/7	98	37	61	196
1997/8	87	33	97	221
Total women detained (by type of custody)	2,051	999	895	3,949
Total % women detained	80	11	9	

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1972-1998.

Appendix One: Table 2: Internees and Sentenced prisoners with Special Category Status prisoners at Armagh 1972- 1979.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	Total
Special Category Prisoners	13	19	44	77	26	35	16	13	243
Internees		7	19	5	n/a				31
Total	13	26	63	82	26	35	16	13	274

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1972-1980.

Note: Internment ceased on December 31, 1975. Although it was official claimed that the last female Special Category prisoner was released on expiry of her sentence in 1979, a small number of Special Category prisoners, including the Price sisters, were still in custody in 1980.

Appendix Two: Types of offences of the sentenced female prisoner population in Northern Ireland, 1972-1998.

	Violence Against the Person	Explosives and Firearms	Property	Other	Total offences
1972-1980	45	112	229	82	468
1981-1990	68	6	191	44	309
1991-1998	62	0	131	48	241
Total	175	118	551	174	1018
Percentage [N]	17	12	54	17	100

Sources: Annual Reports of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, 1972-1998.

Note: the category 'Other' also includes persons detained for membership of proscribed organisations and fine defaulting connected with public order and related offences.

Appendix Three: Offences Committed and Punishments awarded whilst in prison.

Appendix Three, Table 1a: Prison disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners during the operation of Special Category Status, 1972-1976.

Offences	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Violence/ damage	14	4	3	6	3
Trafficking	-	-	-	1	-
Other	31	1	3	5	7
Refusal to Work	-	-	-	-	23
Total by number of offences	55	5	6	12	33

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1972 until 1976.

Appendix Three, Table 1b: Punishments awarded for disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners during the operation of Special Category Status, 1972-1976.

Punishment:	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Close Confinement	3	1	1	-	2
Loss of privilege/ remission	41	4	3	8	20
Stoppage of Earnings	15	1	-	-	16
Warning	3	1	3	3	2
Total number of awards	62	7	7	11	40
Total number of women punished	35	5	6	10	32

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1972 until 1976.

Appendix Three, Table 2a: Prison disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners after the revocation of Special Category Status, 1977-1985.

Offences	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984/5
Violence/ damage	5	20	12	9	6	50	40	15
Trafficking	8	-	5	6	2	5	8	7
Other	129	308	790	274	164	144	154	58
Refusal to Work	408	689	972	355	364	182	45	20
Total number of offences	550	1017	1779	644	536	381	247	100

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1977-1985.

Note: This table corresponds with the period after revocation of Special Category Status and up to the closure of Armagh prison.

Appendix Three, Table 2b: Punishments awarded for disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners after the revocation of Special Category Status, 1977-1985.

Punishment:	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984/5
Close Confinement	-	-	-	1	-	46	33	14
Loss of privilege/ remission	521	985	1796	433	496	217	157	61
Stoppage of Earnings	417	524	1796	353	2	8	25	4
Warning	6	-	12	5	7	54	47	14
Total number of awards	944	1509	3604	792	505	325	262	93
Total number of women punished	45	57	63	619*	504	325	230	81

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1977-1985.

*Note from 1980 onwards, the system of calculation was changed from the number of prisoners punished to the 'number of times punishments [were] awarded'. This meant that the figures for repeat offenders were no longer available.

Appendix Three, Table 3a: Prison disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners, HMP Maghaberry, 1986-1996.

Offences	1986/7	19887/8	1988/9	1989/90	1990/1	1991/2	1992	1993	1995/6
Violence/ damage	9	19	11	20	7	5	4	2	10
Trafficking	3	-	5	13	-	3	1	-	-
Other	19	12	20	60	7	29	12	6	6
Refusal to Work	3	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Total by number of offences	34	32	36	93	14	37	19	2	16

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1986-1996.

Note: Punishment figures are not available for 1994

Appendix Three, Table 3b: Punishments awarded for disciplinary offences committed by female prisoners, HMP Maghaberry, 1986-1996.

Punishment	1986/7	19887/8	1988/9	1989/90	1990/1	1991/2	1992	1993	1995/6
Close Confinement	3	14	10	9	-	8	1	-	-
Loss of privilege/remission	27	21	22	70	13	39	33	-	13
Stoppage of Earnings	8	3	7	16	1	23	4	1	7
Warning	1	3	4	15	7	4	4	1	-
Total number of awards	39	41	43	110	21	74	42	2	20
Total number of women punished	22	8	30	59	7	24	13	1	6

Source: Annual Reports of the Prison Service, Northern Ireland, 1986-1996.

Note: This table corresponds with the period after the transfer of the female prisoner population to Mourne House, HMP Maghaberry.

Appendix Four: Number of occasions when strip searches were conducted, Armagh and Maghaberry Prisons, 1982-1986 (figures and monthly averages)

Year	Average daily population	First admission; Remand	First admission; sentenced. Final discharge	Court attendance	Pre-release (life sentenced)	Miscellaneous	Total	Total (amended)	Average strips per prisoner searched (monthly)
1982	-	-	-	-	-	-	403		
1983	49	51	68	195	358	29	1218*	1,267	3
1984	38	51	118	85	66	35	355	393	1.6
1985	37	82	164	84	129~	31	490	527	2
1986 (Jan. to May incl.)	32	34	97	51	18	4	204	236	1.6

Source: Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHRE, 1986: 11).

Note: These figures were originally collated by SACHRE from various House of Commons Written Answers to Members of Parliament, because of the lack of availability of such data from alternative official sources. Thus, they are incomplete and contain errors.

* Includes 517 searches carried out between January and March 1983 which 'cannot be categorised' (SACHRE, 1986: 11).

~ This figure refers to one life sentence prisoner taking part in a pre-release programme, and thus underwent a research on exit and re-entry to prison.

Appendix Five: Prisoners interviewed by alibi, period of imprisonment, prison where sentence served, and roles in the prison protests.

<i>Alibi</i>	<i>Administrative phase</i>	<i>Prison</i>	<i>Role in protests</i>	<i>Other remarks</i>
Nora Connolly	Reactive containment	Armagh	Campaign for political status.	Internee with political status. Mother
Meg Connery	Reactive containment	Armagh	Campaign for Political status	Internee, Later sentenced. Escapee.
Anna Parnell	Reactive containment	Armagh	Campaign for Political status	Sentenced with political status.
Eilis Ni Riain	Reactive containment	Armagh	Campaign for political status	Interned with political status. Escapee.
Jennie Wyse-Power	Reactive containment	Armagh	Campaign for political status.	Sentenced with political status.
Aine Ceannt	Reactive containment/ Criminalisation.	Armagh	Non-cooperation/ no-work campaign.	Sentenced with political status.
Annie Cooney	Reactive containment/ Criminalisation	Armagh	Non-cooperation/ no-work campaign.	Interned. Later sentenced without political status.
Winnie Carney	Criminalisation	Armagh	Non-cooperation. no-wash protest. Strip search campaign.	Sentenced without political status.
May Gibney	Criminalisation/ Normalisation	Armagh/ Maghaberry	Segregation. Strip search campaign	Remand/ Sentenced without political status. Mothered child in prison.
Elizabeth O' Farrell	Criminalisation/ Normalisation	Armagh/ Maghaberry	Segregation. Strip search campaigns.	Remand/ Sentenced Commanding Officer (IRA) Maghaberry.
Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington	Criminalisation/ Normalisation	Maghaberry	Strip search campaign. Litigation.	Sentenced, Mother
Louie Bennett	Normalisation	Armagh/ Maghaberry	Loyalist segregation campaign.	Remand/ Sentenced.
Kathleen Clarke	Normalisation	Maghaberry	Strip search campaign. Litigation.	Sentenced. Mother. Education Officer (IRA), Maghaberry
Maud Gonne MacBride	Normalisation	Maghaberry	Non-political prisoner.	Sentenced. Mother.

Appendix Six: The Political Background to the Fieldwork.

This thesis was begun in September 1995, almost a year after the declaration of ceasefire by republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations, which paved the way a negotiated political settlement in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork was conducted in two phases; the first taking place between early February and late August, 1996, and the second phase between March and June, 1998, coinciding with the re-entry of republican and loyalist negotiators to the political process after renewed ceasefires, and up to and after the period in which the Belfast Agreement was signed.

However, until the Belfast Agreement was signed in April 1998, the political process was frequently mired by reversals and the possibility of collapse. The political process is acknowledged to have formally commenced with the 'Downing Street Declaration' of the British and Irish governments in 1993, although both governments had been engaged in secret, exploratory talks with the republican leadership between 1990 and 1993 (McEvoy, 2001: 325). Republican political prisoners were initially unanimous in their rejection of the declaration on the grounds that it enshrined the Unionist veto on preserving the Union and impeded Nationalist self-determination towards unification with the Republic of Ireland. The rejection of the 1993 document by both loyalist and republican political prisoners delayed the declaration of ceasefires for eleven months (Taylor, 1997: 343).

The IRA declared a 'complete cessation of military operations' from August 31, 1994, followed six weeks later by a ceasefire from the combined loyalist factions. However, the next impediment occurred in March 1995, following the condition laid down by the British

government that paramilitary organisations disarm or ‘decommission’ in advance of substantive political negotiations. The requirement that paramilitary organisations be excluded from all-party talks until committing to ‘disarm progressively’ in advance hastened the withdrawal of the IRA cease-fire in February 1996 (Taylor, 1997: 350-351). Republicans were fundamentally divided about the entry to a ‘political process’ and the unconditional cessation of their ‘armed struggle’ and viewed the requirement to disarm before negotiations as a strategy for placating Unionists while potentially dividing Nationalists, and splitting the IRA.¹ The report of the international commission to set out an agreed framework on graduated decommissioning, the Mitchell Report, was published in January 1996. Following the renewal of negotiations between the Irish government and the newly-elected Labour administration, the British Government published an Aide Memoire on June 25, 1997 which guaranteed Sinn Féin’s entrance to the talks, from which they had been excluded since June 1996. The Mitchell Report had envisaged that the decommissioning issue was to be resolved in phased stages as part of a negotiated settlement, rather than as a precondition to substantive negotiations. The IRA renewed its ceasefire in July 1997.

Although the release of imprisoned paramilitary prisoners was bound to be a central condition for a settlement, the issue was at once one of the most pivotal, and problematic, aspects of the political process. Between October 1997 and March 1998, the prison issue had become the most mercurial indicator of the state of the political negotiations as the prospect of a prisoner release programme under the terms of a political agreement emerged as one of the most intractable aspects of the political process. The prospect of an ‘amnesty’ for people

¹ A detailed account of the political process is outside the scope of this thesis. Comprehensive discussions are to be found in O’ Brien (1995), McKittrick (1994), and Taylor (1997). For an account of the negotiations and setbacks on prison conditions and prisoners releases, see McEvoy, (2001).

convicted for serious or violent offences was potentially the most objectionable and controversial aspect of an agreement, as far as considerable sections of public opinion and Unionists were concerned, which made the issue a potential electoral liability in the proposed referendum and assembly elections in 1998 (Hayes and McAllister, 1999). The prisoner issue was submerged in the fundamental differences among the negotiators as to the precise character and timing of 'decommissioning' the existing security framework. Republicans and loyalists had rejected the narrow interpretation of 'decommissioning' which implied prior disarmament only on the part of paramilitaries, with Sinn Féin defining the process of 'demilitarisation' in the broader context of the withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland, the disbandment of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and prisoner releases.

Events inside the prisons were equally significant. The republican prisoner bloc had emerged as a significant force in influencing republican political policy after the hunger-strikes in 1981, and in particular after the adoption of the dual-policy of pursuing electoral and military strategies in 1986 (chapter two). While the prisoners' endorsement was necessary for continued political negotiations, there were internal differences between prisoners and the leadership.² In the months before the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998, the conditions for 'demobilising' the penal estate appeared to be especially tenuous. A series of breaches of security occurred in the Maze prison, including a riot on the Loyalist

² McEvoy found in interviews with former prisoners that the republican leadership had proceeded with the ceasefires with minimal discussion, causing 'some resentment amongst prisoners who felt excluded from the organisational decision-making process' (McEvoy, 2001: fn.321). In contrast, the loyalist leadership made more strenuous efforts to ensure their prisoners' involvement. Moreover, the largely 'technocratic' and instrumentalist extensions of confidence building measures such as the 'huge[ly] disappoint[ing]' restoration of remission in 1995 to fifty percent (its 1989 levels) indicated 'a political failure on the part of the government to grasp the historic opportunity to deal generously' with the prison issue or to appreciate the pivotal place the prison issue was assuming in the overall negotiations, thus adding to the frustration of prisoners and their communities (McEvoy, 2001: 320-330).

Volunteer Force (LVF) wing in August 17, 1997; two republican escape attempts, one successful in the winter of 1997; the killing by the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) of the LVF leader, Billy Wright, in December 1997; and the murder by LVF inmates of one of their remand prisoners in March 1998. These serious breaches of security prompted the more hawkish critics of the political process to conclude that the government had embarked on a mistakenly 'concessionary' approach in prematurely relaxing certain elements of internal prison security in the context of the negotiations (Sunday Times March 22, 1998). Loyalist prisoners also withdrew their support for the political process, stating they would not endorse the ceasefires of the 'mainstream' loyalist Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), partly in response to the issues of security and safety in the Maze, and partly to rebalance what they viewed as the disproportionate republican advantage in the political process (Belfast Telegraph, December 12, 1997).

These events also led to renewed criticisms from Unionist and Conservative political quarters that prison security had been degraded by the 'confidence building' measures introduced in the prisons, such as the withdrawal of discipline officers from the political wings to adjacent observation points, thereby allegedly handing over control in the prisons to the political factions (H.C. Standing Committee on Northern Ireland, April 2, 1998). The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which had refused to participate in the political process on the basis that it opposed negotiation 'with terrorists', argued that such gestures legitimised paramilitarism in the prisons, and paved the way for an amnesty which would 'appease[...] the IRA' and allow 'convicted murderers and IRA terrorists' to be released (Telegraph, April 11, 1998). It was argued that particular responses to the ceasefire, such as the increase in parole in 1995 from one third to one half of sentences served, the transfer of the prisoners from Britain in 1997, and revised pre-release and home leave schemes, amounted to the

premature relinquishment of sufficient safeguards, as well as foregoing political leverage over republican and loyalist negotiators (Northern Ireland Information Service, December 2, 1997). The spiral of disorder in relation to the prisons was exacerbated, it was argued, by the temporary release of some serving prisoners to represent the political prisoners at party conferences and negotiations with their parties in early 1998.³ The Narey report (1998) into the events in the Maze prison sought to address the security problems, while implicitly tailoring its language to the various political sensitivities, and avoiding any jeopardy to the political negotiations that would inevitably follow any effort to restore prison security regimes to pre-political process levels. Narey subsequently emphasized the ‘unique nature’ of the Maze:

... which cannot be run like other top security prisons in the United Kingdom. This point is not appreciated by much of the media and has led to some damaging publicity ... It is a prison which, while tolerating relatively high levels of prisoner freedom on the wings had, until December 1997, and for fourteen years, an enviable security record (Northern Ireland Information Service, April 2 1998).

Hence, Narey focused on technical shortcomings in the security structure, such as the non-implementation of regular searches of the blocks in the last two months of 1997, which was the outcome of ‘insufficient staff being about to carry out routine searching’ (Narey, 1998). The report’s recommendations were confined to enhancing safety and security procedures such as the introduction of ‘full weekly block searches each Thursday’, increased headcounts

³ The most controversial temporary releases were of three republicans who had been sentenced for their role in the Balcombe Street siege in London in 1973, and had previously been transferred from Britain. They shared a platform with the republican leadership during Sinn Féin’s Special Ard Fheis (conference), as it debated and later ratified the terms of the Belfast Agreement (Irish Times, May 13 1998). There was also criticism of the appearance of Michael Stone, a loyalist jailed in 1988 for his attack on the funeral cortege of three IRA operatives, including Mairéad Farrell, at a UVF/UDA conference in Belfast, in April 1998 (Times, May 15, 1998).

or prisoners and visitors, enhanced procedures for monitoring the traffic between the wings, daily random 'fabric (surface) checks, 'which were to be initiated immediately'.

The concern that the administration was fostering a culture of 'conciliation' with 'terrorists' inside and outside the prisons, brought industrial relations within the service into alignment with some of the fundamental political debates (Irish News, May 7, 1998: Times, March 20, 1998). In the view of the Prison Officer's Association (POA), the 'loss of control' in the prisons was a predictable outcome of the withdrawal of officers from the wings which, they held, had led to diminished security, surveillant and search procedures. The relatively autonomous environment on the political wings that had developed in the 1990s meant that the administration and management had conceded authority to the paramilitary factions, exposed their members to physical danger, and compromised their ability to maintain order and discipline. As a representative of the POA said in interview:

The biggest grievance of the prison officers is that the prison service is not being managed. They are being used as a scapegoat. There's that many concessions being made to prisoners with no resources to fund it.

The POA attributed the breaches of prison security to the administration's engagement with the prisoners' command structures throughout the 1990s. As a consequence, the responsibility for diminished security and order in the prisons lay with the combined interference by NIO mandarins and management in eroding the authority of discipline officers, rather than procedural oversights or human error on behalf of discipline staff (Irish Times, December 30, 1997).

The first extensive releases of prisoners under the terms of the Belfast Agreement commenced in September 1998 (Irish Times, September 12, 1998), and was weighted to the decommissioning of armed groups.⁴ The Republican Commanding Officers in Maghaberry and Maze prisons, Geraldine Ferrity and Padraic Wilson, were released temporarily to participate in Sinn Féin's delegation to the Sentences Review Commission, just prior to Wilson's nomination as mediator to the de Chastelain Commission for overseeing the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons (Sunday Times, August 9, 1998). Provision was made for the release of all paramilitary prisoners

belonging to organisations on ceasefire within two years. The unpalatable option of declaring an 'amnesty' was overcome by increasing remission to two-thirds under the terms of the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act, 1998, enabling prisoners, including life-sentence prisoners, to apply for release on license to the Sentences Review Commission. The first releases of women prisoners occurred in October 20, 1998 (Guardian, October 22, 1998). The last woman political prisoner was released in February 1999.

⁴ Strictly speaking, the terms of the Belfast Agreement (1998) do not legally oblige paramilitary organisations to decommission weapons in return for prisoner releases. These processes are dealt with as separate legal entities, with measures for prisoner releases being embodied in the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act, 1998, and decommissioning arrangements being overseen by various independent, external bodies, including the Sentence Review Commission, the de Chastelain Commission, and the Patten Commission.

Glossary of Organisations

ALJ	Association for Legal Justice
CAJ	Committee on the Administration of Justice
EPIC	Ex-prisoners Interpretative Centre
ICC	Irish Council of Churches
ICJP	Irish Commission for Justice and Peace
IIP	Irish Information partnership
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil rights Association
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
OIRA	Official Irish Republican Army
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
POA	Prison Officers' Association
SACHRE	Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights
SF	Sinn Féin
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

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Mail

Mirror

{Belfast} Newsletter

Observer

Scairt Amach

Telegraph

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Sunday News

Sunday Times

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