

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: SLAVE SHIPS, SHAMROCKS, AND SHACKLES:
TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS IN BLACK
AMERICAN AND NORTHERN IRISH WOMEN'S
REVOLUTIONARY AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING,
1960S-1990S

Amy L. Washburn, Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

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This dissertation explores revolutionary women's contributions to the anti-colonial civil rights movements of the United States and Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. I connect the work of Black American and Northern Irish revolutionary women leaders/writers involved in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Panther Party (BPP), Black Liberation Army (BLA), the Republic for New Afrika (RNA), the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee, the Communist Party-USA (Che Lumumba Club), the Jericho Movement, People's Democracy (PD), the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee, the Provisional Irish Republican

Army (PIRA), Women Against Imperialism (WAI), and/or Sinn Féin (SF), among others by examining their leadership roles, individual voices, and cultural productions. This project analyses political communiqués/ petitions, news coverage, prison files, personal letters, poetry and short prose, and memoirs of revolutionary Black American and Northern Irish women, all of whom were targeted, arrested, and imprisoned for their political activities. I highlight the personal correspondence, auto/biographical narratives, and poetry of the following key leaders/writers: Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey; Assata Shakur and Margaretta D'Arcy; Ericka Huggins and Roseleen Walsh; Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, and Martina Anderson, Ella O'Dwyer, and Mairéad Farrell.

These women address similar themes in their work either through direct communication (i.e., political communiqués and personal correspondence) and/or indirect expression (i.e., news coverage and auto/biographical responses to it). I document moments of transatlantic solidarity among them. This project also draws on interviews with selected writers for supplemental data in interpreting their personal histories and writings. This dissertation is concerned with tracing and analyzing the politics and prose/poetry of Black American and Northern Irish women. Their cultural expressions concern revolutionary struggle. I use their work as a source of data and an object of analysis. My work establishes links between several areas: nation and anti-colonialism, race and anti-racism, gender and feminism, literature and genre, content and analysis, and theory and praxis.

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DEDICATION

For my community of women—Mom, Holly, Nan, Nikki, and Daniela

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¹ See my appendix.

² See my appendix.

³ See my appendix.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Overview.....	1
Theoretical Intersections: Critical Race/ Postcolonial/ Feminist Theories of Race, Class, Gender, and Nation in the United States and Northern Ireland.....	3
Black, Green, and “Black and Green”: Anti-Colonial Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland, 1960s-1990s.....	17
Literary Convictions: “Revolutionary Auto/biography” in the United States and Northern Ireland.....	32
Interdisciplinary Approaches: Theoretical, Historical, Literary, and Interview-Based Modes of Inquiry	44
Scholarly Contributions: Towards a Feminist Comparative Literature of Anti-Colonial Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland.....	49
Conclusion: Chapter Outline.....	51
Chapter 2: Soledad-ity Sisters: Rhetoric, & Tactics in Angela Davis’ <i>Angela Y. Davis: An Autobiography</i> and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s <i>The Price of My Soul</i>	53
Introduction.....	53
Auto/biographical Overviews of Resistance: Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey.....	58
Civil Rights Scripts: Rhetoric, Politics, & Tactics in Angela Davis’ <i>Angela Y. Davis: An Autobiography</i> and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s <i>The Price of My Soul</i>	78
Conclusion	96
Chapter 3: Theatre of the Absurd-ly Incarcerated: Representation & Re-Imagination in Assata Shakur’s <i>Assata: An Autobiography</i> and Margaretta D’Arcy’s <i>Tell Them Everything</i>	97
Introduction.....	97
“I Am a 20 th -Century Escaped Slave” and “I Am an Outsider”: An Overview of Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s Resistance.....	101
Stabilizing the State: Representations of the Black Revolutionary Woman in the <i>New York Times</i> ’ Coverage of Assata Shakur, 1971-2010.....	109
Bloody Silence: Censorship of Racism and Chivalry towards the Irish Republican Woman Prisoner in Loyalist and Sinn Féin’s Responses to Margaretta D’Arcy.....	113
Styling and (E)Racing the State: Literary Analyses of History/Truth-Telling, Marginalization/Privilege, and Power/Resistance in <i>Assata: An Autobiography</i> and Margaretta D’Arcy’s <i>Tell Them Everything</i>	115
Conclusion	134
Chapter 4: “We All Suffer from Walls”: Barriers & Freedom in Ericka Huggins’ <i>Insights & Poems</i> and Roseleen Walsh’s <i>Aiming Higher</i>	135
Introduction.....	135
Writing and Revolution: An Auto/biographical Overview of Ericka Huggins’ and Roseleen Walsh’s Resistance.....	138

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forms of Literary Resistance: Freedom and Barriers in Ericka Huggins' <i>Insights & Poems</i> and Roseleen Walsh's <i>Aiming Higher</i>	153
Conclusion	179
Chapter 5: "Our Only Weapon Was Our Pen": Dehumanization & Resistance in the Politics and Prose of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O' Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell.....	180
Introduction.....	180
Auto/biographical Overviews of Resistance: Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O' Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell.....	186
Political Torture: News, Statements, and Letters on Physical, Sexual, and Psychological Violence in Prison.....	207
Write-On, Sister!: Literary Analyses of Collective Struggle, Solidarity, and Spirit in the Prose of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O' Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell.....	224
Conclusion	233
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	234
Fictive History & Historical Auto/biography: Cultural Citizenship, Women's History, & Revolutionary Auto/Biography.....	234
The Past, Present, and Future: Genealogies, Limitations, and Predictions.....	237
Conclusion.....	242
Appendix: Interviews.....	244
Works Consulted.....	246

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This dissertation explores revolutionary⁴ women's contributions to the anti-colonial civil rights movements of the United States and Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. I connect the work of Black American and Northern Irish revolutionary women leaders/writers involved in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Panther Party (BPP), Black Liberation Army (BLA), the Republic for New Afrika (RNA), the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee, the Communist Party-USA (Che Lumumba Club), the Jericho Movement, People's Democracy (PD), the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Women Against Imperialism (WAI), and/or Sinn Féin (SF), among others by examining their leadership roles, individual voices, and cultural productions. This project analyses political communiqués/ petitions, news coverage, prison files, personal letters, poetry and short prose, and memoirs of revolutionary Black American and Northern Irish women, all of whom were targeted, arrested, and imprisoned for their political activities. I highlight the personal correspondence, auto/biographical⁵ narratives, and poetry of the following key leaders/writers: Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey; Assata Shakur⁶ and

⁴ See my definition of "revolutionary" on pages 18-19.

⁵ See my definition of "auto/biography" on pages 18-19.

⁶ Her former name is Joanne Chesimard. She changed her name for marital and political reasons. I honor her name change, which is her pen name, as well.

Margaretta D'Arcy; Ericka Huggins and Roseleen Walsh; Afeni Shakur-Davis,⁷ Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari,⁸ and Martina Anderson, Ella O'Dwyer,⁹ and Mairéad Farrell.¹⁰

These women address similar themes in their work either through direct communication (i.e., political communiqués and personal correspondence) and/or other communication (i.e., news coverage and auto/biographical responses to it). I document moments of transatlantic solidarity among them. This project also features interviews with selected writers for supplemental data in interpreting their personal histories and writings. This dissertation is concerned with tracing and analyzing the politics and prose/poetry of Black American and Northern Irish women. Their cultural expressions often concern revolutionary struggle. My work establishes links between several areas: nation and anti-colonialism, race and anti-racism, gender and feminism, literature and genre, content and analysis, and theory and praxis. This chapter provides an overview of the study. First, it turns to a theoretical discussion of concepts (i.e., race, class, gender, and nation) and contexts (i.e., the United States and Northern Ireland). Second, it offers a historical overview of anti-colonial civil rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland, and explores women's involvement in it. Third, it discusses the history of auto/biographical criticism. Fourth, it gives a methodological rationale (i.e., theoretical, historical, literary, and ethnographic). Lastly, it summarizes the organizational structure for the project.

⁷ Her former name is Alice Faye Williams. She also changed her name for marital and political reasons.

⁸ Her former name is Bernice Jones. She changed her name for religious and political reasons.

⁹ Her name in Gaelic is Ella ni Dhuibhir. However, the majority of her letters are signed "Ella O' Dwyer." In addition, her mainstream recognition and current pen name is "Ella O' Dwyer." I use "Ella O' Dwyer" for these reasons.

¹⁰ Her name in Gaelic is Máiréad Ní Fhearghail or Mairéad Ní Fhearail. However, she signs her letters as "Máiréad Farrell." In addition, in Irish culture, she is known as "Farrell," so I preserve her pen name and her mainstream recognition.

Theoretical Intersections: Critical Race/ Postcolonial/ Feminist Theories of Race, Class, Gender, and Nation in the United States and Northern Ireland

Theoretical genealogies of racism, classism, colonialism, and/or sexism as systems of power emerge in the fields of critical race studies, postcolonial studies, and/or feminist studies in Black American and Northern Irish scholarship. This dissertation privileges theoretical analyses of identity as socially constructed and historical analyses of production as materialist. It draws upon a wide range of contributing literatures. It pulls together mid-to-late twentieth-century theoretical, historical, literary, and ethnographic discussions in the fields of critical race theory, postcolonial theory, feminist theory; Northern Irish civil rights/ Troubles and Republican history, Northern Irish women's/ feminist history, Black American civil rights and Black power history, Black American women's history; Northern Irish women's auto/biographical literature, Black American women's auto/biographical literature; and formalist, materialist, feminist, and postcolonial literary criticism.

Early critical race theory was established as a critique of racial essentialism post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in the late 1970s and developed in the 1980s from critical legal studies in the United States. In addition to Thurgood Marshall's untiring involvement in *Brown*, Derrick A. Bell's course on "race, racism, and the law," offered at Harvard, was instrumental to creating critical race theory as a field of inquiry. Bell's notions of "racial realism" and "interest convergence" are essential to understanding racial power, in particular. "Racial realism," according to Bell, "requires [Blacks] to acknowledge the permanence of our subordinate status" (306), whereas "interest convergence" suggests that "[t]he interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be

accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (22). Several of Bell’s leftist students of color (i.e., Charles Lawrence, Linda Greene, Neil Gotanda, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Kimberle Crenshaw) designed “the alternative course” and a conference on “expansive visions” (Crenshaw), protesting his forced resignation from Harvard. In a lecture, Patricia Hill Collins charts four defining elements of critical race theory as developed by these Bell students: 1) that “racialism” is systemic (Crenshaw xxiv), 2) that “colorblindness” and liberalism (e.g., neutrality, objectivity, and meritocracy) must be critiqued (Matsuda), 3) that “imperial scholarship” must be ancillary to the unique voice/ experience of marginalized scholars (Delgado), and 4) that “intersectionality” must be legitimized as a mode of inquiry (Crenshaw).¹¹ Since its formation, critical race theoretical discourse has traveled into different interdisciplinary and geographic locations.

Critical race theory, in its current form, originated within discussions of postmodernism in the United States. Some major defining characteristics of postmodernity in critical race theory most relevant to this burgeoning field include the following: (1) the role of World War II and post-war economic institutions, (2) the prominence of liberal reformist processes, and (3) the role of systemic racialized state power and the counterforce of resistance. The recent work of Zygmunt Bauman, Howard Winant, David Theo Goldberg, Joy James, and Roderick A. Ferguson has been essential to recent postmodern characterizations of race, racism, and the racialized world order. Bauman discusses five main concepts related to “bureaucratization”--“genocide,” “antisemitism,” “racism,” “heterophobia”--and argues that traditional Enlightenment

¹¹ Patricia Hill Collins charted these four elements in a lecture given during her class “Critical Race Theory,” offered at the University of Maryland in the fall of 2007.

notions of “truth,” “reality,” “knowledge,” and so forth have been deployed to promote race and racism as systems of power. Winant argues that the liberal rhetoric of “post-racial politics” has been utilized by the state to shift structural racism from a position of overt “domination” to covert “hegemony.” Like Winant, Goldberg argues that the connections between the “racial state” and the “racist world order” are the economic, cultural, political, and legal forces that define, determine, exclude, and privilege white supremacy and capitalism through the rhetoric of hegemonic “racelessness.” James argues that liberal thought rooted in new, postmodern systems of domination must be abandoned, and replaced with a “revolutionary” critique of racism, sexism, colonialism, among others. Roderick A. Ferguson pushes for additional interrogations of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and colonialism as intersecting systems of power, insisting on two notions that critique and revise historical materialism: “woman of color feminism” and “queer of color critique.” These critical race theorists are deeply committed to advancing a radical social justice framework critical of institutionalized racism and other forms of discrimination, though this goal is not the case for all postmodernists.

Critical race theory’s travels carry different reception in Ireland, specifically in Northern Ireland. Theodore Allen’s exhaustive work *The Invention of the White Race* provides a good overview of radicalization processes that Irish people experienced, eventually resulting in their “white” classification in the United States. However, unlike in the United States, whiteness and white privilege are not coterminous notions in Ireland. While simplistic explanations of religious, ethnic, and cultural tension deny the existence of asymmetrical racialized power in Ireland, Irish racialized discourse has departed from these binaries of identity, i.e., Black/ white, Catholic/ Protestant,

Republican/ Loyalist, Nationalist/ Unionist, British/ Irish/ Northern Irish. Instead, racial and colonial relations often are explored simultaneously in Irish consciousness by understanding complex racial experiences: 1) the history of racism against Irish people, i.e., Northern Irish Catholic (race, culture, and religion), Republican Catholics (Socialist activist volunteers), and Nationalist (middle-class political supporters) communities, and 2) the history of Irish racism (i.e., Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani communities). The institutionalized trauma of British racism and colonialism on Irish Catholic consciousness has continued for five centuries, during which time Irish Catholic people have experienced genocide, slavery, forced emigration, war, segregated housing, and employment discrimination. The British viewed the Irish as a different race. Irish Catholics were considered second-class citizens. They see themselves as racially different from Protestants. Antagonistic racial and colonial relations continue in the Six Counties today, we well. Some Northern Irish critics have dubbed this dual condition as “apartheid without color,” drawing connections with South Africa. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey defines “apartheid without color” by making transatlantic connections: “If all Catholics were Black and Protestants white, you would visually see the apartheid. Of course, we all look alike so you don’t see [the racism]” (qtd. in Downs 19). This reality led many Northern Irish Catholics to identify as Nationalists (IRA sympathizers) and Republicans (IRA volunteers), fighting for a united Ireland, politically and/or organizationally. However, recent analyses of racial relations also consider multi-layered ethnic discrimination (i.e., Romanian refugees and Roma in Wexford City) (McVeigh and Lentin 8). In addition, efforts to pigeonhole southern and northern types of racism in Ireland have been deconstructed in employment and residence work. Conceptions of

power and conquest operate in complicated ways between racialized groups in Northern Ireland as compared to the United States.

Critical race theory in Northern Ireland has unpacked notions of “genocide,” “holocaust,” “slavery,” “race,” “forced emigration,” “situated racisms,” and “racism.” Scholars Robbie McVeigh, Ronit Lentin, Thomas Gallagher, Chris Fogarty, Brian Dooley, Michael Shannon, Bill Rolston, Christopher Hewitt, and Claire Carroll have explored the theoretical implications of racial and colonial power. Robbie McVeigh and Ronit Lentin explain the layers of Irish racial life as “situated racisms.” They examine the “specificities of Irish racism from a situated positioning” by contextualizing “the particular polity and historical moment in which it appears (6; 38). An example of “situated racism” is Thomas Gallagher’s and Chris Fogarty’s usage of “genocide” (Gallagher) and the “Irish holocaust” (Fogarty) as opposed to “famine.” They argue that “the Great Famine” is a racial and colonial British cover-up for the deaths of five million Irish people during the mid-nineteenth-century. Fogarty states, “As no Jewish person would ever refer to the ‘Jewish Oxygen Famine of 1939 – 1945,’ no Irish person ought ever refer to the *Irish Holocaust* as a famine” because more than two hundred thousand armed British soldiers made forty to seventy shipments each day, leaving Irish people to starve.¹² Brian Dooley discusses the term “race” in relation to “slavery” and “forced emigration,” dubbing racial connections between Black American and Irish people “white and black slaves.” Dooley talks about Irish people’s forced migration to the Caribbean island of Montserrat as racial “slavery,” and troubles Irish people’s immigrant status as

¹² Throughout this project, some sources contain no page numbers, authors, and copyright information. In some instances, these sources have been archived, whether in libraries or online, without preserving pages and/or authors. In other cases, some sources, such as pamphlets, flyers, and brochures, lacked citation information altogether. I cite as best as possible in these cases. In this case, Fogarty’s work contains no page numbers or copyright information.

“black Americans” as an “inferior race” in the United States (8; 2). Like Brian Dooley, Michael Shannon and Bill Rolston further examine what they call “the metaphor of slavery” as it existed between Protestants as “masters” and Catholics as “slaves” on plantations (9). Likewise, Christopher Hewitt talks about racist segregation in housing and discrimination in employment. Brian Dooley, Michael Shannon, Bill Rolston, and Claire Carroll all have deconstructed racist portrayals of both Black American and Irish Catholic people as chimpanzee-like, lazy, and subhuman, and have traced processes by which Irish people became “white” only through exaggerated representations of inferior “Blackness.” These aforementioned critical race scholars have examined the boundaries of racialized processes in the Irish imagination.

Early postcolonial work uses the terms of “colonialism” and “imperialism” as “processes whereby the dominant politico-economic interests of one nation expropriate for their own enrichment the land, labor, raw materials, and markets of another people” (Parenti 1). Critiques of colonialism go back at least to Karl Marx, who examined colonialism as an expansion of *laissez-faire* capitalism in *The Civil War in France*. Marx argued that colonialism is an efficient means by which the ruling class maintains structural inequality, as capitalism expands to seek new resources and markets, guaranteeing systemic mechanisms to preserve power. In the 1980s, postmodernism’s conceptual stronghold within academia has resulted in the ubiquitous usage of the term “postcolonialism” or “neocolonialism,” with varying implications. Much decolonization occurred between 1945-1975 in Africa, Asia, and within the United States, whereas partial decolonization occurred in the early twentieth-century in the Irish southern twenty-six counties. Henry Schwartz maintains that such political shifts produced

linguistic shifts: “postcolonial studies [came into being to] describe the movements for national liberation that ended Europe’s political domination of the globe” (1). Emerging from area studies, postcolonial studies became an academic phenomenon initiated by migrant intellectuals, many of whom emigrated from India (i.e., Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Lata Mani), and many of whom became located in English departments.

Key intellectual debates in postcolonialism include: 1) the role of violence and armed struggle, 2) the significance of native culture and processes of assimilation, and 3) political composition and consciousness of the new bourgeoisie. According to Jyoti Puri, postcolonial scholars offer four theoretical angles: 1) “perennialism,” the notion of nationalism as always having existed, 2) “primordialism,” the notion that everything is seen as natural, 3) “ethnosymbolism,” the notion that subjective experience constructs national identity, and 4) “modernism,” the notion that upholds the ideological/ political dimensions of the state. Other concepts also are offered by postcolonial theorists, many of whom are located in Ireland: “emergent nationalism,” “official state nationalism,” “imperial nationalism,” and “nationalisms against the state” (Carroll 6). In general, the role of racism, cultural imperialism, and armed self-defense percolates through many postcolonial analyses on “internal colonialism” and “settler colonialism,” especially when examining anti-colonial struggles in Ghana, Algeria, and Cuba. Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Kwame Turé (formerly Stokely Carmichael), Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Assata Shakur have explored these themes from an internal colonialist perspective as they pertain to Black and white relations in the United States. James Connolly,¹³ Eamon

¹³ James Connolly was a leader in the Easter Rising of 1916. He was assassinated in prison. Because of the callousness of the murders, namely Connolly’s because he was disabled, Irish people revolted.

de Valera, Gerry Adams, Sean Mac Stiofain, and Michael McKeivitt also have addressed these themes from a settler colonialist perspective attentive to Catholic/ Protestant relations in Ireland.

Recent postcolonial theory has explored the concepts of nation, nationalism, and anti-colonialism. Franz Fanon, Edward W. Said, Benedict Anderson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha have been key thinkers within the field. Fanon argues that “decolonization” is a historical process tied to armed struggle, utilized as a form of resistance against colonial wealth and power accumulation. Fanon’s work on “decolonization” and the psychology of violence was very influential to social movements, especially within the United States and Northern Ireland. Most influential, however, has been Fanon’s discussion of “internal colonialism” as a way to challenge racialized/ gendered/ colonial violence perpetuated against oppressed populaces to exploit their native land, labor, and resources for wealth and power. The knowledge/ power nexus plays a key role in ideological productions and reproductions of “Orientalism,” too. Said focuses on culture as the central site of historical resistance to colonialism. Anderson traces the anthropological development of nationalism (“imagined communities,” in his words) to political and social dimensions of the state, namely to print capitalism (i.e., newspapers and novels) in the eighteenth-century. Spivak also argues that the historical realities of colonialism inform all cultural productions and, by extension, their producers, the Othered “subalterns.” Like Spivak, Bhabha argues that “dissemi-nation” constitutes the cultural spaces from which the “subaltern” can speak and re-construct the nation in counterhegemonic ways. Said uses “narrative of disasters” to refer to Ireland (i.e., the Six Counties) itself, but he also notes that the internal

colonialism of the United States (i.e., marginalized locations) fits such a description.

Said's important work is a historical corrective to Bill Ashcroft's, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*, which contains no mention of colonialism in the United States and Northern Ireland. These scholars are speaking to work that omitted current manifestations of colonialism.

The canonical development of feminist theory within academia occurred in the mid-twentieth century, linked to but transcending identity politics activism. Numerous tendencies¹⁴ within feminism have emerged, among them: intersectionality (e.g., bell hooks, Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Bonnie Thornton Dill), transnationalism (e.g., Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Amrita Basu, Uma Narayan), postmodernism (e.g., Donna Haraway and Judith Butler), and psychoanalysis¹⁵ (e.g., Nancy Chodorow, Jane Flax, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva), to name a few. A hegemonic taxonomy includes five political categories: 1) liberal (e.g., Naomi Wolf and Gloria Steinem), 2) radical (e.g., Adrienne Rich and Shulamith Firestone), Marxist (e.g., Rosa Luxemburg, Lise Vogel, and Silvia Federici), Socialist (e.g., Lydia Sargent and Heidi Hartmann), anarchist (e.g., Carol Ehrlich, Peggy Kornegger, and Cindy Milstein), and lesbian separatist (e.g., Radicallesbians and Valerie Solanas). Chela Sandoval advocates a "differential mode of oppositional consciousness," originating in the experiences of women of color and operating on categories like those above to animate, disturb, and further politicize them.

¹⁴ Katie King has problematized "the feminist taxonomies" for upholding linear, masculinist values. However, while I concur with King's criticism and find multiplicity, complexity, and possibility invaluable, in this cursory case, they provide a good organizational framework from which to work.

¹⁵ Claire G. Moses argues that constructions of "French feminist" theory are not historically accurate. Moses suggests that the focus must be taken off of Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, along with the group, *Psych et po*, as feminist icons. This version of "French feminism" is a creation of United States publications (241).

The synthesis of critical race and feminist theories of power and racial difference arises as a response to racism within feminist movements and sexism within civil rights movements in the United States. These social movements contributed to the intellectual establishment of Black Studies, Women's Studies, and Ethnic Studies. "Intersectionality" emerged as a solution to unitary analyses of race and gender in these (inter)disciplinary locations. Kimberle Crenshaw has written extensively on "intersectionality" as an effective mode of scholarly inquiry to "ground the differences among [women] and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (1299). However, Crenshaw highlights the role of power within difference discourses: "The struggle over which differences matter and which do not is neither an abstract nor an insignificant debate among women. Indeed, these conflicts are about more than difference as such; they raise critical issues of power" (1265). Bonnie Thornton Dill, another practitioner of intersectional research, critiques the universal concept of "sisterhood." Dill proposes to abandon the problematic "concept of sisterhood as a global construct based on unexamined assumptions about [women's] similarities" and replace it with "a more pluralistic approach that recognizes and accepts the objective differences between women" (148). Bonnie Thornton Dill and Maxine Baca Zinn offer a paradigm for coalitional intersectional work, which they designate "multiracial feminism." Patricia Hill Collins also stresses the importance of "intersectionality." Collins' "matrix of domination" posits that "multiple, interlocking levels of domination stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations" (18). Through her analysis of power Collins is able to interrogate dominant ideas (e.g., racist, classist, and sexist ideologies) that permeate the social structure (300). These noted scholars,

along with others like Elsa Barkley Brown, Paula M. L. Moya, and Maria Lugones, celebrate the necessity for plurality in terms of acknowledging different social locations.

Critical race feminist thought, in its current form, has expanded its intersectional imagination to include nation, national identity, and relations of power among nation-states. Scholars like Angela Y. Davis, Joy James, Gloria Joseph, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Kum-Kum Bhavnani, and Margaret Coulson have infused a critique of “racially structured, patriarchal capitalism” within critical race feminism since its inception (Bhavnani and Coulson 89). However, as pioneering critical race/feminist/postcolonial thinker, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, points out, it was not until recently that “intersectionality” has carried a substantive analysis of how colonialism connects to the interlocking identities of race, class, and gender. Mohanty demands “a critique of the operation, discourse, and values of capitalism and of their naturalization through neoliberal ideology and corporate culture” (9). Mohanty further explains that a critique of colonialism is urgent because “[w]omen and girls are still 70 percent of the world’s poor and the majority of the world’s refugees. Girls and women comprise almost 80 percent of displaced persons of the Third World/ South in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Women own less than one-hundredth of the world’s property, while they are the hardest hit by the effects of war, domestic violence, and religious persecution” (235). However, Mohanty resists simplifying connections between women. Mohanty crystallizes problematic historical heterogeneities of women in the Global South and proposes national differentiation as a conceptual framework. Colonialism’s particular use of racialized and gendered bodies for labor and capital in colonized locations makes salient critical race feminism’s analytical merger of race and gender with nation.

Transnational feminist scholars have discussed the ways in which race and nation implicate gender. Nira Yuval Davis, Floya Anthias, Anne McClintock, Gerardine Meaney, and Jayne Steel have noted colonialism's particular use of racialized and gendered bodies for accumulation. Yuval-Davis and Anthias discuss the regulation of women's sexuality and fertility, motherhood and national culture, and protection of women as symbols of the nation. Like Yuval-Davis and Anthias, McClintock addresses the politics of land accumulation (e.g., "motherlands" and "fatherlands") in relation to power and difference. Meaney also explores women's role in promoting men's status in the "history of colonialization/ feminization"; she argues that women's role is to be bearers of national honor and serve as scapegoats of national identity in Northern Ireland. Mairéad Farrell has commented on the concept of "Mother Ireland" as being deeply problematic in numerous interviews for the documentary bearing that name. Steel demonstrates that popular representations of Northern Irish Republican women, unlike traditional ones of Irish women as biological and cultural reproducers of nationalism, moves beyond the image of "Mother Ireland" to what she calls "Vampira," or blood-sucking, "terrorist" beasts. The scholars complicate the idea that women, whether Black American or Northern Irish, are not to be seen as challenging white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonialism. The medium of culture has been integral to this type of social analysis.

This study is indebted to the aforementioned theoretical critical race/ postcolonial/ feminist genealogies. However, it also rejects hegemonic frameworks that are inattentive to the intersecting systems of power: racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism, among others. My theoretical framework is greatly informed by my social identity as a white working-class queer woman living in the United States, with Irish Catholic Republican

familial roots on both my maternal and paternal sides. In addition, it is influenced by my political identity as a radical activist, with ardent Socialist, feminist, and anti-racist beliefs and practices. Lastly, this study also is informed by my cultural identity as a poet/ writer/ teacher, committed to infusing politics into poetry/ prose. My own location (as well as other issues) limits this study in several ways, which I explore in depth in my conclusion.

For this study, I offer a revolutionary view of anti-colonial civil rights movements, in which Black American and Northern Irish women writers/ activists fully participated. I build on Joy James' definition of "revolutionary" as "connecting political theory for radical transformation with political acts to abolish corporate-state and elite dominance" (79). I not only use the term "revolutionary" to fill the interstices of radical thought and revolutionary action, but also of political rhetoric and geographic location. Comparative work should use language that is appropriate to all contexts. The terms "Irish Republicanism" and "Black Nationalism" describe situated locations that have very different geographic and political terrain. In different racial and national locations, "Black Nationalist" refers to a political identity based on self-determination, independence, and unity for Black people as a race. "Irish Nationalist" denotes Catholic civilian communities opposed to British colonialism, rather than "Irish Republican" volunteers fighting for an independent socialist republic in Northern Ireland. Nor do all the writers/ leaders examined in this dissertation identify as "Nationalists." The term "revolutionary," instead, offers common ground in language and represents fairly the political commitments of these women across geographic sites. I use the terms "anti-colonial" for a similar reason. Like Fanon, Said, and Carroll, I view colonialism and capitalism as

continuing problems in both the United States and Northern Ireland because of their marginalized populaces¹⁶ While the United States has remained a colonial power since World War II, intervening externally in more than eighty countries, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, the Philippines, and Palestine at present, it also maintains internal colonial control of its own marginalized populaces, especially Black communities. Northern Ireland, like the United States, is still plagued by colonial violence, too; the Republic of Ireland, the southern Twenty-Six Counties, was freed of British domination in the early twentieth-century, whereas Northern Ireland, more appropriately referred to as the Six Counties, remain British-controlled in all areas, politically, socially, economically, and culturally. Working-class and/or poor Black American and Irish Catholic Republican women continue to experience the horrors of institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism within their own nations. Black Americans and Northern Irish Catholic Republicans rate among the highest in statistics on prison, unemployment/ underemployment, hate crimes, police brutality, and other forms of systemic violence. Both racialized groups hold second-class citizenship.

In addition, I use the term “civil rights” because both movements and countries share this political rhetoric. This term carries periodization problems, however: (1) in the United States, “civil rights” is often used to discuss the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s that challenged unbalanced white/ Black relations, and served as a precursor to “Black Power/ Liberation” of the late 1960s and late 1970s; and (2) in Northern Ireland, “civil rights” is often used to discuss the social movements of the late 1960s and mid-

¹⁶ Some critics (myself included) argue for discontinuing using the term “postcolonialism”: (1) its usage is elitist because it often does not travel outside of academic circles or even certain disciplines (2) its very prefix suggests a sense of completion, of being done, as opposed to an ongoing contestation, (3) its very characteristics are redolent of its successor, colonialism, and (4) its historical unaccountability oftentimes thwarts full understanding and results in the production of gross generalizations of real historical patterns.

1980s, commonly referenced to as “the Troubles” that led up to disarmament and the peace process in the late 1990s. I use this term to preserve historical associations, though I do acknowledge points of ideological departure between these two sites. I also find Jacquelyn Dowd Hall’s notion of the “Long Civil Rights Movement” particularly useful to this study. This concept resists problems associated with periodization to honor points of connection (and disconnection) between all social movements that have fought against racism. In addition, “civil rights” has been appropriated for other moments (i.e., recent queer movements in the United States), thereby further building coalitional alliances. I use all of these terms for deliberate reasons. Oftentimes, I also use the terms “Black American” and “Northern Irish.” While I use the terms “Black people in the United States” and “Irish people in the Six Counties of Ireland” to challenge power manifested in language, I do use “Black American” and “Northern Irish” for mainstream translation and stylistic brevity. The two latter terms are politically charged and linguistically inaccurate, especially “American” and “Northern”; they reinforce the arrogance of colonial geography, whereas the term “Black” transcends borders and creates solidarity. I note my use of terms because the language of resistance is just as important to consider as the language of power, and I confess to wishing to mobilize it here.

Black, Green, and “Black and Green”:¹⁷ Anti-Colonial Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland, 1960s-1990s

Historical analysis of Black American and Northern Irish anti-colonial and civil rights movements is a significant site of inquiry for this comparative project. I provide an introductory overview of scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement/ Black

¹⁷ This concept is adapted from Brian Dooley’s work by the same name.

Liberation/Power Movement in the United States and the Civil Rights Movement/ the Troubles in the Six Counties of Ireland. I reexamine geographical and masculinist ideologies and practices in these social movements, particularly repositioning the role of women in them. I give a brief overview of their transatlantic connections in this chapter, but I explore them in more depth in individual chapters on the writers'/leaders' work in order to better contextualize them. The ultimate aim is to acknowledge the masculinist bias in these revolutionary histories and imaginative constructions of these social movements. I hope to offer a different, more inclusive angle of vision than available in male-centered accounts, using an intersectional lens linking gender, race, class and nation.

Issues of movement tactics and the way they are represented in the writing of the women in my study are especially important for this study. In the United States, many civil rights scholars have written extensively about nonviolence from abstaining from violence as a matter of principle to nonviolent direct action, such as applying nonviolence in protest, especially in relation to the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Inge Powell Bell, August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick document the theme of nonviolence in CORE, the first organization to profess nonviolence in 1942. Adam Fairclough and David J. Garrow discuss SCLC's unwavering Christian advocacy of nonviolence as a legitimate form of resistance in 1957. Howard Zinn and Claybourne Carson also document SNCC's early embrace of nonviolent direct action in the 1960 sit-ins. Richard Gregg and Staughton Lynd address the importance of nonviolence in opposing virulent white supremacy in these civil rights organizations. Jacquelyn Dowd

Hall addresses these continuing issues in all historical periods, calling it the “long Civil Rights Movement.”

Despite the widespread, popular scholarship on nonviolence in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, many civil rights scholars also have written about the indisputable fact that armed self-defense was used as a complementary tactic alongside nonviolence in these aforementioned organizations. Akinyele O. Umoja and Christopher B. Strain both focus on the public ideological shift from nonviolence to armed self-defense in the mid-1960s. By 1966, Umoja points out that both CORE and SNCC had publicly endorsed armed self-defense as a tactic. Akinyele O. Umoja and Lance E. Hill also reveal that despite the fact that the SCLC always remained an advocate of nonviolence, Martin Luther King, Jr. allowed the Deacons for Defense and Justice to provide security in the June 1966 March Against Fear to preserve the unity of the Civil Rights Movement. Francis Fox Piven attributes CORE’s and SNCC’s later promotion of militant armed self-defense to frustration with the glacial pace of change. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick attribute SNCC’s later advocacy of armed self-defense to regional differences in the north and south, specifically to the involvement of northern Black activists. Jack Bloom suggests that organizing preferences in SNCC and SCLC were different and were responsible for the change. A pervasive theme in Umoja’s scholarship has been examining how egregious social conditions also played a huge role in the shift towards the overt promotion of armed self-defense. Charles M. Payne suggests that the change can be attributed to different organizing styles as well as leadership and decision-making processes. These scholars complicate the binary representation of the civil rights movement as nonviolent-oriented and Black Liberation/ Power as defense-oriented.

Many historians have written about women's involvement in the civil rights movements. Charles Payne's work documents women's role in community-based organizing around voting in the south. Charles Payne and Belinda Robnett both label women's activism as "bridge" work. "Bridge" work was done in local communities and involved no formal leadership roles. Informal leaders were crucial, however. Barbara Ransby also writes about the invaluable contributions of Ella Baker, but uses Baker's own term "spade" work instead of "bridge" work. Ransby documents Baker's political work, especially in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Chana Kai Lee's work on Fannie Lou Hamer also approaches women's activist work. Cynthia Griggs Fleming, Bernice McNair Barnett, Anne Standley, LaVerne Gyant, Sara Evans, and Kristin Anderson-Bricker all discuss important yet less famous women involved in the early civil rights period, as well.

The Black Liberation/ Power Movement, coming from the same soil as the civil rights movement, emerged in the mid-1960s, continuing the "long Civil Rights Movement." Timothy Tyson, Komozi Woodward, Jeanne Theo-Haris, and Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar all contributed to early Panther scholarship in the 1970s. Charles E. Jones and Judson L. Jeffries outline the formation, beliefs, and practices of the Black Panther Party, and the misconceptions about them. Though the Panthers were originally established in Lowndes County, Alabama, Jones and Jeffries zero in on the October 16, 1966 formation of the West Coast Panther chapter in Oakland by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale (1). Though, as Jones and Jeffries note, its community-based programs, for which the

Panthers are best known, existed from 1966 to 1971, the organization lived on until 1982 (3). Viewing Black people as a colony regardless of their geographic location, the Panthers advocated armed resistance, community services, and self-determination in order to eradicate the structural inequality created by white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and empire. Jones and Jeffries juxtapose this image against the corporate media's depiction of the Panthers as anti-white, sexist, cop-killing, militant "terrorists," demonstrating the organization's goal of ameliorating social conditions they found deleterious (i.e., deplorable housing, poor health care services, a racist criminal justice system, inadequate diets, and substandard education). The co-authors focus on the Panthers' organizational work, particularly its "survival programs," such as the Intercommunal News Service (*Black Panther*) (1967), Free Breakfast for School Children (1968), Liberation School (1969), People's Free Medical Research Health Clinic (1970), Free Clothing Program (1970), and Free Housing Cooperative Program (1971) (Jones and Jeffries 30). Clearly, the Panthers, although they advocated armed self-defense as necessary in their principles and programs, were equally devoted to providing alternatives to inadequate, underfunded, or nonexistent state programs.

The Panthers, unlike CORE, SNCC, and SCLC, had the same division of labor for all of its members regardless of their gender identity. All Panthers received equipment training (i.e., shooting drills), attended political education classes, and performed a myriad of daily Party duties, including selling newspapers, feeding children, and guarding the offices together (Jones and Jeffries 34). In "Women, Power, and Revolution," Kathleen Cleaver stated that she worked for the newspaper, sent out press releases, and ran for political office (125). Other leadership opportunities also were

available for women, though this took some time. Kathleen Cleaver, Patricia Hilliard, Elaine Brown, Ericka Huggins, Barbara Sankey, Ann Campbell, Afeni Shakur, Joan Bird, Yvonne King, Audrea Jones, and Assata Shakur all became significant leaders in various BPP chapters (LeBlanc-Ernest 310). Under Elaine Brown (1974-1977), in particular, the ten-member Central Committee was comprised of fifty percent women: Ericka Huggins, Phyllis Jackson, Joan Kelley, and Norma Armour (in addition to Brown), the highest percentage of women in leadership positions in the BPP's history (LeBlanc-Ernest 322). Newton officially declared on August 15, 1970 that the BPP "recognize[s] women's right to be free" ("The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements 158). Nevertheless, African-American women still struggled with sexism in these organizations.

Like the Panthers, the Black Liberation Army was committed to Black revolutionary thought and practice. Akinyele Omowale Umoja describes the BLA's central purpose as follows: "to defend Black people, to fight for Black people, and to organize Black people militarily, so they can defend themselves through a people's army and people's war" (12). Like the Panthers, the BLA core members Assata Shakur, Safiya Bukhari, Mutulu Shakur, Zayd Shakur, Jalil Muntaqim, and Sundiata Acoli initiated many programs, although, unlike the Panthers, they were more committed to armed resistance. The BLA's "defensive/ offensive" campaign is a salient example of the BLA's advocacy of armed struggle. Many Panthers joined the BLA after its split in 1971 as a result of COINTELPRO operations. According to Umoja, the BLA's "defensive/ offensive" campaign resulted in the deaths of at least twenty officers associated with terrorizing innocent Black people (12). The BLA was concerned with more than simply building a

clandestine army; its goal was to build a “movement,” and thus, it sought the support of aboveground organizations to support multiple non-violent activities. Before the Jericho Movement was birthed, many women worked on getting political prisoners amnesty through the Harriet Tubman Brigade and Amistad Collective. However, the “defensive/offensive” campaign is the program for which the BLA is most remembered; the BLA viewed the state’s complicity with racism as cause for revolution. The Republic of New Afrika (RNA) adapted a similar revolutionary agenda, but it was more focused on gaining access to land in the South. Women’s involvement in the BLA, RNA, and Jericho has not been explored yet in scholarship.

The burgeoning literature of nonviolence and armed self-defense in Civil Rights and Republican Movements in Northern Ireland is conjoined. Brian Dooley states, “Many people were both civil rights campaigners and Republicans throughout. Many started out campaigning for civil rights and ended up joining the Irish Republican Army, and would have difficulty defining when they ‘stopped’ being civil righters and ‘started’ being Republicans” (44). The Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland took shape from 1968 to 1971. During this period, the Civil Rights movement in the Six Counties was spearheaded by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). The Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland (CSJNI), the Derry Citizens’ Action Committee (DCAC), and the People’s Democracy (PD) also were integral to its composition as well as its success. The Civil Rights Movement encouraged militancy in its struggle between Catholics and Protestants against racial and colonial domination. Christopher Hewitt notes that Catholic grievances aimed at Protestants included gerrymandering, franchise, segregated housing, and employment discrimination. He argues that equitable housing

and job opportunities, however, were the most immediate grievances for which civil rights activists were fighting.

Espousing nonviolent principles, the Civil Rights Movement primarily organized rallies and marches in the Six Counties. The first demonstration was on August 24, 1968. It was a short three-mile march from Coalisland to Dungannon, carnivalesque in character and free of police brutality. Its follow-up demonstration on October 5, 1968 in Derry, on the other hand, was one of relentless violence, instigated by the police. Tim Coogan, Christopher Hewitt, and Richard English illustrate that the seventy-three mile trek Burntollet march of 1969 from Belfast to Derry was characterized by similar violence (i.e., stoning, trampling, and clubbing) by the police as well as the by Paisleyites. This violence was a definite precursor to the infamous British paramilitary attacks on Catholic civilians on January 30, 1972, commonly referred to as Bloody Sunday. Coogan and Hewitt argue that the Socialist Republican agenda, despite its nonviolent tactics, was much to blame for the anti-civil rights response from the British government that occupies the Six Counties.

Patrick Bishop and Tim Coogan have written extensively on the birth of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in 1969, into which a civil rights agenda became subsumed. Since then, a number of scholars have contributed to serious, in-depth IRA study, including Bowyer Bell, Richard English, Rogelio Alonso, Steven P. Moysey, and A.R. Oppenheimer. These scholars document loyalist violence directed against Catholic civilian communities. The systemic demolition of hundreds of Catholic houses, discussed by Eileen Fairweather, resuscitated the previously moribund IRA. Armed struggle shaded into practical resistance. Implemented by Sean Mac Stiofain, Ruairi O'

Bradaigh, Daithi O'Connell, and Joe Cahill of the Army Council, new IRA politics, English notes, contained the following principles: “[D]efence, defiance, retaliation and anti-imperialism were interwoven in their thinking, [. . .] and violent revolution was preferred to an impossible peaceful reformism; contemporary conditions validated a lengthy republican tradition and orthodoxy; [and] Catholicism as well as socialism informed the organization’s thinking and identity” (133). The IRA experienced acute repression in the form of internment from 1971 until the 1994 ceasefire, eventually leading to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998.

Many scholars have documented women’s involvement in Irish struggles. No serious study has been done on women’s involvement in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, Sinn Féin, and Women against Imperialism, in particular, but Agnes Maillot has done some work on Sinn Féin leaders Margaret Buckley and Maire Drumm as well as its governing body, Ard Comhairlem (Central Committee). Ailbhe Smyth is especially responsible for recognizing and analyzing the participation of women in Republican organizations. Smyth chronicles the Irish feminist movement from 1970 to 1990, identifying five central time periods in feminist organizing: 1970-1974, 1974-1977, 1977-1983, 1983-1990, and 1990 (250). According to Smyth, 1970-1974 was defined by intense politicization and mobilization around issues dealing with housing, equal rights, and reproductive rights, especially around the Contraception Train. Organizations significant to this historical period included the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement, Action, Information, Motivation (AIM), Women’s Aid, the Rape Crisis Centre, and Cherish. Smyth says that 1974-1977 was characterized by radicalism and direct action. Irish Women United (IWU) had an eclectic membership from Revolutionary Struggle, the

Movement for a Socialist Republic, and People's Democracy. These organizations had a Socialist feminist agenda that promoted free health care and women's self determination. 1977-1983, she argues, was known for its diversification, evidenced in the Contraception Action Programme, Dublin Women's Centre, and the Women against Violence against Women demonstrations. During the period of 1983-1990, on the other hand, repression reached its apex due to economic recession and fundamentalist resurgence, though cultural expression flourished even under these deleterious conditions. In 1990, the end point for Smyth's work, feminist lawyer Mary Robinson was elected president. This change represented a positive defining moment in electoral politics. Since then, Sinn Féin politicians Barbara de Bruin, Mary Lou McDonald, Martina Anderson, and Monica Digney, among many others have promoted a women-centered Republican agenda. Such scholarly work gives a robust overview of various feminist activities in Ireland.

Other scholars also have written about periodization within the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM). Mary Corcoran, like Smyth, organizes her analysis in accordance with chronological time periods: (1) "reactive containment" from 1969-1976, (2) "criminalisation" from 1976-1981, and (3) "normalization" from early 1980s-2000 (115). During the first phase, although few women in the Irish Republican Army had direct combat roles, 80% of them were imprisoned in 1970s (115). According to Corcoran, many of them were imprisoned due to fine-defaulting in connection with "rent and rate strikes, public order offenses, and offenses connected to 'aiding and abetting terrorism' under the Emergency Powers Act, 1973, and related emergency legislation" (115). Begoña Aretxaca also reveals that many women were imprisoned as a result of their involvement in arms deals or possession of arms. The number of Irish Republican

women in prison increased from thirteen in 1969 to one hundred and sixty-two in 1974 (Corcoran 115). During the second phase, Corcoran documents Irish Republican women's participation in the "Dirty Protest," a "no wash" protest, during which they fought for the "five demands": "no prison work, their own clothing, freedom of association, educational and recreational facilities and visits, and letters, and the restoration of remission¹⁸ which had been lost on protest" (121). Women against Imperialism played a major role in raising visibility for this campaign. Corcoran also discloses Irish Republican women's involvement in the hunger strike of 1981, especially by Mairéad Farrell, Mairéad Nugent, and Mary Doyle. The third phase, according to Corcoran, incorporates all actions taken after the 1981 hunger strike, a time during which mass strip-searches were performed on Irish Republican women. March 2, 1986 was the most severe case; more than twenty prisoners were forcibly strip searched that day (127). Corcoran's study ends just after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The Agreement was implemented as a result of the Irish Republican Army's ceasefire on August 31, 1994 (but was not finalized until February 1996), and resulted in the reduction of parole to 50% and, ultimately, the remission for two-thirds of political prisoners who had served one-third of their sentence (130).

Linda Connolly, Tina O'Toole, Theresa O'Keefe, and Rhiannon Talbot all report on the solidarity the Armagh Irish Republican women political prisoners received from outside their cell walls. Connolly and O'Toole note that organizations like Irish Women United (IWU), the Belfast Women's Collective, the Socialist Women's Group, and Women against Imperialism (WAM) as well as revolutionary publications like *Wicca* all

¹⁸ Remission allowed prisoners to lose one day from their sentence. It was granted with good behavior. Many political prisoners lost their remission.

were ardent supporters of both feminist and anti-colonialist civil rights revolution, and did not prioritize one over the other. O’Keefe and Talbot also talk about specific WAM actions that were planned in response to the internment of Irish Republican women in Armagh. O’Keefe labels the high point of WAM’s activism as the March 8, 1979 picket, its first major action against the imprisonment of Irish Republican women in Armagh (45). More than four hundred people attended it (45). This literature illustrates that Irish women in the Republican movement were not any less committed to feminist revolution than the Irish feminists not involved in the Republican struggle. They both were committed to feminist revolution.

Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland sought political inspiration from one another. Brian Dooley, Bill Rolston, Michael Shannon, and Tim Coogan document extensive correspondence and meetings between Black American and Irish leaders, such as Marcus Garvey, Eamon de Valera, Frederick Douglass, and Daniel O’Connell. In 1914, Garvey named the Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) headquarters in Jamaica “Liberty Hall” to honor James Connolly’s legacy in the Dublin-based Irish Citizen Army in the early twentieth-century (Rolston and Shannon 46-47). Garvey also dubbed Éamon De Valera “the President of the Ireland Republic” in August of 1920, just after the Easter Rising of 1916, and sent him a telegram to offer the “sympathy of Negroes of the world for your cause. [. . .] for a free Ireland” (quoted in Dooley 21). Garvey lived in Ireland for two years, provided arms to the Republican cause, and even shared the African flag with Irish people. Garvey told journalist Charles Mowbray that “[t]he Red showed their sympathy with the ‘Reds’ of the world, and the Green their sympathy for the Irish in their fight for freedom, and the Black – The Negro”

(qtd. in Dooley 21). In addition, Frederick Douglass fought for Irish freedom in the United States, and visited Ireland many times to meet and speak with Daniel O’Connell (Dooley 1). Dooley reveals, “When Martin Luther King used the metaphor of a trail of blood to describe black civil rights experience, he was borrowing the phrase from Frederick Douglass, who in turn got it from Daniel O’Connell, who had said that following the history of Ireland was like tracing the blood of a wounded man at a party” (qtd. in Dooley 4). Douglass advocated untiring support for the Irish Home Rule. Douglass writes, “I have been in Ireland for four months, and have delivered upwards of fifty lectures in different parts of the country. [. . .] I have been known to the Abolitionists of that [country] for the last four years through the American papers” (qtd. in Dooley 16). He went to Ireland for his honeymoon because he felt so connected to the land and its people (Dooley 16). Murals in the Six Counties commemorate Douglass’ anti-slavery and anti-colonial work there. This history is important to the mid-to-late twentieth-century Civil Rights Movements because leaders/ writers invoked these past inspirations in their own political work.

Dooley also documents connections between Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and Huey P. Newton, Angela Y. Davis, Ericka Huggins, Bobby Seale, and Kwame Ture. Furthermore, Dooley’s interviews reveal that Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and Angela Y. Davis corresponded frequently, including while in prison, and met to help in the release of Devlin McAliskey’s daughter Roisin McAliskey from prison. News articles (i.e., *The Irish Times* and *Irish Press*) and personal letters also confirm their direct communication. Second, Brian Dooley, Christopher Hewitt, Niall O’Dochartaigh, Eileen Fairweather, Roisin McDonough, and Melanie McFadyean discuss how the Belfast-Derry

march was modeled after the Selma-Montgomery one four years earlier. Third, Dooley notes that slogans like “We Shall Overcome” were reappropriated in an Northern Irish context in all major actions. Also, “Free Bernadette” prison release signs were designed like the “Free Huey” ones. Photographs in major news sources (i.e., *The New York Times* and *The Irish Times*) of prison protest demonstrate these similarities, as well. Fourth, Devlin McAliskey and Dooley explain that People’s Democracy (PD) was sculpted after the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Black Panther Party (BPP) by students from working-class backgrounds, the first to receive a higher education in their families (i.e., Michael Farrell, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale). Additionally, Dooley documents that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) attended many Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) meetings in Belfast in the 1970s. Lastly, civil rights literatures in both countries were in conversation within one another (i.e., the Irish Republican Army (IRA) *Green Book* alludes to the civil rights movement in the United States, and *The Black Panther* newspaper writes about NICRA and the IRA).

Comparative connections between the Black American and Irish revolutionary women writers are a plenty, even though little historical scholarship charts their direct and indirect associations. My work picks up where Brian Dooley’s work left off, providing original information on additional transatlantic connections between women in the United States and Northern Ireland. For instance, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey visited Angela Y. Davis in jail, advocated for better prison conditions for her, and worked very closely with the Panthers, eventually giving them the New York mayor’s keys as a symbol of solidarity. Davis aided Devlin McAliskey in raising awareness about her

daughter's political imprisonment years later. On behalf of People's Democracy, Devlin McAliskey also sent Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale a telegram, communicating her solidarity for their release. Devlin McAliskey gave the keynote address to a Panther conference in Derry recently, as well. In addition, Safiya Bukhari worked on establishing international support for Northern Irish prisoners with the Irish Freedom Committee and Sinn Féin through the Jericho Movement. Likewise, Ella O'Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell have offered indirect international support to Black American activists in their writing. Recently, Anderson also has worked on numerous Sinn Féin campaigns in the United States that uphold the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. Margaretta D'Arcy and Roseleen Walsh, although they had no direct connections with Black Americans, have remained deeply influenced by their politics and activism. D'Arcy was very inspired by Elaine Brown's leadership in the Panthers, just as Roseleen Walsh was interested in Angela Y. Davis' writing, especially her letters to George Jackson. Furthermore, as a result of this project's comparative focus, Huggins and Walsh have shared their poetry, exchanged dialogues, and hope to meet in Northern Ireland the next time Huggins and her partner visit family there. I will explore these past and present connections in more depth in each individual chapter in order to better contextualize the writers' personal lives and political work.¹⁹

In my interview with Brian Dooley, he discussed directions for future scholarship on comparative histories of civil rights struggles in the United States and Northern Ireland. Most interesting are his political insights on women in politics. He points out that Elaine Brown continues to run for political office under the Green Party. Likewise, he

¹⁹ See chapter two for Davis and Devlin McAliskey, chapter three for Shakur and D'Arcy, chapter four for Huggins and Walsh, and chapter five for Shakur-Davis, Bird, Bukhari, O'Dwyer, Anderson, and Farrell.

notes that Martina Anderson, Barbara de Bruin, Mary Lou McDonald, and Monica Digney have transitioned into political work with Sinn Féin. I also have noticed that many political prisoners in the United States and the Six Counties of Ireland have turned to scholarship and writing. Angela Y. Davis, Ericka Huggins, and Kathleen Cleaver all are professors, scholars, and writers. Assata Shakur has reportedly been doing literacy work, post-graduate school, and continues to produce furtive writing and artwork. Afeni Shakur-Davis has been doing cultural revival work in her son's memory. Roseleen Walsh, Margaretta D'Arcy, and Ella O'Dwyer have been supporting themselves by their pen. The majority of these women, in their academic and activist spaces, have transitioned into work on the study of gender and sexuality in social movements. The past and present meet at the level of political office, cultural production, and political organizing by, for, and of the women.

Literary Convictions: “Revolutionary Auto/biography”²⁰ in the United States and Northern Ireland

This study draws from major shifts in auto/biographical literary criticism. The content and form of autobiography has been important in scholarship in the United States and Northern Ireland. I draw from this field to talk about autobiography's roots, definition, and style. In addition, scholarship written about the works of Angela Y. Davis, Assata Shakur, Ericka Huggins, Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Margaretta D'Arcy, Roseleen Walsh, Mairéad Farrell, Martina Anderson, and/or Ella O'Dwyer offers additional perspectives.

²⁰ See my definition of “revolutionary auto/biography” on pages 18-19.

Numerous literary scholars have examined the lexical roots of the term “autobiography.” Although autobiography existed before its coinage, the first publication of the term is attributed to Ann Yearsley in her 1786 poems to her patron, Hannah More (in Folkenflik 1). Many scholars have reconceptualized the term since then. In her historical overview of women’s autobiography, feminist literary scholar Sidonie Smith breaks down the Latin denotation of “autobiography” as “a sense of identity” (“*aute*”) and “experience” (“*bios*”) (*A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography* 16). Other scholars, however, have even re-envisioned the terminology itself, offering “autography” (H. Porter Abbott), “autogynography” (Domna C. Stanton), “Otobiographie” (Jacques Derrida), and “biomythography” (Audre Lorde), or have insisted on modifying the term, as in “cultural autobiography” (Bernice Johnson Reagon), and “political autobiography” (Angela Y. Davis), to name a few. These conceptions of autobiography have changed with time to reflect social, political, and cultural debates on women’s writing.

Since its literary reception in the eighteenth-century²¹ and critical reception in the twentieth-century,²² many scholars have re-defined autobiography in terms of its function. Sidonie Smith’s and Julia Watson’s exhaustive works on women’s auto/biography are notable. Smith defines “autobiography” as “remembered experience,” a “mode of knowing, perceiving, and being in the world” (Smith, “Constructing Truths” 37). Interestingly, Smith also views the auto/biographer as a “self-historian” in her recreation of her non-monolithic identities and experiences (“Constructing Truths” 34). Watson discusses connections between truth and writing: “[T]o give truth about oneself has always been the aim of true autobiography” (24). Shari Benstock’s early work on

²¹ See Samuel Johnson’s work.

²² See James Olney’s work.

auto/biographical criticism focuses on the “crossroads of ‘writing’ and ‘selfhood’” as means of self-interrogation and reflection (7). Benstock argues that autobiography is centered on questioning binary relationships of “self/other, private/ public, center/margin, genre/gender, reading/writing, etc” (4). Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck provide the polyvalent metaphor of “life/lines” to highlight the ways in which “autobiography is a transparency through which we perceive the life” (1). Brodzki and Schenck state, “*Life/Lines* thus aims at preserving the tension between life and literature, between politics and theory, between selfhood and textuality, which autobiography authorizes us to enjoy” (14). Similarly, Jerome Bruner notes the intersections between life and literature. Bruner posits, “[A]utobiography is life construction through ‘text’ construction” (55). Jan Zlotnik Schmidt has written about auto/biographical works as “visions of change” that “offer opportunities for change, growth, and renewal” (11). Most recently, Carolyn A. Barros has explored exciting connections between autobiography and change. Barros argues, “If transformation is the ‘something happened’ and narrative is ‘someone telling someone else that ‘something happened,’ then my definition of autobiography as narrative of transformation becomes someone telling someone telling someone else ‘something happened to *me*’” (6).

This study emphasizes the role that autobiography plays in enacting individual and collective change, expressed in terms of the politics of history, voice, and liberation. Traditionally autobiography has been associated with personal exploration and growth, rather than communal or collective change. The roots and functions of hegemonic autobiographies have associated the genre with Western individualism. Smith traces the origins of autobiography (as we know it today) to the late Middle Ages and Renaissance

(“Renaissance Humanism” 20). Smith notes that many historical changes occurring at this time affected early autobiography’s thematic preoccupation with individualism, including displacement of the feudal system with a system offering more political rights, responsibilities, and “truths,” the rise of scientific analysis and the erosion of a faith-based organization of society, and the discovery of the “self” and “self-examination” (Smith, “Renaissance Humanism” 22). Individualism, romanticism, Victorian “evolutionary progress,” the Industrial Revolution, and “great man” thesis all contributed to the burgeoning field of autobiography. Many counterhegemonic auto/biographical works, however, have routinely deconstructed the Western ethos of individualism. In Michel Foucault’s words, they have endeavored to “discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak . . . [and] which store and distribute the things that are said” (11). By extension, they have affirmed that “truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom” (Foucault 60). They are forms of “talking back,” in bell hooks’ understanding of the concept, that is, assertions of defiant speech.

Counterhegemonic auto/biographical work, thus, reflects a commitment to speaking truth to power, including challenging (a)political preoccupations with individualism that result in containing collective resistance. hooks’ work reiterates Sommer’s exact and necessary questions regarding these themes: “Is autobiography the model for imperializing the consciousness of colonized peoples, replacing their collective potential for resistance with a cult of individuality and even loneliness? Or is it a medium of resistance and counterdiscourse, the legitimate space for producing that excess which throws doubt on the coherence and power of an exclusive historiography?” (111).

“Political autobiographical writing,” part of what Caren Kaplan calls the “outlaw genre” of counterhegemonic autobiographies, makes salient the latent ways in which the personal and social often are jettisoned and disregarded. “Political autobiography” views writing as a transgressive act. Coined by Angela Y. Davis in her own autobiography about her experiences of political persecution and incarceration, “political autobiography” questions notions of a rational, agentive, unitary “I,” for such “texts of struggle” are not written for “individual growth nor for glory but are offered [. . .] to a broad public as one part of a general strategy to win political ground” (Sommer 109). Margo V. Perkins identifies five key characteristics of “political autobiographical work” as follows:

- (1) that the autobiographer will emphasize the story of the struggle over her own personal ordeals; (2) that she will use her own story both to document a history of the struggle and to further its political agenda; (3) that she will provide a voice for the voiceless; (4) that she will honor strategic silences in order to protect the integrity of the struggle as well as the welfare of the other activists; (5) that she will use the autobiography as a form of political intervention, to educate as broad an audience as possible to the situation and issues at stake. (7)

These features of “political autobiography” demonstrate intentional departures from individualism for “cultural survival,” in Caren Kaplan’s words (132).

Slave and/or prison narratives comprise a significant space within the burgeoning field of “revolutionary work” in the United States, in particular. Joy James has examined the interesting intersections between slavery and prisons in her work on “neoslave narratives.” James posits that defining features of “neoslave narratives,” popularized in the 1970s with Alex Haley’s *Roots*, include identification with themes of enslavement and freedom in cultural productions, and an appeal to the “moral conscience” in cultural productions (94). James states, “In the prison narrative, the successful escape or

emancipation and liberation manifest as physical and metaphysical fleeing from the penal site through parole, exoneration, disappearance into fugitive status, or abolitionism” (xxxii). She argues that the “neoslave narrative,” including “master state,” “non-incarcerated abolitionist and advocate,” and “prisoner slave,” typically is reformist, not revolutionary. James excoriates such an assimilationist cultural tendency for its failure to include “an analysis of state violence, gender, and sexual politics,” and calls for a “new abolitionism” (xxii; 96).

“Barred” literature, coined by Barbara Harlow, is another growing field of “revolutionary autobiography.” Harlow defines “barred” as the “policies—official and unofficial—that deny political status for women, to organized dissent, and to the literary” (viii). “Barred” work is a type of “resistance literature” that is concerned with international women’s self-determination and self-representation in cultural productions in Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, and Northern Ireland, among other sites of (post)colonial detention. It challenges systems of power, such as racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism in writing. Harlow’s work focuses on unrecognized women who engaged the National African Congress (ANC), *Frente Farabundo Marti Para La Liberacion Nacional* (FMLN), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in their activism and/or writing. Harlow’s “literary-critical” work represents a rare form of scholarship that analyzes international women’s literature composed primarily by political prisoners behind prison walls.

Lachlan Whalen and Patrick Magee have written extensively on content and form from a materialist perspective attentive to the conditions under which contemporary Northern Irish resistance writing was produced: incarceration, exile, slavery, patriarchy,

and colonialism. Whalen, moreover, critiques William Wordsworth's Romantic disapproval of "unfiltered emotion" in writing as well as his later Irish acolytes like William Butler Yeats and Edna Longley. Avoiding such "literary gerrymeandering," a deliberate pun, Whalen accounts for the material moments of textual composition and distinguishes between texts written *faoi ghlas* (locked up) and *taoibh amuigh* (outside) (11). These differences, he argues, are essential to consider within the genre of Irish prison literature. Magee, an ex-political prisoner, also argues from a "cultural materialist perspective" that links social perception to political reality, focusing on the linkages between Republican literary imagination and Loyalist colonial censorship of it, particularly in Troubles novels (19). As Barbara Harlow insists in her work on writing in Northern Ireland, "Reading prison writing must in turn demand a correspondingly activist counterapproach to that of passivity, aesthetic gratification, and the pleasures of [revision and] consumption that are traditionally sanctioned by the academic discipline of literature" (4).

Despite the usefulness of terms, such as "political autobiography," "neo-slave narrative," and "barred literature," among others, I use the term "revolutionary auto/biography" in this study for several reasons. First, I want to preserve the historical roots of the term "autobiography," namely for its attention to memory, location, and experience in prose and/or poetry. Second, I also acknowledge Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's literary legacy as senior scholars who have worked tirelessly throughout their careers to recognize auto/biographical writing produced by marginalized people (i.e., women, people of color, working-class and/or poor people). However, I want to fill the interstices of biography and autobiography, the collective and individual, in politically-

charged critique; moreover, I use the slash in “auto/biography” to trouble this binary logic. Third, while the term “political autobiography” was coined in struggle by revolutionary scholar/ activist Angela Davis, its neutrality does not differentiate between the political categories of “conservative,” “liberal,” “nationalist,” “radical,” “revolutionary,” among many others. I do preserve Margo Perkins’ characteristics of the genre, but I do add in other literary concerns that challenge racialized/ gendered colonial power. Fourth, Joy James’ notion of “neo-slave narrative,” while appropriate for the intended audience, Black American people, does not carry meaning for Northern Irish people, even with the latter’s own unique experience of slavery. Fifth, while all the writers in this study did prison time, I do not want to categorize their whole identity as “barred.” Sixth, I appreciate Joy James’ definition of “revolutionary and Harlow’s use of “revolutionary” to talk about writers in her recent work, *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Writing* for the reasons I noted earlier. I use the term “revolutionary auto/biography” to preserve the aforementioned intellectual and practical histories of language discussed above, but I merge and rethink this language to represent my ideological leanings and the writers’ self-representation as writers/ critics of systems of racialized/ gendered colonial power.

While some of the literary critics mentioned here have contributed to the genre of revolutionary auto/biography, little scholarship exists on many of the revolutionary Black American and Northern Irish women leaders/writers under consideration for this dissertation, and no work has been done that compares their experiences and/or their writing. Angela Davis and Assata Shakur have received the most critical attention of the leaders/writers under study for this project. J.A. Parker, Bettina Aptheker, Mary Timothy,

Charles R. Ashman, and Regina Nadelson have written on Davis' trial. Joy James, Margo Perkins, Dylan Rodriguez, Cynthia Y. Young, and Phyllis Marie Jeffers also have done work on Davis' protest rhetoric, though Jeffers' work is an unpublished M.A. thesis. Only Perkins' work addresses Davis' literary style, however. James and Perkins also have written extensively on Assata Shakur's personal and political form of expression in her statements, speeches, poetry, and autobiography. They have provided cogent analyses of Shakur's work as a form of "neo-slave narrative," written as a form of aesthetic resistance. Helene Christol's recent critical work has explored Shakur's use of auto/biography as an aesthetic form of militarism, situating her work in conversation with James' and Perkins' earlier work. Additionally, within the last few years, four unpublished M.A. theses were written by Phyllis Marie Jeffers, Alanya Zubrow, Tayana L. Hardin, and I that devoted study to Assata Shakur alongside other writers like Elaine Brown, Anne Moody, Chester Himes, Harriet Jacobs, Susan Stern, and Mary Brave Bird. Besides those works, Shakur's aunt, Evelyn Williams, produced a fascinating book on Shakur's early life, later activism, and current status, focusing on her arrests, trials, and evidence as her lawyer. Numerous songs and artwork have commemorated Davis and Shakur.

No literary criticism is available on the work of Black American leaders/writers Ericka Huggins, Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, or Safiya Bukhari. The only works besides Huggins' own poetry, own *The Black Panther* news articles, own sociological thesis on the Oakland Community School, and her recent oral history with Fiona Thompson is Donald Freed's comprehensive coverage of her trial in New Haven with Bobby Seale. Likewise, Jasmine Guy's extensive interviews with Afeni Shakur-Davis

remain the only biographical work on her, though much of Tupac Shakur's music pays homage to his mother (i.e., "Dear Mama"). Besides interviews by Workers World activist Imani Henry and Arm the Spirit and some cursory remarks by Angela Y. Davis and Laura Whitehorn in the forward and introduction of Whitehorn's new anthology of Safiya Bukhari's work, *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Panther, Keeping Faith in Prison & Fighting for Those Left Behind*, nothing exists on Bukhari, either. Nothing has been done at all on Afeni Shakur-Davis' and Joan Bird's contributions to the "collective autobiography" of the New York 21 as the only two women imprisoned.

Revolutionary Northern Irish women writers have fared worse in terms of critical attention than Black American ones. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and Mairéad Farrell are notable exceptions. George William Target has written a biography on Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. Like Davis and Shakur, Devlin McAliskey and Farrell have been included in many anthologies as well as shorter biographies--not to mention street murals and rebel songs throughout the Six Counties. Other than that, however, the only works to date on Devlin McAliskey are two unpublished M.A. theses written by Barbara Oney Garvey and Michael P. Foy and two unpublished Ph.D. dissertations written by Karen Margaret Steele and by David F. Fanning. Many of them have addressed representation in Ireland, with Steele's work offering an interesting commentary on women as national symbols in Northern Ireland, in particular. As for Farrell, Marian Broderick's anthology of more than seventy "wild Irish women" provides a short biographical sketch of Farrell's life. Nell McCafferty, Barbara Harlow, and Sharon Pickering have discussed Farrell's interviews that chronicle prison conditions for Republican women. Harlow also has done some work on Farrell's assassination. In addition, Nicholas Eckert's, Hiliary Kitchin's,

and Maxine Williams' works offer an in-depth study of the circumstances surrounding Farrell's assassination by the British Special Air Service (SAS) in Gibraltar with Daniel McCann and Sean Savage as retribution for an undocumented IRA bomb plot. Scott Graham has written two anecdotal pieces on his personal involvement with her, *Violent Delights* and *Shoot to Kill*. Recently, Lachlan Whalen published an anthology of contemporary Republican prison writings, including a chapter on women in Armagh, Maghaberry, and Durham. This project contains some critical commentary on Roseleen Walsh's work, with brief reflections on Martina Anderson's and Ella O'Dwyer's activist work. Melissa Thompson's documentary *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners* compiles letters and interviews with many Irish Republican women released after the Good Friday Agreement, including Roseleen Walsh, Martina Anderson, and Ella O'Dwyer. Barbara Harlow also cites a brief excerpt from one of Ella O'Dwyer's letters in *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention*. In addition, Ella O'Dwyer's own scholarly work *Rising of the Moon: The Language of Power* explores important connections between power and context in Irish literature, though not in her own prison writing.

While Margaretta D'Arcy has received critical attention from many scholars, including Elizabeth Hale Winkler, Mary Luckhurst, Jonathan Wike, for her theatrical collaboration with John Arden, little literary work exists on her auto/biographical work on her prison time. A notable aberration is Laura Lyons, whose work situates D'Arcy's auto/biography within an interesting discourse of "Mother Ireland," alongside other Irish freedom fighters like Mairéad Farrell. Lyons shows the ways Republican women inverted this traditional paradigm of feminized land and domestic servitude through their political

comments, using the “no wash” protest” as an example. Nell McCafferty, Barbara Harlow, Brian Dooley, Sharon Pickering, and Laura Weinstein also allude to D’Arcy’s text in their works on Irish women’s resistance, especially in *Women Against Imperialism (WAI)*, during the Dirty Protest. No published literary criticism exists on any of the Irish women leaders/writers--Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Mairéad Farrell, Martina Anderson, and Ella O’Dwyer--considered in this study thus far.

This project will explore stylistic similarities in their revolutionary auto/biographical work personal connections to each other in their political lives, and parallels in their political experiences. It focuses on content and form in the work of Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey; Assata Shakur and Margaretta D’Arcy; Ericka Huggins and Roseleen Walsh; Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, and Martina Anderson, Ella O’Dwyer, and Mairéad Farrell. I examine their lives and their work, their experiences and their language, their politics and their prose or poetry. I treat their revolutionary auto/ biographical writing as both data about their lives and literary form. I use their auto/biographies as both an object of analysis and a source of data. I consider the dimensions of their auto/biographical experience, especially related to their political experiences. This project examines numerous historical associations and textual similarities in these writers’ lives and work: (1) their work is directed towards an audience of activists and/or academics, (2) their work is an important record of their political lives and lies at the intersections of civil rights/ anti-colonial and feminist liberation movements, (3) their works are good examples of the ways in which revolutionary commitments and auto/biographical impulses coalesce, and (4) their work represents a challenge to racialized/ gendered/ colonial power in their form and content.

The features of their revolutionary auto/biography demonstrate intentional departures from Renaissance autobiography's thematic preoccupation with individualism, in particular. Instead, many of their works challenge notions of a rational, agentive, unitary "I," for such texts of struggle are not written for individual growth, but rather collective struggle. This dissertation looks at rhetorical devices and narrative strategies that characterize work by Black American and Northern Irish women. It also views their texts as data. Many of these leaders/writers question racialized/ gendered/ colonial power.

Interdisciplinary Approaches: Theoretical, Historical, Literary, and Interview-Based Modes of Inquiry

This dissertation employs interdisciplinary modes of inquiry. It fuses theoretical, historical, literary, and interview-based analyses of Black American and Northern Irish women leaders/writers and their work. It views theory as a way of understanding and/or challenging concepts of social identity, marked by gender, race, class, and nation. It also views historical process as a significant source of change and meaning in the world. In addition, it views cultural production as a key site of creative power for substantive political enfranchisement. Lastly, it views personal interviews as a supplemental mode of inquiry that privileges each writer's own voice and interpretation of her life and work. It examines comparatively and relationally two sites with similar historical processes and literary productions to generate a more unified understanding of social and cultural realities. It establishes critical links between theory, history, literature, and interview, and centers women's placement within each genre. Specifically, it draws on civil rights/postcolonial/feminist theory, literary materials (i.e., auto/biographical prose and poetry), archival materials (i.e., newspapers, letters, and communiqués), and short

interviews with five writers (i.e., Margaretta D'Arcy, Ericka Huggins, Roseleen Walsh, Martina Anderson, and Ella O'Dwyer) and two scholars/ activists (i.e., Brian Dooley and Laura Whitehorn) in an attempt to put them all in conversation with one another. It privileges similarities in textual forms of expression across genres and geographic borders, though notes differences, as well. This interdisciplinary approach re-imagines power and resists power by exploring the form of two important social movements and the women's literatures emerging from them.

Within literary criticism, historical/ biographical study was the dominant form of literary scholarship in the late nineteenth/ early twentieth-centuries. Critic H.A. Taine proposed that writers should be understood in terms of race, milieu, and moment—what he saw as hereditary and environmental influences, cultural tradition, and the writer's present moment. He argued that writers are the product of the racial characteristics they have inherited and environmental influences (i.e., poverty), of the cultural tradition they are born into, and of the social politics of the moment. Formalism/ new criticism developed as a distinct critical method in response to what non-traditional critics at the time perceived as an overreliance on biographical and historical background. Formalist critics like John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks argue that the text is the primary—some critics would say the only—source of meaning. Word choice, structure, and literary devices, such as metonymy, paradox, alliteration, assonance, and symbolism, etc., are the key concerns, with everything outside the text viewed as largely irrelevant. These traditional approaches did not confront sites of marginality (i.e., race, class, gender, and nation).

Challenges to the repressive naturalization of these hegemonic knowledges surfaced in the mid-twentieth-century, including feminist, critical race, and postcolonial criticisms. Feminist criticism is a notable example of these intersections. It concentrates on questioning sexist portrayals of women and recovering the writings of women neglected in the literary establishment in different historical times and locations. Elaine Showalter and Susan Gubar have called these respective approaches “feminist critique” and “gynocriticism.” Showalter describes “critique” as follows:

In its earliest years, feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history. (5)

“Gynocriticism” followed “critique,” allowing “women writers [. . .] a literature of their own, whose historical and thematic coherence, as well as artistic importance, had been obscured by the patriarchal values that [previously had] dominated our culture” (Showalter 6). In addition to “critique” and “gynocriticism,” feminist criticism now practices what Gubar calls “the engendering of differences,” an intersectional form of literary criticism that merges racial, ethnic, economic, and sexual differences (117). For Gubar, “engendering of differences” merges critical race and postcolonial criticisms with feminist criticism. Judith Newton’s and Deborah S. Rosenfelt’s concept of “materialist feminism” recognizes the importance of situating women’s literature as the product of material conditions while at the same time, grounding analysis within an intersectional framework, attentive to critical race and postcolonial critiques of white supremacy and colonialism. This approach takes into account “the social and economic circumstances in which women and men live - the material conditions of their lives – [that] are central to

an understanding of culture and society” (Rosenfelt and Newton xi). This dissertation excavates unrecognized women’s texts, repositions “gynocritical” work next to masculinist narratives, and examines the ways in which materialism and formalism can be deployed together as interrelated forms of analysis within the fields of critical race, anti-colonial, and feminist studies in revolutionary auto/biographical literature.

This dissertation practices a “historical materialist” approach to understanding histories of revolutions in the United States and Northern Ireland, but is inclusive of the social constructions of racialized, gendered, and nationalized tensions, as well. It explores much archival information to contextualize transatlantic anti-colonial civil rights movements as material productions. *The Black Panther*, *An Phoblacht/ Republican News*, *The New York Times*, and *The Irish Times*, among other sources, are key sites of archival research to put alternative and mainstream news coverage in conversation with each other. In the United States, Black Liberation publications *The 10 Point Program*, *Ramparts*, *Right On! Black Community News Service*, and *Message to the Black Movement: A Political Statement from the Black Underground* also are considered, alongside the Irish Republican publications *Green Book*, *IRIS*, and *Spare Rib*. I use statements from organizations in the United States and Northern Ireland, as well. All archival material was procured from the following sources in the United States and Ireland: the National Archives and Records Administration (US), the University of Maryland, the City University of New York, the National Archives of Ireland, the National Library of Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the Linen Hall Library, the Sinn Féin Prisoner of War Department, and various online news sources. I also include personal data given to me by some of the writers/ scholars in this

dissertation, especially Ericka Huggins, Roseleen Walsh, and Brian Dooley, as well as prison files cleared by governmental bodies.

This dissertation also includes several interviews from both writers in the study and scholars writing about them.²³ These one-time interviews lasted approximately one to two hours. The selection process was open to the majority of the writers in this study, with the exception of deceased writers (i.e., Safiya Bukhari and Mairéad Farrell), fugitive writers (i.e., Assata Shakur), and writers famous enough to resist incursions on their time (i.e., Afeni Shakur-Davis, Angela Y. Davis, and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey). However, Jasmine Guy's in-depth biography on Shakur-Davis contains rich interview material that is useful to this study. In addition, historian/ activist Brian Dooley has interviewed Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey extensively on their transatlantic connections. Joan Bird was impossible to locate and contact for an interview invitation. Interviews with Margaretta D'Arcy, Ericka Huggins, Roseleen Walsh, Martina Anderson, and Ella O'Dwyer are used as supplemental data in this study. All of these writers were asked approximately five questions about their personal biographies, writing processes, and transatlantic solidarity. While this dissertation is deeply informed by literary and historical concerns, it also values each writer's individual voice and literary interpretation. The interview with historian/ activist Brian Dooley provides additional background information on historical associations, political rhetoric, research omissions, and current trends. His interviews, particularly those on Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, are essential to this study, for his scholarly work on Black American and Irish civil rights movements is the only substantive work on the topic. The interview with activist/ writer Laura Whitehorn gives biographical, aesthetic, and material

²³ See my appendix.

information about Safiya Bukhari's life and work, including Whitehorn's friendship with Bukhari and compilation of her work. The interviews serve to fill the gaps in biographical, historical, and/or literary information.

Scholarly Contributions: Towards a Feminist Comparative Literature of Anti-Colonial Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland

Many theoretical, historical, and literary associations exist between contemporary anti-colonial civil rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland. The social tension between Blacks and whites in the United States and Republican / Catholics and Loyalist/ Protestants in Northern Ireland has been discussed both in activist and academic circles. Existing scholarship highlights crosscurrents both in theoretical conceptions of race, class, and nation and in historical struggles against colonialism and for civil rights in these contexts. The movements in the United States greatly influenced the movements in Northern Ireland in many areas, including ties between leaders, marches, slogans, organizations, and communication. Literary production also reflects these connections. One important similarity between the movements was the significance of women's work both in terms of activism and/or writing. However, existing scholarship neither acknowledges the connections (and disconnections) between Black American and Northern Irish women across these social movements in any substantive way, nor recognizes the significance of their own counterhegemonic cultural productions in any substantive way. Some of these Black American women writers have received a wealth of scholarly attention, some a dearth of scholarly attention, and some none whatsoever, but most interpretations share a lack of comparative complexity.

This dissertation builds upon the scholarly discourse on Black American and Northern Irish anti-colonial civil rights relations that challenges them as discrete events instead of highlighting key points of connection. However, Black American and Northern Irish women were deeply involved in these struggles, though masculinist representations of these struggles ignore, minimize, and/or distort them. These struggles and connections between them look different when women's contributions to them are examined. This study offers a feminist comparative study of anti-colonial civil rights movements literatures by women in the United States and Northern Ireland. I reposition Black American and Northern Irish women's political and cultural work to show a fuller, more inclusive vision of these anti-colonial civil rights movements. I center women's political and aesthetic contributions to these movements. I view culture as an important medium of representation for these women. Their cultural productions provide "literary-critical" commentary in ways they could not do politically, socially, and economically due to disenfranchisement. This study asks the following two-fold question: how do female subjects contribute to formulating these anti-colonial civil rights movements, and how do they represent struggle and solidarity in their literary expression? This dissertation contributes to conversations in Women's Studies in several ways: (1) it rethinks existing scholarly work on these women writers from a formalist, materialist, interdisciplinary, and comparative perspective, (2) it repositions masculinist canonical work that has ignored some of these women writers' work altogether, and (3), it offers new insights into all these women writers' lives and works by placing them in dialogue with one another.

Conclusion: Chapter Outline

This dissertation is organized into several chapters. The second chapter analyzes the ways in which content and form coalesce in the auto/biographical literature of Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. I also discuss their political lives in relation to their work. I focus on Angela Y. Davis' *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's *The Price of My Soul*. These central Black American and Northern Irish leaders' early civil rights works are integral to understanding overlapping ideologies and practices of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Communist Party-USA (Che-Lumumba Club), the Black Panther Party, and the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee as well as the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, People's Democracy, Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), and the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee. These texts explore common themes of political memberships, activist tactics, and international solidarity. These figures corresponded with one another to exchange ideas for collective success as well as offer solidarity, and their revolutionary auto/biographical prose work is politicized in similar ways, as well. The third chapter analyzes analogous thematic preoccupations in the revolutionary auto/biographical prose work of Assata Shakur and Margaretta D'Arcy. I focus on Assata Shakur's *Assata: An Autobiography* and Margaretta D'Arcy's *To Tell Them Everything: A Sojourn in the Prison of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Ard Macha (Armagh)*. These writers/ leaders illustrate similar experiences with inaccurate representation by the mainstream media and societies, and express their frustrations through a defiant writing style that re-imagines connections between thought and action through punctuation, mechanics, tone, and imagery. The fourth chapter examines the revolutionary auto/biographical poetry of

Ericka Huggins and Roseleen Walsh. I focus on Ericka Huggins' *Insights and Poems* (which also contains Huey P. Newton's work) and Roseleen Walsh's *Aiming Higher*. Both of the leaders/writers, while not in direct communication with one another, explore related themes of love, time, spirituality, and racial and national identity in their poetry. The fifth chapter analyses the revolutionary auto/biographical essays of Black Panther Party members Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, and Safiya Bukhari as well as the personal letters of Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin members Martina Anderson, Ella O'Dwyer, and Mairéad Farrell. I focus on Afeni Shakur-Davis' and Joan Bird's contributions to *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21*, and Martina Anderson's, Ella O'Dwyer's, and Mairéad Farrell's prison letters, petitions, and files. In addition, I will use some of Martina Anderson's and Ella O'Dwyer's interview material from *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners*. I also use *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther*, *Keeping the Faith in Prison*, and *Fighting for Those Left Behind*, an anthology of Safiya Bukhari's work (i.e., letters, essays, and statements), edited by ex-Weather member Laura Whitehorn, in this chapter. I focus on themes of dehumanization and resistance in their writings. These writers all composed their work in prison, and address similar themes of physical, sexual, and psychological violence as well as collective struggle, solidarity, and spirit in their works. The sixth chapter concludes the dissertation. It discusses the major themes generated in the previous chapters, addresses the limitations of the study, offers directions for future study, and proposes a brief rationale for continuing a social justice agenda in these contexts.

Chapter 2: Soledad-ity Sisters: Rhetoric, Politics, & Tactics in Angela Davis' *Angela Y. Davis: An Autobiography* and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's *The Price of My Soul*

Introduction

In “Free Derry”²⁴ territory, Tom Kelly, Kevin Hasson, and William Kelly, also known as the Bogside Artists, painted twelve murals on Rossville Street (<http://www.bogsideartists.com>). Their aim was to commemorate the area’s symbolic and strategic importance during the Troubles in the Six Counties of Ireland. Their artwork historicizes many events, such as Civil Rights marches in the late 1960s, the Bloody Sunday massacre in the 1970s, the “No Wash” protest in the 1980s, and the Nobel Peace winners in the 1990s.²⁵ The murals also honor key leaders of revolutionary movements, such as Martin Luther King, John Hume, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, among others. Their current artwork is a beautiful corrective to a horrifying past. However, the role that the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party (BPP) played in influencing the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and People’s Democracy (PD) has yet to be portrayed in Derry’s famous murals. It is a glaring omission, for Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s and Eamonn McCann’s iconic statuses and catalytic roles are indisputable, and they were deeply inspired by SNCC’s and the BPP’s work in the United States. Perhaps, in the future, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and Eamonn McCann will be surrounded by Angela Y. Davis, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale,

²⁴ In Derry, a Republican landmark welcomes you. It is known as “Free Derry” territory. It says, “You are now entering Free Derry.” In Belfast, there is similar Loyalist mural that reads “you are now entering Loyalist Sandy Row.” They divide communities, along with stones painted in Irish or British colors to keep “others” out.

²⁵ See introduction.

Ericka Huggins, and Kwame Ture (Stokley Carmichael) there. It seems fitting that they share the same space on the walls that they did on the streets.

Many points of connection exist between Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. Brian Dooley's work has addressed many of them, filling interstices in accounts of the Civil Rights Movements of the United States and the Six Counties of Ireland. In particular, his interviews with Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey provide first-hand information on the connections that existed between them in their political and personal lives. Devlin McAliskey followed social justice activism in the United States with unflinching attention. She saw many racial and colonial parallels between Black Americans and Northern Irish Catholics. In an interview, Devlin McAliskey states: "[I]t is like agreeing to unite and fight, Black and white together, when the price for that agreement is that Black people pretend there is no such thing as racism. [. . .] We must pretend that there is no such thing as Loyalist racism against us and no such thing as the differential discrimination and privilege against us" (qtd. Flaherty 8). Her ideological and practical values merge through transatlantic activism, as well:

The people of Northern Ireland instinctively identified with the Black civil rights movement; many of our marches were consciously and deliberately modeled after marches from Belfast to Derry, they carried banners which were identical to those carried out the Selma March. [. . .] Nationalist and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland knew almost every speech that Martin Luther King made and knew almost every speech Malcolm X made. (qtd. in Flaherty 7)

In particular, Devlin McAliskey talks about the Panthers: "[P]eople like myself and [Eamonn] McCann and others [. . .] at the time were political enough to know the experience of the Panthers [. . .] our strategy [was] that it could happen to us" (qtd. in Dooley 116). People's Democracy, to which Devlin McAliskey belonged, followed the

Soledad Brothers' case and Angela Y. Davis' case religiously. Devlin McAliskey called Davis "a symbol of all political prisoners" (qtd. in Dooley 66). In addition, during Devlin McAliskey's visit to the United States, she visited Davis in prison in 1971, and shortly thereafter, advocated for better prison conditions for her (Dooley 3; "Bernadette Devlin Here"). In an interview, Davis reflects on Devlin McAliskey's visit:

I guess I was surprised to hear that she wanted to meet with me and of course extremely pleased that she had decided to visit me in jail even though there was a great deal of resistance in the Irish-American community in the Bay Area. We talked about the similarities of the situations in Northern Ireland and in the US with respect to African-American people and people of colour. (qtd. in Dooley 91)

Later, Davis joined the campaign to free Devlin McAliskey's daughter Roisin McAliskey, who was arrested on a bombing charge in November 1996, and spent the final months of her pregnancy in British and German prisons (Dooley 125; 139). Before her trip to raise funds for the Six Counties concluded, Devlin McAliskey also met up with Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Huey Newton, and sent a telegram to Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins in solidarity with their acquittal (which I discuss in more depth in chapter five) (Dooley 139; "Miss Devlin Ends Her Visit to the U.S"). During her trip to the United States in August 1969, she also turned over the mayoral keys to the Panthers as a "gesture of solidarity" ("Bernadette Devlin Gets Key to City from Mayor"; "Irish Give Key to City to Panthers as Symbol"). Devlin McAliskey has continued to maintain ties with former Panthers, as well, though she was barred from visiting the United States in June 2008, owing to her former membership in the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and its military wing the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) ("U.S. Bars Bernadette Devlin"). On November 4, 2008, Devlin McAliskey, along with McCann, introduced talks given by Billy "X" Jennings on his Panther archive and Emory Douglas on his

Panther artwork for the “Spirit of ‘68” fortieth anniversary events in Derry, during which she also reminisced about presenting the mayoral keys to New York Panthers (<http://veryderry.com/panthers-in-derry>). This relationship demonstrates the continuity of past and present.

Besides Brian Dooley’s exhaustive historical and ethnographic work, which put them in conversation in comparative scholarship, a wealth of critical attention has been devoted to Angela Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey as individuals. J.A. Parker, Bettina Aptheker, Mary Timothy, Charles R. Ashman, and Regina Nadelson have written about Davis’ trials. Joy James, Margo Perkins, Dylan Rodriguez, Cynthia Y. Young, and Phyllis Marie Jeffers have done some work on Davis’ protest rhetoric, though Jeffers’ work is an unpublished M.A. thesis. Only Perkins’ work addresses Davis’ literary style, however. Like Davis’ writings, Devlin McAliskey’s work has been included in many anthologies as well as shorter biographies, just as her image has appeared in street murals and rebel songs throughout the Six Counties. In addition, George William Target has written a biography on Devlin McAliskey, based largely on her auto/biography. Other than that, the only works to date on Devlin McAliskey are two unpublished M.A. theses written by Barbara Oney Garvey and Michael P. Foy and two unpublished Ph.D. dissertations written by Karen Margaret Steele and David F. Fanning. This graduate work has addressed cultural representation in Ireland, with Steele’s work offering an interesting commentary on women as national symbols in Ireland. No published literary criticism exists on Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, however. My project takes the comparative discussion Dooley birthed into the unexplored realm of the literary. To date, no

comparative literary work has been done on Davis and Devlin McAliskey. It also includes more recent examples of their continuing transatlantic connections.

This chapter, then, explores the revolutionary auto/biographical literature of Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey. I focus on Angela Y. Davis' *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's *The Price of My Soul*, both of which are longer memoir projects. Davis wrote her revolutionary auto/biography in 1974, almost two years after her arrest, whereas Devlin McAliskey's work was dictated and transcribed in 1969, a year before her arrest (*Target 293*). I also use Davis' shorter personal sketches in *If They Come for Me in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*, a compilation of essays by and about political prisoners that was published in 1972 while she was in jail. These central Black American and Northern Irish leaders' early civil rights works during Black Power and the Troubles, respectively, are integral to understanding overlapping ideologies and practices of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Communist Party-USA (CP-USA) (Che-Lumumba Club), the Black Panther Party (BPP), and the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee as well as the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), People's Democracy (PD), Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), and the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee. These texts explore common themes of political membership, activist tactics, and international solidarity. First, I provide a relatively straightforward descriptive account of Angela Y. Davis' and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's personal and political lives. I draw from their auto/biographical works, from other scholarly work, and from press stories and speeches. In this section, I use their auto/biographical works as a source of data. Then I turn to a literary discussion on convergent and divergent themes in

their revolutionary auto/biographies, in which the texts become an object of analysis. I give special attention to their rhetorical, political, and tactical discussions.

Auto/biographical Overviews of Resistance: Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey

Angela Y. Davis

Angela Davis is a distinguished professor, scholar, and activist. She was born on January 26, 1944 in Birmingham, Alabama (Marcuse). Davis' mother was a primary school teacher, and while her father also taught for years, he later became a mechanic (88). She is one of three children (88). Davis' childhood was plagued by virulent racism. She sums up her experiences during her youth as follows:

In 1948 we moved out of the projects in Birmingham, Alabama, to the large wooden house on Center Street. [. . .] We were the first black family to move into that area, and the white people believed that we were in the vanguard of a mass invasion. [. . .] Almost immediately after we moved there the white people got together and decided on a border line between them and us. [. . .] If we ever crossed over to their side, war would be declared. (77-79)

This social environment required vigilance and defense for survival. Davis' parents became members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which at the time, was illegal; Davis' mother also was involved in organizing efforts to free the Scottsboro 9, the nine men arrested for rape (101). They received numerous bomb threats. Her parents owned guns, and encouraged their children to use education as another means of survival (101). Davis used independent reading as a form of social escape. "As a result of my mother's encouragement and prodding, books became a gratifying diversion for me. [. . .] I read avidly there—everything from *Heidi* to

Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, from Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* to Frank Yerby's lurid novels" (97). This "hobby" became her life-long preoccupation.

Experiences with systemic inequality followed her into young adulthood. When Davis was in her junior her of high school, she decided to leave Birmingham; she went to Elisabeth Irwin High School in New York, where she read Karl Marx's pioneering work *The Communist Manifesto*. At this point in her life, Davis became politically active. In 1960, Davis joined Advance, a Marxist-Leninist youth organization with ties to the Communist Party (111). Shortly thereafter, Davis participated in her first demonstration, picketing F.W. Woolworth on Forty-Second Street for not hiring Black clerks (112).

In college, Davis divided her time between school and activism. At Brandeis University, she studied French literature and Western philosophy with leftist philosopher Herbert Marcuse (118). During this time, Davis' Festival Scholarship required her to perform volunteer work, so she went to the Eighth World Youth Festival in Finland over the summer to fulfill this requirement (124). When she returned, she was interrogated by a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigator about her Communist activities (124). In September 1963, Davis was deeply affected by the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, resulting in the death of four of her sisters' friends: Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, and Denise McClair (129). Davis joined the anti-war organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), protesting the Vietnam War at the U.S. Embassy in Germany (142).

During Davis' time in graduate school at Frankfurt, the Black Liberation Movement was omnipresent in the United States-- the Watts and Detroit riots, marches in Mississippi, the transformation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the

development of the Black Power Conference and the Black Panther Party. After just two years at Frankfurt, she decided to transfer to the University of California in San Diego, where Marcuse was teaching at the time (145). As Davis puts it, “I wanted to continue my academic work, but I knew I could not do it unless I was politically involved” (145). In 1968, Davis joined the San Diego Black Conference, a coalition of community organizations spearheaded by the Us Organization (157). Davis also joined SNCC; she worked with the Propaganda Department and the Liberation School (171). In her auto/biography, Davis explains:

My overall vision of the school I directed was a place where political understanding was forged and sharpened, where consciousness became explicit and was urged in a revolutionary direction. This is why I taught and found others to teach courses on such topics as Current Developments in the Black Movement, Liberation Movements in the Third World, and Community Organizing Skills. (182)

In addition, she joined the Che-Lumumba Club, affiliated with the Communist Party-USA. She was in charge of designing the Lumumba-Zapata College, an alternative education for Black and Latino students. Davis explains the mission of the Che-Lumumba Club, as follows:

The practical perspective of the Che-Lumumba Club is based on an awareness of the need to emphasize the national character of our people’s struggle and to struggle around the specific forms of oppression which have kept us at the very lowest levels of American society for hundreds of years, but at the same time to place ourselves as black people in the forefront of a revolution involving masses of people to destroy capitalism, to eventually build a socialist society and thus to liberate not only our own people but all the downtrodden in this country. (*If They Come in the Morning* 180)

Eventually, Davis quit SNCC, and teamed up with the Panthers. She wanted to distance herself from SNCC’s national leadership, reduce hostilities between SNCC and the BPP, and establish coalitions between Black organizations. She was head of Bobby Seale’s

defense committee in Los Angeles (*If They Come in the Morning* 264). She was committed to the freedom of many political prisoners.

After Davis advanced to candidacy and before she commenced full-time teaching in the Philosophy Department at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1969, Davis went to Cuba illegally with the Venceremos Brigade to protest the United States trade blockade (63). A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent anticipated her arrival in the United States, probing her about her Communist activities in Cuba. Davis responds to UCLA Chancellor Charles Young's letter, asking about her Communist membership (as requested by Governor Ronald Reagan and the Board of Regents): "At the outset let me say that I think the question posed is impermissible. This is true on grounds of constitutional freedom as well as academic policy. However, and without waiving my objections to the question posed, my answer is that I am now a member of the Communist Party" (qtd. in Parker 110). Davis received numerous death threats—not to mention that many of her colleagues were harassed (219). On September 19, 1969, Davis was dismissed from her professorial duties; furthermore, the Regents unearthed a resolution from 1940 that stated that Communist Party membership was incompatible with faculty membership (Daviess, "U.C.L.A. Teacher Is Ousted"). While the case was pending, she was allowed to teach her Black Literature course in the fall ("Ousted Communist"). On October 4, 1969, UCLA faculty voted 551 to 4 to rescind the ban on Communists teaching there, and voted 539 to 13 to condemn the Regents' decision to dismiss Davis, citing reasons of academic freedom (Daviess, "Teacher Barred"). Two days later, Davis gave her first lecture to more than two thousand students on Frederick Douglass, in which she told her students to "resist Regents," honor the "autonomy of the

university,” and engage in “an open act of resistance” (qtd. in Roberts, “U.C.L.A. Students”). Davis’ professors and colleagues supported her, as well. Director of Afro-American Studies Robert Singleton, Philosophy Chair Donald Kalish, and Chancellor Charles E. Young tried to get credits²⁶ for her course, and added two courses to her assignment, “Kant and Idealism” and “Dialectical Materialism” (Roberts, “U.C.L.A. Students”; “2 More Courses”). Two months later, UCLA conducted a larger campus-wide vote (2,487 to 1,139) in favor of Davis’ remaining at UCLA (“U. of California Faculty Rejects”). Superior Court Judge Jerry Pacht also demanded that Regents halt hearing on Davis; he cited “no political test shall ever be considered in the appointment and promotion of any faculty member or employe[e]” (qtd. in “U. of California Faculty Rejects Communist Ban”). Nevertheless, Pacht’s decision was rejected on a mere technicality by Regents, the case was sent to Alameda County (university headquarters), Hitch and Young were dismissed from the case, and Reagan voted in favor of the resolution (“Court Ruling”; “U.C.L.A. Bypassed”). On June 19, 1970, Davis was fired from her post, not allegedly for “racial” or “political” reasons, but because of “inflammatory” speeches in which police were called “pigs” (Turner). She tried to sue for reinstatement, to no avail (“Ousted Red Teacher Sues”). Davis continued her Communist organizing, officially elected to the sixty-member central committee of the Communist Party-USA in the winter of 1972 (“Miss Davis Wins Position”).

As a result of losing her teaching position, Davis redirected her time to full-time dissertation writing and activist work. The Los Angeles “Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights” contacted the Che-Lumumba Club to arrange a mass campaign to free the

²⁶ Regents allowed Davis to teach until her hearing, but did not allow students to receive credits from taking her courses.

Soledad Brothers. She devoted the majority of her time to the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee, in particular. Davis explains:

The situation in Soledad is part of a continuous pattern in the Black community. Three Black men who are unarmed, who are not attempting to escape, are killed, and this is called justifiable homicide. [. . .] One white guard is killed and this is immediately called murder. . . . Three Black men who are known for their attempt within the prison to organize the inmates towards some form of united struggle against the real causes of our oppression, those three Black men are then singled out, and indicted for murder. (qtd. in Aptheker 8)

Davis called the incident in Soledad a "slave insurrection" against pernicious laws (*If They Come in the Morning* 190). Davis met political prisoner George Jackson, with whom she later fell in love,²⁷ and his brother Jonathan Jackson through her work with the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee. On April 7, 1969, Jonathan Jackson, incensed at his brother's incarceration, opened fired in the San Rafael courtroom, killing Judge Harold J. Haley, James D. McClain, and William A. Christman before Jonathan Jackson himself died ("F.B.I. Enters Hunt"). Unbeknownst to Davis, Jonathan Jackson used her guns (which were used by her bodyguards for survival after numerous death threats for her Communist membership); he knew her guns were stored in the office of the Che-Lumumba Club, Valerie (Tamu) Mitchell attests ("Paper Links"; Caldwell, "Witnesses Dispute"). Upon hearing the news about the shoot-out, Davis said, "Oh my God, there's something here about a shotgun. I just bought one and gave it to Jonathan Jackson. I wonder if it could be the same one? I wonder if those could be our rifles?" (qtd. in Caldwell, "Trial Hears"). The police wanted Davis for the following reason:

lawfully purchasing weapons on four separate occasions: January 12, 1968, a pistol, caliber .380, serial number 595071; April 7, 1969, a rifle, model, carbine .30 caliber, serial number 18514, manufactured by Plainfield; July 25, 1970, a rifle, a carbine, .30 caliber, serial number

²⁷ According to *Out Magazine*, Davis came out as queer in the late 1990s.

18052, manufactured by Plainfield; and August 5, 1970, a shot gun, 12 gauge, serial number 67297, manufactured by Spanish. It is claimed that each of these weapons was used on August 7 and that Angela [Davis] furnished the weapons to Jonathan [Jackson] for that purpose” (*If They Come in the Morning* 197).

Davis became a fugitive. She was added to the FBI’s Most-Wanted List on August 19, 1970, becoming the third woman on it (“Most-Wanted List”). Numerous pictures of her were plastered everywhere, often drawn to accentuate her hair, mouth, and shoulders in stereotypically racist depictions of “cavewomen” and “Negro apes” (“Attitude toward Violence”). This “Marxist Black militant girl” was captured on October 13, 1970, at a Howard Johnson hotel in New York with David Poindexter (“Davis Case Goes”; “F.B.I. Seizes”).

As a result of political persecution, Davis was charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy on October 13, 1970 (“F.B.I. Seizes”). She also was charged with violating the Federal Interstate Fugitive Act, and was returned on \$250,000 bond (Aptheker 110). She was denied bail under Section 1270 of the California Penal Code on capital offenses until the death penalty was outlawed as a form of punishment against capital crimes (Aptheker 137). Later, on February 25, 1972, she was released on bail; Rodger Lapsley McAfee put up bail using his San Joaquin Valley farm as a gesture of Communist solidarity, which eventually, resulted in his having to sell his farm and move in the face of unremitting death threats against him and his family (“Miss Davis’s Benefactor”). At first, Davis was put in solitary confinement in the Women’s House of Detention before extradition. Assistant Corporation Counsel Leonard Bernikow said: “She could possibly have a serious and destructive influence on the rest of the [prison] population. It’s also for her own safety” (qtd. in “Angela Davis Sues”). She went on a

hunger strike, and sued the institution (“Miss Davis Is Continuing”; “Angela Davis Sues”). On November 5, 1970, she was transferred to a regular cell, resulting in her calling off her hunger strike (“Ending of Solitary”; “Angela Davis Is Transferred”). On December 22, 1970, Davis was extradited by the Air Force and the National Guard (“Angela Davis Is Moved”).

Many people provided untiring support for Davis through the National United Committee to Free Angela Davis (NUC-FAD); posters, buttons, stickers, and leaflets were widely distributed to raise funds for her (Aptheker 27). Notable Black writers also created an organization, Black People in Defense of Angela Davis, and its statement was signed by Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Maya Angelou, and Toni Cade (Bambara), among many others (Aptheker 28). Baldwin’s letter to Davis (after which her book *If They Come in the Morning*, written in jail, was named) was published by the *New Statesman* in London and *the New York Review of Books* to raise visibility about her case (Aptheker 28). The NAACP said, “We must warn the state of California that we shall watch closely its trial of Miss Davis and we invite the whole world to do likewise” (qtd. in Johnson, “NAACP Critical”). The Urban League responded similarly: “The state of California has the responsibility of seeing to it that Miss Davis is given a scrupulously fair trial” (qtd. in “Urban League”). On behalf of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale wrote, “Sister Angela is not unknown to us. She has been a part, a strong force, in the revolutionary struggle of our people, of all the people. [. . .] The Black Panther Party wants everyone to know that we appreciate our Sister, Angela Davis, for she is herself a unifying factor in the struggle of Black people” (264). Bernadette Devlin McAliskey (at the time, known by her maiden name “Devlin”) visited Davis in jail on February 21,

1971, telling her “I think we’re in the same struggle” (“Miss Devlin, on Coast”). Many Black lawyers from the National Conference of Black Lawyers, including Derrick Bell, and Harvard’s finest lawyers also aided Davis in legal matters (“12 Negro Professors”; Johnson, “Briefs Seek Bail”). Hundreds of people protested outside the courthouse with unrelenting fervor (“Protest at Courthouse”). Her case reached international audiences, especially in Germany, Italy, and Ireland.

Davis’ trial commenced on February 27, 1972 (Caldwell, “Davis Trial Seats”). It was comprised of an all white middle-class jury of eight women and four men with diverse political views (Timothy 35-36). Davis reiterated her innocence:

I now declare publicly before the court, before the people of this country that I am innocent of all charges which have been leveled against me by the State of California. I stand before this court as a target of a political frame-up which far from pointing to my culpability, implicates the State of California as an agent of political repression. (qtd. in *If They Come in the Morning* 209)

Acting as co-counsel “for her own life,” she continues, “We contend Governor Ronald Reagan played no small part in this conspiracy. We intent to subpoena Ronald Reagan, call him, and put him on the stand and ask him to explain how he abetted and aided this conspiracy” (qtd. in “Miss Davis Seeking”; qtd. in Major 138). Before Richard Earle Arnason, Davis’ first judges John P. McMurray and Alan A. Lindsey were appointed by Reagan before her case was severed from political prisoner Ruchell Magee’s shared case to better address state and federal issues (“Angela Davis Loses Appeal”; “Separate Trials Granted”). Her trial was moved to San Jose in an attempt for a fair trial outside of Marin County (“New Delay”). The main sources of evidence used against Davis were witness Aiden F. Fleming, her love letters to George Jackson, and her possession of guns. First, Fleming said he saw Angela Davis, but he actually saw her sister Fania Davis, also an

activist, based on pictorial confirmation (“Miss Davis Linked”). Second, Davis discounted her letters to George Jackson and her diary as evidence, explaining that they were personal, and were irrelevant to the shoot-out. Davis said, “This is utterly fantastic, utterly absurd. The prosecution would like to take advantage of the fact that I am a woman, for in this society women are supposed to act only at the dictates of their passion. Clearly, this is evidence of the male chauvinism that pervades this society” (qtd. in Caldwell, “Miss Davis Tells”). In addition to sexist and heterosexist bias, she reminds the court of survival precautions necessary for her as a Black woman as follows: “I needed some kind of protection if I was to live out my years. You will understand that for a black person who grew up in the South guns were a normal fact of life” (qtd. in Caldwell, “Miss Davis Tells”). After thirteen weeks on trial, sixteen months in jail, and a million dollars spent on court fees, Davis was acquitted 11-1 on all charges (“Miss Davis Asks”; “Miss Davis Freed”; Caldwell, “Angela Davis Acquitted”; Timothy 243). Speaking to a crowd of fifteen thousand supporters after her acquittal, Davis stated, “The very fact of an acquittal means that there was no fair trial—because a fair trial would have been no trial at all” (qtd. in “Davis Juror”; “15,000 Exhorted”).

Since Davis’ release, she has remained committed to social justice work. As she puts it, “I have given my life for the struggle. My life belongs to the struggle” (*If They Come for Me in the Morning* 171). Davis is Professor Emerita of the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies Departments at the University of California at Santa Cruz (<http://histcon.ucsc.edu/directory/details.php?id=3>). She is currently a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Women’s and Gender Studies and African-American Studies Departments at Syracuse University (<http://wgs.syr.edu/FacultyStaff.htm>). Her scholarly

and pedagogical interests include: “feminism, African American studies, critical theory, popular music culture and social consciousness, and the philosophy of punishment (women’s jails and prisons)” (<http://histcon.ucsc.edu/directory/details.php?id=3>). Besides *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, she has written many scholarly books, such as *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance, Women, Race & Class, Women, Culture & Politics, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday, The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (edited by Joy James), *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, and *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prisons, Torture, and Empire* (Interviews with Angela Davis)--not to mention countless scholarly and activist articles. Her recent work is a critical edition of *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in which her introductory remarks address challenging masculinist trajectories of freedom struggles to include women’s contributions. Davis also frequently lectures nationally and internationally through organizations like Speak Out. While a Visiting Professor at SUNY Stony Brook in the early 2000s, she advocated for graduate students working without a current contract. Her lecture at Howard University on February 6, 2008 was on “activism in higher education.”²⁸ Recently, she gave talks in New York on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues.²⁹ Much of Davis’ activism is focused on exposing the vestiges of slavery and abolishing current manifestations of racism that are endemic to “prison-industrial-complex,” as she calls it. Davis writes, “So much work remains to be done around prisons in general—pending revolutionary change, we have to raise the demands that prisons in their present form be abolished” (*If They Come in the Morning* 109). In 1998, along with Rose Braz and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, she co-founded Critical

²⁸ I attended these lectures.

²⁹ I would prefer to write Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Ally, and Intersex (LGBTQQIA), but LGBT still carries more mainstream recognition.

Resistance, “a national grassroots organization committed to ending society’s use of prisons and policing as an answer to social problems” (<http://www.criticalresistance.org>). She also is involved with Justice Now, an organization that “works with women prisoners and local communities to build a safe, compassionate world without prisons” (<http://www.jnow.org>). Davis is a member of the executive board of the Women of Color Resource Center, and advocates against poverty (<http://oaklandlocal.com/blogs/2010/23/women-color-resource-center-confronting-financial-crisis>). In addition, she, along with Gil Green and Pete Seeger, is involved with the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS); it advocates for democratic socialism, participating in many struggles for labor rights, civil rights, immigrant rights, women’s rights, international solidarity, queer rights, environmental preservation, and youth and senior rights, among others (<http://www.cc-ds.org/>). The CCDS seeks “constructive solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment, racism, sexism, health, education, and housing” (<http://www.cc-ds.org/>). According to the CCDS mission statement, its “vision is one in which everyone is entitled to work at a living wage, and has full access to education, health care, and housing. [. . .] To achieve this vision the means of producing wealth -- the factories, the land, and the banks -- must be controlled by the people, through a broad democracy in political and cultural life” (<http://www.cc-ds.org/>). Her life remains committed to the pursuit of freedom and social justice.

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey (her maiden name was Devlin) is a community activist and former politician. Devlin McAliskey was born on April 23, 1947, the feast of St. George, the patron saint of England; Devlin McAliskey states that this coincidence “has some sort of ironic meaning,” preferring instead to remember April 23, 1916, the date of the Easter Rising (*Price* 10).³⁰ She was raised in Cookstown in North Tyrone, a small, working-class farming town divided into Old Town (Protestant residence) and rebel camps (Catholic residence), where Devlin McAliskey grew up (10). She has five siblings (10). Her father worked in England, for as Devlin McAliskey put it, “Socially my father was the bottom Cookstown could produce” (3). Devlin McAliskey addresses her father’s class concerns as follows:

Because of my family’s poverty, my father left school when he was eleven and became a messenger boy, an unpaid messenger boy. [. . .] To begin with this was merely because there was no work in the North of Ireland, but later—when I was already at school—he was forced to go to England because his insurance card was stamped with the words “political suspect” and nobody in Northern Ireland would employ him. (5)

Devlin McAliskey explains her father’s “political suspect” status as follows:

I don’t know whether my father ever belonged to a political party. If he had, he would have been a Republican. The Republican Party is another name for Sinn Fein. [. . .] [H]is ideals were strongly Republican. He was the kind of man who would know lots of people in the movement and very likely he had helped some of them out when they were in difficulties. It was probably for some such reason that he was politically suspect. [. . .] [H]e commemorat[ed] the Easter Rising of 1916. (6)

Conversely, Devlin McAliskey’s mother was a politically neutral Catholic. For instance, on Easter, her mother did not don a lily to commemorate 1916, thinking that it “was over

³⁰ Henceforth any notes to this text will be only page numbers.

and done with” and “just as bad as the Orangemen [sic] flaunting their banners in the name of past history on the twelfth of July” (6). She attributes her staunch Republican Socialist ideals to her father. Devlin McAliskey writes:

There is no doubt that I owe the dawn of political feeling to my father. One way in which he was more involved in family life than most Irish fathers was in telling us bedtime stories. [. . .] He told us bedtime stories from recorded history as well—the battles and invasions, the English oppression and the risings, the English-Irish trade agreement that crippled the country’s economy. Naturally, he didn’t attempt to be objective about all this: this was Ireland’s story, told by an Irishman [sic], with an Irishman’s feelings. (34)

She was reintroduced to this political education at St. Patrick’s Academy in Dungannon, where Devlin McAliskey attended school (59). It was a militant, Republican school, coordinated by Mother Benignus, whom Devlin McAliskey called “Reverend Mother” (59). Devlin McAliskey says Mother Benignus was “among the people who have influenced [her], one of those [she] most respected. [. . .] Everything [they] did in school was Irish-oriented. She was a fanatic about Irish culture” (59). Devlin McAliskey’s Republican education, thus, was an organic process that evolved into political ideology. As Devlin McAliskey puts it, “I’m not a socialist because of any high-flown intellectual theorizing: life has made [her] one” (45).

In college, Devlin McAliskey became interested in politics. She writes, “Politics for me meant debate, not action, when I joined Queen’s University, Belfast, in October 1965. [. . .] I went up to university with some vague notion of being able, one day, to improve some aspect of life in Northern Ireland” (70). At first, she joined the Irish Democratic Club and its Gaelic newspaper, *An Scathan* (The Reflection), and became the Secretary of Gaelic Society (75). However, shortly thereafter, she decided to apply her

politics to direct action. Her shifting politics and tactics, she avers, occurred as a result of British colonial presence:

They may stop any civilian and require that they open their purse, open their coat, empty their pockets, give their name, address, identification, inform the authorities where they're going, where they're coming from. People don't have privacy even in their own homes. If the soldier comes to the door, they are required to give the same information. If the soldiers want to come into the house and search, they don't require a reason, state or unstated. They don't require a warrant. Our daily lives are led against the background of total military authority over our every movement. (qtd. in Stewart 10)

Devlin McAliskey felt that activism was not a choice, but rather a form of defense to survive. When asked by a US interviewer “why [she] became an activist,” she said the following:

[T]he very possibility of making the choice in the first place is based on the assumption that you have the socio-economic freedom to make that choice—which most of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland don't have. So to ask me that, well, it's like asking a Black person why they got involved in the Black civil rights movement. Because it's my life—the only life I've got. (qtd. in Stewart 8)

In 1965, she was politically open-minded, working collaboratively with the Young Liberals, the National Democrats, the Young Socialists, the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA), and People's Democracy (PD) as well as with “do good,” Catholic organizations that “visited the poor, decorated houses for old people, did voluntary work at hospitals, and so on” (72; 77).

Later in college, Devlin McAliskey ultimately found her political home in NICRA and PD. NICRA was an umbrella group of civil rights organization that promoted Catholic equality and power. She said, “[It] started out from the feeling that something was wrong in society and should be put right, but whose demands have since hardened into a campaign for Catholic equality” (154). NICRA included PD, the Campaign for

Social Justice in Northern Ireland (CSJNI), and the Derry Citizens' Action Committee (DCAC), among others ("Meet the Press"). PD was a civil rights organization, whose demands (mostly focused on obtaining jobs, housing, and "people's rights") included the following: "one man [sic], one vote; a fair drawing of electoral boundaries; freedom of speech and assembly; repeal of the Special Powers Act (which gives the police almost unlimited power of arrest and detention); and a fair allocation of jobs and houses" (104). Devlin McAliskey says, "We're not asking for anything we haven't got a right to. But we've got some very great, high, romantic ideas—that you can end poverty, you can end unemployment, you can end the slums and the ghettos, you can end racism, religious prejudice, hatred, fear, insecurity—which are very noble goals" ("The Irish Fight for Socialism"). She was part of its main Faceless Committee, along with Kevin Boyle, Fergus Woods, Ian Goodall, Malcolm Miles, Joe Martin, Eddie McCamely, Michael O'Kane, Anne McBurney, and Patricia Drinan (104-105).

By 1968, Devlin McAliskey, along with PD, began to identify publicly as a Republican Socialist, a staunch opponent of racialized class oppression. Devlin McAliskey said, "I would describe myself as a Revolutionary Socialist, but I do not support Communism as practised in the Soviet Union" (qtd. in Target 325). She continues, "I believe the social, cultural and economic problems of Northern Ireland [. . .] can only be solved when the ideals of James Connolly and Padriag Pearse are realized. [. . .] [U]nder a 32-county republic, as outlined by Connolly, it could. All men [sic] would have equal rights, equal opportunities, civil and religious liberty ("Meet the Press" 1). This major shift to the left occurred due to racialized colonial contact at the demonstrations PD organized in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Cameron Report

revealed, for instance: “[O]n the night of January 4/5 a number of policemen [sic] were guilty of misconduct which involved assault and battery, malicious damage to property in the predominantly Catholic Bogside area, giving reasonable cause for apprehension of personal injury among other innocent inhabitants, and the use of provocative sectarian and political slogans” (qtd. in Target 163). Devlin remembers:

The police were armed with batons, shields, riot helmets, and, of course, their revolvers. [. . .] Derry was a battlefield. It was like coming into beleaguered Budapest: you had to negotiate the cars round the piles of bricks and rubble and broken glass which were cluttering the roads. Every family in the Bogside, the Catholic slum ghetto of Derry, had left its home and was roaming the streets seeking whom it could devour. (184-185)

Experiences such as this one required PD to re-examine and challenge state power in ways it had not done before. PD’s biggest and most famous demonstrations were on August 24, 1968 (Coalisland to Dungannon), Oct. 5, 1968 (Derry), and Jan. 4, 1969 (Belfast to Derry, also known as the “Long March”).

In the spring of 1969, Devlin McAliskey decided to dabble in electoral politics. At first, she resisted participating in the electoral system. Her auto/biography states, “I didn’t want to stand for election to Westminster. I didn’t know anything about Parliament[.] I’d never been inside the House of Commons, and I found Stormont a total farce. Of formal politics, I was—and am—totally ignorant. [. . .] I didn’t respect the system and even if I had, that wasn’t the sort of politician I wanted to be” (169). However, she acquiesced under peer pressure. She explains, “[P]eople kept coming to me, asking me to sort out the problem. [. . .] I’ll run the whole circus to give the people who want to choose me an opportunity for doing so” (174; 178). She advocated withdrawing the British troops; ending repression, the H-Block, torture, and the death penalty; repealing emergency powers; granting amnesty, and allowing self-determination for Northern Irish people

(Stewart 9). On April 18, 1969, she became the Independent Unity candidate, serving as the youngest and “first Irishwoman to be elected to the House for an Irish constituency since Countess Markievicz” (“21-Year Old in Belfast Wins”; qtd. in Target 197). She became a “public revolutionary” overnight, with the mainstream press often incorporating sexist and ageist depictions of her as a “young,” “naïve,” “girl in the miniskirt.” She used her “Maiden Speech” to address state violence:

I saw with my own eyes 1,000 policemen [sic] come in military formation into an oppressed, and socially and economically depressed area—in formation of six abreast, joining up to form 12 abreast [. . .], screaming their heads off to terrorise the inhabitants of that area so that they could beat them off the streets and into their houses. (“Maiden Speech to Parliament” 285)

Later, as the only MP in Derry on Bloody Sunday/ the Bogside Massacre on January 30, 1972,³¹ Devlin McAliskey demanded to bear witness to the British troops’ murder of thirteen unarmed civilians; however, British Home Secretary Reginald Maudling silenced her. Devlin McAliskey, incensed by him, stomped across the floor of the House and punched him, an act for which she is often remembered (“Bloody Sunday in Derry”; *The Sunday Tribune*, April 24, 1988). Disgusted with electoral work, Devlin McAliskey announced that she would not run for reelection on June 22, 1969, quitting her political career at twenty-six (“One Term for Miss Devlin”).

During Devlin McAliskey’s Mid-Ulster parliamentary stint, she was arrested for her involvement in the Battle of the Bogside, mainly for throwing petrol bombs to deter police from breaking down the Catholics’ barricades of protection (“Bernadette Devlin Tells Inquiry”). Devlin McAliskey insisted that the “barricades stay up until the Government comes down” (“Barricades of Bogside”). On December 22, 1969, the

³¹ See my introduction.

Magistrate Court gave this “mini Joan of Arc” six months in prison and a six hundred dollar bail on charges of assaulting police officers and inciting a riot (“Six Months”; “Miss Devlin Gets 6 Months”). After her appeal was denied, she started her prison time on June 26, 1970 in Armagh (“Miss Devlin’s Appeal Denied”; “Bernadette in Jail Tonight”). She was permitted to do her parliamentary work in prison (“Miss Devlin Allowed Work”). She was released on October 21, 1970, after just four months in prison, owing to good behavior.

Since the Troubles, Devlin McAliskey has maintained a low profile. Her desire for privacy in her familial life and activist work is primarily a result of an Ulster Defense Association assassination attempt by Andrew Watson in 1981, which she and her husband Michael McAliskey just barely survived, with their children Roisin, Deidre, and Fintan at home (“Bernadette Devlin Is Shot”; “Belfast Man Admits Devlin Murder Attempt”). However, Devlin McAliskey told Katie Donovan, writing for the *Irish Times*, “I’ve been active ever since.” In December 1974, Devlin McAliskey served on the National Executive of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), whose military wing was the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) (Ireland’s Own). According to the IRSP founding statement, it advocated “end[ing] imperialist rule in Ireland, and establish[ing] a 32 County Socialist Republic, in which the working class is in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange” (Ireland’s Own). IRSP’s sectarianism was a result of Sinn Féin’s refusal “to implement the democratically decided policies on the National Question as laid down at the 1972 and 1973 Ard Fheiseanna” (Annual Conference). Its central membership included Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Sean Flynn, Manuel McIlroy, John McAlea, Charlie Craig, Seamus O’Kane, Terry Robson, Joe Sweeney,

Johnny White, Seamus Costello, Theresa Gallagher, Anne Webb, Mick Plunkett, John Lynch, Stella Mackowski, Joe Quinn, and Tony Quinn. Devlin McAliskey resigned when the INLA's paramilitary agenda superseded the IRSP's Republican Socialist mission (Ireland's Own). Instead, in 1977, she became a member of the Independent Socialist Party until it disbanded shortly thereafter (Ireland's Own). In the early 1980s, she shifted political registers, and spearheaded prison support for the hunger strikes. She co-founded the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee, which many people believe fueled the Loyalist assassination attempt. She now identifies as an Independent Republican Socialist.

Since the mid-1990s, besides doing some work with the Irish National Congress to commemorate the Easter Rising, the Fair Employment Commissions to revise the Irish Constitution, and the Northern Ireland Civil Liberties Council to promote its justice programs, Devlin McAliskey has focused her political energy largely on critiquing the Peace Process and supporting community involvement (Ross). She is one of the most outspoken, ardent critics of the Peace Process of 1994. Devlin McAliskey's central criticism is "not with the ending of violence, but with those republicans who have weakened the traditional republican agenda. It was not a socialist agenda" (qtd. in Young). She stated, "They [Sinn Féin] have failed to recognise the racist nature of Unionism and that the British do not deal in good faith. They believe they could pull the Peace process off. The war should have ended with people realising that war does not work; we have not learned that. People have learned to put the war on hold—the penalty for dishonesty and absence of non-violent mechanisms is a return to war" (qtd. in

Moore).³² She continues, “It [The Good Friday Agreement] is as if somebody was trying to bake a cake with the ingredients for making sauerkraut. The debate was reduced to whether there was too much sugar or salt, and at which point it should be added to the recipe” (“Interview with Bernadette McAliskey” 4). “The inherent nature of Northern Ireland is an anathema to democracy and progress,” Devlin McAliskey asserts, because “[n]obody is resolving these conflicts[,] but [. . .] just pushing them around in circles” (“Interview with Bernadette McAliskey” 5). Currently, she is involved with the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) (<http://www.stepni.org/>). Based in Dungannon, STEP was established in 1997 “to contribute to building a rights-based, participative, peaceful and prosperous society which provides equality of access and opportunity, embraces diversity and respects difference” (<http://www.stepni.org/>). She is most involved with migrant support work, providing information, advice, and guidance to them for better working conditions (<http://www.stepni.org/>). Her life remains committed to the struggle for social justice for its marginalized populaces in the Six Counties.

Civil Rights Scripts: Rhetoric, Politics, and Tactics in Angela Davis’ *Angela Y. Davis: An Autobiography* and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s *The Price of My Soul*

Rhetorical Questions: Genre, Audience, Purpose, & Personae in Revolutionary Auto/biography

Angela Y. Davis’ *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s *The Price of My Soul* are two germinal revolutionary auto/biographies that were produced out of these women’s early involvement in their respective Civil Rights Movements (i.e., the Black Liberation Movement and the Troubles) in the United States

³² See my discussion on the relevance of “race” in Ireland in my introduction.

and the Six Counties of Ireland. In this section, I discuss these important revolutionary texts in relation to their deployment of political rhetoric in auto/biography, the ideological politics of self-determination, and their balancing acts between the apparently oppositional tactics of nonviolence and armed self-defense. I focus on Davis' and Devlin McAliskey's auto/biographical purposes, political ideologies, and representations of organizational practices.

Both Davis and Devlin McAliskey, although writing about different political experiences in different countries, define the genre, audience, and purpose of their texts through a political vision that focuses on critical consciousness, community involvement, and social action. In her preface, Davis calls her work a “political autobiography.”³³

Davis writes:

I was unwilling to render my life as a personal “adventure”—as though there were a “real” person separate and apart from the political person. [. . .] [I]t could not convey my overwhelming sense of belonging to a community of humans—a community of struggle against poverty and racism. When I decided to write the book after all, it was because I had come to envision it as a political autobiography that emphasized the people, the events and the forces in my life that propelled me to my present commitment.

This generic labeling complicates auto/biographical genealogies centered on the self, without attention to collective communities of struggle. It is a deliberate ideological challenge to the rhetoric of individualism that anchors most auto/biographical cultural productions in the capitalist West.

Devlin McAliskey, on the other hand, eliminates the possibility of generic classification altogether in her forward. Devlin McAliskey writes, “*The Price of My Soul* is not a work of art, an autobiography, or political manifesto. Readers who expect one of

³³ See my introduction for additional information on the evolution of auto/biographical forms. Davis and Devlin McAliskey emphasize communal participation, in particular.

other of these things will no doubt class it as a failure. Let them” (vii). Her intention is pronounced in this passage, presumably due to her anticipation of scathing criticism. William Target, her biographer, said her text “was no work of art,” and Michael Wharton, a journalist for *The Daily Telegraph*, said “she is no political thinker,” and “not much of a thinker at all” (Target 295). Unlike many of her critics, including herself, I argue that Devlin McAliskey’s text is a fusion of art, auto/biography, and political manifesto. Her work is a defiant, well-crafted testimony to her political life. Like Davis, Devlin McAliskey wrote her book “in an attempt to explain how the complex of economic, social, and political problems of Northern Ireland threw up the phenomenon of Bernadette Devlin” (vii). Both writers avoid generic prescriptions that split identification between the personal and the political, for such a division is for them anathema to collective social and political experiences.

Audience is another literary concern for both Davis and Devlin McAliskey. Davis is writing to a larger audience of “people—Black, Brown Red, Yellow and white [. . .] to join [her] growing community of struggle.” In particular, she is speaking to her community of older Black people, especially women. Davis writes:

Writing an autobiography at my age seemed presumptuous. Moreover, I felt that to write about my life, what I did, what I thought and what happened to me would require a posture of difference, an assumption that I was unlike other women—other Black women—and therefore needed to explain myself. I felt that such a book might end up obscuring the most essential fact: the forces that have made my life what it is are the very same forces that have shaped and misshaped the lives of millions of my people.

Davis clarifies her authorial intention by “explaining herself” to an audience of Black people who have experienced the injuries of racism and classism. She shares her textual space with them to recognize them as co-authorities of experience. Her individual life,

therefore, is not special, unique, or more important than the communities in which she lives and organizes. Devlin McAliskey also de-emphasizes herself as individual and denounces her fame, but unlike Davis, Devlin McAliskey singles out her generation of Irish comrades in the Six Counties. Devlin McAliskey writes, “If I misinterpreted the civil rights movement at any point, I apologize to my friends for it. In this movement, which is still struggling to free our people from the bonds of economic slavery, I am only one among hundreds of my generation. [. . .] [B]efore I get submerged in all the Joans of Arc and Cassandras and the other fancy labels people stick on me, I want to put the real flesh and blood Bernadette Devlin on record” (vii-viii). However, Devlin McAliskey also recognizes the political importance of a larger audience, as well: “I also want to tell the story of the protest movement which wrote Northern Ireland across the world’s headlines in 1968 and 1969” (vii). Devlin McAliskey, like Davis, emphasizes both self-evaluation and communal participation. They want their audience to understand their involvement in freedom struggles that are committed to removing the bonds of racial and “economic slavery” for “their people,” using this language to communicate solidarity with their respective personal-political communities. Their life narratives are the product of rhetorical stance, a point they make salient to their respective communities and larger audiences.

In addition to genre and audience, Davis and Devlin McAliskey discuss their compositional purposes in their revolutionary auto/biographies. Their lives are dedicated to freeing and securing social justice for their people, and their literary successes are determined by the extent to which they support that objective. Davis writes:

There was the possibility that, having read it, more people would understand why so many of us have no alternative but to offer our lives—

our bodies, our knowledge, our will—to the cause of our oppressed people. [. . .] [T]here was the possibility that more people—Black, Brown Red, Yellow and white—might be inspired to join our growing community of struggle. Only if this happens will I consider this project to have been worthwhile.

This passage emphasizes that Davis is concerned neither with fame nor fortune, but rather with freedom. Devlin McAliskey claims a similar goal. Devlin McAliskey writes: “*The Price of My Soul* refers not to the price for which I would be prepared to sell out, but rather to the price we all must pay in life to preserve our own integrity. [. . .] I’m not concerned with its success, financial or literary. [. . .] To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else” (vii-viii). They articulate their purposes, then, as preserving their freedom. They both dedicate their texts to their comrades and families with this political aim.

Revolutionary personae also characterizes Davis’ and Devlin McAliskey’s auto/biographies. They represent themselves as part of a larger political community, oftentimes downplaying individual concerns. Many reasons explain this decision. First, in their rhetoric, their political commitments outweigh individual desires. They represent themselves as working for a better world for humanity, including their own lives. Second, they acknowledge their youth, but mark it as a sign of social process. Davis was twenty-seven when she wrote *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* and thirty when she wrote *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*; Devlin was twenty-two when she wrote *The Price of My Soul*. As I noted earlier, they note the limitations of this reality. However, one way they represent themselves outside of their authorial disclaimers is as serious militants. Information about personal activities outside of political preoccupations is omitted. Discussions about friendships, relationships, and recreational events are absent.

In addition to ageism, sexism also plays a role in this decision. As young women, they want to be taken seriously, viewed as revolutionaries, not ancillaries. Third, they end their texts by talking more generally about social justice agendas, not their place in them. This decision is strategic, for then their auto/biographies do not have to end with their lives, but rather represent a historical moment in which they were living with other oppressed communities.

Political Ideologies: Black Communism, Republican Socialism, and Revolutionary Agendas

As discussed earlier in the cursory overview of Angela Davis' and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's personal and political lives, both writers/ leaders are organic revolutionaries, as Antonio Gramsci puts it. Moreover, Davis and Devlin McAliskey viewed critical reaction and response as evolving counters to hegemonic social constructs that they were shaped and misshaped by as young adults. Their political convictions dictated that racism, classism, and colonialism (internal and external) were fundamentally wrong. Growing up, they learned much about social justice from their families, friends, and neighbors. Access to education served as a portal through which they would emerge as novice radicals, gradually becoming seasoned revolutionaries. In this section, I discuss the evolution of their political thoughts and practical actions, as represented in their auto/biographies.

Critical theory was invaluable to Davis' formation of revolutionary philosophy. Karl Marx was a capstone in her radical consciousness. Davis states, "*The Communist Manifesto* hit me like a bolt of lightning. I read it avidly, finding in it answers to many of

the seemingly unanswerable dilemmas which had plagued me. [. . .] I began to see the problems of Black people within the context of a large working class movement” (*Angela* 109).³⁴ In high school, she views Marx’s analysis of political economy as important to understanding racialized power, both of which now were inextricably linked for her. She continues:

Because the masses of white people harbor racist attitudes, our people tended to see *them* as the villains and not the institutionalized forms of racism, which, though definitely reinforced by prejudiced attitudes, serve, fundamentally, only the interests of the rulers. When white people are indiscriminately viewed as the enemy, it is virtually impossible to develop a political solution (148)

Later, as an undergraduate and graduate student, her association with Herbert Marcuse, under whom she wrote her M.A. thesis and Ph.D. dissertation, influenced her, as did an interminable list of well-known philosophers she studied and/or worked with (i.e., Hegel, Camus, and Adorno, among others). Her interrogation of white ruling-class power is anchored in a sophisticated understanding of systemic equality that merges historical materialism and critical race studies.

Republican and/or Socialist thinkers made an indelible mark on Devlin’s political values, as well. McAliskey’s recitations of Padriag Pearse’s poems and Michael Collins’ speeches from the Easter Rising and the Irish Free State periods, as well as her relentless commemorative work on James Connolly’s political writings and direct action through the Socialist Republican organization Eirigi, demonstrate her intellectual investments in their political legacies. Her political versatility in Unionist and Republican organizations shifted in terms of involvement as she became exposed to radical ideologies that were critical of both racial and economic conflict. Devlin McAliskey writes, “CRA has moved

³⁴ Henceforth any references to this text will be only page numbers.

in a natural progression from demanding something for the minority (that is, the Catholics); to demanding Catholic equality; to demanding Catholic power. [. . .] But [o]nly if it's an all-Ireland working-class revolution, are there enough of us to overthrow the powers that be" (168). Her political analysis synthesized racialized state power deftly, leading her to become a "threat to security" both in Northern Ireland and the United States ("U.S. Bars Bernadette Devlin").

In the Marxist tradition, the intention of revolutionary philosophy is to link theory and practice to transform the world. As endorsers of Black communism and Republican socialism, both Davis and Devlin McAliskey joined political parties. In 1968, Davis joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and later, the Black Panther Party (BPP). Davis writes, "I was in favor of joining SNCC—not because I thought that the merger was going to dispel the discord between us [the Black Panther Political Party] and the new L.A. Panthers, but rather because I respected the historical contributions SNCC had made to the movement. The peace talk, however, in no way encouraged me to relax my own vigilance" (164). In the same year, she also became a member of the Che-Lumumba Club, affiliated with the Communist Party-USA (CP-USA) (187). This organization "fought within the Party for a club that would be all Black and whose primary responsibility would be to carry Marxist-Leninist ideas to the Black liberation struggle in L.A. and to provide leadership for the larger Party as far as the Black movement was concerned" (187). Her decision was inspired by her intimate friendship with Charlene Mitchell, a member and presidential candidate of the Political Committee of the Communist Party: "she taught me a great deal about what it means to be a Communist" (59). In addition, she and her sister Fania Davis went to Cuba, which

Angela Davis says, “proved to [her] what socialism can do to eradicate racism” (63). The sense of Communist solidarity to which Davis was exposed served as impetuses for political party membership. Davis confesses, “I needed to become a part of a serious revolutionary *party*. [. . .] I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty” (186). Davis believes that sustained collective participation is essential to the core principles of the Black Liberation Movement.

Like Davis, Devlin McAliskey became involved in communities that addressed race and class conflict, as well as colonial presence. In the late 1960s, Davis joined the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and People’s Democracy (PD). These organizations espoused a political agenda centered on racial equality, not difference: they “consisted of not just random people, but of representatives of every political party in Northern Ireland, including the Unionists. [. . .] [They] started out from the feeling that something was wrong in society and should be put right, but whose demands have since hardened into a campaign for Catholic equality” (154). They were critical of rampant racism targeted at the Catholic minorities, “akin to Hitler and the Jews,” as Devlin McAliskey puts it (166). However, she, along with People’s Democracy, moved away from traditional Republicanism towards Republican socialism. Devlin McAliskey writes, “I had moved from traditional, mad, emotional Republicanism to socialism in the context of Ulster; now I was joining my new-found socialism to my old belief in a united Ireland. Only in a thirty-two-county Ireland could socialism even begin to work. But I had realized that the essential problem was not to unite the country, but to unite the people, and this could only be done on the basis of socialism” (125). Her

individual critique of racism, colonialism, and classism merged with larger communities of struggle. By 1968, both Davis and Devlin McAliskey had come to view revolutionary success in terms of community decision-making in their auto/biographical works and political lives. They viewed their texts as a means of acquiring and conveying critical consciousness. They hoped education would lead to action and result in liberation.

Tactical Solutions: Nonviolence, Armed Self-Defense, & Complementary Actions

The growing historical narrative of the Civil Rights Movements in the United States and the Six Counties of Ireland has focused on the theme of revolution as a struggle involving the concepts of both nonviolence and armed self-defense. Nonviolence advocated abstaining from violence as a matter of principle, as well as using nonviolent direct action, including sit-ins, boycotts, and marches. Armed self-defense advocated peaceful resistance, unless confronted with violence; victims of violence fought back against perpetrators in self-defense, citing the ethos of practical “intelligence” a la Malcolm X’s speeches. Oftentimes, armed self-defense was used as a complementary tactic alongside nonviolence, especially during exigencies (e.g., hate crimes and/or police brutality) before, during, and after the 1960s-1970s. I am reminded of Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela’s words in *Long Walk to Freedom*: “It is up to you [the South African government], not us [the African National Congress], to renounce violence” (537). However, by the mid-1960s, the public ideological shift from nonviolence to armed self-defense occurred in the United States and Northern Ireland, resulting in a false

dichotomy of oppositional tactics.³⁵ In this section, I discuss praxis around these two strategies as a defining theme in Davis' and Devlin McAliskey's revolutionary auto/biographies.

Davis' text highlights the regularity of violence and defense against it in her life. As a child in Birmingham, her neighborhood was divided along racial lines. In *The Black Panther* Davis writes the following:

Among the most vivid of my earliest childhood memories are the deafening sounds of dynamite exploding—ripping apart, for instance, the house across the street which had been purchased by Blacks. Because they would not be dissuaded by the whites' insistence that the zone beginning with that particular row of houses off limits to us, they were promptly repaid for their aggressiveness. Throughout that period, to be Black and to actively attempt to tear down the false idols of white supremacy meant that one's name assuredly was on the list of potential victims of racist bombings. (“Comrade Angela Davis” 4)

In her auto/biography, she continues, “If we ever crossed over to their side, war would be declared. Guns were hidden in our house. [. . .] Crowds of angry Black people came up the hill and stood on ‘our’ side, staring at the bombed out ruins of the Deyaberts’ house [white racists]. [. . .] [O]ur neighborhood became known as Dynamite Hill” (77-79). The Black church First Congregational Church as well as Reverend Fred Shuttleworth's and Attorney Arthur Shores' homes were assailed by bombings for their civil rights support (“Comrade Angela Davis”). Friends of her sister Fania were killed in church (127). These passages show the degree of segregation and aggression against which Black people defended themselves only when denied access to their neighborhood by racist whites. Her parents provided armed protection to their children to increase their chances of making it to adulthood. Davis learned that self-defense was essential for self-preservation, thereby shattering Wordsworthian notions of youthful innocence.

³⁵ See my introduction.

The necessity for self-defense remained an uncompromising tactic in her life. Though in SNCC, an organization that believed in “peace talk,” she kept her “trustworthy weapon [. . .] within reach at all times” (164). During this period, racial profiling and police brutality reached their apex. Davis gives many “shout-outs” to victims of police brutality as a form of revolutionary remembering. For instance, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (formerly known as Rap Brown), chairperson of the SNCC, was arrested for allegedly insulting a police officer (168). Bunchy Carter and Jon Huggins were assassinated during a UCLA Black Student Union meeting (194). Fred Hampton and Mary Clark also were assassinated by Chicago police officers while they were sleeping (226). Bobby Seale and Erika Huggins were indicted in New Haven.³⁶ In addition, Gregory Clark was pulled over by police officer Warren B. Carleson on Washington Boulevard in Los Angeles because he was in a Mustang, a car Carleson thought Clark stole because he was a Black man. Even after Clark showed Carleson the registration to prove he owned the car, he still was arrested. When Clark “talked back” to Carleson, he forced Clark to lay face down on the sidewalk, cuffed his hands behind him, and then Carleson shot Clark in the back (171). More importantly, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 (179). Davis records their histories to commemorate their bravery. In addition, she represents herself as part of this community. In this way, her stylistic decisions have an emotional impact on her readers. She could be next. She campaigned on behalf of these Black people, who endured racist violence—not to mention countless others. As a response to revolutionary work, police officers raided SNCC’s office. They destroyed printing machines to silence the organization. Davis writes: “It was not coincidental that they had attacked our printing machines. The work of our organization, was in the first place,

³⁶ See chapter 4.

educational. We had just produced hundreds of thousands of leaflets protesting Dr. King's murder, explaining the racist forces behind his assassination and suggesting how we should manifest our resistance" (178). The police put nails in their food in an attempt to kill off these dissenters, as well (180). Davis writes: "Someone suggested we eat. [. . .] [W]e started to eat, when someone shouted, 'Hey, there's a nail in this spaghetti.' It was true. Tacks were in his food and in the others' as well—they had been stirred into the pot by the police who had broken into our office" (179). She uses suspense to show the seriousness of possible deaths. Like her fallen comrades, Davis is targeted by the authorities for her revolutionary activities. These incidences accumulated over time. Her course of action is self-preservation, which readers can see through her examples. Davis viewed gun ownership as alternative tactic to non-violent action in order to best protect herself from future attacks directed at her in retaliation.

Racist and red-baiting furor resulted in Davis' "public revolutionary" status, as she puts it. In addition to SNCC, her membership in the Che-Lumumba Club of the CP-USA (and later her election) earned Davis the title of the Communist "leader of the Black movement at the university" (155). At first, threatening calls and letters were sent to her academic and political offices. Then the threats escalated to bombing promises. Davis writes:

Several times they had to check out my car because of bomb threats I received. [. . .] Bomb threats were so frequent that after a while the campus police stopped checking under the hood of my car for explosives. [. . .] When I walked out of the classroom, [. . .] comrades from Che-Lumumba were waiting to take me home, their long coats not quite concealing the shotguns and rifles they had brought along. (218-219)

This passage charts the drastic measures Davis had to take to protect her right to life.

Campus security was interested in escorting her off campus, but it became desensitized to

her urgent need for protection. She required protection off campus by her activist friends, as well.

As her text recounts, the reality of racist and red-baiting violence even carried into her daydreams and nightmares: “I saw the guns coming out. I imagined the deafening noise of gunshots and our bodies lying in pools of blood” (15). In her text, Davis uses daydreams and nightmares to create suspense, leaving readers to wonder about the climax. Her decision to begin her text non-linearly with her running from the police provides suspense. She wants readers to experience the degree of her political repression. Davis’ auto/biography deliberately documents the dangerous social conditions that demanded continuous protection before, during, and after her involvement in SNCC, the BPP, and the Che-Lumumba Club (CP-USA), among other organizations with which she worked. She represents the carrying and use of guns by her comrades as part of a culture of resistance and necessary self-defense.

Devlin had ideas similar to Davis’ about revolution. However, while Devlin McAliskey did contemplate armed self-defense tactics, she was committed unequivocally to nonviolence/ nonviolent defense in practice, planning mostly debates and demonstrations for People’s Democracy before venturing into electoral politics as the Unity candidate to contest the Westminster by-election for the constituency of Mid Ulster in March 1969 (174). Devlin McAliskey singled out three specific NICRA marches that indelibly shaped her nonviolence praxis in Northern Ireland: the August 24, 1968, Oct. 5, 1968, and Jan. 4, 1969 marches. Police brutality was a major concern for her at these demonstrations. Many times she was forced to defend herself, and though her creed was nonviolence, self-defense ranged from chain-linked arms to throwing stones and making

petrol bombs. Racialized colonial violence tested her unwavering commitment to nonviolence.

During the first demo from Coalisland to Dungannon, Devlin McAliskey describes a peaceful protest: “[W]e all jogged along happily, eating oranges and smoking cigarettes, and people came out of their houses to join the fun. Marchers were dropping off at every pub along the way, and whole thing had a sort of good-natured, holiday atmosphere, with drunk men lolloping in and out of this supposedly serious demonstration” (93). However, “[t]hen we got to Dungannon, and the carnival feeling faltered” because “[t]here was a police cordon across the road” (93-95).

Devlin McAliskey continues to describe the march as follows:

The meeting got very angry, though it was still a passive anger, with very little pushing and shoving of the police. Some men were calling out that we should force our way through, and the lines of the march were breaking formation and crowding up to the police. Everyone forgot about the accordion-playing children, about to be squashed between the opposing forces. Then my brother grabbed a megaphone and bellowed through it: would the drunk men get out of the march, would the women take the children out of the march and get out of the way themselves. [. . .] [T]he organizers announced that we weren’t going to force our way into Dungannon because this was a nonviolent march. They were beginning to lose their hold on the marchers, though. People shouted, “What’s the point of saying we’ll get civil rights when you let them stop us having *this* civil right?” [. . .] Betty Sinclair, chairman [sic] and leading light of the Civil Rights Association in those days, got up, fearing the movement would be discredited if a fight broke out, “This is a nonpolitical, peaceful demonstration. Anyone who wants to fight should get out and join the IRA,” she said. And the crowd roared back, “Where do we join?”(93-94)

The majority of the protesters participated in “sit-ins,” and took notes on police misconduct. Opponents left the march. This demonstration ended in singing “We Shall Overcome” and “A Nation Once Again” to celebrate the success of nonviolence as a political tactic. This passage not only demonstrates Devlin McAliskey’s nonviolent

actions, but also her skill in storytelling. She begins with vivid imagery of violence. Then she uses anecdote to build suspense for her readers. She wants readers to feel police brutality and political divisions that result from them. This decision leaves readers to ponder about what tactics they would employ to survive. Devlin McAliskey is forced to rethink her tactics in this way throughout the book, her activism depending on the environmental conditions under which she is living. Her memory is infused with both political and aesthetic passion.

During the second demonstration in Derry, on the other hand, peaceful protestors were greeted with police brutality from its beginning. Devlin McAliskey writes:

We hadn't got more than a couple of hundred yards up the street when we were stopped by masses of police. There were a few scuffles. The police took our banners away and knocked a few people over the head. [. . .] I had been watching the police and I'd seen them filter down both sides of the march, so that now they encircled us. When we turned to go back down the street and re-form we found that we were trapped. There were policemen [sic] to the right and the left, to the fore and the aft, and they just moved in on all four sides, with truncheons and heels and boots, and beat everybody off the street. Then the water cannons came out and hosed the streets. [. . .] The police just went mad. (97-99)

Devlin McAliskey herself was targeted. She writes:

While everyone was running madly around me, I was standing still--not because I hadn't panicked, but because panic had a different effect on me. I was standing almost paralyzed, watching the expressions on the faces of the police. Arms and legs were flying everywhere, but what horrified me was the evil delight the police were showing as they beat people down, then beat them again to prevent them from getting up, then trailed them up and threw them on somebody else to give them a thrashing. [. . .] [A]s I was standing there a young fellow came up and grabbed me by the arm, and said "For Christ's sake, move!" Just as he positioned me in front of him, which left him standing where I had been, a policeman [sic] clobbered him, splitting his head down the side. [. . .] After that I walked into a pub, literally shaking, and swallowed one double whiskey neat without tasting it. So began my civil-rights commitment and my whiskey drinking. (99-100)

After this demonstration, Devlin McAliskey, being “so sick with indignation and horror,” did not eat for three days (101). In this passage, she uses description and suspense again to pull her readers in. She expects sympathy and perhaps empathy for her plight, which forced her to reexamine her tactics. During this time, Devlin McAliskey contemplated armed self-defense (i.e., guns) as a response to police retaliation. “But common sense in the end prevailed” for Devlin McAliskey, who “came to believe, by thinking about the futility of the violence [she] had seen, that [she] needed more than anything else to build up a disciplined, nonviolent force” (101). Violence, in this case, encouraged Devlin McAliskey to cling to nonviolence more tightly.

The last march of noteworthy significance to Devlin McAliskey was a seventy-mile trek called the Long March. This march, more so than any march, provoked acute repression. After protesters’ chain-linked thrusting through the police cordon, it resulted in eighty-seven peaceful protestors being hospitalized with countless injuries (142). Again, Devlin McAliskey was attacked (this time with wood and nails), the most vicious attack she experienced. Devlin McAliskey recalls:

“Now, Bernadette,” I said, “what is the best thing to do? If you leave your arms and legs out, they’ll be broken. You can have your skull cracked, or your face destroyed.” So I rolled up in a ball on the road, tucked my knees in, tucked my elbows in, and covered my face with one hand the crown of my head with the other. Through my fingers, I could see legs standing round me: about six people were busily involved in trying to beat me into the ground, and I could feel dull thuds landing on my back and head. (147)

In the end, thousands of protestors were able to defend themselves against only a hundred or so police officers. She stated that “[t]he more demonstrations we organized, the more we became convinced of the usefulness of the nonviolent method: it baffled the police, it

baffled the Paiselyites, and it gave us each time a further lesson in self-discipline” (122). Devlin McAliskey held true to her nonviolent principles by bearing vicious beatings.

Unlike Davis, Devlin McAliskey did not utilize arms for self-protection. She was able to survive state sanctioned racist violence at these demonstrations and later by practicing nonviolence. However, without turning to guns, Devlin McAliskey did turn to self-defense as a complementary tactic. During the August 12 Battle of the Bogside, for example, Devlin McAliskey reports changing tactics as follows:

What was happening there was that ordinary, peaceful people, who had no desire to spend fifty hours throwing stones and petrol bombs, had realized the harm that had been done to them for half a century and were learning how to fight in self-defense. We threw up barricades of rubble, people, and paving stones—anything we could get our hands on—to prevent the police coming straight into the area. [. . .] Throw them hard and throw them straight. [. . .] The petrol bombs were made, literally, by pregnant women and children. (219)

She used stones, petrol bombs, and barricades as a form of self-defense for survival.

According to her, she was forced to use “the least violent method” (“Maiden Speech to Parliament” 286).

Since writing *The Price of My Soul*, Devlin McAliskey drafted a practical constitution that embraced political contradictions. She revised her tactics after her assassination attempt and the Peace Process, in particular. She states: “The use of arms is the inevitable result of the lack of democracy, participation and honesty in politics. People, usually those on the receiving end of many kinds and levels of violence, injustice, and oppression, are forced into war either to defend themselves or because the powerful have used their power to cut off any opportunity for peaceful resolution of the problems” (qtd. in Moore). She continues, “Sometimes when I hear people droning on sanctimoniously about how ‘nothing justifies violence,’ I wish somebody would draw

their hand as if to whack them to see how many would strike without a second thought. People who do nothing about anything are as responsible for social and political violence as those involved in it” (qtd. in Moore). This passage shows that Devlin McAliskey currently views self-defense as warranted in situations that concern life and death, just as Davis does. As a survivor of an assassination and an ardent Republican Socialist, Devlin McAliskey has excoriated Sinn Fein, calling the Peace Process a “sell-out” to Irish Republic as envisioned by James Connolly. Both Davis and Devlin McAliskey currently espouse a revolutionary positionality that is inclusive of complementary tactics.

Conclusion

In her revolutionary auto/biography, Angela Davis says, “Revolution is a serious thing, the most serious thing about a revolutionary’s life. When one commits oneself to the struggle, it must be for a lifetime” (160). Racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism, among other systems of power, have remained omnipotent. However, both Davis and Devlin McAliskey have continued to respond with rigor to the demands of their liberatory causes. Their consistent commitment to creating a more egalitarian world has spanned more than four decades, and will continue until their revolutionary hearts stop beating.

Chapter 3: Theatre of the Absurd-ly Incarcerated³⁷: Representation & Re-Imagination in Assata Shakur's *Assata: An Autobiography* and Margaretta D'Arcy's *Tell Them Everything*

Introduction

In *Assata: An Autobiography*, Assata Shakur³⁸ states, “Every revolution in history has been accomplished by actions, although words are necessary” (52). Language plays an important role in Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s lives as two women fighting for liberation in Black American and Irish anti-colonial civil rights movements. For them, words are not only necessary, but rather imperative to resisting systemic oppression. Both Shakur and D’Arcy dubbed their trials “theatre of the absurd,” and wrote and published their revolutionary auto/biographies after they were released from prison. Shakur penned her autobiography in exile in Cuba, where she still resides, in 1987; D’Arcy wrote her autobiography in 1981, the year of the hunger strike. Though both wrote short sketches during their prison time (i.e., poems and/or speeches), the material realities of their lives in prison made it impossible to produce their polished final drafts. Shakur and D’Arcy wrote their revolutionary auto/biographies to resist racialized/gendered state power. They use language as a medium to “talk back,”³⁹ in bell

³⁷ I reappropriate Martin Esslin’s term to encompass Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s convictions. They both classify the court system under which they were persecuted using the concept of “theatre of the absurd.”

³⁸ Joanne Deborah Byron was her birth name, her married name was Joanne Chesimard, and her preferred name is Assata Shakur. She changed her name for political reasons, calling her former name her “slave name.” ³⁸ Shakur states, “Somebody named Chesimard had been the slavemaster of my ex-husband’s ancestors. Chesimard, like most other last names Black people use today, was derived from massa. [. . .] i would lie in bed and think about it, wondering how many slaves Chesimard had owned in Martinique and how often he beat them. I would stare up at the ceiling wondering how many Black women Chesimard had raped, how many Black babies he had fathered, and how many Black people he had been responsible for killing. So the name finally had to go” (185). In her auto/biography, Shakur reveals that she chose “Assata Shakur” because the name translates to “she who struggles” and “the thankful one.”

³⁹ hooks explains “talking back” as follows: “[T]rue speaking is not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. As such, it is a courageous act—as such, it represents a threat. To those who wield oppressive power, that which is threatening must necessarily be wiped out, annihilated, silenced” (8).

hooks' definition of the concept. Shakur and D'Arcy saw themselves as remembering individual and collective prison experiences and rewriting inaccurate histories recorded by neoliberal media, colonial powers, and/or masculinist comrades.

Some recent scholarship has been done on Shakur and D'Arcy, though no work comparing them. Joy James and Margo Perkins have written extensively on Assata Shakur's personal and political form of expression in her statements, speeches, poetry, and auto/biography. They have provided cogent analyses of Shakur's work as a form of "neo-slave narrative," written as a form of aesthetic resistance. James focuses more on militant themes in her recent work, however, while Perkins addresses formalist concerns. Like James, Helene Christol's critical work has explored Shakur's use of autobiography as an aesthetic form of militantism, situating her work in conversation with James' and Perkins' earlier work. Additionally, within the last few years, four unpublished M.A. theses were written by Phyllis Marie Jeffers, Alanya Zubrow, Tayana L. Hardin, and I that devoted study to Assata Shakur alongside other writers like Elaine Brown, Anne Moody, Chester Himes, Harriet Jacobs, Susan Stern, and Mary Brave Bird. Besides those works, Shakur's aunt Evelyn Williams produced a fascinating book on Shakur's early life, later activism, and current status, focusing on her arrests, trials, and evidence as her lawyer.

Literary criticism on Margaretta D'Arcy's plays is burgeoning. She has received critical attention from many scholars, including Elizabeth Hale Winkler, Mary Luckhurst, and Jonathan Wike for her theatrical collaboration with John Arden. In addition, Colin Chambers, Mike Prior, and Baz Kershaw have provided critical commentary on her theatrical progress and performances—not to mention many anthologists' work containing brief biographical and/or critical introductions. However, little literary

analysis exists on her auto/biographical work on her prison time. A notable exception is Laura Lyons, whose work situates D’Arcy’s auto/biography within an interesting discourse of “Mother Ireland,” alongside the work of other Irish (especially Northern Irish) freedom fighters like Mairead Farrell. Lyons shows the ways several Republican women inverted this traditional concept of domestic servitude and feminized land through their political commitments. Nell McCafferty, Brian Dooley, Sharon Pickering, and Laura Weinstein also allude to D’Arcy’s text in their works on Irish women’s resistance, especially in Women Against Imperialism (WAI), during the “Dirty Protest,” a no-wash protest. My comparative project explores thematic and stylistic overlaps in Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s auto/biographical prison work, focusing on narrative structure, tone, imagery, and punctuation, among others.

In this chapter, I explore processes of organic militancy against systemic racism, sexism, and colonialism in Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s lives and texts. Many parallels exist in their historical influences, revolutionary commitments, and literary styles. D’Arcy was deeply influenced by civil rights leaders, especially Black Power/ Liberation leaders on whose legacy much Northern Irish organizing was modeled,⁴⁰ and for this reason, I begin with Shakur and then turn to D’Arcy. D’Arcy was very much influenced by Elaine Brown’s leadership, in particular. Both Shakur and D’Arcy address overlapping themes of rewriting history and embracing collective struggle; they also reinvent auto/biographical form in their narratives of struggle. In particular, Shakur and D’Arcy both call into question the political tension that exists between hegemonic history and what I am calling their “self-histories.” First, I give some auto/biographical background on Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s lives,

⁴⁰ See my introduction.

including their engagement with revolutionary activism and their punishment for it. Second, I will discuss the media contents within which they are writing. For Shakur, I focus on the *New York Times's* extensive coverage from 1971 to the present. For D'Arcy, I analyze her experiences with British colonial censorship and Sinn Fein's masculinist tactics. Third, I analyze their revolutionary auto/biographical texts in order to explore processes of oppositional representation. I am especially interested in their counterhegemonic representation of themselves as "historians" and "self-historians," committed to "truth"-telling and to resisting racialized/gendered state power by "talking back" to respective courts in the United States and Ireland. I focus on Shakur's retelling of history, arguing that for her, autobiographical writing is a form of collective truth-telling. I also highlight D'Arcy's authorial intentionality, self-reflexivity, and deft utilization of privilege that percolate through her life in many ways: writing, activism, and resistance in internment. In addition to her text, I draw from a recent interview with D'Arcy to discuss representation, just as I used archival work for Shakur. I argue that Shakur's and D'Arcy's writings encapsulate Margo Perkin's categorization of "political auto/biography," especially in tonal and mechanical form, though I prefer to use the term "revolutionary auto/biography." Overall, I demonstrate that Assata Shakur and Margaretta D'Arcy are consistently committed to reconstructing their personal images, rewriting history, and affirming their liberatory political visions in their lives and work.

“I Am a 20th-Century Escaped Slave”⁴¹ and “I Am an Outsider”’: An Overview of Assata Shakur’s and Margaretta D’Arcy’s Resistance

Assata Shakur

Arguably, Assata Shakur is the most remembered and most persecuted ex-member of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army. In college, surrounded by a diverse student body and many activist organizations, Shakur immediately became involved with the Golden Drums, a campus organization devoted to preserving Black history and culture, including pushing for more Black Studies courses, programs, and teachers, as well as the Last Poets, a cohort of socially conscious Black poets. This organization fostered her nascent political openness, versatility, and involvement in numerous organizations, such as the Black Muslims (she converted during this period), Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the Black Student Union (BSU), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Garveyites, and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). From 1969 to 1971, when she transferred to City College, Shakur was involved in the Black Panther Party, which at this time, had a membership that was sixty percent women (LeBlanc-Ernest 309). Shakur was assigned to the medical cadre, the breakfast program, and the New York liberation school during her time with the Panthers.

In the medical cadre, the health care program of the BPP, with Joan Bird⁴² as her supervisor, she worked closely with Black medical students. She was put in charge of making medical and dental appointments, administering tuberculosis tests, and providing

⁴¹ This passage is from Shakur’s introduction to her letter, “Open Letter from Assata Shakur,” written during the summer of 1998.

⁴² See chapter five.

information about sickle-cell anemia. In the breakfast program, Shakur cooked for malnourished and/or starving inner-city children (and, in some cases, their parents) and educated them on the importance of eradicating racism, sexism, and classism under global capitalism through her political education (PE) classes. In addition, like all Panthers, Shakur also distributed the organization's weekly newspaper. Shakur was critical of the Panthers on certain points, including their positions on armed revolution and on Black nationalism, but these disagreements were not why, ultimately, she decided to leave. Rather, she felt that the BPP had become "weak, inexperienced, [and], disorganized" due largely to COINTELPRO actions, a counterintelligence program that monitored political organizations in the sixties and seventies (Shakur 242). She went on to join a clandestine organization called the Black Liberation Army, the affiliation for which she is best known. The BLA was considered an underground movement by both its members and the government. As noted earlier, many people have engaged in many different practices in the BLA's name. Shakur does not disclose any specific information about her duties within the BLA movement in her auto/biography, citing reasons of security.

As a result of her political activities in the BPP, and especially the BLA, Shakur was (and is still being) pursued relentlessly by the state. She was charged with armed robbery on April 5, 1971, but charges were dismissed; bank robbery on August 23, 1971, but acquitted; bank robbery again on September 1, 1972, but the trial resulted in a hung jury; kidnapping a drug dealer on December 28, 1972, but acquitted; murdering a drug dealer on January 2, 1973, but charges were dismissed; attempting to murder (ambush) a police officer on January 23, 1973, but charges were dismissed (Williams, *Inadmissible*

Evidence). However, Shakur was finally convicted for the murder of state trooper Werner Foerster on the New Jersey Turnpike on January 23, 1973 (Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence*). On March 25, 1977, an all-white jury sentenced her to life, plus thirty-three years in prison for her refusal to rise when the judge entered the courtroom (Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence* 163). A great deal of evidence suggests that she was wrongly convicted. In the forward to *Assata: An Autobiography*, Lennox S. Hinds, the national director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, mentions that at Shakur's trial three neurologists attested to her inability to shoot a gun, owing to the acute nerve damage from which she suffered as a result of being shot in the arm, as well as to the injury to her clavicle, suggesting that she was sitting down with her hands in the air when she was shot three times (xiv; xi). Evelyn A. Williams, Shakur's aunt and lawyer, also argues, in her "Statement of Facts in the New Jersey Trial of Assata Shakur," that "no evidence exist[s] that prove[s] Assata fired the bullet that killed Trooper Foerster."

Evelyn Williams cited the following facts:

- (1) The finger print analyses of every gun and every piece of ammunition found at the scene showed there were no fingerprints of Assata found on any of them. (The official analyses admitted into evidence.)
- (2) Neutron Activation Analysis taken immediately after Assata was taken to the hospital that night showed there was no gun powder residue on her hands, effectively refuting the possibility that she had fired a gun. (The official analyses were admitted into evidence)
- (3) As a result of the bullet Harper shot under her armpit, while her arms were raised, her median nerve was severed, immediately paralyzing her entire right arm, shattering her clavicle, and lodging in her chest so close to her heart that an operation to remove it was not feasible. A neurologist testified to that fact at the trial.
- (4) A pathologist testified that "There is no conceivable way that the bullet could have traveled over to the clavicle if her arm was down. That trajectory is impossible."
- (5) A surgeon testified that "it was anatomically necessary that both arms be in the air for Ms. Chesimard to have received the wounds she did." The state offered no expert witnesses to refute this medical testimony.
- (6) Photographs depicting the gunshot entry wound

under her armpit and the entry wound of the bullet Harper shot into her back were admitted into evidence during the trial (www.assatashakur.org).

On November 2, 1979,⁴³ however, after two years in prison, Shakur escaped the Clinton Correctional Institution with the assistance of four armed BLA members⁴⁴ who posed as visitors, evaded security, held guards hostage (none were harmed), and drove over unfenced-in sections of grassy meadows to free Shakur (Parenti). Immediately, the FBI launched a massive hunt, but Shakur vanished without a trace. Eventually, she showed up in Cuba, where, in 1984, she received political asylum (“Open Letter from Assata Shakur”). Shakur earned a postgraduate degree at the University of Havana in political economics, during which time she also was doing much creative writing (Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence* 223). In addition, Shakur has continued her activism in Cuba to the present day.⁴⁵ Shakur told *Essence* interviewer, Evelyn C. White, that she is “still very active in political work.” James also notes that Shakur has been meeting with international delegations,⁴⁶ in particular. Not surprisingly, the search for Shakur continues, as evidenced by the recent one million-dollar bounty that was placed on her, the “largest reward ever placed on an individual in the state,” as well as her placement on “a watch list of domestic terrorists” by New Jersey officials on Monday, May 2, 2005, the thirty-second anniversary of the shooting (“NJ Officials Post \$1M Reward for Capture of

⁴³ This date often is celebrated in Black communities as Black Solidarity Day.

⁴⁴ Some members of the BLA involved with the holdup of a Brinks truck also have been convicted for their support in Shakur’s escape, including the Marilyn Buck and David Gilbert. Buck was released early on July 15, 2010 for health reasons after serving twenty years of an eighty year sentence, and died shortly thereafter (<http://www.marilynbuck.com>).

³⁶ See Joy James’ recent essay.

⁴⁶ According to Venceremos Brigade organizers, Assata Shakur used to give regular talks to their delegations, for instance. Since the Cuban Revolution, the Venceremos Brigade has organized more than forty trips to Cuba to defy the travel ban.

Assata Shakur”). Nevertheless, she is still politically active in Cuba, working mainly on literacy, human rights, and cultural programs (www.assatashakur.org).⁴⁷

Margaretta D’Arcy

In her auto/biographical book *Tell Them Everything: A Sojourn in the Prison of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at 3rd Macha (Armagh)*, D’Arcy states, “Republicanism seeps into people’s consciousness because of the pervasive reality of the British presence in the Six Counties. It is as organic a part of a family’s way of life as Catholicism. The extent of change from armchair Republicanism into activism depends upon the comparative behaviour of the British Army and the RUC in each area” (95). For her, activism is a social response—not a natural characteristic—to British-occupying forces that uphold racialized/gendered/colonized violence. D’Arcy explains in her auto/biography that she was influenced by her father, an Irish Republican Army (IRA) volunteer who rejected Michael Collins’ endorsement of the Anglo Irish Treaty, which divided Ireland into the Twenty-Six Counties, the Republic of Ireland, and the Six Counties, Northern Ireland, still occupied by the United Kingdom. In addition to D’Arcy’s Éamon De Valera-leaning father, she was deeply influenced by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Black Panther Party (BPP), the War Resisters’ League, and feminist writers Kate Millett and Grace Paley in the United States, she tells me in the interview I had with her. These models led her, she says, to ask “for whom?”, “by whom?”, and “for what purpose?” as central inquiries into rethinking the annals of history, oftentimes used to preserve colonial, racial, and/or patriarchal power. For

⁴⁷ This website is not her own personal website.

D’Arcy, prison became a metaphor for a colonized country that resists colonialism in her work.

D’Arcy’s initiation into the bleak reality of British colonialism à la the Thatcher regime was based on a cultural event. She was invited to a poetry reading at the Ulster Museum. Two pictures were taken down from an art exhibition, where the reading was taking place; one of the pictures was of an H Block march. It was the suppression of these pictures that caused her to make her intervention. D’Arcy was livid about political censorship. D’Arcy responded by speaking out against it through graffiti: “I leant against the wall, took out a red marker and wrote H-Block.⁴⁸ [. . .] I was dragged out by the museum attendants, taken downstairs and made to wait for the RUC.⁴⁹ The Black Maria arrived, and a young steely-eyed RUC man tipped me in, hoping to break my neck. [. . .] The dream was over, the illusion burst—here I was staring at the reality of Northern Ireland” (15-16). Shortly thereafter, D’Arcy was arrested for three assaults: breach of peace, incitement to riot, and defacing a public monument (15-16). This incident merged art and activism for D’Arcy in salient way: the symbolism of the red records what she saw as a bloody history. It became her impetus to align politically with Women Against Imperialism (WAI).

According to the mission of Women Against Imperialism (WAI), “The women political prisoners in Armagh Gaol are playing a vital part in opposing British presence in Ireland and the fight for political status. It is important that anti-imperialists and feminists

⁴⁸ Defined by its shape, the H-Blocks housed Republican political prisoners during the Troubles. It is also known as Long Kesh, the Maze, and Her Majesty’s Prison Maze. It is most famous for the political prisoners who died on hunger strike there in 1981. Bobby Sands is the most iconic hunger striker, but nine other men also died fighting for political status during it.

⁴⁹ The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) was the Loyalist police force in the Six Counties that responded to Republican activity. Scholars Brian Dooley and Richard English have documented numerous instances of racialized brutality on the RUC’s behalf. It is now known as the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

unite in support of them” “International Women’s Day”). In its statement on April 9, 1980, WAI writes the following:

We have called this Tribunal [. . .] to highlight the conditions of the women political prisoners in Armagh Gaol. [. . .] As members of the women’s movement we are committed to exposing the conditions suffered by Irish women political prisoners and also the particular problems they face as women. (4)

As a WAI member, D’Arcy was committed to the tribunal, picket, and the court boycott.

D’Arcy joined the Belfast WAI in calling for the tribunal that investigated the following concerns: (1) the case for political status (i.e., legal political prisoner status and individual cases), (2) the conditions of women political prisoners in Armagh Gaol (i.e., educational and recreational facilities, free association, remission, food parcels, medical treatment, and health/sanitary facilities), and (3) the physical attacks on women prisoners (i.e., assault, rape, and strip searches) (1-2). D’Arcy also participated in a number of workshops and demonstrations from March 8-10, 1980 for International Women’s Day, for which more than five hundred feminists from Europe and the United States sent solidarity messages (Lagrua). The Republican women, housed in the B-Wing, shouted and waved in support of WAI’s picket, as well (Protest POWs, B-Wing, Armagh Gaol). WAI argued vociferously that “women [. . .] [were] overshadowed by the horrific conditions in the H-Blocks. It is only within the last year that there has been widespread recognition of the need to expose the plight of women prisoners” (4). One of the most visible markers of women’s inhumane treatment in Armagh Gaol involved menstruation. On August 22, 1980, in her article “It Is My Belief that Armagh Is a Feminist Issue,” Nell McCafferty writes, “There is menstrual blood on the walls of Armagh Gaol in Northern Ireland. The 32 women on the dirt strike there have not washed their bodies since

February 8th, 1980; they use their cells as toilets; for more than 200 days now they have lived amid their own excreta, urine and blood.” McCafferty continues, “”It is my belief that Armagh is a feminist issues that demands our support. I believe that the 32 women there have been denied one of the fundamental rights of women, the right to bodily integrity.” This article was groundbreaking because it received mainstream attention for the first time.

As a result of her unwavering commitment to WAI, D’Arcy was arrested again for taking part in the solidarity picket outside Armagh Jail on International Women's Day in support of the Republican women inside. She was jailed with two other women. She became one of the “Armagh Eleven.” In the 1970s, 120 Northern Irish Catholic women were imprisoned in Armagh, with 40 of them identifying as Republican and civil rights political prisoners, not accepting “criminal” status (115). D’Arcy, along with the “Armagh Eleven,” joined the ranks for three months for upholding the court boycott and refusing to pay British fines. Her auto/biography is a remembering of this time for herself and the political prisoners for whom she was advocating.

D’Arcy continues her activism to this day. She is a playwright and filmmaker. She is the founder and chair of Women’s Pirate Press, Women’s Pirate Radio, and Women in Media & Entertainment (www.margarettadarcy.com). Much of her work has been published by Women’s Pirate Press. She has written numerous plays, such as *The Business of Good Government*, *The Royal Pardon*, *The Little Gray Home in the West*, *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*, *Friday’s Hiding*, and *Vandaleur’s Folly* (www.margarettadarcy.com). She collaborates frequently with her husband John Arden; they have co-authored *The Non-Stop Connolly Show*, *The Island of the Mighty*, and *The Happy Haven*, among others

(www.margarettadarcy.com). In addition, after she was released from Armagh Jail, she set up Women's Pirate radio to challenge the censorship laws regarding radio, which she also explores in her play *Galway's Pirate Women, a Global Trawl*. After Armagh, in the 1980s, she also was jailed several times for taking part in non-violent direct action at Greenham Common, based in the United Kingdom. She was fighting against the United States Cruise missiles stationed there on land that had been taken away from the people. In 2002, the land was restored to the people. Her auto/biographical work *Loose Theatre: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Theatre Activist*, published by Women's Pirate Press in 2005, and her film *Yellow Gate Women*, produced in 2007, are about her involvement at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. Currently, her activism is based at Shannon Airport. She is working to challenge the use of a civilian airport by the United States military. Her recent film *Big Plane Small Axe* addresses this topic.

Stabilizing the State: Representations of the Black Revolutionary Woman in the *New York Times*' Coverage of Assata Shakur, 1971-2010

Like Margaretta D'Arcy's frustration with biased representation, the neoliberal media played an instrumental role in shaping public opinion about Assata Shakur. The *New York Times*, headquartered near the site of the crime in New Jersey, has had the most comprehensive reporting on Shakur from 1971 to the present, coverage that reveals the biases of neoliberal reporters. The Black Liberation Army, in particular, was especially targeted due to its "defensive/ offensive" campaign, which promoted direct attacks on police officers associated with terrorizing innocent Black people.⁵⁰ On February 9, 1972, Michael T. Kaufman writes in the *Times* that BLA members "have been responsible for

⁵⁰ Despite the popular narrative about the BLA, I want to stress that its "defensive/ offense" campaign was not the only activity in which the organization participated. See chapter two.

killings and assaults on policemen [sic], both black and white, and assaults against ordinary citizens and businessmen [sic], both black and white.” In the same article, Kaufman refers to the BLA as a “homicidal organization.”⁵¹ On February 17, 1972, Kaufman continues his reporting by calling all BLA members “black terrorists gunning for policemen [sic].” Like Kaufman, many other reporters, such as Pranay Gupte, perpetuate this problematic trend, branding the BLA as “a loosely knit revolutionary group that attempts to assassinate policemen [sic].” Shakur, and also the BLA’s mission statement, described it as a “movement,” rather than an “organization,” and also noted (1) that many activities were carried out in the name of the BLA by persons outside its known contacts, and (2) that the BLA engaged in many activities other than assassinations. Assata Shakur was referred to, in the *Times*, as the “fugitive leader of the terrorist group,” because of her involvement (e.g., alleged assassinations) in the BLA. However, Shakur has never been linked to any BLA assassination activities. Aside from being called the “soul of the movement,” only “militant” compares in terms of frequent usage in the *Times*’ articles on Shakur. Often, she is referred to by even more politically offensive names: “terrorist” (Dugan), “cop killer” (Taylor), “fugitive cop killer” (“Feds Offer \$1 Million Reward for Fugitive Chesimard”), “extremist” (“Chesimard Jury Selection Evokes Varied Reactions”), “criminal” (Kaufman), “enemy of society” (Kaufman), “fugitive murderer” (McQuiston), and “escaped killer” (Ravo). All of these *Times*’ writers assume her guilt before her trial and perpetuate that assumption in their reporting. Undoubtedly, such language is employed to shape public opinion about Shakur as “guilty.” Indeed, it is no surprise that, before her murder trial took place, “[s]eventy-

⁵¹ The BLA was a movement, not an organization, much less one defined by police assassinations. More well-known figures besides Shakur are the BLA 5: Herman Bell, Anthony Bottom, Albert “Nuh” Washington, and Francisco and Gabriel Torres.

two per cent of the respondents said they believed that she [. . .] [was] guilty, and a majority of the respondents equated ‘black militants’ with guilt” (“Defense Bid for Venue Change in Chesimard Case Is Rejected”). In her auto/biography, Shakur writes, “[p]eople are tried and convicted in the newspapers and on television before they ever see a courtroom”; it is understandable why Shakur told the judge that she has “no faith in this system of justice” (168; 170).

Interestingly, however, during Shakur’s actual murder trial, the *New York Times*’ coverage, unlike its pretrial coverage, recognizes that overt racism did “somewhat” define her judicial experience. For instance, the *Times* devotes much attention to the jury selection process for Shakur’s trial. On October 11, 1973, an article titled “Prospective Jurors in Chesimard Case Barred for Racial Attitude” reveals that one juror out of 450 new jurors was disqualified because “his attitudes about race and police might prevent a fair trial.” On the next day, eleven jurors were reported to have been disqualified for “already formed opinions on the case” (“11 Disqualified as Jurors in Chesimard-Squire Case”). By October 18, 1973, *New York Times*’ writer Ronald Smothers reveals the “widespread discussion of the case and expressions of racial prejudice among the pool of prospective jurors” and summed up the racist atmosphere with the recurring phrase, “[I]f she’s black, she’s guilty.” Furthermore, on the following day, Smothers writes about the dismissal of 650 jurors for racist beliefs. Though still resulting in an all white-jury, the alternative given to Shakur instead of a change of venue is to select jurors from Morris County and still hold the trial in Middlesex County. Again, the *Times* is more balanced in its discussion of this change. Smothers, for example, in his article on October 24, 1973, makes it public that “Morris County [. . .] has a population of 383,454, of whom 2.2 per

cent are black.” Similarly, in January, an article titled “Chesimard Jury Selection Evokes Varied Reactions” publishes the fact that “373,000 white residents and 8,500 blacks in 1970 census [are from] Morris County.” Additionally, as if the overt racism in Morris County was not yet apparent, the *Times* published an article titled “Protests Mark Chesimard Trial: Backers and 2 Nazis Stage Demonstrations Outside,” in which the paper reveals that the Nazi Party protested at Shakur’s trial in opposition to forty protestors. Nonetheless, the *Times*’ reporting goes out of its way to label the Nazis “peaceful” and Shakur’s supporters “unruly.” As Joseph T. Sullivan reports in “Courthouse Is Picketed as Chesimard Trial Starts,” even the murder trial’s tight security (i.e., metal detectors and full body searches), Shakur’s lawyer William M. Kunstler argues, “give[s] the prospective jurors the impression that Mrs. Chesimard was a ‘wild animal’,” much in the same way as do the recurring pictures of Shakur handcuffed. Evelyn Williams discusses the negative impact the media had on her niece’s⁵² life: “Between 1971 and 1973, the possibility that she would be shot to death filled my every waking moment and broke my sleep at night. I had no way of knowing whether I was dealing with manipulated media coverage or untainted reality” (*Inadmissible Evidence* 11).

Shakur tries to balance the *Times*’ generally derogatory depiction with her own more positive self-presentation. Refusing to be the “soft-spoken” and “docile” defendant that the press wants her to be (Chambers), Shakur rewrites herself in her auto/biography: “I do not think that it’s just an accident that we are on trial here. [. . .] Throughout amerika’s history people have been imprisoned because of their political beliefs and charged with criminal acts in order to justify that imprisonment” (167). Shakur’s heightened political consciousness allows her to critique the politics of knowledge

⁵² Evelyn Williams also called Assata Shakur “Joey,” which was her own special nickname for her.

production as expressed in media operations. Shakur states, “When it comes to the media, i have learned to believe none of what i hear and half of what i see” (168). Shakur “talks back,” in bell hooks’ understanding of the concept. She characterizes her trial as “theater of the absurd,” and uses the courtroom as a political space to perform the processes of repression and resistance (254). Shakur uses the courtroom as political theatre to demonstrate inequalities in power. Her determination to tell what she saw as the political truth is exceptionally powerful, an intention that made many of her opponents loathe her even more.

Bloody Silence: Censorship of Racism and Chivalry towards the Irish Republican Woman Prisoner in Loyalist and Sinn Féin’s Responses to Margaretta D’Arcy

Like Assata Shakur, Margaretta D’Arcy devotes much thematic attention to the politics of historical veracity and collective truth-telling in her writing. As noted earlier, she was arrested for political vandalism by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). She continues to write about political realities in Armagh prison in her auto/biography. Furthermore, she purports to “tell them everything” about not just her life in prison, but about her Republican women comrades’ lives, a cognitive impossibility she herself addresses in her preface. Not an advocate for Foucauldian “death of the author” ideology, D’Arcy explains the authorial intentionality of the title of her text *Tell Them Everything*: “This is a non-dramatic and often rather absurd story of one person who found herself in Armagh Jail for three months during the period of the long-term prisoners’ no-wash protest in 1980. The women in Armagh said to me: ‘Tell them everything’ and this I have tried to do” (13). D’Arcy continues, “And since so few books have been written about Irish women’s experience as political prisoners over the last two centuries, I felt it

essential to put down my own small experience with all its limitations” (13). Evident in this passage, D’Arcy’s aesthetic objective is to record both individual and collective histories of women’s struggle. It is a decision rooted in consciousness of challenging British censorship, still powerful in 1981 when the auto/biography was written. Speaking out was prohibited but exigent. Historians Tim Pat Coogan, Richard English, and A.R. Oppenheimer have discussed countless arrests without charges during the Troubles for witnessing acts of oppression. In her preface, D’Arcy also notes the British government’s usage of covert censorship, and explains that, rather than axing her project altogether, she strategically used her outsider location as a white working-class woman living in Dublin to “tell them everything,” or as much as she could given the censored conditions (i.e., internment without trial) out of which she was working.

In addition to colonial censorship, D’Arcy discusses patriarchal censorship within the Republican struggle as a problematic concern. D’Arcy’s incisive criticism of Sinn Féin alludes to Republican women’s invisibility, in particular. Sinn Féin’s Prisoner of War Department kept women in the shadow far too long. For instance, Sinn Féin failed to acknowledge the hunger strike organized by Mairéad Farrell, Mary Doyle, and Mairead Nugent in Armagh Goal right away in order to focus on the hunger strikes in the H-Blocks, which resulted in the deaths of nine men, including Bobby Sands. D’Arcy writes: “The emphasis at the meeting was on the men in the H Blocks. Women Against Imperialism pointed out that they were also protesting women in Armagh Jail [. . .] Sinn Féin was taking a cautious view of the new women’s group” (23-24). Eventually, such criticism resulted in her expulsion from the organization. In a recent interview, D’Arcy shares a scathing indictment of Sinn Féin’s masculinist tactics:

We need to stop seeing women as victims. Armagh women were not victims. Women were stronger than men. Sinn Féin didn't want to see it—the H-Blocks and Armagh were connected. Women started our own version of H-Blocks. We were political prisoners. Sinn Féin wanted to hide the women in Armagh. The aspects of women's bodies shocked people. [. . .] [W]omen's periods, births, and internal strip searches violated puritanical religion. Father Murray⁵³ got support for women. It became to Sinn Féin's advantage to mention women only then.

Her book speaks out against this silence, though it does not indict Sinn Féin extensively for solidarity reasons. However, D'Arcy's testament to the vital importance of women's historical significance in this struggle evidences itself from the title/epigraph to the concluding call. While her regional privilege informs her political location, her feminist work on Irish Republican history is corrective and essential. D'Arcy writes: "Only by being able to write my diary could I spill off my frustration, and work my way to an understanding of the young women's position" (89). It offers possibilities to the alternative: silence. It recasts women as their own actors in her "self-historical" script, not ancillary objects to be dealt with post-revolution. D'Arcy centers the role of gender in the narrative of power and resistance to it, providing a different angle of vision. Instead of cowering in silence, she "tells them everything" about the collective experiences of her fellow Irish Republican women inmates. For both Shakur and D'Arcy, the "hardest thing in the world was to keep [their] mouth[s] shut" (Shakur 168).

Styling and (E)Racing the State: Literary Analyses of History/Truth-Telling, Marginalization/Privilege, and Power/Resistance in *Assata: An Autobiography* and Margaretta D'Arcy's *Tell Them Everything*

Whose History, Whose Voice?

Arguably, the most productive form of "talking back" for Shakur and D'Arcy, limited in their revolutionary activist possibilities by their prison sentences, is through the

⁵³ Father Murray fought tirelessly for better prison conditions for women in Armagh jail. See chapter two.

medium of auto/biographical writing: their pens are their only weapons. It is in this way that they seek to speak truth to power, thereby re-thinking racialized/ gendered/ colonized history and re-writing their own histories. First, I examine Shakur's textual rewriting of what she calls "fairy tale history," including the wielding of presidential power as symbolic of state power and capitalist preoccupations with individualism. Second, I explore D'Arcy's literary intentions and conceptual practices of self-reflexive politics. Both writers push the boundaries of revolutionary auto/biography in new and interesting ways.

Assata Shakur discusses her notion of "fairy tale history" early in her auto/biography. This decision is a conscious one that positions collective over individual history. Shakur states, "When we learned history, we were never taught the real reasons for things. We were just taught useless trivia, simplistic facts, key phrases, and miscellaneous, meaningless dates" (29). Shakur attributes such a misguided teaching of history to the educational maintenance of racialized/ gendered state power, explaining that "nobody is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. Nobody is going to teach you your true history, teach you your true heroes, if they know that knowledge will help set you free" (181). She insists that historical lessons are invaluable; furthermore, for her, they can promote critical consciousness of state power with revolutionary possibilities. Shakur demonstrates that there are different versions of history, and that the version told in the mainstream educational system in which she came of age serves the interests of white ruling classes. Shakur's commitment to historical veracity prompts her to assume the role of "historian," an early pioneer for Black Studies.

Shakur provides numerous examples of the “true” identities of famous presidents as a way of resisting inaccurate hegemonic historical production used to preserve systems of power. Shakur begins with George Washington and the Revolutionary War. Her first factual point of interest is in Washington’s personal life. She criticizes him for selling “a slave for a keg of rum” (33). Shakur then looks to Washington’s political career as a manifestation of racism, sexism, and colonialism--not freedom, justice, and equality. Shakur states, “George Washington [. . .] [was] fighting for the freedom of ‘whites only.’ Rich whites, at that. After the so-called Revolution, you couldn’t vote unless you were a white man and you owned a plot of land. The Revolutionary War was led by some rich white boys who got tired of paying heavy taxes to the king” (33). This characterization of Washington is particularly significant because Washington is upheld as a founding supporter of freedom. Shakur suggests that this country’s inception was plagued with systemic violence. Shakur, moreover, challenges the ethos of “America” as “land of the free” in its very formation.

Transitioning to a different historical moment, Shakur speaks in a similar fashion about Abraham Lincoln. As she did for Washington, Shakur discusses “Honest” Abe, first personally and then politically. Shakur identifies Lincoln as “an archracist who had openly expressed his disdain for Black people. He was of the opinion that Black people should be forcibly deported to Africa or anywhere else” (33). Then Shakur challenges the popular narrative of the Civil War as a war to “free the slaves” as follows:⁵⁴

We had been taught that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves. [. . .]
The Civil War was fought for economic reasons. The fact that ‘official’
slavery was abolished was only incidental. The slave economy of the

⁵⁴ I would like to thank Claire G. Moses for her insights on the Civil War. There were many Marxists and mainstream historians who challenged the notion that the Civil War was not about ending slavery.

South was a threat to northern capitalism. What if the slaveholders of the South decided to set up factories and process the cotton themselves? Northern capitalists could not possibly compete with slave labor, and their capitalist economy would be destroyed. To ensure that this didn't happen, the North went to war. (33)

This discussion is particularly significant because of Lincoln's valorization as an "honest" "abolitionist" in hegemonic historical narratives. Shakur works to deconstruct the very foundations upon which this country was built—truth and freedom—in her reflections on Washington and Lincoln.

Shakur also indicts other presidents in other historical moments (e.g., Jimmy Carter for prison profiteering and Ronald Reagan for being, in her words, a "fascist capitalist dog"), but focuses especially on Richard Nixon (132). This language holds these presidents culpable for war, genocide, and poverty. Shakur's discussion of Nixon focuses on analogous points of honesty, lying, and freedom. She identifies Nixon as one of the "real criminals" juxtaposed to "real heroes," or "freedom fighters." Shakur describes Nixon as follows:

It should also be clear to us by now who the real criminals are. Nixon and his crime partners have murdered hundreds of Third World brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa. As was proved by Watergate, the top law enforcement officials in this country are a lying bunch of criminals. The president, two attorney generals, the head of the fbi, the head of the cia, and half the white house staff have been implicated in the Watergate crimes. (50)

In her text, Shakur's critique of power is salient. She first references United States colonialism and then invokes internal colonialism, suggesting that the "truth" is that the state is run by a "lying bunch of criminals" only concerned with preserving their own economic interests, as evidenced in the Watergate crimes. Shakur concludes that possibilities of freedom are nonexistent in racialized/gendered state policies of war and

genocide that are upheld through rampant fabrication. Moving from “historian” to “self-historian” committed to counterhegemonic historical representation, Shakur insists on similar standards of “truth” in her own self-identification as a freedom fighter and revolutionary, not an imperial oppressor (e.g., the president). Shakur’s self-description is as follows:

My name is Assata Shakur (slave name joanne chesimard), and i am a revolutionary. A Black revolutionary. By that i mean that i have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men, and kept our babies empty-bellied. I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty, the politicians who lie to us with smiling faces, and all the mindless, heartless robots who protect them and their property. I am a Black revolutionary woman, and because of this i have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposedly involved, i have been accused of planning. (52)

In this passage, Shakur identifies as a Black revolutionary woman at war with the state and its repression against her people. The interesting point of this passage, however, is that Shakur chooses to minimize her individual value in the revolution by lower-casing “I” in arguably the most important “personal” statement in her auto/biographical text. Shakur lower-cases “I” many times throughout her auto/biography; some deviations include upper-casing “I” at the beginning of a sentence, for example, “I nodded my head across the highway” (3). Shakur’s decision to lower-case “i” as early as the first paragraph in the first chapter works as a deliberate questioning of the whole western tradition’s rhetoric of individualism. As noted earlier, post-Enlightenment auto/biographies have celebrated the individual in a way that separates their subjects from their communities. Shakur, however, understands that individualism thwarts the solidarity attained from communal involvement. She will not view her life as more important than other people’s lives; instead, Shakur uses her life as an example of the need for collective

struggle. In a text about the “content” of her life, Shakur contests racialized/gendered state repression, especially since World War II, in every conceptual way, including the actual “form” of her identity. Shakur’s commitment to resisting the state’s values is all encompassing. After all, even “legal” (e.g., “slave name”) name is lower-cased (7)

Like Shakur, D’Arcy sets up her auto/biography to cast a critical eye on history; however, she slants her vision to focus on the outsider’s role in questioning dominant history. Furthermore, she acknowledges both her marginalized and privileged sites of identity and where they intersect with other Irish Republican women’s social realities. Residents in the Republic of Ireland do not suffer from direct colonial realities, such as racialized police brutality. D’Arcy’s decision to travel to and advocate for residents in the Six Counties becomes a way to challenge colonial intransigence. The role of the outsider is comparable to that of an “explorer,” used advantageously in the travels of voice and translation. D’Arcy writes: “I was an explorer who had stumbled in on their⁵⁵ strange customs. [. . .] I was one of the few artists from the 26 Counties who had actually come up to the North to protest publicly about the lack of humanitarian civil liberties” (94; 111). Geographic privilege permits her visibility. She speaks openly about the entitlement her location provides her: “I did not come from the North: there was no way I could act as though I were from the oppressed minority of the ghettos. I had for example never personally experienced the savagery of the loyalists [...]. I was there because I object in principle to the British presence in the Six Counties, the subjugation of the minority, and the treatment of the prisoners” (D’Arcy 44). D’Arcy’s decision to out herself as a Southerner allowed her to challenge racialized inequality in a way Northerners could not because they lacked her privilege.

⁵⁵ D’Arcy uses “their” to refer to people residing in the Six Counties of Ireland.

D’Arcy further discusses the importance of outsiders in raising critical consciousness in a personal interview I conducted with her: “I was an outsider--not from the North—coming into a community not from the Provos or Sinn Féin. The outsider can be very important. You are not part of the internal dynamics of community. You’re more objective, aware. One is more conscious. It’s important because more people know why you’re doing it. It’s more efficient for your political goals because the North was cut off. People didn’t know what was going on there. Armagh was not really explained in the 1980s. Women were abused in jails, and continue to remain hidden even now.” She believes that outsider status offers a possibility for unique translations, deriving from the privilege to speak out about activist projects, such as protests, petitions, civil disobedience, among others. Vocal “explorers” challenge hegemonic systems of power by relinquishing their privilege, thereby outing themselves as resistance fighters who are willing to sacrifice their own lives in the name of justice. More public outrage can be generated when privileged people are the target of overt oppression, rather than marginalized people.

The intersection of politics and aesthetics is another pervasive theme in D’Arcy’s life. In the interview I conducted with her, she talked extensively about her writing process, intent, and audience. She is particularly interested in “keeping things alive,” as she puts it, which explains her use of vivid imagery in her auto/biography and later, her decision to write plays. She discusses both the roles of “historian” and “self-historian” as well as the artist and activist in an attempt to raise critical consciousness about social inequality in the British-occupied Six Counties of Northern Ireland. The role of what I am calling “auto/biographical writer” is used to challenge fixed genres in art and life. In a

personal interview, she reflects on these themes. D’Arcy states, “It’s all political. You’re up there [on the stage] and you’re communicating with the public. What kind of politics are you interested in creating?” Such Freirean philosophy views education, including cultural representations of it, as political, a product of social creation. Life is political, and therefore, art is political. Reminiscent of Shakur’s court experiences, D’Arcy uses Armagh as one such illustration in an interview: “Armagh showed the real liturgy of the theatre. It’s what happened when you choose your roles. The collective court couldn’t handle it. The court is very much a part of theatre of the absurd.” By extension, life also imitates art. Like Erving Goffman, D’Arcy sees life as a theatrical performance. An example is the use of physical space, even of sitting. D’Arcy says, “I began to create plays to sit in them. My nativity play is about the state and how it treats people sitting, using civil disobedience against the H bomb.” In this case, it is difficult to tease out existential, political and theatrical realities for the audience. These intersections occur within the literary genres. “I don’t separate acting from plays or plays or autobiography,” D’Arcy says, “*Tell them Everything* is written in a very theatrical way. It can be taken as a play, so I’m in the play as a character. In many ways, it is about women already in jail. I’m not just writing about my experience, but theirs, as well.” The intervention, then, between life and art is theatrical. D’Arcy uses her role as a “writer” in this revolutionary auto/biography to call into question stable conceptions of content and form that are anchored in hegemonic systems of power across a range of mediums. This decision offers a historical revision that unveils the primacy of women’s lived experiences, honors the ethos of the collective over the individual, and pluralizes the question, “whose voice?,”

all through the medium of writing. Politics and art, thus, make audible the oftentimes numerous silenced subjects (especially hunger strikers), dying to be heard.

D’Arcy’s reflections on politics and prose are important for understanding her use of vivid imagery and symbolism in her auto/biography. Her insights provide a conceptual framework for “seeing” her story more clearly. She blurs the boundaries of politics and art in deliberate ways to call attention to fixed conceptions of reality and of genre.

D’Arcy devotes much time into crafting the symbolism of bodily waste, in particular. Irish Republican prisoners on the “no wash” protest, in their words, “decorated the wall” with their excrement, urine, and menstrual blood, an organized tactic to resist “criminal” status and fight for “Special Category Status” for political prisoners. Despite the unfathomable unhygienic realities of feces and flies that buzzed atop it, they produced art out of shitty conditions, literally. They swirled and inked the walls with their words of survival with their excrement and menstrual blood instead of using the colonial bathroom facilities. D’Arcy writes:

I’ve had a shit, I’ve had a shit, it’s small and brown, hard as a nugget. Carefully wrapped in a tissue. She takes it to the wall. I want to puke. My nostrils are closed, I close my eyes. I open. She has covered a small section of the walls—a swirl, a small swirl, Liz has done it. The next voice exclaims: “I see you’ve started decorating, Liz!” (Margaretta says): “I apply it to the wall, I press hard, it falls off. I pick it up again, pressing it more lightly, as though I was touching a glass for a table-rapping session at a séance; let it take itself over the wall; it moves in thin lines. I am proud. The next time I shit I am going to draw pictures. My drawing is lousy. I will practise. (51)

D’Arcy transforms shit into art in prison. She also writes about this process by using ironically aesthetic imagery for her fecal art. We can see her touching a glass, drafting thin lines, and drawing pictures. D’Arcy uses shit to highlight the struggle for life amidst hell for women in prison and its transformation into something of collective value.

D'Arcy also describes the conditions out of which this art is created with allegorical symbolism. D'Arcy describes these deplorable conditions as follows:

We are called back to the filth, the cells covered with flies, little happy flies, stubborn flies, flies that, when you think you've got them, fly out of the windows: dead flies, dried blood of fat flies, smearing shit on the walls, bluebottles that buzz, wasps, earwigs, a mass of menacing nature trying to take over. [. . .] Every morning there are hundreds of flies on the walls, on the floors. We swat them. I feel like the proverbial white hunter. I try to have a truce with them. 'You can have the walls but leave my body alone.' No way, they crawl up my legs, land on my face, I hide under the filthy grey blanket, they sneak in, no mercy. No surrender, I am Paisley [a Unionist], I lash out, jumping on my springs and on my bars. [. . .] Carefully get them: some of them are stunned, I think they are dead, no, they recover. They are like the Provos [PIRA], unconquerable, they are everywhere, and then the little ones that live in the skirting boards, [. . .] thousands of flies live there/ (78-79)

This passage is flooded with adjectives to invoke the flies as literal presence: "little," "happy," "stubborn," "dead," "dried," "fat." She also transforms them into symbol, describing them as "buzz[ing]," "menacing," and "trying to take over" her cell. The flies' bodies invoke a colonial presence in her imagination. She fights back, swatting them, but they continue to oppress her like "white hunter[s]." They refuse a truce; they capture her body, crawl on her, land on her, and hide in her parcels. She will not surrender, though. At the end, she identifies the human fly-swatters as the IRA, and the fly shit-hoverers as the enemy, the Paiseleyites. Her writing is rich in details and symbols in this passage. This stylistic decision reflects a clear merger of politics and art that is steeped in reality.

Unlike D'Arcy, Shakur uses the politics of aesthetics through lower-case capitalization and unique misspellings. Shakur's decisions regarding capitalization are rich in multiform possibilities. Her intentional lower-casing of state-related language is a form of dissent. She presents her objections to the United States as an empire in form simply by lower-casing her references to it. Specific examples include the following:

“u.s.” (151), “amerika” (35), “new jersey” (52), “middlesex county” (49), and “fbi, cia, white house” (50). “amerika” is not only lower-cased, but spelled with a “k,” an obviously deliberate decision.⁵⁶ The substitution of the “k” for the “c” (as in the German spelling) was common practice among radicals in this period and was done to mark their disgust with racialized/fascistic forms of deference. Shakur’s uses of other misspelled references to “America” make clear her disdain for United States racism and imperialism: “amerikan revolution” (35), “amerikan dream,” (119), “amerikan nightmare” (119), and “amerikkkan population” (51). The use of “amerikkkan” became more salient during her trial; the KKK protested outside it, waving banners that read “White power and death to the BLA” (qtd. in Williams *Inadmissible Evidence* 125). Shakur contrasts her writing of “America” in this way by capitalizing other locations, such as Africa, Asia, Cuba, and Havana, among others.

In addition to capitalization and misspellings, Shakur’s frequent “apologies” and “thank-you’s” throughout her auto/biography serve as yet another formalist interrogation of racialized/gendered state power. Again, Shakur engages the politics of power in terms of both racialized/gendered state power/repression and resistance. Here she makes use of direct address: “I want to apologize to you, my Black brothers and sisters, for being on the new jersey turnpike. I should have known better. The turnpike is a checkpoint where Black people are stopped, searched, harassed, and assaulted. Revolutionaries must never be in too much of a hurry or make careless decisions” (52). This “apology,” written to Black people living in the United States, is a specific indictment of state practices of racial profiling, in this case, “driving while Black.” Here, Shakur suggests that Black

⁵⁶ Revolutionaries’ decision to write “amerika” in this way was intended to connect the United States to Nazi Germany. I am thankful to Claire G. Moses for this information.

revolutionaries are targeted, in particular, because they choose to protest such egregious conditions. But she also can be sincere in her apologies. For example, Shakur states, “It was hard for me to write anyway. I was also very paranoid about letters. I could not bear the thought of the police, FBI, guards, whoever, reading my letters and getting daily insight on how i was feeling and thinking. But I would like to offer my sincerest apology to those who were kind enough to write to me over the years and who received no answer” (49). Another such example includes the following: “There were many, many people who i never got to meet, even though they worked so hard on my behalf. And even though i never got a chance to thank all the Black people, white people, Third World people, all the students, feminists, revolutionaries, activists, etc., who worked on the case, i thank you now” (Shakur 246). In these latter statements, Shakur is deeply concerned with the politics of remembering and the politics of solidarity. Shakur envisions her supporters as equally important historical figures worthy of counterhegemonic recognition. Her recognition of them in her auto/biography, thus, is of important to both historical constructions of “truth” and activist constructions of collectivity. Both examples of apology and thanks are writing practices that contest racialized/ gendered state power.

Like both her predecessors and contemporaries, including Shakur, D’Arcy employs particular techniques to disrupt stylistic canonization. She writes about her incidents in a defiant tone, rather than using standardized spellings and direct address. Her fiery spirit is most evident in her strong voice as she remembers this time. She recounts those incidences that surrender her locational privilege, preferring self-defiance and empowerment over authorial acquiescence and respect. She did not expect any

leniency from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) as a result of her marginalized gender, either, reiterating that she, like many Irish Republican women comrades, is not a victim. After D’Arcy’s arrest, her first act of civil disobedience is silence: “They wanted me to talk, and I was not going to. I would not cooperate. I explained that I would not respect [them]” (17). She stretches the boundaries of recalcitrant rebellion when she attacks the loyalist authorities’ failure to serve her warrant. She challenges the colonial power’s repression. She uses humor and irony to challenge it. Like Shakur, she calls attention to the arbitrariness and incompetence of the state in her writing. D’Arcy proclaims disobediently, “I voiced my complaint about my warrant not having been served, it showed a lack of efficiency, a lack of commitment to the policy, a fundamental lack of patriotism, an undermining of the unionist loyalty to the crown. Where was my warrant?” (40). The RUC honors her request, and tells her she will get what “her heart desires,” but not before D’Arcy follows up with a caustic response: “A 32-county small-farmers and workers’ socialist republic, amnesty for all prisoners?” (40). Failure to cooperate, namely “talking back,” carries dire consequences for her. She is the only one not released on International Women’s Day. With unbridled Irish stubbornness and feminist confidence, D’Arcy accepts this reality: “I had slept heavily in the very same cell I had occupied 18 months before. [. . .] I had 91 days left to serve, and here was where I wanted to be” (41).

D’Arcy also pushes the political terrain of solidarity by writing in the collective voice. D’Arcy confesses, “As a writer committed to the integrity of the written word, I felt we had raised the expectations of the young women in Armagh (who were in there for ten to twenty years and many of them firmly maintaining their innocence); and they were

all expecting us to come and join them” (40). D’Arcy is able to include their lives in her work; it brings them the visibility they wanted and deserved, but were unable to achieve themselves while in prison. She uses “we” for this reason. Her investment in collective visibility and memory motivates her hope for “at least a few people still concerned for civil liberties [to] be perturbed at the implications” (D’Arcy 35). Her relentless critique of British colonialism and its treatment of Northern Irish Republican women prisoners encompasses every aspect of her life, manifested in the language of her writing. She uses her own experiences to show the possibilities for literally “talking back” back to state power.

In addition to her cumulative arrests and fines, D’Arcy’s tonal contestation percolates throughout her court and penitentiary experience. As in many of Shakur’s early trials, D’Arcy waives legal counsel. She is concerned with inaccurate representation, just as much as she is with historical untruths. She would rather tell her story than have someone fabricate it. “I had decided not to use a lawyer at all, but to conduct my own case: to be on the offensive,” D’Arcy affirms (24). Her decision came after she informed the attorney she was assigned that she would neither recognize nor respect the court for its loyalties to the British crown. Beforehand, D’Arcy castigated other WAI members for upholding colonial institutions, too; furthermore, she admonished them not to “emotionally blackmail” her, either (24). Additionally, D’Arcy denounces her trial’s functionality and offers a solution, removal. D’Arcy states, “As someone from the 26 Counties I would like to know how much this court is costing. It is obvious that the two witnesses, the doctor and the Inspector, are lying. Why don’t we just dismiss the case and have no more nonsense?” (25-26). In this passage, D’Arcy scoffs at the trial, but does

so comprehensively, including the attorney, witnesses, judge, and court system itself. Her disdain for the judge becomes strikingly apparent in her later refusal to address him as “Your Honour.” Like Shakur, D’Arcy’s strategy of address is deliberately disruptive of prescribed protocols: “‘Mr. McIvor,’ I say, ‘surely you cannot expect me to’—I look around at all the women—‘to call you, Your *Honour*?’ (30-31). What is important in the writing here (as opposed to the actual speech act) is the way she dramatizes her refusal to give him an honorific by interrupting the syntax with a parenthetical sentence that acts like a stage direction, both reminding us of her audience and creating syntactic suspense. It is deliberate courtroom – and narrative – drama. Ultimately, she rejoices in her “guilty” conviction, and sings women’s protest songs as they cuff her en route to her comrades’ arms.

D’Arcy’s commitment to Republican civil rights and women’s rights is untiring and admirable. Both her actions and her narrative about them illustrate that she will not surrender until her Republican sisters are released, even conversing abrasively to the prison guards dubbed “screws” (i.e., calling them “unquestioning servants of the British government,” “Nazis,” and threatening to “throw [her] piss on the floor” in front of them while detained (47). She uses her access to prison as a portal to telling Republican women’s collective stories of struggle. Reminiscent of historian Howard Zinn’s works, D’Arcy feels that it is, in her words, “the role of the artist in a time of repression” (17). Her courage to pursue honesty and morality are essential to her conception of individual and collective freedom.

Shakur and D’Arcy also both utilize “shout-outs” to question state-sanctioned “truths.” Shakur’s “shout-outs” deconstruct inaccurate and individualist histories. For

instance, in her discussion of Martin Luther King, Shakur positions James Chaney beside him, recuperating the memory of a man less often acknowledged than King. In this way, Shakur questions ascribing special significance to one individual. An advocate of anti-hierarchical states and activisms resisting them, Shakur wants to make clear that movements are comprised of numerous people, whether or not they undertake more work than others or receive more public acclaim than others. Additionally, Shakur re-writes history in her “shout-outs” to revolutionaries whom she regards as misrepresented. One such example includes the Rosenbergs. Her commemoration of them serves as a revolutionary counterpoint to racialized/ gendered state repression of them for their supposed communist politics during the Cold War. She represents their executions as outright assassinations by the state. Shakur also writes about a myriad of other freedom fighters, including Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Jonathan Jackson, Nat Turner, Mark Clark, Fred Hampton, Lil’ Bobby Hutton, Marcus Garvey, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, and Lolita Lebrón, (50), other less remembered but important figures of struggle, such as Ronald Carter, William Christmas, Mark Essex, Frank “Heavy” Fields, Woodie Changa Olugbala Green, Hames McClain, Harold Russell, Zayd Malik Shakur, Anthony Kumu Olugbala White, and countless others⁵⁷ (52-53). Shakur even identifies Black activists who were assassinated during the time of her own imprisonment, naming, for instance, every one of the thirty Black college students killed at Jackson State and Southern State (50). Through such interminable enumerations, privileged over her own personal plight, Shakur contests ruling-class histories of

⁵⁷ See also Safiya Bukhari’s “Lest We Forget,” reprinted in Laura Whitehorn’s anthology of Bukhari’s work, *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison & Fighting for Those Left Behind*. It lists the contributions of more than fifty Black activists who were assassinated from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, including many of the Black leaders to which Shakur refers.

individualism and inactivity and instead insists that oppositional work must accentuate collective consciousness in order to challenge ideologies and practices that perpetuate racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism. For Shakur, both collective consciousness and collective action are imperative for liberation.

D'Arcy, too, imbues her narrative of resistance with numerous "shout-outs." She steeps her work with a liberatory rhetoric demanding that social movements, including the cultural productions created within them, affirm the humanity of interned comrades who sacrificed their own lives for collective liberation. Such an unmasking effort is a political project, but oftentimes is also rooted in personal memory. Comprehensive in historical genealogy, D'Arcy first preserves the political memories of 1916 Easter Uprising survivor Countess Markievicz and Polish-German Marxist-feminist martyr Rosa Luxemburg before commencing her sentence. Countess Markievicz, born Constance Gore-Booth, was one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising. Unlike the others involved, her life was spared by virtue of her marginalized gender. Eamon de Valera's life also was saved due to his United States citizenship. Countess Markievicz became the first woman elected to the British Parliament, running as a Sinn Féin candidate, and later went on to join President Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil party after the Irish Civil War. Markievicz's life and writing has been very influential to D'Arcy. Rosa Luxemburg was involved in the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Social Democratic Party, and the Communist Party of Germany. Due to her Marxist contributions to the German worker's movement, she was assassinated by counterrevolutionary *Freikorps* soldiers. Recent mainstream news sources speculate that her body, found in a Berlin canal, now resides in a Berlin hospital.

Luxemburg, too, has been a key thinker and writer for D’Arcy. She lauds them in her own writing. She both alludes to their prison writing and tells how she honors them by deciding to sneak in accordance with their symbolic desire for new growth. D’Arcy states: “I remembered Countess Markievicz’s and Rosa Luxemburg’s prison letters and the importance to them of the flowers and insects. I decided I would smuggle in seeds on my shoes, lettuce and onion seeds, and grow them in my shit. One little shoot would give me something to concentrate on” (39). D’Arcy uses fecal imagery again in this passage. She invokes their lives and words for testimonial purposes, seeing them as part of a lineage of women dedicated to transferring social oppression to something more beautiful and more liberatory.

In addition, D’Arcy provides an extended “shout out” to Mairéad Farrell. Farrell was a member of the Irish Republican Army. Arrested for her involvement in the Conway Hotel bombing, a response to the British government’s revoking “Special Category Status,” Farrell was interned for ten years, and then assassinated two years later by the Special Air Service (SAS) of the British army.⁵⁸ While interned, Mairéad Farrell was in charge of organizing and speaking for political prisoners at the time, serving as the Officer-in-Command (OC) of Republican prisoners in the A wing. D’Arcy not only knew her, but knew her well; therefore, quite fittingly, her most pervasive “shout-outs” in the text are reserved for acknowledging Farrell’s commitment to social justice. D’Arcy’s litany of Farrell’s accomplishments is exhaustive. Dubbed “*Inkosi-kaas*,”⁵⁹ by political prisoners, Farrell, in D’Arcy’s words, “had developed into a highly sophisticated

⁵⁸ In the chapter on Mairéad Farrell’s writing, I will further discuss the specifics of her assassination, including the Gibraltar Inquest and Amnesty International reports that demonstrate the British government’s responsibility for her death. See chapter five.

⁵⁹ “*Inkosi-kaas*” is the Zulu word for “chieftainess.” Many Republican women were inspired by anti-apartheid resistance in South Africa.

negotiator,” whose uniting “this small group of women was really remarkable” (83; 67). In her first four years in prison, Farrell greatly improved the living conditions for the women prisoners. She taught them Irish in jail, proofed their letters for them, and lectured them on pre-Celtic and Celtic culture, especially literature. In addition, as a result of the hunger strike she organized with Mairéad Nugent and Mary Doyle,⁶⁰ prisoners were allotted time outside to breathe, exercise, and share life together. D’Arcy, like other prisoners at the time, saw Farrell on the verge of death to make their lives better. She alludes to and reprints portions of the Hunger Strike Statement Farrell co-wrote with Nugent and Doyle to honor her: “We are prepared to fast to death, if necessary, but our love for justice and our country will live for ever” (qtd. in D’Arcy 122). To top it all, D’Arcy chose a picture of Farrell in the no-wash protest for her book cover, suggesting the great extent of her respect and admiration for Farrell. Like Shakur, D’Arcy also provides a comprehensive “shout-out” list to thirty Irish Republican women political prisoners (whether famous or not) in her appendix, including Christine Beatty, Briega Anne McCaughley, Patricia McGarry, Sinead Moore, Rosaleen Nolan, Annie Marie Quinn, Bernie Boyle, Anne Bateson, Eileen Morgan, and Dolours Price.⁶¹ However, her final words resonate with Farrell’s legacy: they reinvent the politics and herstory of liberation in feminist writing. Shakur’s and D’Arcy’s revolutionary auto/biographies, both unique yet similar in content and form, are a rewriting of women’s prison herstory from the bottom up.

⁶⁰ Mairéad Nugent and Mary Doyle are household names as a result of their Republican activism and subsequent participation in the hunger strike in Armagh prison, organized chiefly by Mairéad Farrell. For more biographical info, see *Republican News*.

⁶¹ See *Republican News*.

Conclusion

In *Tell Them Everything*, D'Arcy reprints a short poem "The Starless Sky,"

written by Armagh prisoner Christine Beatty. Beatty writes:

The sky is starless tonight, / Or so it seems from my cell window. / One
little patch of sky is better than none, / [. . .] By the oppressors of our land.
/ But a flame burns within me, / So strong, Not even my enemies will
quench it / Never ending, / Until the day my country is free. (qtd. in
D'Arcy 86)

For Beatty, the flame will not be extinguished until the country is burned and purified.

Like Beatty, both Shakur's and D'Arcy's flames ignite within them and their writing, but the omnipresent fires engulf the entire earth. These texts sparkle with possibility to affirm humanity and fight for freedom through the beauty of bloody storytelling. Their stories are told and shared collectively for both historic and aesthetic purposes, in order to emphasize the importance of collective struggle.

Chapter 4: “We All Suffer from Walls”: Barriers & Freedom in Ericka Huggins’ *Insights & Poems* and Roseleen Walsh’s *Aiming Higher*

Introduction

On May 19, 2010, while Roseleen Walsh re-visited the Peace Wall, just minutes from her home in West Belfast, she inscribed “we all suffer from walls” on it. The metaphorical possibilities of this statement are robust, but the literal message is that barriers to freedom must be demolished. In my interview with Ericka Huggins, she also mentioned several times that she abhorred barriers. “Humans get stuck in them,” Huggins said, and “we just need to break them down.” These revolutionary poets, both of whom wrote much in prison about liberation, can be placed in conversation with one another, both about writing and the world.

To date, however, there is a paucity of literary scholarship on Huggins’ and Walsh’s poetry. In addition, little scholarship is devoted to exploring their work individually, let alone comparatively. Donald Freed’s comprehensive coverage of her trial in New Haven with Bobby Seale and Fiona Thompson’s recent project “An Oral History with Ericka Huggins” are two notable exceptions. Angela Y. Davis, Judith A. Scheffler, and David Hilliard reprinted some of Ericka Huggins’ poems in an attempt to incite critical attention to them, though they do not provide literary commentary. Huggins’ own *Panther* news articles and own sociological thesis on the Oakland Community School conceived and maintained by the Panthers demonstrates that some of the best information on her has been produced by herself, along with her recent scholarly collaborative article with Angela Le-Blanc-Ernest. No literary criticism exists on Huggins’ work. Similarly, Lachlan Whalen’s *Contemporary Irish Republican Prison Writing: Writing and Resistance* contains a chapter on women in Armagh, Maghaberry, and Durham, in which

Roseleen Walsh's poetry is featured. In addition, Melissa Thompson's documentary *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners* showcases much underrecognized and/or unpublished works by Irish Republican women, including Roseleen Walsh. Beyond Whalen's cursory criticism, no scholarly work has been conducted on Walsh's work, either. This chapter both recognizes Huggins' and Walsh's individual work and explores significant parallels between them as noteworthy examples of political poetry by women situated in mid- to late-twentieth-century revolutionary movements.

In this chapter, I discuss many overlapping themes in their revolutionary auto/biographical poetry, particularly love/hate, time/space, spirituality/religion, and racism/nationalism. Their aesthetic and political visions overlap in stylistic expression, as well. Both writers use similar literary techniques, such as consonance, assonance, capitalization, repetition, rhyme, and caesuras, among others, in their free verse poems. In addition, their work reveals their consciousness of historical associations between their respective movements. Like Irish writer Margaretta D'Arcy, Roseleen Walsh was very influenced by civil rights/ Black Power/ Liberation struggles in the United States. While Walsh did not have direct contacts with them, she read many prominent writers/ activists, such as George Jackson and Angela Davis, while doing her own social justice-based work in Northern Ireland. In an interview with me, Walsh avowed that Angela Davis' letters to George Jackson were the "most beautiful work I've ever read." Later, she read Assata Shakur's and Ericka Huggins' work. Ericka Huggins also had some minimal contact with Bernadette Devlin McAliskey (known as Devlin at the time). Lisbet Tellefsen, Ericka Huggins' life partner and personal archivist, retrieved a Western Union telegram to Black

Panther Party Headquarters in Oakland dated May 25, 1971: “Just heard the news about Bobby and Erika Stop Congratulations Stop all Power to the People Stop We have not forgotten those who still remain in prison Stop Love Bernadette Devlin.”⁶² Huggins said, “It was phenomenal. I respect and admire her so much from a distance.” Recently, Huggins viewed Melissa Thompson’s documentary *The Road of Women*, in which Northern Irish activists Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Roseleen Walsh, Martina Anderson, and Ella O’Dwyer are featured.⁶³

Much comparative possibility hovers over Ericka Huggins’ and Roseleen’s Walsh’s political work. First, Huggins and Walsh entered their respective struggles as a result of their social environments, characterized by racism and colonialism. Second, they endured acute repression for their involvement in social movements. Third, they both were imprisoned in the early 1970s for their political activism. Fourth, they both composed while in prison. Lastly, the content and form of their work demonstrate similar experiences, reflections, and constructions. In this chapter, I provide auto/biographical background on Ericka Huggins’ and Roseleen Walsh’s personal, political, and creative lives, including information from secondary sources, personal interviews, and news archives. Then I turn to a close reading of their revolutionary auto/biographical works, *Insights and Poems* and *Aiming Higher*, both of which are collections of poems written during prison. I use formalist and materialist criticism, and explore the aesthetic and social richness of their work.

⁶² I would like to thank Ericka Huggins and her life partner Lisbet Tellefsen for providing me with this important document. It is from Tellefsen’s personal archives, where she keeps historical work on Huggins.

⁶³ Huggins and Walsh also exchanged e-mails, both desiring to communicate with one another after I interviewed them.

Writing and Revolution: An Auto/biographical Overview of Ericka Huggins' and Roseleen Walsh's Resistance

Ericka Huggins

Ericka Huggins is a writer/ teacher/ activist undeservingly neglected by scholars after her more than forty years of social justice work. In her interview with Fiona Thompson, Ericka Huggins explains that the March on Washington was a political capstone for her. Only fifteen at the time, Huggins recalled the words of Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King, and Lena Horne, in particular. Huggins said, "I was standing there on that little mound, that day, and I made a vow to serve humanity for the rest of my life" (qtd. in Thompson). Demonstrations in Washington at which King spoke clarified many social problems for her, such as racialized poverty, and police brutality, among others. She remained committed to social awareness after that in college. Huggins continues, "[T]he same thing occurred when I was on the Lincoln University campus, read the article about Huey Newton and called my mother and told her, in my junior year of college, that I was leaving to join the Black Panther Party. It was the same pull" (qtd. in Thompson). While at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, located near Rising Sun, Maryland, then the headquarters of the KKK, Huggins became disillusioned with higher education for its institutional failure to fuse social theory and praxis. Writing in prison to a friend on November 18, 1970, Huggins says, "The whole armchair revolutionary nationalist thing stunk. i was looking for something real" (qtd. in Freed 63). In 1969, at the age of eighteen, her solution was to move to Los Angeles, California, with her husband John Huggins (both were members of the Black Student Congress at Lincoln University at the time) and join the Black Panther Party (Freed 63). They joined the BPP

in South Central Los Angeles. Huggins writes, “i⁶⁴ remember reading an article in *ramparts* about huey’s arrest and the newly formed black panther party. Had to go and do something, amerika was destroying the people—we felt desperately the need to help” (qtd. in Freed 63). Not even a month after their daughter Mai was born, John Huggins was assassinated, along with Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter, during a Black Studies formation meeting, housed on the UCLA campus. In *The COINTELPRO Papers*, Ward Churchill and Jim VanderWall argue that his assassination was a result of political tensions between the Panthers and the Black organization Us, exacerbated by the government’s infamous counterintelligence program, COINTELPRO. Huggins believes COINTELPRO’s divisive intent was to cause Us and BPP to distrust one another through a letter-writing campaign. Huggins returned to New Haven, Connecticut, for her husband’s burial, stayed with his family, and started a BPP chapter there. Six months after his assassination, she was arrested.

Ericka Huggins, along with Bobby Seale and twelve other Panthers, was arrested on charges of kidnapping, conspiracy, murder, and intent to commit a crime against Alex Rackley; the charge carried seventy years in prison (“Bail for Panther Decreed by Court: Judge Rules in New Haven Murder-Kidnap Case”; Oelsner, “Deadlock by Jury Results in Seale-Huggins Mistrial”). George Sams testified that Panther cofounder Bobby Seale, 33, and Panther member Ericka Huggins, 22, ordered him to kill Rackley, believing him to be a police informer. Huggins and Seale denied such allegations, pointed to lack of evidence, and reminded the court of George Sams’ extensive psychological treatment; in 1961, he was labeled as “mental[ly] defect[ive]” (“Seale Motion Denied”; Oelsner, “Defense

⁶⁴ Huggins uses lower-case capitalization in much of her writing, a stylistic decision I will examine in significant depth in my literary analysis section.

Witness Testifies Sams Sought to ‘Get Even’ with Seale”). Huggins also cited a class she taught four days before Rackley’s murder in which she instructed Panthers not to “ill-treat captives” (Oelsner, “Seale Witness Denies Hearing Talk of ‘Plot’ against Rackley”). Seale’s prestigious civil rights lawyer Charles Garry portrayed Seale as a “peaceful man,” explaining that self-defense was “peaceful talk as defined by oppressed people” (qtd. in Oelsner, “Seale is Praised as Peaceful Man”). Seale’s lawyer invoked the Amistad rebellion more than a century earlier as the prophetic forerunner to the trial. It took four months for jury selection (not including illness recesses), with some 1,500 prospective jurors screened in total before seven whites and five Blacks finally were selected (Oelsner, “Charges Dropped in the Seale Case; ‘Publicity’ Cited”). “Fixed opinions” and “pretrial publicity” were responsible for innumerable rejections (Vasquez, “Order in Court Urged by Seale”) For instance, a prospective juror classified the Panthers as a “colored motorcycle gang” (qtd. in Oelsner, “Lawyers for Seale Urge Start of Trial with Only 11 Jurors”). Garry excoriated the court and demanded that the charges be dropped because “we cannot get a fair trial” (“Juror Is Excused in Trial of Seale”). Huggins lawyer Catherine Roraback agreed with Garry’s proposal. However, while Judge Harold M. Mulvey admitted that “it’s understandably difficult to obtain a jury here,” he denied dismissal due to unbalanced “pre-trial publicity” (“Seale Motion Denied”; Oelsner, “Seale Denied Bid to Halt His Trial”). Discrimination based on biased public opinion accompanied them in jail, too, where Seale was harassed to shave his goatee and Huggins to remove her jewelry. They were treated as already convicted. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) ushered themselves in to challenge such presumed guilt before conviction

(“Seale Asks Court to Authorize Goatee Forbidden by Jail Rules”). Eventually, four thousand members of the National Guard were called in to contain more than fifteen thousand Yale-based students, community members, and Panthers protesting the jury selection with unrelenting vigor (Freed 71; 123; Oelsner “Deadlock by Jury Results in Seale-Huggins Mistrial”). The protesters dubbed it “the most important trial of a Black man in American history” (“7 Seale Jurors Are Selected in 70 Days”).

This rhetoric, while anchored in a trenchant critique of racism, mentions nothing of Huggins’ plight as a Black woman, and it encourages Black women’s invisibility. The *New York Times* also is culpable of such gendered omissions for its dubbing the trial “the Seale trial” in the majority of its articles. Furthermore, the *New York Times* uses superfluous gendered and sexualized labeling, oftentimes writing “Seale and Mrs. Huggins” as well as marking Huggins as a “tall, thin, motionless widow” on several occasions (Oelsner, “Mrs. Huggins, on Witness Stand, Protests Innocence”). Huggins, in her article “Revolution in Our Times,” written for *the Black Panther*, responds, “Each day, as I sit in the alleged court of justice in New Haven, I am saddened by the dull, cold, narrow, racist lives of the people who wish to try Bobby and me. I leave everyday angered at what Amerika has done to its people; angered at [. . .] its oppression and brutality [. . .] [M]y thoughts are centered on the necessity for us to move swiftly and begin to change before it is too late.” Finally, after more than two years in prison while on trial, Seale and Huggins were exonerated, owing to records of Sams’ tenuous mental state. In Judge Harold M. Mulvey’s words, “I find it impossible to believe that an unbiased jury could be selected without superhuman efforts” (qtd. in Oelsner, “Charges in the Seale Case; ‘Publicity’ Cited”). After her release in 1972, Huggins continued to work

for the Panthers, leaving behind a fourteen-year legacy with the organization, the longest membership for any woman involved with it (www.erickahuggins.com).

In Ericka Huggins' and Angela LeBlanc-Ernest's scholarly essay, "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education: The Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School," Huggins shows that her most notable investment with the Panthers was pedagogical. She also wrote and edited articles, sold newspapers, and spoke at rallies (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 171). She was Editor of the Intercommunal News Service, the Panther newspaper. In addition, she was Director of the Panther Oakland Community School (OCS) (formerly named the Intercommunal Youth Institute) from 1973 to 1981, allowing her to merge her interests in teaching and writing for social change (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest). In 1976, Ericka Huggins became the first Black person and woman on the Alameda County Board of Education (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 175). In their article, "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education: The Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School," Huggins and Le-Blanc-Ernest share its philosophical objective: "The Oakland Community School (OCS) was a ten-year institution that provided an alternative instructional model to Oakland's public education system," committed to teaching marginalized students of color from impoverished backgrounds "about their true history in the United States" (161). From its inception, the OCS challenged school gangs, canonical curricula, oversubscribed classes, mediocre learning strategies, and wealth divisions in the California public educational system. Instead, OCS offered its students a multi-racial and multicultural staff, a social justice-oriented curriculum, service learning, emotional support services, and a tuition-free education, funded by the California State Department of Education itself and Panther supporters.

OCS was 90 percent Black American (most children's parents were Panthers), but some Mexican-American, Asian-American, European-American, and biracial students also attended it (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 172). 55 percent were female; 45 percent were male, and all people shared roles, whether pedagogical and/or administrative (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 172). All students took courses in art, choir, Spanish, and environmental studies in addition to math, science, history, English, and physical education. However, traditional subjects like English were taught nontraditionally; for example, students wrote poetry to BPP prisoners for their poetry lesson (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 169). Students, thus, were expected to combine theory and practice in their learning processes. Before the OCS closed due to trust and funding problems as a result of governmental surveillance, much evidence demonstrates that students from this school excelled beyond its boundaries. According to Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest, preschool students (aged 4.8 to 5.5 years) scored in the 70th percentile in reading, and 71st for math; furthermore, 8.8-11.5 year olds scored 32.9 points above the public school students at Oakland Unified School District (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 176-177). In addition, the National Association for Alternative Schools welcomed Huggins to its ranks, and prominent freedom fighters Rosa Parks, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and Caesar Chavez spoke out in favor of the OCS (Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 180). According to Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest, former OCS students did well in public schools after OCS shut down, but complained that they were ahead of other students their age, could not be involved in Black communities, and were chastised for asking "why" questions (181).

Huggins' commitment to social justice continues today. Huggins states, "For the past 30 years I have lectured across the country on issues relating to the well-being of women, children & youth; incarceration; education; & the role of spiritual practice in sustaining activism and promoting change" (www.erickahuggins.com). She taught Hatha Yoga and meditation through the Siddha Yoga Prison Project to incarcerated people, including children, public school children, and community college students in California for fifteen years (www.erickahuggins.com). For five years, she did similar relaxation work through the Mind/Body Medical Institute, an affiliate of the Harvard medical school. She still teaches these methods to foster parents and their children as well as kids and teen parents (www.erickahuggins.com). Huggins also served as the first woman practical service volunteer coordinator at the Shanti Project (www.erickahuggins.com). She is especially interested in working with queer of color youth with HIV/AIDS (www.erickahuggins.com). She is currently a professor in Women's Studies at California State (www.erickahuggins.com). In a recent interview I conducted with her, she explained that she completed an MA thesis in Sociology on a "prescriptive model for education" which proposes "student-centered, community-based tuition-free education for students to minimize the multi-generational race and gender trauma of American slavery. Twenty former students, staff, and parents of the OCS form the core of this qualitative study." Huggins, a parent of three and grandparent of two, views education as a basic human right for all children and adults. She told me she is drafting an autobiography "about [her] life beyond social justice, [her] inner and outer life."

In addition to being a life-long activist, Huggins continues to be a life-long writer.

In a recent interview, Huggins shared her impetus to write at the young age of ten:

I wanted someone to talk to. I was the caretaker in the family. My father was an alcoholic. My sister was three years younger, and brother four years. I couldn't talk about what was important. I was very existential. What was the purpose of life, and why is there suffering? All the themes in my writing address how I can serve the world. What can we do not to suffer? It has developed and shifted with time, but it's pretty much all the same themes—race, gender, and sexual orientation and the connections between spirituality and social issues.

Revolutionary auto/biographical writing, like all forms of activism, was a natural preoccupation for Huggins, created out of deplorable social conditions. She nurtured her devotion to liberation, and continues to write about the social problems that trouble her spaces and her communities' spaces. From 1969-1972, she wrote regularly while she was in the Niantic State Farm for Women, but much of her writing, drawings, and hand-made "Revolt" headbands for the Sister Love Collective⁶⁵ were confiscated and deemed politically inflammatory "kites," also known as "love letters," to other prisoners. In many ways, she existed through her writing during this barren period, owing to her confinement and restrictions. She wrote to think, to exist, to survive. When released, Huggins became a prolific writer. Arguably, to date, her most prolific writing for publication was birthed during this short period, 1969-1972. In my interview with her, Huggins stated that she wrote *Insights & Poems*, coauthored with Huey P. Newton, in a "very organic way," reserving an entire month away from everything, including the Party, and "just wrote—old and new stuff." Some of her poems then also appeared in *If They Come in the Morning*, edited by Angela Y. Davis, with whom Huggins' originally set out to coauthor *Insights & Poems*. Huggins writes in a letter to a friend, "i never wrote for people to read

⁶⁵ In Fiona Thompson's "An Oral History with Ericka Huggins," Huggins discusses her activism in prison from creating "revolt" headbands to doing hair as a means to create communal support and solidarity.

what I write/ but just to help myself think. [. . .] But I'm writing now because for some reason I want you to understand me" (qtd. in Freed 174). Her penchant for revolution as a natural response to oppression permeates her writing in all aspects, much as it did during her childhood. Huggins told me, "I don't really try to do it. It's there. My autobiographical writing and poetry is right there. I'm African-American and a woman. My partner is a woman. I don't try to write about inequalities.[. . .] . It's in there." In my interview with her, she continued, "What I write is totally from my heart, passion, and beliefs. [. . .] I bring every part of me to everything, whether, writing, teaching, organizing, living. It's what I see in me and other beings. I don't try to tell others' stories. I'm telling my stories." In addition to content, her form reflects her burning desire for freedom to express herself and exist. Huggins told me the following:

I don't like to get stopped by my mind. Sometimes there are no English words to express what I'm feeling. Not using upper-case letters wasn't a political act. But it may be and has been one. I don't like barriers. Humans make them up, and get stuck in them. They can be dismantled. It's not lower-case letters that break the barriers [. . .] What's most important is the content of what I'm writing, the discussion of what I'm writing.

Her recent scholarship on the OCS reflects a conscious decision towards accessibility of language and educational access to promote social change, as well.

Roseleen Walsh

Roseleen Walsh is a poet, playwright, and activist. Born in 1950, she was raised in the working-class Irish Catholic neighborhood of Andersontown, located in the Republican area of West Belfast (www.commedaghproductions.com). Many educational inequalities postponed her access to literacy. In a recent interview I conducted with her, she explained that she was educated at St. Teresa's primary school until the age of

fifteen, but she was unable to attend classes because her father fell ill. As a result, she could not read well, and had a limited vocabulary. She also recalls racial/ religious tension during her educational experience. She shares a time with me when a teacher excoriated prestigious 1916 poet Joseph Plunkett's work because of his political identity: "he couldn't have been an IRA man because no one in the IRA could have a mind like that." Walsh reflects on the experience later with me, stating "I was demonized because I am a Republican." Nevertheless, Walsh commenced writing poetry at the early age of nine. She said, "Poetry at first felt really natural." She embraced her poetic passion, in her words, because it "took you somewhere you've never been." In addition, she was a reticent child, whose "way of thinking wasn't the same as anybody else's." Poetry then, for Walsh, functioned as a means of escape, fantasy, affirmation, and comfort.

Beginning in her late teens, Walsh (at that time, her maiden name was Watson) decided to devote her life to addressing social problems. She views social services and assistance as essential to personal improvement. According to the anonymous authors of "Portrait of a 'Terrorist'," a piece submitted to *The Irish Times* by her community to challenge her 1973 arrest, Walsh became a voluntary social worker, and specialized in services for elderly people, in particular. She socialized with them, cooked for them, and completed their errands; in addition, four times a week she provided overnight assistance to them ("Portrait of a 'Terrorist'"). Furthermore, she was involved with children's programming, organizing social events, such as parties, dances, and social discussions with them, and oftentimes, she provided support for substance abusers and sex workers, as well ("Portrait of a 'Terrorist'"). She said, "God does not discriminate, why should I?" ("Portrait of a 'Terrorist'"). Her life was committed to making life easier, more

egalitarian for marginalized populations, fighting the systemic injustices of sexism, racism, classism, ethnocentrism, among other forms of discrimination that elderly people, children, and sex workers experienced on a personal level.

For more than five years as a voluntary social worker, she endured incessant harassment by British security forces due to her working-class Irish Catholic Republican background and her volunteer work. In addition, her Republican alliances with Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, got her the attention of the system (“Portrait of a ‘Terrorist’”). Despite her determination to continue her volunteer and political work, on Friday, August 24, 1973, she was arrested under the Detention of Terrorists Act and brought to Townhall Street, where she was interrogated for two days, without charge, and then transported to Armagh Jail (“Interned Girls for Court”). According to Walter Ellis of the *Irish Times*, she, only twenty-two at the time of her arrest, was purported to be a top-ranking Irish Republican Army (IRA) officer. Sinn Féin in Andersontown, however, was adamant that “she was not a member of any Republican movement and denied that she had been associated with the I.R.A” (Ellis). Additionally, her neighbors of Lower Andersontown published a collaboratively written piece “Portrait of a ‘Terrorist’” in the mainstream newspaper *The Irish Times* that attested to her notable record of charitable work, not her alleged “terrorist” activities, and demanded her immediate release. The people of Lower Andersontown write:

The ruling majority of Northern Ireland describe a terrorist as being a person that creates terror, destruction and possibly the downfall of a state. To portray Rosaleen [sic] as a terrorist, it would certainly appear that certain people have their definition of a terrorist terribly wrong. It would change the meaning of the word. Terror would become charity, destruction would become creativeness, and the downfall of a state the building and extension of community relations. It would change bitterness to love and suspicion to forgiveness.

They continue, “Can anyone call her a ‘terrorist.’” Can our society afford to lose people like Rosaleen [sic]? She should be released immediately so that she can carry on with her great acts of charity. If only half the people in N. Ireland followed the sample set by Rosaleen the people of the province would have long ago learned to love, and to live together.” The last reflections in this piece emphasize that this community has suffered from unimaginable cruelty as a result of its members’ racialized/ religious identities in the British-occupied Six Counties of Ireland. This community identifies with Mairéad Farrell, whom Roseleen Walsh knew, as the most (in)famous target in this small neighborhood; a Farrell mural, just a few blocks from Walsh’s home, reminds us of her IRA duties and Special Air Service (SAS) assassination. As Walsh puts it in my interview with her, “Everyone I knew was in the struggle for survival.”

Walsh had much knowledge of internment. Both of her brothers, Sean and Joe, were interned for political reasons at Crumlin Road Jail, where the latter’s hair was torched off and his body so severely beaten by guards (also known as “screws”) that Walsh could not recognize him during the H-Blocks. In addition, her husband Martin, just newly married to her eight weeks earlier, their first born daughter on the way, was sentenced to the H-Blocks during the hunger strike. She maintained regular correspondence with her brothers and husband while in prison. She also received numerous letters from friends, including Tomas Maire Collins, writing about their deleterious conditions in Long Kesh Jail: “[W]e are refusing all prison food indefinitely. We found glass in it, for the third time, last week so it’s back to the old diets for us. I need to lose a bit of weight anyway” (“HMP Belfast 14/11/73”). In the interview, Walsh said that she accompanied many of her family and friends in prison for more than a year,

thirteen months and two weeks to be precise; she never learned the exact reason she was interned from the commission, just as many of the thirty-three women interned for political reasons from 1971-1973 did not receive charges.

While in prison, Walsh refused to surrender her social vision and personal voice. Walsh told me, “I think being in prison reinforced the belief that there’s a difference between law and justice. I’m a Republican, and that doesn’t make me a bad person. They tried to kill my desire for freedom. I’m lying in a prison, but the wind is everywhere.” Poetry became one of the only mediums through which she could express herself and resist oppression. “Prison reinstated my voice through poetry,” she explained to me, “because it flowed even more in there.” In the interview, Walsh stated, “I write about some unfair issues. I write to change. And I write to change the form. Great writers know the form. Myself, I don’t. If people don’t accept it as poetry, it’s okay. I love Yeats, Frost, Eliot, etc., but sometimes it’s okay to say to hell with tradition. As long as we’re being listened to, that’s what’s important.” Walsh’s space embodied poetry; moreover, she started writing on the prison walls and ceiling, a forbidden activity at the time. Walsh said, “Eventually, there was barely an inch of paint in any direction that hadn’t one of [my] poems on it” (*Aiming Higher*). Both prisoners and guards read her poetry religiously, even though it was prohibited due to vandalism rules. Guards were forced to accept it as an exception for art’s sake. Republican prisoners demanded it. “I was happy because I was surrounded by my own words. I was sculpting my own space,” Walsh shared with me. Words functioned as a form of emotional and political solace for her. Her life was surrounded by writing, literally. It was all she could see. Her hope was her words. She composed many poems during that somber period, 1971-1973: “Imprisoned

Lovers,” written for Richard McAuley (Gerry Adams’ private secretary) while he also was in jail; “To My Silent Church,” written for the Catholic Church; “To Willie Whitelaw,” written after her re-internment by commissioner Felix Walley; and many others now compiled in *Aiming Higher*, a collection of poems published by Glandore Press in 1999.

Walsh managed to share her poetry with many friends outside of Armagh Jail, as well. Her friend Tomas Maire writes, “[Y]ou have a great gift for writing poetry and I was absolutely amazed at how good they were. [They] point out the state of things under british rule. Stay silent and be free, look the other way when injustices are done to other people, I’m all right Jack! Or speak out against the injustices and get jailed. I will cherish these poems for the rest of my life” (“HMP Belfast, 14/11/73”). In addition, Richard McAuley writes a glowing letter to her in which he compares her poetry to Yeats’ during his internment: “You’re right about Yeats. He certainly had a way with words however I prefer your own poems particularly those concerning our present predicament” (“Maze Prison, Cage 10, 11/9/74”). Since then, some of her poems have appeared in Melissa Thompson’s documentary: *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners*, a notable chronicle of such writing.

Walsh’s life still reflects a life-long devotion to writing. She continues to write poetry about social issues. She penned a poem “The Tunnel” for her brother, recounting her brother’s experience visiting the tunnel that connected Crumlin Road Jail to the Court House after the 1998 Peace Process. Walsh writes in her brother’s voice, “Now 40 years later/ [. . .] I can stand at the entrance/ to the tunnel that sent/ thousands to an unkind/ unforgiving place/ [. . .] but now [. . .] I can go home/ [. . .] because/ I am part of the

peace” (1; 11-20). In addition, she has new poetic pieces on Burma, Iraq, and Guantanamo, self-published by Commedagh Productions (www.commedaghproductions.com). She also is involved with the Felons’ Writing Group. Much of her current work now, however, is playwriting and short spiritual prose. From the mid-nineties on, she has written numerous political plays, such as *Ceasefire*, *Prelude to ’81*, *Screw*, and *Death of an I.R.A. Volunteer*, that address the Peace Process, the hunger strikes, prison conditions, and fallen IRA members. In 2006, she founded Commedagh Productions, an independent theatre company, designed to “give words life.” In her biographical information for Commedagh Productions, Walsh writes:

I went to writing plays, which I found to be both liberating and giving voice to that which as individuals many people find hard to express; audiences seem to relate, identify and feel that what they witness on stage: somehow connected to something they have experienced metaphysically or in their personal reality, as well as feeling entertained. That is why my plays are usually of a social or political nature.

She thinks her work is appreciated more when it is performed, for as she puts it, “How can you understand the meaning of silence on a page? It has to be visually seen to be heard” (*Aiming Higher*). Plays, for Walsh, bridge the lacunae between production and performance as well as internment and freedom. Her words are now free to move and exist outside enclosed spaces, as she now does in her life, post-internment. Her writing on revisiting Armagh Jail in 1998 underlines this sense of possibility: “I am full of hope for and confidence for the future, a future which I know the nationalist people are strong and confident enough to shape for themselves. [. . .] It is only the imagination that it capture[d] and now thankfully not the body!” (“Armagh Revisited.”) She is now at work on *Northern Rose*, a novel.

Forms of Literary Resistance: Freedom and Barriers in Ericka Huggins' *Insights & Poems* and Roseleen Walsh's *Aiming Higher*

In this section, I provide analyses of Huggins' and Walsh's political poetry. I focus on themes of love/hate, time/space, spirituality/religion, and racism/nationalism in their work. I put Huggins' "[I Wake in Middle-of-Night Terror],"⁶⁶ "A Day in Their Time," "[We Are Just]," "[Morning Drifts In]," and "Alprentice (Bunchy) Carter" in thematic and stylistic conversation with Walsh's "Imprisoned Lovers," "To Willie Whitelaw, 1974," "For Veronica," "To My Silent Church," and "On Commedagh Hill."

"[I Wake in Middle-of-Night Terror]" was written during Ericka Huggins' imprisonment in Niantic State Farm for Women in Connecticut from 1970 to 1971. It is a free-verse poem about lost love and imaginative transcendence. Huggins' poem addresses past and present nightmares for marginalized populaces. It deconstructs time and space – being in and out of prison– to highlight "outsider within" locations, in Patricia Hill Collins' words, particularly for people of color, women, and/or working-class and/or poor people.

Huggins illustrates socio-spatial confusion in the opening of her poem. She writes, "I wake in middle-of-night terror/ next to the warm sleeping body of my lover/ yet alone in the conviction that I am in a prison cell/ shut away, suddenly, from all that makes my life" (1-4). At first, these lines seem paradoxical. How could someone in prison awake next to his/her lover? For Huggins, this awakening to a lover is a dream, a fiction, owing to her own internment as well as to her husband John Huggins' assassination, almost a year before she wrote this poem. Her cell bed is cold, and she is isolated from her spaces of comfort in society while in prison. Rather, her lover's body is a

⁶⁶The brackets are used to identify Ericka Huggins' untitled poems. I use the first line.

transcendent dream; the cell is her reality. For her, prison is a living nightmare, a colossal terror. The use of the conjunction “yet,” followed by the term “alone” suggest this shift in thought from companionship to solitude. Her life is in shackles and shambles. Her polysemic usage of “conviction” demonstrates dual meanings: belief and the state of imprisonment. Imaginative power carries her epiphany to other societal subjects, as well: “free” women. In the following lines, Huggins writes, “How often do women awake/ in the prison of marriage, / of solitary motherhood, / alone and forgotten. / of exhaustion from meaningless work, / of self-despising learned early, / of advancing age / alone and forgotten” (8-15). She develops a sense of feminist solidarity here by invoking the metaphorical prisons to which the non-incarcerated can belong, including: institutionalized marriage, single motherhood, wage slavery, low self-esteem, internalized sexism, and isolation. Women hold no worth in a world with endemic discrimination. She extends imprisonment to these victims of structural inequality in paradoxically rich ways. Spatial associations abound here, as well. What seems important is the ending of the word “alone” and the phrase “alone and forgotten” of “alone. [. . .] forgotten”; thus, female prisoners are more “alone” and “forgotten” than women in society, but the prison is used as a symbol to thread similar realities for societal subjects. Huggins also does not use a question mark at the end of this rhetorical question (7-15). These lines repeat “alone and forgotten” to emphasize the forced isolation of women – who are poor, who are old, who are in unhappy marriages, who are caring for children on their own, and who lack community under capitalism. This choice suggests that the question is actually a statement. This device requires no further explanation: women are dehumanized as a

result of the interlocking nature of sexism, racism, classism, and/or heterosexism, among other sites of marginalization.

Midway into the poem, Huggins continues to indict gendered oppressions in society and prisons. She says, “And how short a step it is/ –for us–to the more obvious imprisonment/ of bars and concrete/ where our sisters lie/ alone [. . .] forgotten” (20-24). The words “short steps,” in conjunction with prison imagery, are used here to make linkages between the societal and incarcerated hypervisible. In addition, a period—a caesura—instead of a question mark further illustrates this transparency: the “bars and concrete” (also quasi-conjoined) of prison serve as metonymic representations. Many working-class/ and/or poor women of color are prisoners in white-supremacist patriarchal capitalist societies (22). Huggins replaces “women” with “sisters” to further practice the politics of racialized and gendered solidarity, drawing on a revolutionary lexicon. In the next couple of lines, Huggins invokes clothing to show linkages between women of different backgrounds, and shows how the differences do not matter: “See now, in this middle-of-the-night emptiness/ how little it matters whether we wear a convicts’ ill-made cotton dress/ or a velvet pantsuit—” (25-28). Women are stripped of their commodity identities here; thus, the naked “truth” of women’s objectification, symbolized by feminized convict uniforms and classed civilian garb, becomes indisputable both in and beyond prison. Huggins also conflates her individual voice with a larger chorus of women’s voices by using the collective “we.” Diverse communities of women now can understand structural inequality and organize collectively for liberation without the confusion of respective costumes. She writes, “We are possessions to be bought and sold,/ We are children to be curbed and patronized, / We are bodies to be coveted, seized,

and rejected/ when our breasts begin to sag, / We are dummies to be laughed at” (29-33). Women, in patriarchal capitalism, are reduced to sex work, slavery, infantilization, objectification, and buffoonery. Overlapping realities continue to surface for women, especially women of color, inhabiting both these inegalitarian worlds. Huggins leaves Black and women of color unmarked to challenge normative categories of whiteness, just as many Black writers do.

In the last section of “[I Wake in Middle-of-Night Terror],” Huggins lays out her final points lucidly and forcefully. Huggins writes, “the great weight of the society”—that is, non-incarcerated yet unfree society—is comparable to her cell or “little box of room,” where she “lie[s] in alone [. . .] forgotten/ like [her] sisters in prison” (34-37). Huggins employs “room” polysemically here; it becomes both a physical occupancy for stagnation and an intellectual possibility for change. However, it veers towards the latter, given Huggins’ repetitive predilection for the term “sisters,” a term for Black and other woman of color in solidarity. Huggins is particularly “forgotten” because she is in prison (as the continuing space between “alone [. . .] forgotten” suggests (40). The extreme distance between these words is a push to establish solidarity between women. She asks her readers that if we understand her, we should consider how prison, the metonymic “bomb of human dignity,” could just as well be planted outside of women in society’s metaphorical cells (41). If the bomb were to explode, it could “shake/ the foundations of [her] jail” and “burst open the door that separates [women in society].” Destroying prisons would be a clarion call for women to “struggle together to be free” in oppressive societies (40-45). The poem ends on a note of unity for women, especially poor and/or working class women of color, to join forces to fight against these barriers and for a

better world, not riddled with social injustice. She addresses and challenges the literal and metaphorical manifestations of street cuffs and prison cells for women across racial and class boundaries.

Like Huggins, Walsh explores themes of romantic and spiritual transcendence of the brutal realities of confinement and separation from love in the poem “Imprisoned Lovers,” written in Armagh. This auto/biographical poem was written for Richard McAuley, a prisoner in Crumlin Jail. Later, she married Martin Walsh, another prisoner in the H-Block during the hunger strike, with whom she had three children -- Aine, Maire, and Kathleen. They were married only eight weeks until prison separated them; nevertheless, they found their way out of prison and back to each other to this day. They remain together today.

Walsh’s narrative poem, composed of two nine line stanzas without metrical regularity, commences with migratory musings. She “wander[s] / With the night” and “travels” outside the prison walls with mental concentration (1; 2; 5). She imagines pleasure elsewhere: “Your place of sleep” (6). The bedroom, illustrated through synecdoche, and the capitalization of “your” confirms that she imagines meeting a person with whom she shares a bed, a person of special importance to her: her husband. Enjambment resulting from the conjunction “and” is used to combine ideas, albeit incompletely, to suggest a sense of hesitancy; such an escape, even if rooted in fantasy, would have to be quiet. The assonant words “unseen” and “sleep,” the alliterative “wander” and “with,” and consonant “with” and “night” also suggest a sense of silence (4; 6; 1-3). However, they also establish relations of invisibility and impossibility. The death of the repetitive “dream” is actualized when the capitalized “Dream” becomes a

lower-cased “dream” (8-9). They cannot dream together. The caesura, one of two in the poem, demonstrates the finality of solo stagnation. The meaning manifests in a quiet progression.

The second and last stanza uses repetitive words and analogous images. “But” indicates that change will ensue in this stanza. In addition, pessimistic conjunctions are introduced; “and” is replaced with “nor” (13). “[C]ould wander” is replaced with “can’t travel” (1; 11). Reality has colonized imagination temporarily. “I,” her sense of self, is seen when awake, whereas “myself” is not (14-16). The sense of isolation becomes concrete when the first-person use of “I” becomes unitary. “I” itself occupies an entire line to emphasize solitude and oftentimes its concomitant loneliness (15). The use of repetitive sounds in “only” and “alone” further exemplify solitary seclusion (16; 18). The couple will not meet in corporeal reality, but only in her unconscious fantasies. She is alone in the end: “Dream/ Alone our Dream” (17-18). While she cannot escape, in her dream, she will decolonize her imagination: freedom and togetherness. As in the previous stanza, her use of repetition, capitalization, and caesura combine with her diction and imagery to offer reunion in dreams. The dream has become “our” dream, though the dreamer is “alone.” The spirit transcends and finds solace.

Huggins’ poem “A Day in Their Time” explores the theme of wasted time in prison in three short stanzas. It moves from initial commentary on the social construction of time in civil society to the real implications of time in incarcerated society. The first stanza begins: “time is essentially unreal/ always bending/flowing/expanding” (1-2). Time is arbitrary, not an absolute truth; rather it is created and practiced differently in different contexts in different historical moments. Thus, for Huggins, time is fluid in

theory. It is in constant movement. She demonstrates its conceptual mobility with active, repetitive “ing” verbs: “bending,” “flowing,” and “expanding.” The back slash here lets words flow into each other, as time often does, especially when defying normative schedules and/or ignoring ubiquitous clocks. In the next stanza, time and space are conflated to “time-space,” with the hyphen chaining them together. Huggins writes, “sometimes the time-space/ thing sort of surrounds certain people” (3-4). These lines suggest suspense through alliteration; “sometimes,” “space,” “sort,” “surround,” and “certain” are virtually inseparable. “Sort” also is employed not just for colloquialism, but also for classification. This order will materialize into something specific for “certain people.” The next lines create divisions in power with regard to time and space with the binary use of “us/them” logic. “[E]ver notice how the timething/ for them is one thing,” she writes, whereas “for us, another –their seconds are/ one long day for us/ while/ our days are almost years for them” (5-10). Again, alliteration is used to convey similarities; “timething,” “thing,” and “them” are all “them.” The subjects now can be identified: “us” denotes “the oppressed,” and “them” denotes “the oppressor.” Here, for the first time, time becomes a barrier, as it often has been in the workplace for owners and workers from the Industrial Revolution to this historical moment. Time creates tension for antagonistic classes of people within oppressive systems of power. She also is talking about guards and prisoners. The “time-space groove,” Huggins affirms in the last two lines of the stanza, are “unreal” for “us” (11-12). The oppressed – “us” – resist this notion of time that wastes life.

The last stanza functions as a direct spatial challenge to time. The words do not fit on the literal page. They carry on in multitudes and with attitude. They flow onto the next

page freely and defiantly, without turning on themselves. They want to be seen in this space and where they pour onto the next page. They are enjambed yet remain spacious. Huggins writes, “because we do not/ fit/ and/ we’re/ always/ flowing/ over/ the/ edges/ of/ their groove/ spilling/ into/ others/ of/ our/ own” (13-29). The first part attempts to exist within regulated spaces, but dives off the “edge” when it cannot “fit,” as an overfilled glass leaks liquid. The substance will not surrender. The active “ing” words “flowing” and “spilling” demonstrate active continuity. Reality – in this case, timed reality – is in constant revolution, albeit natural revolution. It is free. However, “their groove” poses a static threat, which nature’s flux is unable to overcome. “They” create a barrier, “spilling into others” (24-27). This activity reaches a cessation with “our own” (23; 28-29). “They” contain “us,” spilling with liquid, presumably blood. In the next few lines, ellipses open and close the remainder of this last stanza. Huggins writes, “. . . this is like a bad, dull nightmare--/ the kind you don’t even wake up behind/ or remember/ you just think evil all day/ after having it/ . . . this/ is like that . . .”(30-34). Time, then, becomes real in “the us” imagination because of “the they” power’s enforcement of it. The words “bad,” “dull,” “nightmare,” and “evil” convey the twisted logic of this particular use of time. It is conscious and callous. It is a living nightmare, one that “you don’t even wake up behind” (31). The ellipses serve as emblems of red flags for the reality of colonization; the words are close, overlapping, stagnant, and contained. The final lines function as a mental break, a dangling transcendence, making resistance still possible and now exigent: “i can’t even believe that/ time is real for them” (35-36). The subject of “us” becomes the lower-case “i.” It is introduced to highlight the importance of community over the unitary capitalized “I.” The poem ends in a tone of

disbelief and sarcasm. Who would confine people to restrictive time/space? The fact that “time” is still portrayed as “unreal” for “the us,” even when contained by “them,” however, suggests that the “us” has refused to accept it, will fight it, and free itself again. Captive spaces – namely prisons – will not hold with the center pushing back on the page, even with its spatial limitations.

Like Huggins’ poem, “To Willie Whitelaw, 1974,” written by Walsh after she was re-interned by commissioner Felix Walley, bears witness to the importance of speaking behind prison bars against the challenge of losing time and life. In a footnote to the poem, Walsh proclaims, “[T]ime is precious, but to our British jailers that just wasn’t enough: they wanted to take everything from us[,] especially our spirits” (*Aiming Higher*). Walsh reveals that Walley had two years of experience interning Black South Africans during apartheid before coming to colonized Northern Ireland, but that she was his first Irish Catholic Republican “case” there (*Aiming Higher*). Despite his punitive decision, Walsh affirms her innocence, pointing to his racist reaction to her name, religion, and accent as evidence in itself. She states, “He said he knew I was telling lies because he could tell I was speaking in a voice that was alien (I rest my case)” (*Aiming Higher*).

This poem contains a single stanza, burgeoning with repetition that results in conceptual reversal as it builds. Its tone is confrontational, rebellious, raw, and bold. Despite the fact that it evidences epistolary elements, it is a direct address to Willie Whitelaw that demands answers. Walsh scoffs at his discriminatory intent and affirms her courageous spirit to resist imprisonment in her mind. The poem begins with a challenge: “So you think you can change me, / Rearrange me, / My beliefs - / Steal my mind/ Take my time / Lock me in this cell?” (1-6). The rhyming synonyms “change” and “rearrange”

suggest a connection, rooted in control that parallel the following “stealing” and “taking” “time” from life while in the “cell.” However, that connection does not reach fruition because the assonant sound “i” in “mind” and “time” interrupts, and then drifts off farther back into corporeal space: the “cell” (4-6). The completion is clear with the exclamation point that follows the question: “You fool!” (7). She inserts the insult “fool,” a direct address, to further split the immaterial mind from the material body a la Cartesian dualism, which she later challenges. She picks up this idea in more depth in the section. She shows that he is deluded about what institutional power can accomplish.

The next section of the poem in the same stanza offers a different angle of vision. Walsh makes hypervisible the significance of the invisible mind: “You can’t see/ I have a mind/ Strong and fine, / One, united with my flesh” (8-11). She attempts to get Whitelaw to understand that she has a mind by representing her mind and her body as a unity. The “mind” becomes a flexed muscle, embodying the core of the body, as a “strong” heart would, and works “fine.” Again, Walsh employs assonance in this case to establish the link between “mind” and “fine.” The image of the mind/ body is partitioned for illustrative purposes here. Later, however, Walsh returns to the poem’s initial assertion about the transcendence of mind over corporeal experience. She continues, “You’ll never change me, / Rearrange me, / My beliefs, / Steal my mind” (12-15). Here the mind is highlighted against the other seizures discussed earlier in the poem. The synonymous words “change” and “rearrange” as well as “beliefs” and “mind” function in a similar way this round. They establish cerebral associations in language that leads up to the clincher: “all you’ve taken/ Is my time!” (16-17). Walsh accentuates the supremacy of the stimulated mind as an entity transcending the body, rotting in the cell without activity.

The exclamation point finalizes the lost, “time,” with rhythms and emphases similar to her direct address to the oppressor, the “fool.” Walsh will remain a Republican and will free her mind to explore endless creative and political possibilities, refusing to succumb to colonial imprisonment by Unionist authorities. Both Huggins and Walsh insist that an incarcerated body has possibilities for community and intellectual freedom.

“[We Are Just],” written after Huggins’ release, is similar to “[I Wake in Middle-of-Night Terror]” in style, but mirrors “A Day in Their Time” in tone. Like her other free-verse poems, this one addresses themes of freedom and struggle against racial and colonial systems of power. It is composed of two stanzas that attribute oppositional activities to the subjective pronouns “we” and “they.” The piece commences with a general overview of the situation: “we are *just*/ and yet *they* say they have created ‘justice’” (1-2). The antagonistic relationship between “we” and “they” is made more apparent with italics. Huggins represents the former subjects as the epitome of “just,” but the latter claim a right to creation. “They” control the means of production, “Justice” is the goal of the less visible “we.” The poem proceeds by changes in part-of-speech: the adjective “just” mutates into the noun “justice.” The noun is imbued with subjective power beyond mere description. The remainder of this stanza proceeds to enumerate examples of justice and injustice.

Images of starvation, corruption, incarceration, and expiration percolate throughout the poem. “We” encompasses the victims of hunger and murder, whereas “they” enforce the power relations of corruption and deception. Huggins writes: “we suffer with the pain of hunger/ and they give us handcuffs/ instead of bread. / we believed in their constitution/ and they violate it in their courts. / we defend ourselves from attack,

/ they murder us and claim self defense. / we run from their rifles, guns, sirens -- / they shoot us and call it justifiable homicide” (3-11). This series of cases addresses the genesis of subversion, resulting from the contradictions of society that label victims as criminals and oppressors as good citizens. Huggins employs alliteration in “hunger,” “handcuffs,” and “homicide” as well as “constitution” and “court” to establish connections among forms of inequity and power. Prisons are packed with victims who committed “crimes” for survival (i.e., welfare fraud, sex work, drug dealing). The constitution disenfranchised people of color, women, and/or poor people. The court system oftentimes requires privileged positions of race, class, gender, and nation to receive a fair trial. In addition, Huggins uses synecdoche, such as “bread” for food. This usage carries a literary and historical ethos of class struggle.⁶⁷ The imagery of “rifles, guns, and sirens” links violence/ weapons and power/ authority. Huggins writes, “they have all the rights, we have none./ they try to co-opt the land in all of its beauty, / while we fill the jails, the prisons/ the internment camps” (12-15). These final lines of this stanza communicate containment. The realities of racism and internal colonialism are transparent. The racialized vestiges of Japanese interment camps and the indigenous people’s reservations haunt this historical moment.⁶⁸ Prisons are compared to concentration camps, both a locus of inhumane detainment. The contradictions of beauty and ugliness create tensions between the concept of freedom and the practice of enslavement.

The last stanza ends with a positive twist. The power of the conjunction “but,” followed by the jarring dash for hypervisibility, indicates a powerful shift. Huggins writes: “but – we have strength; / we have hope; / we have faith in the people, / who

⁶⁷ James Oppenheim’s poem “Bread and Roses” comes to mind. It honors the Lawrence women’s textile strike in the early twentieth-century).

⁶⁸ I would like to thank Ericka Huggins for pointing out these connections.

have suffered, / who have died, / who have tasted / their own blood --/ and died a million deaths” (16-24). The use of the “-ed” verbs “suffered” and “died” shows a commitment to ending—but not erasing—past injustices. She wants the cycle of institutionalized violence to end. Instead, Huggins offers strength, hope, faith, and memory as forms of resistance. This thematic decision is more productive than acceptance, cynicism, apathy, and denial, oftentimes resulting in stagnation. The repetitive use of the subject “we” affirms the collective humanity of oppressed people. The martyrs live in the people’s memories of them.

“For Veronica,” written after Walsh’s release, commemorates the lives of Rosemary McCartney and Patrick O’Neill, both victims of a more specific kind of racialized/nationalized hate crimes than Huggins in her work, though the poetics of protest are similar. At the bottom of her “shout-out” poem, Walsh informs her readers that McCartney and O’Neill were brought to a Loyalist pub, and after leaving, were shot six times in their heads on July 22, 1972, just off of Shankill Road, West Belfast, at an Ulster Defense Association (UDA)/ Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) roadblock. The poem is saturated with political and Biblical allusions, evidenced in its dual-edged title. The title draws attention to the personal realities of their deaths; Veronica was Rosemary McCartney’s sister, Walsh told me. The title reflects the political tensions of their murders, stemming from their Republican Catholic identities. In the Bible, Veronica wipes Christ’s face as he walked to his death. Walsh informed me, people threw towels over McCartney’s and O’Neill’s heads in the UDA/UFF pub to which they were escorted. This commemorative poem addresses interlocking themes of racism and colonialism.

As in many of her poems, Walsh uses circular repetition to begin and end this poem: “long shiny black hair/ that laced her [Rosemary’s] smiling face” (1-2). Walsh continues, “taking the young men’s breath away/ that recognized *poetry in motion*” (3-4). McCartney’s beauty flowed like poetry -- natural and free. The repetitive “ing” sound in “smiling” and “taking” demonstrates the energy Rosemary exudes in motion. The focus remains fixed on the face because despite its innocence, it becomes the gun’s target. In the next stanza, feminine appearance and behavior mix with regal markers to build a plea of purity. Walsh writes, “so beautiful when she sang/ and graced life’s stage/ like a princess posing on a waiting throne” (6-8). The “ing” repetition of “posing” and “waiting” suggest an active receptivity. She is a young woman waiting for her prince. While it is troubling that passive gender expression and repressive imperial symbols are used to create this character sketch, they communicate virtue in the popular imagination.

The third stanza introduces change and suspense. McCartney goes out with O’Neill: “they night out and lift home” (9). Here they remain actors who are free to roam and live. Their spirit is “carrying [the] music she created in her heart ready to recreate it” on the journey home (10-11). The suspense builds with activity, “carrying music” “at the dropping of a hat” (12). The setting then shifts to the notorious roadblock: “everything stopped with a routine roadblock as/ Ulster (**conceived with innocent blood**)⁶⁹ became the dirtiest word uttered/ by laughing men with drink in their blood/ and blood in their stare” (13-16). The capitalization of “Ulster” is the capstone to the poem. In my interview with her, Walsh explained that she employs lower-case capitalization throughout the entire poem, with the upper-cased capitalization of “Ulster” being the sole exception, to highlight the following: “Only Ulster mattered. Everything else in their lives was of a

⁶⁹ The emphasis appears in the original.

lesser importance. We (Catholics, Nationalists and/ or Republicans) meant nothing to these Loyalists. The only word that mattered was ‘Ulster’.” Politics, culture, and religion create divisions, including the division between life and death. Heterosexual men no longer drool over McCartney’s feminized beauty, but rather are passionate for a different kind of fulfillment: murder. Their gaze remains constant, unrelenting, as does the blood imagery. Blood is mentioned three times in this four-line stanza. It is a concrete foreshadowing of what the “dirtiest word” “Ulster” will do. Ulster was not “conceived with innocent blood.” The British soldiers came into Ireland via force, thereby crystallizing the irony of this phrasing. The mood is ominous; the lines are all spattered with blood. The final stanza repeats the first two lines of the poem, but they turn on themselves now, life to death. “Long shiny Black hair / that laced her smiling face” “now hung like a curtain/ hiding six bullet holes in her head” (1-2; 17-20). “Life’s stage” is over. The curtain is down. The alliterative words “hair,” “hung,” “hiding,” “holes,” and “head” emphasize the horror of her death. The blood came in the form of bullets, focused on her innocent face. For Unionists, even the living body of a lovely young girl is an object not for her admiration but for hatred and dehumanization. Both the Huggins and Walsh poems speak to how racial and colonial hierarchies lead injustice, violence, and murder.

Huggins’ poem “[Morning Drifts In]” was written in Niantic in 1971. This poem addresses the hypocrisy of institutionalized religion within prisons and the parody of women’s participation within them for survival purposes. The first sequence opens with mundane routines. Huggins writes, “Morning drifts in/ bringing pots/ teeth/ arms/ soap/ feet dragging to the bathroom. Another prison camp” (1-7). Morning, personified here as

a prison guard, functions symbolically as an alarm clock and a baton within the prison walls. Prisoners are forced into a shower routine, but go there disembodied: teeth, arms, and feet. Teeth symbolize class status, arms symbolize manual labor, and feet symbolize mobility. The prisoners' objectification is symbolized by their "dragging feet," in particular. This image is redolent of silent sabotage, an oppositional tactic used during slavery. James Scott classifies foot dragging as a "hidden transcript," an everyday form of resistance to slow down production on slave plantations. Huggins re-imagines plantations as prisons, populated by many Black women. The term "prison camp" also serves as a historical reminder of other racialized containment. Huggins wants to remind readers of plantations, provinces under Apartheid, and Nisei camps in the United States. Racial solidarity is stretched for coalitional reasons. But these women are not off to work or death, but to church. Huggins reveals the day's religious agenda: "ladies/ if you're going to church / bring your coats down with you" (7-9). They choose to resist religious indoctrination similar to missionary work. Huggins writes, "--ladies, / please come . . . 'lord Jesus/ be our guest' . . . / --ladies, come / with me, your dresses are too short/ -- ladies, girls/ children, robots, degenerates—come/ with me" (10-17). These lines, sandwiched between chiasmus, demonstrate that the prisoners are forced to attend Christian services. They are begged to follow, then ordered around, and finally insulted into submission. Huggins' use of titles (preceded by dashes for emphasis) shows the intersection of race, class, and gender marginalization. The term "ladies" suggests women's (hetero)sexuality circa Victorian era for white middle-class women (and the idea that the good little Indian girl, Black girl, or Puerto Rican girl conforms to these standards). The image of short dresses suggests feminine passivity or sexuality beyond

whiteness and wealth. She continues with “girls,” “children,” “robots,” and “degenerates.” These terms evoke gendered infantilization, ignorance, and dehumanization. These Black women and other women of color are disrespected and dehumanized; Huggins keeps the category of “woman” unmarked to challenge normative exceptions of white womanhood. The last line circles to the beginning: “morning drifts in/ bringing misery/ loneliness/ depression (18-20). This repetition emphasizes both their discrimination and their subsequent alienation, moving from the concrete detail to the generalized emotional state.

The second sequence is set in church, where these female prisoners sit inattentively. Huggins writes, “Endless music/ sound that covers/ disguises/ reality. They sit shift groan squirm/ yell scream/ moan pretend (21-23). The “music/sound” is the church songs, which create a cacophonous “cover/ disguise” for institutionalized oppression and individual resistance. The church here does not abide by its Biblical principles of love, respect, and fairness. These women have no autonomy—not even when it comes to religious/spiritual deliberations. The active verbs “sit,” “shift,” “groan,” “squirm,” “yell,” “scream,” and “pretend” all are words used to portray surly attendance. These Black and other women of color are uninterested, agitated, insolent, and defiant. They do not accept, but rather reject this reality.

In his groundbreaking work *Asylums*, Erving Goffman explores such behavior in “total institutions,” especially in prisons. He explains that prisoners oftentimes attended religious services to interact with one another outside of cells—talking to each other, playing with each other, having sex with each other, and doing drugs with each other. Participation was a performance for socialization purposes. Huggins explores misery and

loneliness in this context: “pretend/ to be/ happy. / They know they are/ not. I know they are not” (23-26). These guards are agents and come in disguise, too. They hide their intentions behind the music. Huggins continues, “Within these walls it is/ loneliness that keeps us going, / hoping for freedom—any second/minute/day” (27-32). “Loneliness,” “hope,” and “freedom” are key words for survival. Time chains the words, but the words remain in constant motion. They hope for a distraction (church) for socialization (dialogue), but yearn for freedom (home), pondering it incessantly—every second, minute, day. The last image epitomizes the severity of loneliness vividly: “in the corner a woman sits, / huddles. Maybe crying on the inside for her children, / her life” (33-36). This woman is spiritless, empty, and depressed, but she suppresses her tears to prevent further isolation. This time, while anchored in temporary relief, is a stolen moment for her; however, she cannot help but fantasize about home, family, and life.

Institutionalized religion also is a key theme in Walsh’s “To My Silent Church.” It addresses themes of silence/ speech and religion/ politics within Northern Irish Catholic Republican communities, based in West Belfast during the Troubles. Walsh’s footnote to the poem reads: “I wrote this poem out of frustration and disappointment with the Catholic Church in 1973” (*Aiming Higher*). Walsh, an ardent Irish Catholic Republican, attends mass every day, receives the Eucharist and reads in services for her chapel daily, surrounds herself with portraits of Jesus Christ and statues of the Virgin Mary, writes spiritual prose religiously, and lives her life according to principles of social good for the communities in which she navigates. For Walsh, it was deeply troubling that many Catholic priests refused to speak out against political tensions existing between Catholics and Protestants, including both violence and internment. Father Raymond Murray was a

notable exception; furthermore, he met with Republican Catholic prisoners, provided religious services for them, and wrote much literature to protest their imprisonment – not to mention that he distributed his own groundbreaking work *Armagh Goal* (Jail) before Sinn Fein’s Prison-of-War (POW) Department got involved. Walsh argues that failure to take a stand against injustice demonstrates a divide between religious theory and direct practice, not legitimated in the Bible. Using direct address, Walsh confronts the Catholic Church in this poem.

This poem contains three stanzas. The lengths of the lines vary, but do not exceed ten lines. “To My Silent Church” serves as an example of dramatic repetition. Most pronounced are the sibilant sounds in the first lines of the first two stanzas: “Silence or Cell” (1; 8). Sibilance is utilized to create an ethos of moral disgust. The historical explanation for the recurring hissing is identified in the following lines: “Divided nations conquer well/ For imitation love of peace/ Give all up to the oppressor/ Lose all, forgot those who have given all/ So You can live in your imitation home/ Made of imitation security” (2-7). British colonialism has divided Ireland into a country with twenty-six counties and six counties in Northern Ireland -- Derry, Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh, and Down. The colonial presence is ubiquitous: currency, government, language, accent, culture, religion, housing, and jobs. Colonialism has maintained its presence, indicted by the rhyming connection of conquest and internment: “cell” and “well.” The church also thrives on it. “Imitation” is repeated three times for emphasis. For example, “love of peace,” “security,” and “home” are spurious, for war is the omnipresent voice. The church is mocked and indicted for surrendering its morals and ethics to the “oppressor” – British authorities – to maintain its avaricious privileges,

abandoning mendicant and humble standards. The British government, then, will continue to be the church's institutional father and benefactor. Thus, the church upholds "imitation" morality. It has forgotten its commitment to love, respect, and equality for Republican Catholics, especially political prisoners in their fight against inequality and colonialism.

The second stanza, also beginning with "Silence or Cell," moves from informative to responsive in context. Walsh writes, "I choose cell" (9). She personifies her fate by informing us that "I did not want the cell/ It came – because/ I could not bare the Silence" (12-14). The cell creeps towards her and encloses her for taking up too much air. She speaks out, albeit with admonition. The chain between the prison and the cell is the trope of synecdoche. "My words were quiet/ But I was not silent" (10-11). The assonant sounds in "quiet," "I," and "silent" demonstrate her subtle refusal to restrain her words. "Silence," like "peace," "security," and "home," "was imitation" (15). For Walsh, silence is "not truth" – a bloody lie – and "incomprehensible" (16-17). Silence cannot be understood. Voice is the sole meaning. That which is not true and unjust, therefore, must be outed as deception and abomination. It leads to death and destruction, a repugnant morality.

The last stanza is anchored in Biblical allusion. It begins: "Christ died because he could/ Not stand the Silence" (18-19). Christ is the symbol of authentic Christianity, which the Church has abandoned. These subjects become disjunctive entities, however, in the following line. Walsh writes, "Because of your Silence" (20). This line is a colossal finger-wagging at historical examples of unfairness endorsed by the Church -- Christ's death, the Crusades, the Troubles, and everything in between and beyond. Religion, in its

various sects, is not the sole medium in which morality must be practiced; nevertheless, it serves as an institutional example that purports to uphold exemplary morality. For that reason, the Catholic Church's bloody hands make the abuse particularly problematic. Walsh, one of countless Republican Catholics, becomes targeted for her humanitarian work. "I am condemned/ To be without freedom, / I am therefore dead!" (21-23). Walsh establishes connections between Christ and herself here. The repetitive past tense in "Christ died" and "I am condemned," along with the alliterative "Christ died" and "I am therefore dead," make this link apparent. The loudness of silence is evident all eight times it is used; however, at the end it becomes piercing in its inaudible volume. Walsh demands, "Speak! Talk now/ Silent ones" (24-25). The address changes from the Church to those who have resisted a fake morality. Silence causes death. The poem ends with a clarion call for resurrection. The dead will become martyrs. The church must vocalize itself, Walsh commands. The word is out and is definitive, just like the period that seals the poem. The hypocrisy of institutionalized religion and its connections to racialized/ gendered colonial oppression, on which Huggins also reflects, will reach a cessation.

Huggins' "Alprentice (Bunchy) Carter" is a "shout-out" poem to fallen Panthers Bunchy Carter and John Huggins. As noted earlier in this chapter, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins were killed after a political tirade during a Black Student Union meeting on the UCLA campus on January 17, 1969, by two members of Ron Karenga's Us, another organization with vast political differences from the Panthers. However, Ward Churchill's COINTELPRO work documents much governmental support for their assassination as a deliberate strategy to create divisions between the organizations, already at enmity from vying for campus recruits. Ericka Huggins wrote this poem in June of 1969, just months

after her friend's and husband's murders and her own arrest. It bears witness to their personal integrity and social commitment to a better world. The poem is divided into three stanzas that are linked by water imagery.

The first stanza begins on a note of tranquility. Huggins writes, "it is a moment after rain/ and there is a sound of silence/ everywhere" (1-3). Transience and universality convey suspense during this calm, soothing moment. The oxymoronic "sound of silence" comes and goes. The silence is soon shattered with another downpour: urine, not rain. Carter is identified as the source of disturbance: "i know it is you, bunchy, taking/ one of your eternal champale / pisses . . ." (4-6). These lines are important not only for identification, but also for their attention to race; Champale, a quasi-hybrid beer/wine, was one of the first drinks marketed to Black people in the United States. Carter, now identified as Black, voices racial disharmony through embodiment. The ellipses drip with his urine, hot like the sizzling" "s" in "piss." It seems innocuous and natural, yet it disrupts the nature invoked in the opening line. Unease continues, "there is a natural disorder/ of things here. Hard to/ explain. but i know you/ understand what we feel . . ." (7-10). A sense of confusion exists with this "natural disorder," revealed as "eternal" loss. Carter's presence and sound are gone. The silence is not natural. As a writer aware of language's limitations, Huggins gravitates towards sensation. She notes, "if i could stand in your rain/ and if by some magic/ each/ drop contained the solutions/ to this unsoluble, untimely/ fiendish problem I would/ breathe again" (11-16). Carter's urine becomes rain, his essence becomes nature, and his politic becomes action. By standing under his innocence/ martyrdom/ urine, she is cleansed. His body excretions will cleanse her of the real and destructive dirt of prison. She uses this ironic and disturbing image to

grant Carter, the world, and herself rebirth. The symbolic merger of “unsoluble” and “solutions” produces breath, again.

The second stanza is short, but expounds on the symbolic use of water imagery. Huggins writes, “it is wet and shiny and/ clammy out there but yet/ beautiful as it always is/ after nature reminds the/ earth of her presence” (17-21). She describes the world’s climate in unattractive ways, yet affirms its attraction by re-envisioning an alternative one. The cool rain carries relief from arid surfaces. Another rain is nigh. Nature and the earth are gendered and personified to accentuate life over death as well as memory over forgetfulness. Change is still on the horizon, even with Carter’s death.

The last stanza completes the cycle of water sequences. Huggins writes, “it is strange/ but before your ‘piss’ i/ wanted to cry and the rains/ came as a release and I made/ my tears the rain and i made/ my screaming mind the thunder/ and I felt quieted” (22-28). Carter’s “piss,” enclosed by quotes, highlights specificity and the art of writing. Huggins cries because of his specific absence. To demonstrate the enormity of her loss, Huggins also uses pathetic fallacy. She merges urine, tears, and raindrops to re-create her individual mind in the collective environment. In this sense, water symbolizes both emotional and natural change. A part of Huggins herself has died with Carter, so she uses water to grow and be born again. Her “release” “quieted” her “screaming mind[,] the thunder.” A sense of tranquility returns after the storm passes. The next lines establish a connection between Bunchy Carter’s and John Huggins’ deaths, and invoke Fanon’s legacy. She writes, “our jon must be somewhere near/ and I know tho he did not speak to me/ with the rain—he is with you—he is/ with us the disenchanting/ the wretched of the

earth/ the tired/ the holders of the pearl” (29-35). Nature’s silence brings meaning that transcends the auditory.

In her interview with Fiona Thompson, Ericka Huggins noted the following: “John became Captain of the chapter of the Party and that meant that he was an assistant to the Deputy Minister of Defense, who was Alprentice Carter. [. . .] Bunchy mentored John, but I think that they worked on an equal footing. [. . .] John and Bunchy became friends almost immediately, because there’s something so maverick and fearless about John that Bunchy really liked it. And Bunchy loved me. He always looked out for me.” This personal and political relationship underlies Huggins’ need to include John Huggins in this poem, too. While Huggins wrote other poems about her ex-husband, she also puts two men in each other’s company in this poem to represent friendship and solidarity. They are neither forgotten, nor alone. Moreover, Huggins extends the solidarity to include other oppressed people, invoking them for example through reference to Franz Fanon’s classic work *Wretched of the Earth*. Their martyrdom reaches numerous audiences of struggle beyond her, evidenced through the use of the ellipse at the end. The poem ends on a joyful note: “. . . and i sang into the wetness ominously falling—we miss you” (36-37). Huggins continues to celebrate their lives through her memory of them. In this way, she keeps them and hope alive in an ominous world removed from nature’s beauty.

Like Huggins’ “Alprentice (Bunchy) Carter,” Walsh’s “On Commedagh Hill” is an extended “shout-out” poem, crafted in free verse. Walsh’s poem contains five short, centered stanzas. It begins with a Wordsworthian vision of childhood innocence in nature. On the “grassy bank/ known Commedagh hill,” kids like Kieran played “boyhood games” (1-3). The location of Commedagh hill is an allusion to where Kiernan Doherty’s tombstone lies, resulting from his Republican activities, which are confirmed as the poem

builds. “Boyhood games” evokes an innocuous ethos, but a gendered one. Connections between “boyhood,” “masculinity,” and colonial power erupt in the next line, however: “Cowboys, Indians, calvary charge, soldier and good cop” (4). This alliterative line suggests a linkage of the patriarchal and colonial. Lines six through nine further solidify this association: they “jump to the sky,” reiterating ‘good cops always win, cowboys never die’” (6-9). The speaker, however, affirms that “[h]appy children” dally “where the buttercups and daisies grew, that it was “kind and wonderful up on Commedagh high!”(5; 10). This stanza ends on a shared note of denial, disbelief, and suspense, evidenced by the rhyming of “sky,” “die,” and “high” (8-10). Childhood is a symbol for youthful innocence and naturalistic peace.

The next stanza transitions from childhood to adolescence. Actions like “jumping to the sky” transform into “ballroom dancing.” “Alfie and Margaret’s romance and marriage” seal “a family’s love and closeness worn like a sparkling eternity ring!” (12-16). Love and marriage are coterminous in these lines. They are connected with metonymic marriage and joyful rhymes: “bring,” “ring,” and “sing” (14-16). Despite problematic hetero-patriarchal control, they still evoke love, not hate, in their actions. Love is active and real. The next stanza disrupts this narrative, however. “Lights shone bright at night” signifies an unnatural yet relational change, established by using internal rhyme. The remainder of this stanza also characterizes impending change. References to movement (i.e., “moving eyes”), imprisonment (i.e., “some day his prison cell”), disappearance (“no lilies”), degradation (i.e., “C.S. gas pollutes the air”), and death (i.e., brave men’s blood would spill”) link this change to colonialism (20-25). This stanza ends with a confirmation of innocence lost to colonial brutality: “British soldiers came in

tanks, destroying far and near; how we wished that all our yesterdays could once again be here” (25-26). Now, the playful rhyming is somber in tone. The impending change is now imminent carnage. War becomes fused with hate, the polarization of marriage and love.

The last two short stanzas of Walsh’s poem address themes of resistance and remembrance. The first line reads: “Stolen moments in the middle of [the] night” (27). Nighttime, no longer for romance, has become a prime time for clandestine revolutionary activity (27). Walsh gives specific “shout-outs” to liberation fighters Kiernan Doherty, Sean McDermott, and Mairéad Farrell, the use of their first names confirming their iconic status and Walsh’s closeness to their stories. Walsh’s epigraph, provided on her online publication of the poem, identifies their revolutionary actions. Doherty was involved in the Belfast IRA, imprisoned for eighteen years for firearms and explosives possession; he died in the Long Kesh prison while on hunger strike after seventy-three days on August 2, 1981.⁷⁰ McDermott was another Irish revolutionary, involved in IRA and Sinn Féin (Walsh). He was shot during the Conway Hotel bombing, for which Farrell was arrested. In an attempt to kill security forces in 1976, Farrell bombed the Conway Hotel with Sean McDermott and Kieran Doherty.⁷¹ She was arrested and served fourteen years in Armagh Jail, during which time she instigated the “no-wash,” “Dirty Protest,” went on hunger strike, and fought against strip-searching.⁷² After her release, along with Sean Savage and Daniel McCann, she was shot eight times by SAS soldiers preventing a bombing in Gibraltar (Williams).⁷³ Numerous murals in the Six Counties commemorate these

⁷⁰ This information is well-known in Northern Ireland, but can be retrieved from his tombstone, located on Commedagh Drive.

⁷¹ Walsh’s play *Death to an I.R.A. Volunteer* also commemorates their lives, particularly Sean McDermott’s life.

⁷² This information is widely publicized, but can be found on her tombstone in Milltown Cemetery, just off of Falls Road. The cemetery is noted for the massacre that occurred during the Gibraltar 3’s own funeral.

⁷³ I will provide an extensive biography of Mairead Farrell in the chapter on Mairead Farrell’s and Safiya

revolutionaries. For these “brave comrades,” “death held for them no fear!” (28-32). The poem ends by commemorating Doherty’s life as “the boy, the man, the friend, the teammate, the warrior/ our own Cuchulain and more” (33-34). This narrative poem maintains Kiernan Doherty’s innocence, even after maturity, and preserves his memory, just as Ericka Huggins does for Bunchy Carter and John Huggins. For both of these writers, the past informs the present’s focus on the future.

Conclusion

Erika Huggins’ and Roseleen Walsh’s revolutionary auto/biographical poetry is an exemplary form of resistance literature that uses culture as a key site of creative power for these ex-political prisoners. Literary critic Lisa Lowe argues that “contradictions critically politicized in cultural forms and practices [must] be utilized in the formation of alternative social practices” (172). Revolutionary auto/biographical poetry can be an important site of re-imagi(nation) of power and resistance to power. This literary work is a form of both individual agency and collective struggle that eloquently challenges barriers to freedom, especially prison bars.

Chapter 5: “Our Only Weapon Was Our Pen”: Dehumanization & Resistance in the Politics and Prose of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell

Introduction

In 1925, while in Attica prison, Marcus Garvey writes: “Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God’s grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.” This passage is the epigraph of *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21*, in which the prose of Afeni Shakur-Davis⁷⁴ and Joan Bird, the only two women contributors to the Panther 21 “collective autobiography,” is featured. In addition, the title of this “collective autobiography,” as the contributors call it, is derived from this passage, as well. Indeed, this passage is significant. However, the mainstream narrative on Garvey situates his work within the “Back to Africa” campaigns, ignoring his international ties to Ireland or finding them incongruous based on assumptions about Irish “whiteness.” Brian Dooley, Bill Rolston, and Michael Shannon reveal Ireland’s influential hold on Garvey’s activism in the Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey named the UNIA headquarters in Jamaica “Liberty Hall” to honor James Connolly’s legacy in the Dublin-based Irish Citizen Army in the early twentieth-century (Rolston and Shannon 46-47). Garvey also dubbed Éamon De Valera “the President of the Ireland Republic” in August of 1920, just after the Easter Rising of 1916, and sent him a telegram to offer the “sympathy of Negroes of the world for your cause. [. . .] for a free Ireland” (quoted in Dooley 21). In addition, Garvey lived in

⁷⁴ Afeni Shakur married Lumumba Shakur. Later, she re-married and changed her name to Shakur-Davis. I use her current name in this study, but citations from her publications are noted as “Shakur.”

Ireland for two years, provided arms to the Republican cause, and even shared the African flag with Irish people. Garvey told journalist Charles Mowbray that “[t]he Red showed their sympathy with the ‘Reds’ of the world, and the Green their sympathy for the Irish in their fight for freedom, and the Black – The Negro” (qtd. in Dooley 21). These connections between Black American and Northern Irish radicals persisted into the 1960s and 1970s. While Garvey’s historical legacy is immeasurable, it is also exemplary of masculinist narratives of the anti-colonial Civil Rights Movement. Women’s participation in this movement gets obscured, and their contributions need to be recognized.

Comparative connections between the Black American and Northern Irish revolutionary women writers are aplenty, even though little historical scholarship charts these direct and indirect associations. Like many Black Power/ Liberation activists, such as Angela Y. Davis and Ericka Huggins, Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, and the Panther leadership received untiring international support from activists in colonized zones, particularly from the Six Counties of Ireland. Moreover, Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, People’s Democracy, and the National H-Blocks/ Armagh Committee, in which Bernadette Devlin McAliskey were involved are notable examples of Northern Irish solidarity; McAliskey (known as Devlin at the time) gave the mayoral keys to the Panthers during her visit to the United States (Dooley), which the Panther leadership accepted. In addition, Bukhari received much international support, especially from the Six Counties of Ireland, as cofounder of the Jericho Movement. While the National Jericho Movement at first was focused on addressing the plight of Black political prisoners in the United States, the organization later branched out to include not only Native-American, Latino, and other Indigenous political prisoners in the

United States, but also international political prisoners. The Irish Freedom Committee and Sinn Féin still maintain connections with Jericho, recently under the leadership of Bukhari's ex-husband Ashanti Alston and Kazi Toure (<http://www.thejerichomovement.com>). Recently, Alston also traveled to Dublin and Belfast for its Anarchist Book Fair in March of 2009 to establish Irish support for his new organization Anarchist People of Color (APOC) ("Former Black Panther Ashanti Alston in Ireland"). In addition, Ella O'Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell all were imprisoned prematurely for long sentences during the Troubles, and Farrell was assassinated in Spain shortly after her prison time. However, in a recent interview I conducted with O'Dwyer, she said, "I did not have any direct connections with the United States for that reason [prison]. Later, I was not permitted to travel to the United States and/or Canada. But I always was very interested in South Africa and anti-apartheid/ anti-racist protest politics." Anderson conveyed a similar message of transatlantic solidarity in the interview I had with her: "I was put in prison very, very young. It limited my connections there. I, nonetheless, always opened my heart for the civil rights activists there. We all did." However, as the Human Rights and Equality spokesperson for Sinn Féin, Anderson has worked with many activists in the United States since her release. In this interview, Anderson further commented: "I've worked with a lot of people in the United States on a range of events. For example, I was in New York last St. Patrick's Day. I have met with state and city controllers, seeking investment for Derry travel. I attended a lecture that Gerry Adams gave at Boston University, and afterwards, succeeded in getting its President to Derry on two occasions. I have been working to get more contributors to uphold the peace process, ensuring that areas that

have been neglected in the past are not left behind during the peace times.” Numerous historical layers cover these leaders/ writers’ lives and work across the Atlantic, and should be revealed. Accurate representations of their contributions to these movements are necessary for full understanding of the histories and cultures of both movements.

Much scholarship has examined the lives of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell through a non-comparative historical and/or ethnographic lens. In the United States, Black revolutionary women writers Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, and Safiya Bukhari, however, fare much worse than Northern Irish revolutionary women writers in this area. Jasmine Guy’s extensive interviews with Afeni Shakur-Davis remain the only auto/biographical work on her, though much of Tupac Shakur’s music pays homage to his mother’s life. Other than news coverage, little has been done at all on Afeni Shakur-Davis’ and Joan Bird’s contributions to the “collective autobiography” of the New York 21 as the only two women imprisoned. Besides interviews by Workers World activist Imani Henry and organization Arm the Spirit as well as some cursory remarks by Angela Y. Davis and Laura Whitehorn in the forward and introduction of Whitehorn’s new anthology of Safiya Bukhari’s work, *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Panther, Keeping Faith in Prison & Fighting for Those Left Behind*, little exists on Bukhari, either. No literary criticism is available on the work of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, or Safiya Bukhari.

Unlike the aforementioned Black revolutionary women writers in the United States, Northern Irish revolutionary women writers have received more critical attention. Recently, Lachlan Whalen published an anthology of contemporary Republican prison

writings, including a chapter on women in Armagh, Maghaberry, and Durham. His work contains some brief historical reflections on Martina Anderson's and Ella O'Dwyer's activist work. Melissa Thompson's groundbreaking documentary *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners* compiles interviews with and letters from many Irish Republican women released after the Good Friday Agreement, including Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson. Barbara Harlow also cites a short excerpt from one of Ella O'Dwyer's letters in *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention*. In addition, Ella O'Dwyer's own scholarly work *Rising of the Moon: The Language of Power* explores important connections between power and control in Northern Irish literature.

The historical and ethnographic work done on Irish Republican Army martyred icon Mairéad Farrell is extensive. Farrell's work has been included in numerous anthologies as well as shorter biographies--not to mention on street murals and in rebel songs throughout the Six Counties. Marian Broderick's recent anthology of more than seventy "wild Irish women" provides a short biographical sketch of Farrell's life. Laura Lyons explores Farrell's life in relation to the discourse of "Mother Ireland." Republican women inverted this traditional paradigm of feminized land and domestic servitude through their political commitments. Nell McCafferty, Barbara Harlow, and Sharon Pickering have discussed Farrell's interviews that document prison conditions for Republican women. Harlow also has done some work on Farrell's assassination. In addition, Nicholas Eckert's, Hiliary Kitchin's, and Maxine Williams' works offer an in-depth study of the circumstances surrounding Farrell's assassination by the British Special Air Service (SAS) in Gibraltar, along with with Daniel McCann and Sean Savage. The SAS argues the assassinations were retribution for an undocumented IRA bomb plot,

but evidence I will discuss later in this chapter suggests otherwise. Lastly, Scott Graham has written two anecdotal pieces on his personal involvement with her, *Violent Delights* and *Shoot to Kill*. However, no close readings have been published on the literary work of Ella O'Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell.

In this chapter, I first provide auto/biographical background on the personal, political, and creative lives of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O'Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell. I include information from secondary sources, personal interviews, and news/ letter archives. Second, I turn to a close reading of their revolutionary auto/biographical writing, toggling formalist and materialist criticism. All of these activists' writings were composed in prison with numerous material restrictions, except for Bukhari's work. I focus on Afeni Shakur-Davis' and Joan Bird's sketches and essays in *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21*, and Ella O'Dwyer's, Martina Anderson's, and Mairéad Farrell's prison letters, petitions, and files. In addition, I also examine *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison, and Fighting for Those Left Behind*, an anthology of Safiya Bukhari's prose work (letters, essays, and statements), edited by ex-Weather member Laura Whitehorn. I explore both individual voices and comparative choruses in an attempt to reposition their shorter prose pieces as important examples of Black American and Northern Irish women's revolutionary auto/biographical writing. I discuss common thematic similarities of psychological, physical, and sexual violence as well as assertion of agency and the need for collective struggle. In addition, I explore comparable literary styles in their writing. Many of these writers wrote as a historical corrective, as a coalitional tactic, and as a collective voice.

These writers use the subjective pronouns “we” and “they” frequently in their epistolary work to honor the community. They decenter their identities by doling out “thank you’s” and “apologies” as opposed to issuing self-reports and “SOS” pleas. They also provide numerous “shout-outs.” I am interested in mapping out the rhetorical hallmarks of a gendered and racialized twentieth-century revolutionary prose style as it appears in their work. I address such points of overlap and departure to explore the connections between their politics and their style. Overall, I explore the thematic, stylistic, and comparative overlaps in their prose.

Auto/biographical Overviews of Resistance: Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell

Afeni Shakur-Davis & Joan Bird

Afeni Shakur-Davis, a well-known activist, writer, music distributor, and philanthropist, was born on January 10, 1947 in Lumberton, North Carolina, but had a nomadic childhood, constantly moving back and forth between Lumberton, North Carolina and Norfolk, Virginia due to financial problems in the family (Shakur, *Whirlwind* 13). Impoverished conditions of inadequate lodging and healthcare plagued her youth (Shakur, *Whirlwind* 13). Racial tension also was a recurring problem for her. Shakur elaborates on “race consciousness” as follows:

I’ve been what you might call ‘race conscious’ for a long time. [. . .] [I] used to be walking down the North Carolina street and white people would drive down the highway or the road and then we would become a bunch of motherfuckers. [. . .] The KKK [. . .] put a curfew on the whole black community” [M]y grandmother [. . .] married this dude who was half-Indian and half-white. When they got married, they disowned him, but not only did they disown him, they tried him to a wagon and just dragged him

all the way through town. It was all over you, it was all around you. [. . .]
I called it hate and that's what it was. (*Whirlwind* 49)

She joined the gang Disciplines for protection. Later, economic and racial inequality followed her to New York. Shakur reveals, "I thought I was coming to the land of milk and honey. [. . .] everything in the world was better up the road. Food was better, everything was better. White people didn't call you a bunch of motherfuckers up the road. [. . .] And when I got up the road I was disgusted" (Shakur, *Whirlwind* 62). She punched her way through Benjamin Franklin Junior High School in Harlem, enrolled in honors courses in journalism at the Performing Arts, and then dropped out due to economic hardships (Johnson, "Joan Bird"). Shakur joined the Black Panther Party because it "answered the needs of the people in [her] community" (qtd. in Guy 64). In Shakur-Davis' words, "[It] took my rage and channeled it [. . .] They educated my mind and gave me direction" (qtd. in Guy 60-61). Her recent activism has been cultural. After her son Tupac Shakur was murdered in a drive-by shooting, she created Amaru Entertainment and the Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation (TASF) to establish copyrights and honor his hip hop legacy (www.tasf.org). TASF offers a range of creative services to novice artists and musicians, such as "creative writing, vocal technique, acting, stage set design, dance, poetry & spoken word" (www.tasf.org).

Shakur-Davis joined the Black Panther Party in 1967. She was moved by Bobby Seale's words. Shakur-Davis remembers:

I was walking down 125th Street and got to Seventh Avenue and saw the same old crowd. [. . .] Marcus Garvey, Malcolm, Kenyatta, all of them have used that corner as a meeting hall. [. . .] What impressed me at that time was a line that said a policeman [sic] had put his hand on one brother's gun and he said, 'Am I under arrest?' 'No.' 'Then take your hands off my motherfucking gun. I have a constitutional right to have this

gun.' I mean in 1967 that in itself was enough to blow anybody's mind. (qtd. in Guy 288).

She also was encouraged by Eldridge Cleaver's dares. Shakur-Davis continues, "Eldridge dared people. [H]e just said I dare you to go to the political education class tomorrow, PE, and join the Black Panther Party and I went. And I just never left" (qtd. in Guy 290). Shakur-Davis worked on the Free Breakfast Program (Guy 79). Created in 1968, this program fed malnourished and/or starving inner-city children (and, in some cases, their parents), and educated them on the importance of eradicating systemic discrimination through education. In addition, she collected bail money for imprisoned Panthers, sold newspapers, and worked in schools (Guy 80). Shakur explains her commitment to the Panthers as follows: "I believed in those programs. [. . .] I believe it is the responsibility of every individual in a community to take back our schools, take back our minds, take back our bodies and nurture our children. That is our job, then and now" (qtd. in Guy 64).

Unlike Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird has never been a "celebrity" activist, yet her role in the Black Power/ Liberation movement was significant. She was born on March 9, 1949, and was raised in Harlem, which she refers to as "the black colony" and "the ghetto" (Bird, *Whirlwind* 102-103). She was raised by working-class parents who moved from Jamaica to the United States two years before Bird was born; her mother was a domestic worker for white families and her father a self-employed carpenter (Bird, *Whirlwind* 103). She went to Resurrection, a parochial elementary school, then Cathedral High School for Girls, and later the Bronx Community College in 1967 ("Joan Bird's Statement"). Surrounded by abject poverty, Bird pursued nursing in college "to help [her] people"; she also joined the Future Nurses Club ("Joan Bird's Statement"). Later, she realized that "this [career] was not enough" ("Joan Bird's Statement"). She said, "I

needed and wanted to be fully aware of myself and the changing world around – a searching for my people’s true identity and their true roles in society” (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). She joined the Black Panther Party for this reason.

Bird joined the Black Panther Party in the summer of 1968. Her reason for joining the BPP was police brutality. Bird reveals, “I first heard and read about the Black Panther Party [. . .] right after the incident in Brooklyn court when 200 New York City policemen [sic] violently attacked members of the Black Panther Party. Having lived in Harlem all my life, I was aware of bad cops and police brutality, but this was more than I had ever dreamed of. [. . .] I went to the [BPP] office on Seventh Avenue and met a few of the brothers” (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). She commenced her work with the BPP as an educational assistant, based at P.S. 175, and started the Free Breakfast Program there (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). In addition, she raised funds for the Panthers by organizing fashion shows and Christmas parties for poor Black children (Johnson). She juggled student and activist duties deftly. Bird said, “I was never tired, because doing everything possible to help my people gave me energy to go on” (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). Less than a year later, she was arrested as part of the New York 21.

Shakur-Davis and Bird, two women of the New York 21, were arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit murder, attempted murder, and felonious assault in early 1969 (Kaplan, “Bomb Plot is Laid to 21 Panthers”). *New York Times* writer Morris Kaplan notes that these “Black extremists” and “militant Negroes” were indicted on February 7 for an alleged “terror campaign” to dynamite a police station, a commuter railroad, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and department stores, including Macy’s, Alexander’s, and Abercrombie and Fitch during Easter shopping season (“Panther and Chicago 7 Trials”).

If convicted, each individual would have received thirty counts of conspiracy, totaling three hundred and fifty-six years in prison (Guy 96). “Free the New York Panther 21,” published in *The Black Panther*, points out that this criminal investigation of “a bomb plot for 15,000 tulips” is one of sixty conducted within a ten-month period against the Panther members, all of whom were acquitted. *New York Times* reporter Edith Evans Asbury writes, “[T]he defendants are really being tried for their political beliefs. [. . .] [T]he indictments were a result of a police frame-up” (“16 Black Panthers Go on Trial”). Much resistance carried into the courtroom. “Heckling” commenced the trial, owing to Judge John M. Murtagh’s refusal to admit family members (Evans Asbury, “Panthers Disrupt Proceedings”). 665 outbursts, 55 per day, occurred during the trial, totaling one interruption per every two pages of transcript (Evan Asbury, “Brief Defends Murtagh on Panthers”). By the end of March 1970 until early April 1970, Murtagh halted the trial for this reason (Evans Asbury “Panther Posts Bail” and “Hearings Close”). Sit-ins organized by the December 4 Movement occurred at Columbia. Students shut down a business building, arguing that the university should pay reparations to the Panthers (Montgomery, “4 Seized”). Five Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches compiled funds to release Afeni Shakur-Davis on \$100,000 bail (“Churches Provide \$100,000 Bail Here for Black Panther”). Dr. Robert P. Johnson of the Presbytery of New York City said, “[I]t was prejudicial to their rights to hold them in jail for 10 months before their trial” (“Churches Provide \$100,000 Bail Here for Black Panther”). Later, however, Murtagh demanded Shakur-Davis’ return to jail due to tardiness in court, which Shakur-Davis attributed to her “mother’s life in danger” (Evans Asbury, “Woman Panther Returned to Jail”). Five days later, Murtagh said he would release her with written documentation--and if she

“acted like a lady” in court (Evans Asbury, “Bail Reinstated for Mrs. Shakur”). With the help of *The Black Panther* ad “Who Is Joan Bird?” (“Raising Bail for the Panthers”), Shirley Chisholm’s political fame, and funds from a range of sources--the Women’s Committee to Free Joan Bird, the Women’s Union, Resurrection, the Good Shepherds Faith Presbyterian Church (Johnson, “Mrs. Chisholm Joins Campaign”), and Bird’s parents and friends--Bird also was released on bail on July 7, 1970 (“Joan Bird Freed on \$100,000 Bail”). However, when fellow Panther 21 members Richard Moore and Michael Tabor eloped to Algeria, Shakur-Davis and Bird were sent back to the Women’s House of Detention (Evans Asbury, “Suit Is Planned on Police Spies”). Assata Shakur’s aunt Evelyn Williams filed a failed habeas corpus action to free them (Evans Asbury, “Suit Is Planned on Police Spies”). The New York 21 defendants eventually were acquitted on May 14, 1971, though Shakur-Davis was released ten days before it for prenatal reasons (Evans Asbury, “13 Panthers Found Not Guilty” and “Defense Rests in Panther Trial”). This trial was the longest trial in the state’s history at the time (Guy 115).

Safiya Bukhari

Safiya Bukhari was a grassroots organizer and social worker. Her legacy in Black Power/ Liberation struggles is well-preserved within revolutionary circles, yet her work is not represented in mainstream narratives; rather it remains unrecognized, unacknowledged labor. Born in 1950, she was raised in a Christian, middle-class family of ten children, moving nomadically between urban industrialization in New York and rural agriculture in South Carolina (Bukhari 1). According to Bukhari, her mother provided untiring strength and inspiring leadership (“Arm the Spirit”). Her familial

environment was “strict and religious, but proud and independent,” and encouraged education as a means to attaining social uplift a la Booker T. Washington. (Bukhari 2). However, when she attended Brooklyn’s New York City Community College as a pre-med student, Bukhari adopted a divergent worldview. Bukhari writes, “We believed that with the right education we could ‘make it,’ so that is the route we took searching to the ‘American Dream.’ I was going to be a doctor. In my second year of college, I pledged a sorority; it was here that the rose-colored glasses were cracked and rays of reality were allowed to filter in” (2). Confronted with rampant police brutality in her sorority work, Bukhari joined the Black Power/ Liberation movement. Her political affiliations included the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, the Republic of New Afrika, the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, and the Jericho Movement, the latter of which is an organization whose mission is to “gain recognition of the fact that political prisoners and prisoners of war exist inside of the United States despite the United States’ government’s continued denial” of them and “win amnesty and freedom for these political prisoners” (National Jericho Movement). Bukhari was arrested and imprisoned for nine years on charges related to her activities in the Black Liberation Army. In prison, Bukhari co-founded Mothers Inside Loving Kids (MILK), an organization devoted to parental rights behind bars (“Arm the Spirit”). When released, she became a social worker for the Legal Aid Society and an active mother to her daughter Wonda Jones. In 2003, at age fifty-three, Bukhari died of “pulmonary embolism as a result of hypertension” (Whitehorn xxxvi).

Bukhari joined the Black Panther Party's ranks in November 1969 (Henry).

Bukhari says, "I tell people straight up that it was the New York Police Department that made me decide to join the Black Panther Party" (qtd. in Henry). Bukhari's sorority obligations required community service around activities related to feeding hungry children. The sorority collaborated with the Panther Free Breakfast for Children Program (Bukhari 3). Bukhari remembers:

At five a.m. every morning, my daughter and I would get ready and go to the center where I was working on the breakfast program. It entailed cooking and serving breakfast, sometimes talking to the children about problems they were encountering, or helping them with their homework. Everything was going along smoothly until the number of children coming began to fall off. Finally, I began to question the children and found that the police had been telling the parents in the neighborhood not to send their children to the program because we were 'feeding them poisoned food.' (3)

At first a "reluctant revolutionary," Bukhari responded by attending Black Panther political education (PE) classes (88). Shortly thereafter, Bukhari was arrested for arguing with a police officer about constitutional rights violations. "Without a thought, I told the police that the brother had a constitutional right to disseminate political literature anywhere," Bukhari says, "at which point the police asked for my identification and arrested the sister and myself, along with the brother who was selling the papers" (4). Both confrontations with the police propelled Bukhari into a deeper engagement with the Panthers. In addition to the breakfast program, Bukhari belonged to the medical cadre (i.e., welfare rights and sickle-cell anemia advocate), and the liberation school (i.e., political educator). Then in 1971, Bukhari was promoted to the communications and information of the East Coast faction (6). She opened the office, made assignments,

issued statements/ press releases, and edited *Right On! Black Community News Service*, along with Bobby Seale's work and BPP/BLA poetry (24; 131).

The FBI's counterintelligence program's hand in assassinations, imprisonments, and letter-writing campaigns created political tension and destroyed subversive activity, resulting in the Panther split in 1971, which I discuss in my introduction. At this point, although she never left the BPP, Bukhari shifted her political commitments. Her primary work post-Panther split was with the Republic for New Afrika and the Black Liberation Army. Bukhari was the Vice President of the Provisional Government-RNA, an organization devoted "to organiz[ing] the [New Afrikan] people of the nation for success in their struggle for independence and sovereignty over th[e] land mass," known as Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina ("PG-RNA Declaration"). In November 1973, Bukhari also was unit coordinator of the Harriet Tubman Brigade and Amistad Collective (Area 2) of the Black Liberation Army ("Arm the Spirit"). Her role was to compile a list of incarcerated BLA members and establish support for their release. On December 27, 1973, she was arrested with Neil O. Thompson, Harold Simmons, and Ashanti Alston (formerly Michael Maurice Alston) for attempting to free six members of the BLA from the Manhattan House of Detention for Men, also known as Tombs (Montgomery, "4 Seized"). Though "manacled together to a long chain" reminiscent of slavery practices, they were released immediately, for as Bukhari puts it, "[t]he only thing they could charge us with was third degree burglary on a sewer, which was laughed out of court" (qtd. in "Arm the Spirit"). In April 1974, she went underground with the Amistad Collective of the Black Liberation Army for nine months, serving as the unit coordinator ("Arm the Spirit"). Bukhari writes, "My eventual arrest and my going

underground were precipitated by getting subpoenaed to appear before the grand jury to testify against their friends and colleagues. The subpoena came with immunity from prosecution, which gave me no option but to go underground rather than go before the grand jury” (123). If given immunity people had to testify or were given long sentences for contempt of court.

Bukhari was captured in a shoot-out in a Norfolk store on January 25, 1975; her co-defendants Kombosi Amistad was killed and Masai Ehehosi was shot and arrested (qtd. in “Arm the Spirit”). Bukhari remembers the incident as follows:

[W]e decided to stop at a store to pick up cold cuts for sandwiches to avoid stopping at roadside restaurants. [. . .] I saw the manager’s hand with a rifle pointed towards the door. I quickly got into an aisle just as the firing started. [After Kombozi Amistad was shot], the manager of the store and his son, Paul Green Sr. and Jr., stomped Kombozi to death right in front of my eyes. [. . .] My bail was set at one million dollars for each of the five counts against me. (7-8)

On April 16, 1975, after a trial that lasted only one day, Bukhari was sentenced to forty years for armed robbery, and sent to the Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland (8). Due to problems with her fibroids, for which she received no treatment in prison, she escaped to avoid hemorrhaging to death in December 1976 (“Arm the Spirit”). Bukhari was recaptured in February 1977, spending almost four years (half of her prison time) in solitary confinement as punishment (126). She was released on August 22, 1983 (Henry).

After her release, Bukhari shifted registers and started work on liberating political prisoners. She was co-founder of the Jericho Movement. Bukhari says, “I went to Cuba to spend time with Assata Shakur and met with the Association of Cuban Women. [. . .] In 1996, we started to build the Jericho march. [. . .] We needed an umbrella organization

that represented all political prisoners” (qtd. in Henry). In October 1996, the Provisional Government of Republic of New Afrika and the New Afrikan Liberation called a national march on the White House to gain visibility for political prisoners, in which more than fifty activist organizations and defense committees were involved (National Jericho Movement). After Jericho’s own march two years later, Bukhari worked on Jericho’s other campaigns: building amnesty, continuing education, maintaining legal defense funds, and organizing medical projects (National Jericho Movement). She compiled lists of more than a hundred political prisoners in the United States, many of whom were incarcerated during the 1960s and 1970s. Later, she also worked on international support for political prisoners in Ireland and Palestine. In addition, she founded Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition in New York in 1992 to establish support for this former Panther journalist on death row (Free Mumia Abu Jamal Coalition-NYC).

Ella O’Dwyer & Martina Anderson

Ella O’Dwyer is a writer and activist well-known in Republican circles. She was raised in a poor family that worked on a small farm between Roscrea and Nenagh in County Tipperary, located in the Twenty-Six Counties (de Rossa). She is the youngest of seven children (de Rossa). O’Dwyer said, “We worked hard as kids, milking cows, cutting turf, feeding pigs, you name it” (qtd. in de Rossa). She attended University College Dublin (UCD), where she studied English, linguistics, and philosophy, graduating with honors in 1982 (“Le ChÉile MUNSTER Honouree”). Studying abroad

and working as a voluntary worker in a German children's playgroup for financial reasons, O'Dwyer reached political consciousness ("Le ChÉile MUNSTER Honouree").

O'Dwyer recalls conversations with Europeans who ignited her political consciousness. In an interview with Melissa Thompson for her groundbreaking film, *The Road of Women: Voices of Irish Women Political Prisoners*, O'Dwyer expounds:

I met Europeans who said, "Why do you talk about an independent Ireland? You haven't got it." And I said, "What do you mean? We fought for our Republic. We've got the 26 counties as of 1916." And they said, "What you don't understand is, you're still administered by England." I started to think about that. I started to piece together that in the international mind we were part of England. So I sort of listened to what they were saying. And though I have an awful lot of respect and still do for the heroes of 1916, it connected in my mind that we haven't really got our 32 county Ireland at all. We have a home office from Downing Street that operated in the Dáil. We had partition. We didn't have our 6 counties which were part of Ireland as well. And I began to get interested in the 6 counties and the people of that place, especially the prisoners and people who wrote books, like Tim Pat Coogan, *On the Blanket*, learning about the no wash protest. (qtd. in Thompson)

O'Dwyer turned to activism in 1981 ("Le ChÉile MUNSTER Honouree"). She came back to Ireland during the hunger strikes. She felt compelled to participate in the Republican struggle for freedom. O'Dwyer states:

[T]he second hunger strike was underway. Bobby Sands had just been elected. And I just got involved from there on then. I was just an ordinary member of the public who went around to all the marches and the token hunger strikes and token fasts. It seemed unthinkable that people in our time were being put to death by the British empire. [. . .] I felt that people who are committed to die for their country, like the Irish Republican Army or the Irish Republican movement, or to go to prison -- you have to have faith in people like that. (qtd. in Thompson)

She became a volunteer for the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin, working on military and political campaigns. Shortly thereafter, she was arrested at twenty-six ("Hurd Faces Quiz on Strip Search Girls").

Martina Anderson is an activist and prominent politician in Derry, one of the Six Counties. She was raised in a large family, composed of ten children in the Bogside, Derry (“Foyle”). She grew up in a working-class family; her mother was Catholic, and her father was a Protestant (“Foyle”). She was educated at Long Tower for primary school and St. Cecilia’s College for secondary education (“Foyle”). Anderson was very influenced by her ardent Republican mother, whom she classifies as her “role model” (Thompson). In addition, she learned of the Civil Rights Association from her older siblings (“Foyle”). Anderson’s entry into Republican activism was not defined by a particular event, she explains, because incessant racialized and colonial violence surrounded her. Anderson elaborates on this topic in the following passage:

At a very young age I was aware of state oppression -- although I couldn’t have defined it in that way at that time. I was acutely aware that there were British soldiers on our street, and that as Catholics we were denied civil rights. I was aware as Catholics in a catholic community that we were discriminated against. [. . .] I was very conscious of civil rights marches going on in Derry and throughout the statelet. So it was an amalgamation of those things going on during those times that would’ve formulated my involvement in Republican politics. (qtd. in Thompson)

She explains that her house was raided on a weekly basis during the very early morning, though many times the raids were more frequent. Anderson says, “[Y]ou expected the door to be booted in and be surrounded by British soldiers with guns. [. . .] [M]y mother would have reached our bedrooms warning us that they were coming in. That allowed us to get out of bed and throw on our dressing gowns and [. . .] make ourselves a wee bit more modest. [. . .] [I]t had become one of those life factors that we lived with” (qtd. in Thompson). In her mid-teens, she became a volunteer for the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin, working on military and political campaigns.

O'Dwyer and Anderson were both arrested for their political actions. Anderson was arrested twice before her arrest with O'Dwyer. At sixteen, Anderson was arrested outside her house for "screening" by the British army, a customary practice targeted at Republicans during the Troubles (Thompson). Then Anderson was arrested again at eighteen, and charged with possession of a firearm/ammunition and intent to cause an explosion ("HM Armagh Prison File"). She was released on bail after two months, but rather than being tried in the Diplock courts, juryless courts, she eloped to Buncrana in Donegal for a few years (Thompson). Anderson and O'Dwyer both were arrested together on active service in June 1985 with Gerry "Blute" McDonnell, Peter Sherry, and Pat Magee, "The Brighton Bomber" ("Vintage Stuff from British Jails"). They were "charged with conspiracy to cause explosions, connected with an alleged IRA plot to place bombs in English seaside resorts" ("Strip Searches on Women to Be Tested in Court"). A year later, on June 11, 1986, they received life sentences at Old Bailey in London ("Vintage Stuff from English Jails"). Without evidence, they were branded "vile murderers" by the mainstream press ("Sharp Exchanges"). O'Dwyer and Anderson served the majority of their time in British prisons Brixton and Durham, and later, were repatriated to Maghaberry near Derry ("Vintage Stuff from British Jails"). They were released under The Good Friday Agreement, just as other political prisoners were during the Peace Process.

After thirteen years in prison, O'Dwyer and Anderson were released in November 1998 (de Rossa). In prison, O'Dwyer got married. She completed an MA on women's fiction, with a thesis called *Reading Institution*, and went on to complete a Ph.D. (Thompson). Her dissertation is called *The Linguistics of Power and the Structuration of*

Meaning, adapted and published later by Pluto Press as *The Rising of the Moon: The Language of Power*. O'Dwyer provides an abstract of it as follows:

It started out of an interest in how the text of the prison was affecting us, taking control of us, and then taking that in the context of the modern novel and seeing how the writer of the text works on the reader and how the reader works on the text and makes the text function. (qtd. in Thompson)

In the interview I conducted with her, O'Dwyer revealed that she sought employment as a professor in Poland and in the United States at Boston University, but due to visa problems stemming from her prison time, she was unable to accept offers. O'Dwyer says, "So that's part of our future as prisoners released under whatever -- be it the Good Friday Agreement or whatever else" (qtd. in Thompson). O'Dwyer continues to work for Sinn Féin, writes regularly for its newspaper *An Phoblacht*, and recently published a book through its Parnell Publications entitled *Dancing to the Revolution: Sheena Campbell, A Lost Leader*.

Anderson, like O'Dwyer, married and received an education during her thirteen years in prison. Anderson got an interdisciplinary degree in Social Sciences; she graduated with honors ("Foyle"). As O'Dwyer put it in the interview I had with her, they "were not the stupid Irish." Anderson also continues to work for Sinn Féin. After her discharge, she immediately began promoting the Sinn Féin Peace Strategy. Since then, she told me that she served on the *Ard Chomhairle* (National Executive) and held the all-Ireland Political Coordinator of the all-Ireland Strategy position. In March 2006, she was the Director of Unionist Engagement in charge of outreach ("Foyle"). In March 2007, she was elected to the Assembly as a member for Foyle, working on the Equality and Human Rights campaign ("Foyle"). She also has worked on the "Building Derry's Future"

campaign (“Foyle”). Recently, she told me that she has been working on projects that address police brutality, public services, and queer rights. As she put it in the interview I conducted with her, she is known as “All Miss Ireland.”

Mairéad Farrell

Mairéad Farrell was an (in)famous activist, now iconic martyr, for whom numerous murals were created in the Six Counties of Ireland, primarily in the Andersonstown area of Belfast, where she lived. Born on March 3, 1957, Farrell grew up in a family of five with Republican roots. Her maternal grandfather was interned by “Tans” at Ballinamore in County Leitrim for refusing to transport them on his train during the War of Independence, 1919-1921 (McGeever 8). In addition, her brother Niall became and continues to be deeply involved in the Republican movement, mainly in the Communist Party of Ireland and now the Galway Alliance Against the War (“A Girl Who Turned to Terror”). In convent school, Farrell was described as “bright,” “vivacious, and giggly,” with “no interest in politics” (“A Girl Who Turned to Terror”). However, like many nationalists in the Falls area of Belfast, Farrell suffered the pangs of British occupation on a personal level. Farrell stated, “[M]y father kept the shop down in the Falls and we had to pass through by the Brits during the curfews and they’d get into the car and look over everything. One minute they’d say you can go, then no you can’t and you could only get out for a certain number of hours during curfew. We were all victims of the Brits’ occupation. It affected us all” (qtd. in McGeever 8). Similar experiences shaped her budding social awareness.

Farrell's political consciousness bloomed as a student at Rathmore Grammar, where she met Bobby Storey, now Belfast Sinn Féin Chairperson after a twenty-year prison term (www.sinnfein.ie). Coming from a staunch Republican family, Storey influenced Farrell to act on her beliefs. Farrell dropped out, took a job at an insurance office, and joined the Provisional Irish Republican Army as a volunteer, "like many other young girls at the time" (qtd. in McGeever 8). Farrell said, "I suppose I've always believed we had a legitimate right to take up arms and defend our country and ourselves against the Brits' occupation. I wouldn't have gotten involved in the movement if I hadn't believed that. [. . .] [A]s a Catholic and as a nationalist, the only political aspiration to have was for a 32-county, socialist republic" (qtd. in McGeever 8).

Less than a year after Farrell withdrew from classes, she was arrested for bombing the Conway Hotel in Dunmurry on April 5, 1976 ("Bar Bomb Girl Jailed for 14 Years"). At nineteen years old, she was charged with causing three explosions, having possession of bombs with intent, having possession of firearms and ammunition with intent, and Irish Republican Army membership; she was given fourteen years ("Bar Bomb Girl Jailed for 14 Years"). Farrell said, "It was never our intention to kill anyone. That's why we gave the warning. Hotels were political and economic targets during the political status arguments. I was just carrying out an operation. [. . .] There's no regrets . . . except that I got caught" (qtd. in McGeever 9).

In prison, Farrell was Officer-in-Command of Republican prisoners. She divided her time between studying for an Open University degree and organizing protests, the latter of which she gave primacy. Through a Freedom of Information Act request, I gained rare access to her robust HM Armagh Prison file. This file provides a good

character sketch of her political activities as a senior IRA leader while in prison. Refusing to accept criminal status, resisting prison rules and organizing political prisoners defined her incarceration. She was often reprimanded in contempt of rules 30 and 31 for “bad behavior” (“HM Armagh Prison File”). From Dec 1976 to June 1980, for instance, Farrell’s political offenses are consistent: refusing to work (eighty-eight), entering cells (forty-one), conducting parades (eight), issuing commands (six), threatening officers (five), conducting drills (two), among other minor charges of destroying prison property (1) (“HM Armagh Prison File”). From December 1980 to March 1983, Farrell’s charges remain constant, following a similar pattern: refusing to work (thirty-five), disobeying orders (fifteen), conducting parades (seven), issuing commands (three), threatening officers (six), among other minor charges of refusing to be searched (1) and obstructing a cell door (one) (“HM Armagh Prison File”). Out of these charges, she was punished for holding memorial services for fallen services, wearing black armbands and clothes from garbage bins (i.e., “Taking Part in Illegal Parade”), speaking in Irish (“Calling out Words of Command”), teaching Irish politics, history, and culture (“Using Threatening Language”), defending “her girls” from “screw” abuse, such as starvation, assault, and theft, including during religious services (“Threatening an Officer”), among others (“HM Armagh Prison File”). Serious punitive consequences resulted from these charges (i.e., each “refusing to work” charge carried “twenty-eight days loss of remission, forfeiture of two privilege visits, all privilege parcels, and all privilege association”) (“HM Armagh Prison File”). More often than not, Farrell refused to participate in prison procedures. She rarely spoke out against them. On a rare occasion, Farrell wrote, “I am a political prisoner, and I demand to be treated as such. The charge, which I have been found guilty

of, was politically motivated, regardless to the date it took place. [. . .] [W]hether you wish to recognise the fact or not, I never respond to the label Criminal. Mairead Farrell” (qtd. in “HM Armagh Prison File”). She was classified as a first-rate “troublemaker.”

When released in October 1986, Farrell attended Queen’s University, where she took classes in politics, economics, and the social sciences (McGeever). However, after a year, she decided to return to full-time work in the IRA (McGeever). Shortly thereafter, on March 6, 1988, she was assassinated, along with Sean Savage and Dan McCann, by the British Special Air Service (SAS) in Gibraltar on March 6, 1988 on “active service” (Tweedie). They were monitoring the military band of Royal Anglian Regiment, (Tweedie). They were all unarmed (had no guns or explosives), and when accosted, tried to surrender (Williams). Farrell was “shot five times, twice in the head, three times in the body. The bullets to the head were fired into her face and exited under her left ear and at the back of her neck. The three bullets that were fired into the middle of her back exited in the region of her left breast. Her heart and liver were pulped, her spinal column fractured and her chest cavity was awash with two litres of blood” (Williams). Farrell, just before her assassination, said prophetically, “You have to be realistic. You realise that ultimately you’re either going to be dead or in jail. It’s one or the other. You are not going to run forever” (qtd. in “A Girl Who Turned to Terror”). Ten thousand people attended her funeral at Milltown Cemetery, including a shooter who killed three unarmed mourners and injured four—not to mention that two civilians were killed later at her second funeral service (“Gunman Terrorizes Belfast Crowd”; “Look That Killed”). Clearly, as the press reports, Farrell “can’t even be buried in peace” (“Gunman Terrorizes Belfast Crowd”).

The deaths of the “Gibraltar 3” were steeped in contention. “Press Conference: Gibraltar Murders,” drafted by the families of Farrell, Savage, and McCann, states: “We, the relatives of Sean, Mairead, and Dan, have always believed that our loved ones were cold-bloodedly shot to death in Gibraltar. [. . .] [A] massive cover-up ensued in an attempt to protect the criminals who committed this crime.” Niall Farrell continues, “No ‘ifs’ can explain away the fact that Mairead was shot three times in the back of the head at close range. Had my sister committed an offence then surely the only action taken should have been arrest, not shoot-to-kill” (“Letter to Sir”). However, former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher proclaimed joyfully: “the terrorists were lawfully killed,” to which Niall Farrell responded bitterly, “there is blood on Mrs. Thatcher’s hands” (Mills and Hughes, “IRA Trio Lawfully Killed”). An inquest was conducted to determine whether unlawful killings had taken place. It investigated these “institutional deaths” (Tweedie 4). The verdict of the inquest was 9-2 in favor of “lawful killing” (Tweedie 23).

Despite the inquest’s verdict, many observers, such as June Tweedie, Hilary Kitchin, and Amnesty International, expressed serious concerns in their lengthy reports. These issues included the following: (1) witnesses gave testimony from behind a curtain only visible to coroner, jury, and counsel to allegedly protect them, even though they appeared in court previously (Tweedie, Kitchin, and Williams); (1) jurors were all men because women had to volunteer in random selection process, and men and women jurors were not questioned about their government or Crown connections (Tweedie); (3) Public Interest Immunity Certificates were not issued to protect the means of intelligence gathering (Tweedie and Kitchin); (4) Spain did not provide any intelligence evidence (Tweedie and Williams); police provided no drawings of dead bodies, and cartridge cases

were removed against police procedures (Tweedie and Williams); (5) families received no legal aid to attend the inquest, though the government, police, and soldiers did on the taxpayers' tab (Tweedie and Kitchin); (6) transcripts were around five hundred pounds per day, shooting up from fifty pence to five pounds per day four days prior to trial (Tweedie, Kitchin, and Williams); and (7) the coroner read instructions too rapidly for comprehension, discouraged the "open verdict" over "lawfully killed" or "unlawfully killed," and demanded a narrow time slot for decision-making (Tweedie and Kitchin). Additional problems include the "smear" campaign against the main witness Carmen Proetta. Proetta had "no doubts" that Farrell and McCann had hands up to surrender when shot, for "[i]t was something I will never forget. It was horrible" (Mills, "Witness Defies 'Smear' Campaign"). Yet her account was largely discredited for credibility reasons; furthermore, she was vilified by inaccurate media reports that labeled her a "tart of Gib" (sex worker),⁷⁵ "anti-British," and "wife of a drug peddler." Later, she won substantial libel damages against the *Daily Mirror* ("Gibraltar Witness Wins Libel"). Dr. Michael Scott, an eminent electronics expert with three degrees and lecturer at the National Institute of Higher Education, affirmed that Farrell, Savage, and McCann were all unarmed ("Expert Denies"). Scott said "it was 'impossible' for any of the three to have exploded a remote-control bomb from the points at which they were shot, which were more than a mile from where they had left the suspect car bomb – and with part of the Rock, rampart walls 40ft wide, and many buildings in between" ("Expert Denies"). These concerns amass much suspicion of the verdict. Opponents pursued a tribunal.

⁷⁵ This claim should not be problematic. Moreover, if she were a sex worker instead of a translator working for traveling lawyers, her story would not have changed, to which Proetta attests. Such information that invoked a traditional and puritanical rhetoric of privilege to discredit witnesses' veracity is problematic.

The families of Mairéad Farrell, Sean Savage, and Dan McCann took their case to the European Court of Human Rights (Campbell). The Court agreed to review the case, a statistical rarity in a ninety-eight percent rejection pool (Moriarty). It ruled that the SAS breached Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (“Fresh Inquiry into SAS”). The Court contended that “soldiers are trained to shoot to kill without warning and that the operation in Gibraltar was neither planned nor executed in such way as to minimise the need for the use of lethal force” (“Fresh Inquiry into SAS”). Opponents celebrated this verdict, for as Niall Farrell puts it, “[t]he British government stands before Europe’s highest human rights court accused of what in plain English can only be called murder” (qtd. in Moriarty).

Political Torture: News, Statements, and Letters on Physical, Sexual, and Psychological Violence in Prison

Political prisoners face egregious prison treatment in prisons in the United States and Ireland. Loss of intellectual, emotional, physical, and sexual freedom is standard. There are normative patterns of torture used as a means of social control. The record of these women’s experiences in prisons on both sides of the Atlantic reminds us that, Foucault notwithstanding, modern discipline does not rely entirely on panoptical and internalized surveillance; rather, physical punishment is alive and well. Moreover, that punishment has often been gendered, sexualized, and racialized in ways that Foucault fails to acknowledge. This section explores the prison conditions Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell experienced. I use this work as a material record of their time in prison, fusing history, biography, and rhetorical analysis. I address themes of assault (i.e., beatings), harassment

(i.e., rape), and negligence (i.e., health), in particular. I give special attention to institutional abuse by police officers and prison guards (designated by inmates and radicals as “pigs” and “screws”), none of whom were held culpable for their crimes.

Lack of medical attention is a common form of torture within prisons. Archival and ethnographic work by myself and others demonstrates that these revolutionary writers/ leaders endured many problems, ranging from infections to fatalities. Severe problems arise from solitary confinement, which each of them experienced for usually twenty-three hours per day during much of their prison time. Afeni Shakur-Davis contracted an intestinal infection because she was unable to perform normal hygienic practices (Oelsner, “11 Panthers”). Mairéad Farrell suffered from numerous infections, including vaginal, pelvic, and kidney; her refusal to serve labor duties and be strip-searched resulted in solitary confinement and deprivation of bathing privileges (“HM Armagh Prison File”). The infection rate reached its apex during the “no-wash protest,” during which time Farrell had no access to showers and bathrooms. Sanitary products were inadequate, as well. They received three items of sanitary protection per month (“Stop the Strip Searching in Armagh Jail”). Farrell states, “[S]anitary towels are thrown into us without wrapping. We are not permitted paper bags or such like, so they lie in the dirt until used” (qtd. in McCafferty 29). Shakur-Davis also was denied pre-natal care. She was five months pregnant with her son Tupac Shakur, the late musician, in February 1971 (“Judge Asked to Free 2 Women Panthers”). Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, and Martina Anderson required surgeries during their internment. As a result, Bird waived her right to be present in court for two to three weeks (Evans Asbury, “3D Juror Chose”). Safiya Bukhari had “fibroids the size of oranges or grapefruits in [her] uterus,” but prison

authorities told her she would have to wait ten years to obtain medical services (qtd. in “Arm the Spirit”). Due to chronic hemorrhaging, Bukhari said that she was forced to escape (9). She said, “I was wearing three big sanitary napkins at the time. And I would have to change them every 2 hours. I was having my menstrual cycle for two weeks at the time, every other week. I was just bleeding horrendously. [. . .] [I]n order to save my own life I had to escape because of the medical conditions” (qtd. in Arm the Spirit”). Nevertheless, the damage was irreversible; after she was recaptured, Bukhari used her escape charge to pressure the prison authorities into giving her medical attention, but she did not have a hysterectomy until June 1978 (9). She served more than half her sentence, almost four years, in solitary confinement as punishment for her escape, the longest any prisoner in Virginia had faced till then (9).

Anderson also had to have surgery. In addition to vision problems that caused chronic migraines for two months without treatment, Anderson had dysmenorrhea and a polyp in her womb that needed to be removed (Thompson). She required Dilation and Curettage surgery to treat abnormal uterine bleeding (Troops Out Now Movement; Thompson). She asked for vitamins and painkillers to control the effects of menstrual pain before her surgery; instead she was advised to have a hysterectomy by “Colonel” Francis, a former British colonel turned doctor committed to sterilizing women as a “covert control policy” (qtd. in Thompson). Eventually, Anderson was granted her right to surgery. She recalls that day as follows:

I was quickly processed because of being a high risk Category A prisoner and had armed police. And the next thing I remember was being slapped across the face and woke up and being told, “Get out of the bed.” I didn’t know where I was. I didn’t have control of my own faculties. I was aware that I was naked, I was aware I had a gown on me that lay open down the back of me. They had dragged me down this corridor and all the time I

was conscious I had no underclothes on me. I couldn't walk. They bundled me into this trolley. [. . .] I was totally unable to function. (qtd. in Thompson)

All of these women were denied basic rights to healthcare as an aggressive form of control to dehumanize them and break their spirit. They strove to document this form of injustice in their work, providing another version women's incarceration.

In addition to the torture of social isolation in solitary confinement, many political prisoners experience the pangs of separation from family, friends, partners, and other loved ones. Oftentimes, political prisoners are denied regular visitation rights under the pretext of safety and/or non-compliance with prison rules. Egregious human rights violations involve lack of visiting time granted to parents/guardians and children, in particular. This experience was Safiya Bukhari's plight. Bukhari lost her husband Robert Webb to a governmental counterintelligence-inspired/ Panther-split assassination; she also lost her daughter Wonda Jones to underground and prison life ("Arm the Spirit"). Bukhari, concerned about her daughter, assigned legal guardianship of her daughter to her mother ("Arm the Spirit"). Bukhari explains, "One of the things the state was trying to do was to take Panther children away from their parents because they were unfit parents, etc. I didn't want to take a chance, so I signed legal guardianship over to my mother. And I made arrangements for her schooling and everything else, and I went underground" before prison (qtd. in "Arm the Spirit"). As if losing her daughter to underground life was not traumatic enough, Bukhari was devastated that her parental rights were violated in prison. She founded Mothers Inside Loving Kids (MILK) to help mothers spend time with their children in prison (Henry). Bukhari says, "[T]he South takes away parental rights, especially if a woman goes to jail. Doesn't matter how long

she's in prison for or how short she's in prison for, even if her case has nothing to do with child abuse. Virginia took away parental rights" (Henry). Political imprisonment is not coterminous with parental negligence. It is a form of psychological torture to deny children regular access to their parents. Bukhari's daughter Wonda Jones writes in the preface to her mother's anthology, "My mother came home from prison when I was fourteen and in the midst of teenage rebellion. I didn't want any part of her or her life. I gave her hell" (x). This anger and alienation took much time to assuage. Such prison policies not only destroy parents'/guardians' lives, but they also destroy children's lives by holding them accountable for their parents'/guardians' crimes.

Physical assault by law enforcement is used as another form of containment against political prisoners in the United States and Northern Ireland. Joan Bird's writing documents unimaginable examples of police brutality. In "Joan Bird's Statement," she writes about her arrest as follows:

After the shooting ceased, the police approached the car, heavily armed, and dragged me out and began to beat, kick, and curse me. I was then handcuffed and arrested and taken to the 34th Precinct. There I underwent the most terrifying 19 hours of my entire life. I experienced the police harassment and racist attitudes presented continuously with threats on my life. [. . .] My lawyer filed a complaint on my behalf, asking that my arresting officer be arrested for the assault which he inflicted upon me. The District Attorney said it would "cloud the issues."

Much evidence confirms her abuse, what she calls the "true nature of the pig" ("Joan Bird's Statement"). *New York Times*' writer Edith Evans Asbury reports, "A photograph introduced as evidence showed Miss Bird's left eye swollen and closed, her upper lip swollen, and a cut on her right cheek bone" ("Policemen Denies Beating Panthers"). Several police officers commented on her "mouse" (including arresting Officer Roland McKenzie himself), her "little bruise under her eye" (Chief Morgan) (qtd. in Evans

Asbury, “Policemen Denies Beating Panthers” & “Policeman Says Panther Shot at Him”). In addition, Bird’s mother testified that “she heard her daughter scream while being interviewed in another room by a policeman [sic]” (Evans Asbury, “Panther Witness Tells of Screams”). Later, Bird’s mother asked her daughter, “Dear God in Heaven, who did you like this” to which “Joan put her trembling finger to her mouth and then pointed to Roland McKenzie” (qtd. in Evans Asbury, “Panther Witness Tells of Screams”). Bird’s mother said that her daughter’s arresting officer “was very angry, in fact, he was like a lion in a cage” (Evans Asbury, “Police Disputed in Panther Case”). Bird’s mother was a witness who affirmed that her daughter was “worked over” by the police (Evans Asbury, “Police Disputed in Panther Case”). Lastly, her fellow Panther and codefendant Afeni Shakur-Davis spoke up against the police brutality Bird experienced in an interview with Jasmine Guy. Shakur-Davis states:

They beat her. They tortured her. They hung her out a window and threatened to drop her. And when they were through, they slammed her into that rat-infested Women’s House of Detention. She never received medical attention after she was beaten. They just left her in her cell to rot. [. . .] When she came into court the next day, you could see the boot mark on her cape from where she got stomped. It was a plaid cape, and you could see the boot marks on the back of her when she stood up in court. (75; 91)

Bird was given no leniency as a woman because she was a Black political prisoner.

McKenzie received no punitive charges.

Rampant physical abuse has been documented in Irish and British prisons, as well. In his report “Beating Women in Prison,” Fr. Denis Faul provides a comprehensive overview of “Black February.” On February 7, 1980, more than seventy prison officers (“screws”) donning riot gear, including shields and batons, entered the “B” wing; they targeted thirty-two Republican women prisoners in an attempt to find black clothes worn

by Cumann na mBan, an Irish Republican women's paramilitary organization that supported the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin (Faul). Fr. Faul recaps the horrific episode that ensued between screws and political prisoners as follows:

They beat and dragged the girls to the guard room [to be body searched], twisting their arms and pulling their hair. They showed no regard for the fact that their jumpers and skirts were pulled up round them and they were nearly naked. The girls were then starved of food and drink. Male officers toured the wings for two days. The toilets were locked and the girls were not allowed out to the toilets. To a great extent the prisoners were forced into their present situation ["no wash"]. Beatings continued for a few days.

This violence represents a violation of the United Nations' "Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners." Regulation 31 of that law states: "Corporeal punishment, punishment by placing in a dark cell, and all cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments shall be completely prohibited as punishments for disciplinary offences" (qtd. in Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin). Fr. Faul writes, "If this is put forward as normal practice for Her Majesty's Prison, then the imagination cannot grasp what principles of bigotry and injustice and denial of fair play lie behind the administration of the Prison at every level." Nevertheless, the prison authorities, "screws," and riot squad continued this violence for a week with impunity.

Like Joan Bird, Mairéad Farrell experienced heinous acts of violence during "Black February." In a letter to her parents written on February 7, 1980, Farrell gives an overview of "Black February" as follows:

On Thursday 7th February at approximately 12.15 p.m. [. . .] 40 male officers ran into the wing, and surrounded the girls. Then about 30 female officers joined them. The prison authorities then informed me that there was to be a general raid. Nobody was allowed back to their cells and everyone had to go single into Association Cells. The male officers never gave us a chance. They immediately jumped us and started beating all round them. [. . .] After all seemed relatively calm we managed to get into the Association Cells. We were split up into them. We stayed there for

hours. We had no dinner and were allowed nothing to drink. We remained there while male and female officers searched our cells which were wrecked after the search. [. . .] We were not allowed exercise nor out to the toilet or to get washed. We were locked down 24 hours and allowed nothing to eat and drink.

Subsequent correspondence with her father the same day details the horrific physical abuse she endured. Farrell writes:

I was surrounded by nine to twelve female officers. [. . .] [T]hey had me up against the door kicking and punching me the whole time. Some of them grabbed my legs and arms, twisting my arms backwards. Another couple were hanging on to my hair and while officers carried me down the wing other officers pulled my hair in the opposite direction. Eventually they threw me into an empty cell. A few of them then came after me and were kicking away at me but then ran out and closed the door.

Eventually, the medical staff noted her bruises and tended to her cuts on her left arm, but refused to believe that the “bald patch” on her head was from the encounter. This incident reflects outrageous violations in power in order to contain resistance.

Northern Irish Republican women prisoners commenced the “no wash” protest, also known as the “Dirt Strikes” or “Dirty Protest,” under duress as a response to the events of “Black February.” Political prisoners fought relentlessly for the reinstatement of “Special Category” status, which was implemented in 1972 and later revoked in March 1976 to obscure political reasons for imprisonment (National H-Block-Armagh Committee). As a result, they lost many rights, such as education, recreation, remission, visitation, and parcels (food and letters were granted once per month); in addition, they were put in solitary confinement for twenty-three hours a day, without even access to their prayer books and rosary beads (Women Against Imperialism 13; McCafferty 28). In a petition “The Parents Speak” addressed to Armagh prison authorities, relatives of prisoners expressed their solidarity in the following passage:

We the parents and relatives of the protesting girls in Armagh Prison [. . .] have agreed to support the prisoners in their protest, firstly against the beatings by male officers on 7th February 1980, now known as Black February, and the subsequent denial of access to the toilets 7th-12th February, denial of laundry and visits from concerned persons in that period, and secondly against the 23 hour lock-up for refusal to work. This latter punishment is cruel and degrading.”

Like Republican men housed in Long Kesh, the women prisoners received unwavering support not just from loved ones, but also from political organizations and community members for this protest.

Mairéad Farrell explains the organic progression from “Black February” to “Dirt Strikes” as Officer-in-Command (OC) of the Republican section of Armagh Gaol in her writing during this bleak period. On February 8, 1980, Farrell explains this involuntary participation: “We have been forced into a position of ‘Dirt Strikes’ as our pots are overflowing with urine and excrement. We have emptied them out of the spyholes into the Wing. The male officers nailed them closed but we broke them off using our chairs.” Economical solutions to “no wash” became reduced to “decoration.” Farrell writes, “Our walls are covered in excrement – there was nothing else to do with it, you can’t pile it up in the corner – that would be unbearable. This way it’s not half as bad. It dries and the smell isn’t so bad after an hour or so. The urine is the worst smell. [Y]ou’ll probably find that hard to believe but the stench of it just seems to cling to the air” (“A Prisoner on Protest” 13). Menstrual blood, too, was smeared on the wall, making headlines instantly for its feminization of “no wash.” For instance, on August 22, 1980, Nell McCafferty writes in *The Irish Times*, “There is menstrual blood on the walls of Armagh Gaol in Northern Ireland. The 32 women on the dirt strike there have not washed their bodies since February 8th, 1980; they use their cells as toilets; for more than 200 days now they

have lived amid their own excreta, urine and blood.” The only relief from the rancid odor was an hour outside every day, the only time they were permitted to exit their cells. Farrell writes, “We’re freezing by the time the hour has passed but it’s worth it, rain, hail or snow, we’re out in it. Believe me, that fresh air is worth catching pneumonia from” (qtd. in McCafferty 29). The more than thirty Republican women on this protest were denied basic human rights to hygiene for (in)security reasons. Anderson sums it up well, stating they were “living in dirt, eating dirt, seeing dirt, and thinking dirt” (Irish Prisoners’ Appeal, “News from Durham”). Deemed unsuccessful by the European Commission of Human Rights for the men in Long Kesh, the “Dirty Protest” escalated into the hunger strikes that were spearheaded by Bobby Sands in the H-Blocks after just over a year.

Voluntary starvation, oftentimes in the form of hunger strikes, is another common thread in the lives of political prisoners in the United States and Northern Ireland. Safiya Bukhari went on hunger strike for thirty-three days to protest inhumane prison conditions, especially inadequate medical services, for which she received no mainstream media attention (Henry). Unlike Safiya Bukhari, Mairéad Farrell’s hunger strike for political status, along with long-timers Mairéad Nugent and Mary Doyle, was covered exhaustively by the mainstream press. Tired of the British Government’s intransigent and inflexible “criminalization” policy, they demanded the right to refuse work, to organize for educational and recreational facilities, to have one weekly visit, parcel, and letter, and to associate with other political prisoners (Murray). Under Bernadette Devlin McAliskey’s leadership, People’s Democracy got involved with the National H-Block/

Armagh Committee. The National H-Block/ Armagh Committee statement “Armagh Hunger Strike: The Central Issue for Irish Women” helped them gain public attention:

The Armagh hunger strikers and their sisters on the political status protest are not fanatics prepared to die for an abstract principle. Nor are they selfish “criminals” who are making a calculated and cynical bid to get “elite” treatment from the prison regime. They are ordinary working class women who are in prison because they and thousands of other women in the Catholic ghettos of the north of Ireland realised that the only hope for any real and permanent improvement in the quality of their lives requires nothing less than the dismantling of the Six County State. [. . .] They are prepared to die on hunger strike in a final effort to win political status because they understand that it is the political status issue which has become the decisive point of confrontation between forces of imperialism and the nationalist population of Ireland.

The hunger strike started on December 1, 1980, the day after they met with their families to break the news (“Women Prisoners Complete Day 1”; “Armagh Women’s Fast Begins”). In Ireland, it was the first hunger strike by women, referred to as “girl terrorists” in a concerted effort to infantilize and criminalize them (“Women to Join ‘Death Fast’”; “Women Terrorists Join Death Fast”). Farrell, serving as the “spokeswoman,” told the press: “The cause of Irish freedom is not a criminal cause, but a political cause and in order to assert this we are going on hunger strike,” and “[w]e are prepared to fast to the death if necessary” (Murray; “Backing for Hunger Women”). After nineteen days, it ended abruptly. Farrell, Nugent, and Doyle, pledged their solidarity to the men in Long Kesh (who started hunger strikes earlier) in order to save lives there. As Farrell puts in a letter, “I know who the real criminals are” (“A Prisoner on Protest” 14).

Strip-searching was another common practice used incessantly against prisoners in the United States, Northern Ireland, and England. In the United States, strip-searching was not used solely against political prisoners, but was the rule for all prisoners; however, in many instances, the hostility engendered against women political prisoners by prison

administrators resulted in extra searches, or pointedly demeaning searches, of women political prisoners. Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’Dwyer, and Martina Anderson experienced them on a regular basis, oftentimes tallying the offenses. O’Dwyer and Anderson comment exhaustively on the topic, for they experienced the most virulent treatment, owing to their long sentences in British maximum-security prisons. Strip-searching was such a pervasive form of physical and psychological torture that O’Dwyer and Anderson dubbed it “psychological rape,” claimed they suffered from acute Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and spearheaded a human rights campaign to challenge the practice (qtd. in “Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin).

Panther 21 members also were “finger-searched,” to use Afeni Shakur’s words (qtd. in Guy 93). Assata Shakur notes in her revolutionary auto/biography that she learned about this policy from the New York 21 before she had to endure it herself. Shakur-Davis refused the procedure, resulting in solitary confinement: “I took solitary over that shit. [. . .] No, I didn’t go through that! No strip search. No filthy Pap smear. They just locked me down” (qtd. in Guy 93-94). Many Panther women did not have a choice, however. Bukhari writes: “They made us strip,” and they washed their hands after it to make sure they “would not catch anything” (4). Bird describes the procedure in depth as follows:

The next act of degradation and humiliation comes as the women are told that we must take a shower. [. . .] After this shower we are given a dingy cloth robe to wrap around our bodies and a pair of rubber slippers to put on our feet. We are sent to the back of the receiving room to once again sit and wait. Then the prison doctor comes in to search our bodies, internally and externally. This part of the processing is a standard rule of the prison. Those who refuse to be “finger searched” are then placed in a locked cell until they change their minds. [. . .] The women are called into a dim and dirty office one by one and are told to lie down on an examining table with their legs spread apart, at which point the doctor jams his rubber-gloved

index finger up the vaginal and rectal areas of the body. [. . .] [I]t causes hemorrhaging and severe damage to the internal female organs” (*Whirlwind* 319-320).

Bird’s graphic description of strip-searching demonstrates severe violations in privacy, sexual abuse, and psychological harassment. Her intent is to inform, expose, and incite a reaction. It is a clarion call for help and resistance and change. This procedure is not performed as a security measure, but rather as a means to control inmates. Bird notes that authorities used contraband gum and cigarettes as another justification for the practice (Bird, *Whirlwind* 320). Other forms of surveillance were ubiquitous, including numerous guards, dogs, and cameras, on which O’Dwyer also comments.

Like Black Power/ Liberation activists, Republican activists were stripped-searched during cell searches and changes, before and after court appearances, visits, hospital trips (Bennett). Prison guards had unbridled liberty to demand strip-searches for spurious “security” reasons, as well. Strip-searches commenced at Armagh in November 1982 under Governor Thomas Murtagh, and then extended to British prisons, such as Brixton and Durham (“Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin”). The Prison Rules of Northern Ireland (Number 9, Part 6, 1982) state the following:

(1) Every prisoner shall be searched by an officer on reception into prison and at such subsequent times as the governor may order subject to any direction of the Secretary of State. (2) Any unauthorised article found during the search shall be taken from the prisoner. (3) A prisoner shall be searched in as seemly a manner as is consistent with discovering anything concealed. (4) A prisoner shall not be stripped and searched in the sight of another prisoner. (5) A prisoner shall be searched only by and in the presence of officers of the same sex as the prisoner. (qtd. in *Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin*)

According to the Home Office regulations, “strip searching is essential to detect small items of contraband, weapons and drugs” (Bennett). However, the only items confiscated

during strip-searches were letters and a bottle of perfume, none of which ever were found on O’Dwyer and Anderson (“Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin”; “Strip Ruling Gets Terrorists Appeal”). In July 1985, body probing (e.g., internal searches) was included as an addendum (Troops Out Now Movement). The Campaign to Stop the Strip Searches in Armagh Prison explains the procedure as follows:

While you are naked you are asked if you have a PERIOD. If you have you are forced to remove your sanitary protection. A paper bag is provided for your tampon or tow[e]l. The bag is then opened and the contents examined. Your body is then inspected. You are told to turn completely round so no part of your body is left unseen. [. . .] Anyone with long hair is ordered to gather their hair up in their hands and hold it on top of their heads. This, say the women, makes the entire sordid affair seem like a slave trade market.

This passage reflects the underlining dehumanization of this process, delineating connections between sexism (i.e., menstruation) and racism (i.e., slave trade market) as interlocking systems of power. Refusal for strip-searches includes seven nights loss of association and solitary confinement, and women still were searched by force (“Campaign to Stop the Strip Searches in Armagh Prison”). Mairéad Farrell lost all of her visitation rights after October 1983 for refusing strip-searches (McGeever 19). In my interviews with O’Dwyer and Anderson, they confessed that they were stripped five to six times a day, along with body searches/ frisks at least four times a day by more than six hundred men. In total, the Irish Prisoners’ Appeal estimates that they endured more than eight hundred searches in eleven months while on remand (pre-conviction)—not to mention 2,500 body searches (“Was a Fair Trial Possible?”).

Like Shakur-Davis and Bird, O’Dwyer and Anderson addressed this invasive policy frequently in their writing. They began a relentless letter campaign together to castigate it the first day they were interned. O’Dwyer told me: “we fought the system

with all we had – mainly our wits” to which Anderson, clearly in conversation with O’Dwyer, reiterated “our only weapon was our pen.” They commenced their outreach by providing rudimentary information about strip-searching procedures. In Anderson’s letter to her solicitor Michael Fisher, published in *Morning Star* on February 11, 1986, she details this process:

I walk to the wing knowing what lies ahead. Here are two empty cells and I am ordered into one of them. Once in the cell two prison officers order me to take my clothes off, while a third holds up a blanket shoulder high. The fourth stands watching. Realising that their eyes are constantly looking at me over the blanket and feeling so helpless knowing that I cannot do anything, I start to remove my blouse and bra. The officers take them to check and I put on a so-called dressing gown which is like a scruffy surgical gown. Feeling demoralised, I start to remove the bottom half of my clothes. Every last bit of my underwear is scrutinized. When my clothes have been searched, I dress and then one of the prison officers starts putting hands through my hair. (qtd. in Bennett)

In the same publication, O’Dwyer adds: “Prison officers rub my hair and ears, and like an animal I have to lift my feet [. . .] They have told me that they can lift my breasts forcibly if they decide to and even probe my body folds. I know that every part of me has been touched accidentally or deliberately since I have arrived here” (Bennett). Rampant dehumanization characterizes this practice; they are treated like animals.

O’Dwyer and Anderson shift from procedural considerations to statistical information. In January 1986, Anderson writes to the Troops Out Now Movement: “From December 2nd till the 27th, Ella had 21 strip-searches, four cell searches and two cell changes. I had 23 strip-searches, six cell searches and two cell changes. That should give you an idea of the daily harassment which we have had to endure in this hell hole.” These occurrences of sexual torture escalate drastically in April and May 1986 in O’Dwyer’s letter written on October 8, 1986: “Martina had to endure 46 strip searches, 7

cell searches a cell change and I had 43 strip searches, 7 cell searches and a cell change. The figures for May border on the incredible with us each having 61 strip searches and two cell and strip searches each on consecutive Sundays [. . .] It was suggested that they would strip us after Mass, as they did after dental and gynecological visits.” This document also highlights overt gendered and racialized discrimination by implementing additional strip-searches after gynecological and religious visits.

Then O’Dwyer and Anderson analyze the procedure of strip-searching. On International (Working) Women’s Day, O’Dwyer and Anderson write to women picketing Brixton Prison, providing a salient example of strip-searching as a form of control: “One of us wanted to use the toilet after the strip-search. The screw told her (Martina), that she would have to be stripped a second time. [. . .] [S]he had to endure two ‘strips’ in four minutes.” Their correspondences typically conclude with a solution and an analysis. In O’Dwyer’s letter, published by the Stop the Strip-Searches Campaign in Dublin, for instance, she writes: “The place is littered with cameras and a metal detector or one of their many sniffer dogs could successfully replace strip-searching as a security measure. Strip-searching is an experiment at control methods in prison and is especially directed at women. [. . .] Strip-searches are a form of psychological rape.” This passage addresses the key issue—control—and reveals how it is mystified in practices and rhetoric of “security.” It underlines the contradictions of the “criminal justice” system.

O’Dwyer and Anderson’s appeal to terminate strip-searching and offer reparations was denied by Judge Hodson. He ruled that that the court had no jurisdiction to interfere with the Governor’s exercise of power under prison rules” (“Women Fail in Body Search Plea”). They then took it to the European Court of Human Rights. They received steady,

groundswelling support from numerous opponents of strip-searching measures. Ninety-one MP's opposed it ("Fury over Strip Searching"). Anne Matthews, the chair of Southwark Council that investigates Brixton, called strip-searching a "blatant state attack on women" ("Council Leader Slams Hell Hole Disgrace"). The Irish Prisoners' Appeal said that "strip-searching of women prisoners is nothing short of torture and sexual harassment" (Irish Prisoners Appeal, "Draft Motion of Support"). Caroline McCambley from Status of Women Group argues: "strip searches outraged the feelings of women prisoners who described the practice as akin to rape" ("Group Demands Strip Search Ban"). Later studies conducted by psychiatrists found direct correlations between strip-searching experiences and rape victimization. Dr. S. P. Sashidran conducted interviews with many women who were stripped-searched. The report concludes that "strip-searched [people] feel common feelings of shame, guilt, anger, humiliation and powerlessness" (qtd. in "Strip Search Feels Like Rape"). Professor Ivor Browne from University College, Dublin states: "Most people think of rape as a sexual act; in fact, the more you go into studying rape the more clearly it is revealed as an act of hatred and violence and strip-searching has all the connotations of this" (qtd. in "Strip-Searching"). These critics note the gendered and racialized component of "psychological rape," to use O' Dwyer's words, in targeting traditional Catholic Republicans and their respective values of "modesty." In addition, they point out that unlawful strip-searches outside of prison result in assault, battery, rape, and sexual harassment charges under common law, and argue vociferously that analogous forms of injustice in prison should be abolished and punished.

Write-On, Sister!: Literary Analyses of Collective Struggle, Solidarity, and Spirit in the Prose of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, & Mairéad Farrell

Political prisoners have used various methods of resistance to survive intellectually, emotionally, physically, and sexually in the United States and Northern Ireland. Many core themes surface in their written work: vindication of human rights, transcendence of dehumanization, conditions, and deprivations, resistance through community and relationships, and, more importantly, solidarity with other women. In this section, I examine the writings of Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell. I discuss material limitations in their writing and their writing intent. I particularly focus on themes of collective struggle, solidarity, and spirit; furthermore, I highlight their own unique forms of speaking out against the various forms of dehumanization I addressed earlier—assault, harassment, and negligence. These themes emerge most visibly through word choice and the development of collective visions of experience.

Material conditions create and limit possibilities for creative and critical expression. Political prisoners face numerous restraints in writing in the United States and Northern Ireland. Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell penned regularly while in solitary confinement. In his forward to *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21*, Haywood Burns,⁷⁶ the National Director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, writes: “This book was written in jail by men and women who face literally hundreds of years’ imprisonment for their supposed crimes against society. Their

⁷⁶ According to my interview with Laura Whitehorn, Haywood Burns died in a car crash in South Africa some years ago.

accounts of their lives, however, told in simple straightforward narrative, amount to a damaging indictment of this society for its crimes against a people” (x). Editing was an arduous mental undertaking. Revision was not a practical writing strategy for them in prison, either. In an interview I conducted with Laura Whitehorn, for instance, she commented on her process of compiling Safiya Bukhari’s revolutionary auto/biographical writing in prison:

Much of her writing is unfinished. She didn’t rewrite. Sometimes she wasn’t clear. Her old prison writing is on newspapers. I cringed reading it. I rearranged some essays written late at night. I didn’t change words or rewrite anything. It was hard. She never had time to go back and edit. Her main goal was to organize, even in prison. That’s why her writing is raw, not finished.

Like the Panthers, Republicans also had many limitations in terms of supplies and time. On September 25, 1986, O’Dwyer writes, “This effects our capacity to write letters since we cannot buy anything from canteen, since spending rights are also gone. So this letter will be the last for a while. We get one prison issue letter every week, second class.” O’Dwyer, Anderson, and Farrell were allowed one letter per week, had little money to purchase writing instruments and paper because they did not work,⁷⁷ and had terrible lighting to write in during their free time at night (O’Dwyer, “25/9/86 Letter”). These accounts demonstrate that the act of writing in such debilitating conditions was in itself a form of resistance.

Social collectivity is a pervasive theme in the writing of political prisoners in the United States and Northern Ireland. Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell all discuss their writing intentions

⁷⁷ Many Irish political prisoners refused to do work. They did not view themselves as “criminals,” but rather political prisoners. In addition, sewing uniforms for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) armed forces made the idea of such work even more troubling for them.

around the theme of collective audience. They wrote to memorialize their social movements, to create a communal voice, and record their histories. Shakur-Davis states: “I had to make a record there for later, because I would never be able to speak again. [. . .] I just thought I was writing my own obituary. [. . .] I am writing this note [to] inspire at least one of those paper Panthers to get into the community and do the work of the people” (qtd. in Guy 98; Shakur, “Letter from Jail”). Shakur-Davis continues, “I’m not great. [. . .] I’m just a little pebble. I’m a shit, a nothing. But I want some things to happen” (290-293). Shakur-Davis, in this sense, sees writing as an important record of life and death. She combines individual obituary and community history. She values community over individualism. A related theme is the necessity of telling “truths” to counterbalance the lies of those in power. Bukhari writes:

I had spent some time in prison writing and thinking. Thinking and writing. Trying to put on paper some cogent ideas that might enable others to understand why I did some of the things I had done and the process that had brought me/ us to the point we were at. I had also come to the conclusion that if we didn’t write the truth of what we had done and believed, someone else would write his or her version of the truth. If we can’t write/draw a blueprint of what we are doing while we are doing it, or before we do it, then we must at least write our history and point out the truth of what we did. (15).

In this passage, Bukhari speaks to the urgency of written accounts to interpret and affirm political action. She values the role of the individual in drafting his/ her own narrative as a form of historical “truth.” Like Shakur-Davis, in her writing style, Bukhari emphasizes the unity of the struggle, and suggests that the individual is subsumed in the collective struggle. “The people and advancing the struggle,” Bukhari proclaims, “are more important than any individual” (120). Bird’s interest in “truth” reiterates Bukhari’s emphasis: “I write this to tell you, the people, something about myself. I feel it is

necessary that you have some true knowledge or insight into my being – other than the lies which are printed in the newspapers” (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). Bird imagines a community committed to preserving her human rights, including her political decisions. Farrell’s words communicate a need for individual responsibility and collective participation, as well. Farrell writes, “I hope here to give you an insight into this present-day situation in Armagh, where the new prison regime has resorted to the familiar tactic of ‘divide and conquer’ in every aspect of prison routine” (37). Like Farrell, O’Dwyer and Anderson prioritize choruses of voices in attempt to avoid “divide and conquer” ideologies and practices characteristic of colonialist strategies. O’Dwyer and Anderson address the importance of community in their writing process itself. In my interview with Anderson, she stated the following:

We wrote our statements together. We wrote everything together. That’s how we worked. It’s how many of us worked. We were there for life. We realized that we had to find ways to survive. We got internal and external support, mainly through writing. No form of protest, including writing, was about the self. We wrote cases on other women’s behalf. Prisoners trusted us to speak for them.

This passage demonstrates that writing itself is a form of collective struggle. Individual tactics are abandoned in the service of a larger community approach. Instead, the individual and collective are worth fighting for together. These revolutionary auto/biographers all were the “the modern-day storytellers,” to use Bukhari’s words (133). Their “we” was more than rhetorical: it invoked their actual writing practices.

Collective vision is an extension of solidarity for political prisoners involved in the Black Power/ Liberation movement in the United States. Safiya Bukhari, Afeni Shakur-Davis, and Joan Bird all talk about its integral role in attaining freedom. Bukhari proclaims, “I believe that nothing short of a revolution will eradicate the racism,

capitalism, and imperialism that oppress me and my people as well as other exploited and oppressed people everywhere” (48). Bukhari’s use of language is both possessive and liberatory in the repeated phrase “my people.” She includes her people in all she says and does. Other uses of language, for instance, “we” and “us,” are analogous. Like Bukhari, Shakur-Davis invokes plurality in subjective pronouns and “sibling” titles for solidarity. Shakur-Davis writes, “During my incarceration, I have seen that there is a great need for the sisters and brothers to know the true meaning of ‘Power to the People.’ [. . .] We must educate the community to the correct purpose of the Black Panther Party” (“Letter from Jail”). The plural words “brothers,” “sisters,” and “we” follow in this collective trajectory. Shakur-Davis continues as follows:

We are responsible always to the people. [. . .] I no longer have any wants for my desires are my people’s. I have no time, because my time belongs to the people. You see everything belongs to the people [. . .] I love my people and because of this love the seventy years that I am facing seems a small price to pay [. . .]. We will do whatever the people deem necessary. We will go to jail, we will be murdered, we will be prosecuted and most of all we will live for the people. (“Letter from Jail”)

Shakur-Davis packs this passage with the subjective pronoun “we.” In addition, she uses the rhetoric of love as a medium to practice solidarity. Her time, her freedom, and her life are devoted to “the people.” Bird follows up on this linguistic trend in her writing: “We recognize that we will never receive any justice in the courts. We see only the spirit of the people, which moves forth to free the people from the injustices of the oppressor” (“Joan Bird’s Statement”). She moves from dehumanization to resistance by following the “spirit of the people,” rather than “the injustices of the oppressor.” Using “we” over “I” places her in solidarity with “the people,” not the “oppressor,” and dehumanizes the latter in an interesting reversal, stylistically. Solidarity is essential to their political work.

Like Safiya Bukhari, Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell embraced the ethos of solidarity in the Republican movement in the Six Counties of Ireland. O’Dwyer and Anderson stress the need for revolutionary unity in their work. O’Dwyer and Anderson address this point eloquently in their letter, distributed by the Irish Prisoners’ Appeal on November 17, 1987: “Although there were prison walls and bars between us, the feeling of unity and solidarity was such that it appeared to create a magnetic force which pulled us together. It was a great feeling!” Like magnets without a permanent magnetic moment, all Republican political prisoners were both attracted to and/or repelled by one another in the service of freedom, they argue, regardless of different locations and lives. In another letter to the Southwark Trades Council, O’Dwyer and Anderson discuss their political alliances with the Armagh Anti Strip Searching Committee, Sinn Féin, and the Irish Prisoners’ Appeal, in particular:

Our political beliefs and affiliations naturally orientate us towards the consideration of Republicans incarcerated in prisons [. . .] who are likewise being strip searched. As women, our immediate solidarity is directed towards our comrades in Maghaberry Jail and it has been the Armagh Anti Strip Searching Committee and more recently the Maghaberry group against strip searching who have been supporting us in our efforts to highlight the issue since our arrest in June 1985. Any member of the latter group, or of Sinn Fein or of the Irish Prisoners’ Appeal Group will be in a reliable position to support direct details about our experiences to date. All of these groups have done Trojan work on the matter of strip searching and to highlight, to our advantage, conditions of confinement as experienced by both Martina and I.

In this passage, the word “comrade” resonates with Shakur-Davis’ use of “brothers” and “sisters.” “Comrade” reflects their political commitments to Republicans, especially women, for their “Trojan work” for their specific cause. Like O’Dwyer and Anderson, Farrell uses metaphors of solidarity in her prose. She, however, explores the other side, repression. Farrell writes, “this in fact is not prison, but many prisons within prison (37).

The separation between “A,” “B,” and “C” wings troubles Farrell, for she is unable to establish bonds with prisoners outside her wing. Regular association with prisoners was necessary for her as Officer-in-Command, in particular. Oftentimes, Farrell’s political dialogues occurred during religious, educational, and association services. Farrell writes:

Every night at 9:00 p. m. we have the rosary in Irish. One shouts it out the door and the rest respond, afterwards we have our Irish class, shouted out the doors. Our voices are good and strong from persisting shouting. Then perhaps Bingo from our own made cards, it’s good crack. [. . .] Ten at 11:00 p.m. the ghost story is continued from the night before as most lie in their beds under the covers to keep warm as they listen to the story. At midnight all noise ceases – an order laid down by our own staff. I get into my bed under the blanket – no sheets or pillow cases – those too were taken by the screws – and think, another day over as Sinead voices my thoughts: ‘Perhaps it will be cornflakes tomorrow. Yes, maybe tomorrow will be our lucky day.’ (“A Prisoner on Protest” 15)

This passage, packed with visual and sonic images, shows these activities as “good crack” (or “craic”), Irish slang for “good times.” It documents intimacy between political prisoners in a place characterized by dehumanization. It shouts community survival. It is a good illustration of solidarity’s warmth beyond the abstract rhetoric deployed by some Panther women. In addition, Farrell checked in with political prisoners every night, even if just saying “are you right, girls?,” for which she was charged with “Giving Orders to Prisoners” under rules 30 and 31, and received fourteen days loss of remission, fourteen days loss of all privileges, seven days loss of evening association, and two privilege visits (“HM Prison File”). Farrell’s life, including her prison life and writing, were committed to issues of political harmony, as is the case in O’Dwyer’s and Anderson’s lives, as well.

Recognition, especially in the form of “shout-outs,” serves as a clear example of solidarity. Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell all use them in their work for dedication and preservation.

Shakur-Davis and Bird mention Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, and Bobby Seale, among others. O'Dwyer and Anderson also remember James Connolly, Bobby Sands, and other Irish freedom fighters. Farrell, too, gives "shout-outs" to other political prisoners who survived "Black February," including Anne Marie Quinn, Peggy Friel, Bernie O'Boyle, Anne Bateson, Una Nellis, Shirley Devlin, Ellis O'Connor, Eileen Morgan, Rosie Callaghan, and Lynn O'Connell. Bukhari, however, wins the enumerations (more than one hundred). Her life was devoted to organizing political prisoners, so it makes sense that she charts and discusses every individual whom she references to honor their labor. Her assassination "shout-outs" total more than fifty freedom fighters alone, including Fred Hampton, Bobby Hutton, Bunchy Carter, George Jackson, and lesser-known people, such as Sandra Pratt, Sidney Miller, Frank Diggs, and Spurgeon Winters. Bukhari devotes a paragraph to each of them, and writes "slain in combat" or "assassinated" after them in her personalized history of the movement (138-152). Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Kamau Sadiki, Sundiata Acoli, Albert Nuh Washington, Twymon Myers, Jalil Muntaqim Herman Bell, and Mumia Abu-Jamal are other recurring characters in her work. For instance, in 1997, Bukhari writes, "In the past two years, we have seen the execution of two avowed revolutionaries, Ajamu Nassor and Ziyon Yisrayah, in the state of Indiana. We have Mumia Abu Jamal, another revolutionary on death row in Pennsylvania. Geronimo Pratt has been in prison in California for almost thirty years even though the government knows that he was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted" (104). These figures—not just what Laura Whitehorn called "revolutionary celebrities" in my interview with her—created these social movements. These leaders,

whether well-known or not, deserve acknowledgement for their labor. On October 8, 1986, O’Dwyer’s letter to the Southwark Trades Council explains that political prisoners’ “only hope was through people like [them].”

“Thank you’s,” like “shout-outs,” percolate through politically-charged writing. The politics of gratitude is deeply crucial. Survival depends upon support. Sincere appreciation reinforces human consciousness and collective actions. The cycle of kindness oftentimes reproduces itself in other communities, too. O’Dwyer and Anderson’s work contains voluminous “thank you’s.” Their political beliefs inform their personal lifestyles in this way. On September 25, 1986, O’Dwyer writes, “I wish I’d two more pages to just jerk out heartfelt “thank you’s.” That’s how Martina and I see you, as people we’ll never be able to shower thanks enough on. We need you more than ever and by helping us you’ll help lots of others, here and in prisons everywhere.” This passage demonstrates the bonds of solidarity through “thank you’s.” Activists are thanked; other prisoners are remembered. It also is interesting that apologies follow “thank you’s” in this case. Apologies, furthermore, are addressed in the context of material limitations, over which these political prisoners have no control. In another letter to the Southwark Trades Council, O’Dwyer communicates a similar message: “We’d like the opportunity to be used there, if your Trades Council is willing, to thank all those groups and Union Members for their loyal support to date. [. . .] In time we will have more letters to dispose of.” Many letters begin and end in this fashion. The space for “thank you’s” is an indelible reservation.

Conclusion

Safiya Bukhari writes, “A People’s War of Liberation is like the points of a starfish. When a soldier (guerrilla) dies, another grows and takes his or her place in the struggle, or in the body of the army” (138). While revolutionaries die and revolutions live, revolutionaries’ legacies should be preserved in their respective locations. Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Ella O’ Dwyer, Martina Anderson, and Mairéad Farrell played catalytic roles in anti-colonial civil rights struggles during Black Power/Liberation in the United States and the Troubles in the Six Counties of Ireland. Whether alive or dead, they should be remembered for their resistance to dehumanization in the same way that masculinist narratives commemorate key figures like Marcus Garvey and James Connolly. In her beautiful inaugural memorial to Ethel Lynch, Martina Anderson says, “[W]omen have been the backbone of our conflict yet the work that has been done receives little recognition and certainly has not been documented in a way that reflects the sacrifices that have been made. [. . .] I call for equality of recognition of the role played by women throughout our struggle for freedom.” I second that call in this project.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Fictive History & Historical Auto/biography: Cultural Citizenship, Women's History, & Revolutionary Auto/Biography

Conceptions of citizenship are intractably bound to practices of freedom. They derive meaning from one another. Citizenship encompasses political, social, and cultural dimensions. T.H. Marshall defines “substantive citizenship” as “the actual ability to exercise rights of citizenship” as opposed to mere classification of citizenship in law and policy, known as “formal citizenship” (in Nakano Glenn 53). “Political citizenship” is “the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority, or as an elector or the members of such a body” (qtd. in Nakano Glenn 19). Characteristics of “social citizenship” include basic rights to economic welfare (i.e., food and jobs), security (i.e., shelters), and a sense of social heritage (i.e., family). “Civil citizenship” carries the “liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought, and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice” (qtd. in Nakano Glenn 19). Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s notion of “cultural citizenship” guarantees “the right to maintain cultures and languages differing from the dominant ones without losing civil and or political rights or membership in the national community” (54). These forms of citizenship should be mutually consistent, but oftentimes, even in their overlapping patterns, they remain disjunctive. This division means that even when certain groups have political citizenship, they can remain culturally marginalized. Reconceptualizing citizenship as cultural and social makes visible the need to attain not only political but also cultural and social liberation, resulting in the possibility of critical consciousness and social action.

Given the differences between “political” and “cultural citizenships” (the latter is sometimes burdened to resolve what the former cannot do), history and auto/biography have remained central sites of cultural inquiry. “Cultural citizenship” calls for representation not only in language and public discourses, but also in literature, art, music, theatre, history, and the media, among other forms of cultural production. Cultural productions have been an indirect locus of struggle; they represent a challenge to inequitable access. Textual accounts have been integral to various communities of resistance advocating for freedom. Women, often without access to meaningful political power, consistently have used culture to create “oppositional consciousness,” as Chela Sandoval suggests. Cultural spaces are places where political dialogue, civic engagement, and democratic aspirations have been represented. Literatures of dissent, thus, have served as a cultural form of citizenship.

Like Lisa Lowe, I have explored and celebrated the “contradictions” through which political, social, and cultural disenfranchisement brings dominant institutions into crisis and produces “cultures as oppositional and contestatory” in activist and/or aesthetic circles. I have argued that Black American and Northern Irish women have grounded their struggles for “substantive citizenship” in cultural texts as a form of dissent. Revolutionary auto/biography, a type of women’s history and cultural activism that represents and affirms women’s social realities in androcentric worlds of knowledge, also foregrounds narratives of resistance or constitutes narrative of resistance that challenge the prevailing social and political orders. The texts of Angela Y. Davis, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Assata Shakur, Margaretta D’Arcy, Ericka Huggins, Roseleen Walsh, Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, Martina Anderson, Ella O’Dwyer, and Mairéad

Farrell are exemplary artifacts of critical and creative agency that promoted the ethos of freedom during the “long Civil Rights Movement” in the United States and the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, 1960s-1990s.

In this project, I have repositioned literature, activism, and social movements in the United States and Northern Ireland, 1960s-1990s. In the western tradition, literary value of political work is not always perceived as aesthetically significant, but it does not always depend on the kind of formal complexity and aesthetic distance typically valued in the academy. However, in this project, I have shown that revolutionary auto/biography counts as both political intervention and art. Its political and aesthetic features include individual vs. collective personas, themes of dehumanization and resistance, advocacy of radical ideologies and revolutionary activism, and genre-crossing between prose and poetry. Revolutionary auto/biography provides cultural space to explore resistance, especially women’s resistance, in writing. It offers a corrective to masculinist narratives of social movements that ignore or obscure women’s contributions to them. Many of the women’s writings in this study have never been published or have been out of print for many years. This study has challenged these silences on a transnational level. Revolutionary auto/biography also calls for transnational readership (in this case, the United States and Northern Ireland), for its purpose is to establish solidarity across borders. Just as the personal can be political, the political can be aesthetic.

The Past, Present, and Future: Genealogies, Limitations, and Predictions

This dissertation has aimed to re-imagine theoretical, historical, and auto/biographical expressions of Black American and Northern Irish revolutionary women's cultural productions during the Black Liberation/ Power Movement and the Troubles, 1960s-1990s. During these anti-colonial civil rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland, I have demonstrated that women have been involved in many organizations, such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Panther Party (BPP), Black Liberation Army (BLA), the Republic for New Afrika (RNA), the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee, the Communist Party-USA (Che Lumumba Club), the Jericho Movement, People's Democracy (PD), the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the National H-Block/ Armagh Committee, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Women Against Imperialism (WAI), and/or Sinn Féin (SF). I have repositioned revolutionary women's political and auto/biographical work in the United States and Northern Ireland as an alternative angle of vision to masculinist narratives that have relegated their contributions to the periphery. I place their work in the center to describe a more expansive political project. I have argued that women's texts--political communiqués/ petitions, news coverage, prison files, personal letters, poetry and short prose, and memoirs--constitute important historic and aesthetic artifacts of social movements. In particular, Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey; Assata Shakur and Margaretta D'Arcy; Ericka Huggins and Roseleen Walsh; Afeni Shakur-Davis, Joan Bird, Safiya Bukhari, and Martina Anderson, Ella O'Dwyer, and Mairéad Farrell became both key leaders and key writers in the United States and Six Counties of

Ireland. I have demonstrated that these leaders/writers address similar themes in their work either through direct communication (i.e., political communiqués and personal correspondence) and/or indirect expression (i.e., news coverage and auto/biographical responses to it). I have found that interviews with them also point to their transatlantic connections. Their work has “talked back” to systems of power that have silenced them. Their genealogies of knowledge demonstrate the power of their words.

While this dissertation offers original insights into the field of Women’s Studies, in history, literature, and social movements, there is ample room for exploring new ground. The areas of language, genre, content, access, and sources are important areas to pursue for future study. The Gaelic language has become obsolete in many Irish communities. In addition to emigration, Gaelic is now only spoken by just more than ten percent of the Irish population. Though English has replaced Gaelic as the dominant language, many Irish revolutionary women in the Six Counties continue to speak and write in Gaelic for cultural and political reasons. Gaelic fluency communicates an intention to preserve cultural histories and mask political activities. All the Northern Irish leaders/ writers explored in this dissertation write/wrote in English. However, many of them know Gaelic well and use it to convey solidarity in oral and written expression. Some of them still write their name in both Gaelic and English. My research process did not include an understanding of Gaelic. A few times I needed translation during interview conversations, email correspondence, and phone dialogues. My translation inquiries resulted in a slower pace, suspiciousness about my authenticity, and the withholding of information at times. I promised each writer the chance to review my analysis of her work to remedy any translation problems. Still, work in this area is sorely needed.

Other genres are another important area for future scholarship. I drew from diverse genres of revolutionary auto/biography. I have analyzed longer memoirs, poetry, and shorter prose, including letters, essays, petitions, and communiqués. However, I did not work with plays or novels. Black revolutionary women in the United States thus far have not utilized plays, whereas many Northern Irish Republican women activists have turned to plays to make their work “jump” off the page “with life.” Margaretta D’Arcy and Roseleen Walsh are two such writers, both penning numerous plays since the Troubles unexplored by critics. Few Black American and Northern Irish women in revolutionary movements wrote novels.⁷⁸ I attribute the paucity of novels written by political prisoners to issues of economy and materiality. Generic concerns with authentic “truth-telling” may be another possibility, for some writers do not like to mix auto/biography and fiction.

Forthcoming auto/biographies will provide additional material for future analysts. Ericka Huggins’ and Kathleen Cleaver’s forthcoming auto/biographies, which will be published in a few years, well beyond the time I have allotted to this project, are some notable sources. I also decided against using Elaine Brown’s and Maria McGuire’s⁷⁹ auto/biographies. My own concerns focused on the political, and both of these texts were centered more on the authors’ personal relationships with men (mainly Huey P. Newton and Sean Mac Stiofain) than on their political commitments to and experiences within the Black Panther Party and the Irish Republican Army. Elaine Brown’s auto/biography has

⁷⁸ Some exceptions include Alice Walker and Toni Cade Bambara, among others.

⁷⁹ Maria McGuire was her name when she wrote her auto/biography. She eloped, married, and changed her name to “Gatland” to hide her political past with the IRA and her political present with the Tories. Last year she was forced to resign because of discovery of her “terrorist” past. I use “McGuire” when referring to her text, and Gatland when referring to her life. I make this distinction to honor both her pen and marital names.

been viewed by some former Panthers as masking her identity as a police informant, an issue lying outside the scope of my own investigation. Similarly, I did not consider as is Maria McGuire's auto/biography. Now referred to by her marital name "Gatland," her life has been viewed by some Republican and Tory leaders as treasonous; she left the IRA for the Tories, recently resigning upon discovery. I felt they were too romantically focused and controversially charged to use in this project. In the future, I would like to continue doing work on all of these writers, especially encompassing more fully issues of sexuality; many of the writers here have confided that sexuality has featured prominently in their lives and activities, post-Black Poer/ Liberation Movement and the Troubles. Huggins' partner's family is from the south of Ireland, just outside of Dublin, and her recent scholarly articles and oral history projects have been pushing former Panthers and revolutionary circles to examine themes of queer sexuality and meditative spirituality in interesting ways.

More in-depth interviews could advance future studies, as well. More interviews with Northern Irish leaders/ writers appear in this study than interviews with Black Americans. I had more access to Northern Irish activists through personal and political connections. Irish people in the Six Counties also were more available to talk to me because of my family history. The only exception was Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, who has maintained a very private life since her assassination attempt. Brian Dooley and Melissa Thompson reported to me their various "chasing" attempts to interview her; they both were able to talk to her only after fortuitous encounters at political events. Some Black activists in the United States, on the other hand, responded to me with suspicion because I am a white person doing work on Black people, lacking a racially-marked

authority of experience. After offering to include their feedback on my work, I received contacts for many of these writers, save for fugitive Assata Shakur and Joan Bird, from other activists, friends, and/or writers. Angela Y. Davis and Afeni Shakur-Davis never responded to my requests. Davis, I had been warned, has been difficult to track down since her retirement, and Shakur-Davis identifies with some Black separatist communities. A wealth of information is available on them, so it was not essential to conduct additional interviews with them. In the future, I would like to be in touch with them, even if only for feedback on their work to make sure I have represented them accurately, as I have done with the other writers.

Visiting other archives in other areas would expand scholarship in this field. Merritt College library, which I did not visit, houses much of the Black Panther Party materials from the West Coast faction, excluding *The Black Panther* and other prominent Panther publications. Archival sources there provide a more thorough background on some Panther women on the West Coast, though the East and West Coasts factions are also represented. Personal letters can provide additional troves of insight. For example, I was not able to procure many of Mairéad Farrell's letters. Farrell's mother died recently, severing ties between certain family members. I have been told by many Northern Irish ex-prisoners of war that she wrote to her mother and her ex-boyfriend Bobby Storey the most frequently during her imprisonment, but that they have not yet archived those letters. Government documents from the United States' and Great Britain's surveillance agencies also could make an interesting contribution to future projects. After filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) files in the United States and Northern Ireland, I was denied all the files I requested, except for Mairéad Farrell's file, granted two years after

my initial request. Farrell's file was surrendered only because she is deceased, and even so, I was not allowed to photocopy or photograph the material because of "security" reasons. After the requisite thirty-year suspension elapses, I will re-file my FOIA requests. In the future, I hope to visit these locations and receive FOIA approval for examining additional materials and taking more extensive notes.

Finally, after my major "gynocritical" dig,⁸⁰ I unearthed hundreds of letters, poems, and short stories written by Northern Irish Republican women. Some of them were given to their families and friends on International (Working) Women's Day, but many of them have been sitting in boxes for years when their authors' possessions were turned over to organizations, libraries, and/or family members. I could not use all of them in this project. For my next project, I hope to create an archive of these letters, poems, and short stories, perhaps in an anthology. These women's political and cultural lives need acknowledgement. Women's political commitments and cultural achievements serve a vital aesthetic and historic role in understanding communities of resistance.

Conclusion

In my interview with ex-Weather member Laura Whitehorn, she said "I don't like the idea of celebrity revolutionaries. Before I went to prison, I was nameless. In prison, we had become public figures. 'I didn't realize who you were,' people would say. 'What's the fucking difference?' I'd ask. I'm the same person I was five minutes before you figured out who I am.'" She continues, "The stereotypical role of women in movements is unbelievable. Women do work and organize. To not realize that is to demean women.

⁸⁰ I use Elaine Showlater's term here. For more information, see my introduction.

That was why I got involved.” This dissertation is a testament to the power of her words. It is neither interested in maintaining “celebrity revolutionaries” nor “stereotypical roles of women.” Instead, it seeks to correct the history of these radical movements by making sure that their voices, roles, actions, and place in the movements are acknowledged and fully represented. When women’s voices are heard, the quest for freedom will be genuine.

Appendix: Interviews

This dissertation draws on interviews with both writers in the study and scholars writing about them: Margaretta D’Arcy, Ericka Huggins, Roseleen Walsh, Martina Anderson, Ella O’Dwyer, Brian Dooley, Ailbhe Smyth, and Laura Whitehorn. (For a complete interview schedule, see my works cited. This interview process received Institutional Review Board approval.) I provided all interviewees with information about the project, my own personal and political objectives, and offered them the chance to read and revise my work for accuracy. These one-time interviews lasted approximately one to two hours. I sought interviews with the majority of the writers in this study, with the exception of deceased writers (i.e., Safiya Bukhari and Mairéad Farrell), fugitive writers (i.e., Assata Shakur), and writers famous enough to resist incursions on their time (i.e., Afeni Shakur-Davis, Angela Y. Davis, and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey). Joan Bird was impossible to locate and contact for an interview invitation. All of the writers were asked five basic open-ended questions (intended as prompts for further reflection) about their personal biographies, writing processes, and transatlantic solidarity: 1) can you tell me about when and why you started writing?, 2) can you discuss your thoughts on connections/disconnections between politics, prose, and/or poetry (both content and form)?, 3) can you talk about your activism, 4) did you provide international solidarity, especially to the United States or Northern Ireland, and 5) what are your future creative and/or political projects, goals, and visions? Of course not all the interviews followed the order of the questions. The writers were interested in my own political beliefs. There were times when the writers chose to take the interview in their own direction. At times, the interviews with Ericka Huggins, Margaretta D’Arcy, and Ella O’Dwyer became

informal conversations on politics, art, and pedagogy. In addition, Roseleen Walsh's reflections were compiled from both a formal interview and participant observation, because she and her husband provided my partner and me lodging in Belfast. I juggled my roles as researcher, writer, teacher, and activist in these interviews in order to hold a more genuine conversation with them and create an accurate representation of them.

The interview with historian/ activist Brian Dooley provides additional background information on historical associations, political rhetoric, research omissions, and current trends. His interviews, particularly those on Angela Y. Davis and Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, are essential to this study, for his scholarly work on Black American and Irish civil rights movements is the only substantive work on the topic. The interview with activist/ writer Laura Whitehorn gives biographical, aesthetic, and material information about Safiya Bukhari's life and work, including Whitehorn's friendship with Bukhari and compilation of her work. The interviews serve to fill the gaps in biographical, historical, and/or literary information.

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